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PORTS OF SLAVERY, PORTS OF FREEDOM: HOW SLAVES
USED NORTHERN SEAPORTS' MARITIME INDUSTRY TO
ESCAPE AND CREATE TRANS-ATLANTIC IDENTITIES, 1713-1783

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

PORTS OF SLAVERY, PORTS OF FREEDOM: HOW SLAVES USED NORTHERN SEAPORTS' MARITIME INDUSTRY TO ESCAPE AND CREATE TRANS-ATLANTIC IDENTITIES, 1713-1783

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This dissertation examines and reconstructs the lives of fugitive slaves who used the maritime industries in New York, Philadelphia and Newport to achieve freedom. It focuses on slaves during the period between 1713, the end of Queen Anne's War, and 1783, the end of the American Revolution. While the study's primary focus is on slavery in three port cities, it employs a broad geographic approach to consider how enslaved individuals in rural areas surrounding New York, Philadelphia and Newport, as well as slaves in more distant regions, used the maritime industry in northern port cities to escape slavery. Maritime work provided unique opportunities for fugitive slaves to exploit conflicts among whites to create relative autonomy and obtain freedom.

The work makes five significant contributions to the field of early American history. First, the dissertation demonstrates that the key characteristics of slavery in northern ports were slaves' mobility, the diversity of the labor they performed, and their strong connection to the Atlantic maritime community. Second, it illustrates that the maritime industry in northern port cities of British North America provided slaves viable means to obtain freedom. Third, it describes the significant eighteenth century black maritime community in port cities of British North America and the larger Black Atlantic. Its fourth contribution is to the field of Atlantic history. The work depicts the interconnections among Atlantic ports in the eighteenth century. It also globalizes the struggle of enslaved peoples by placing their flight to freedom within a larger Atlantic

context. The last, but far from least, contribution of this study is that it personalizes the stories of enslaved individuals, many of whose lives have remained largely unknown.

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As the son of a librarian, I have a deep appreciation for the often unsung work of librarians and archivists. Without the assistance of these individuals at a score of institutions, guiding me through their collections and gathering needed manuscripts, this project may never have reached completion. The archivists and staff at American Antiquarian Society, Bristol Records Office, Columbia University Rare Book Room, Gloucestershire Records Office, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Library Company of Philadelphia, Mystic Seaport Museum, National Archives, National Maritime Museum, Newport Historical Society, New York City County Clerk's Office Old Records Division, New-York Genealogical and Bibliographical Society, New York City Municipal Archives, New-York Historical Society, New York University's Bobst Library, Portsmouth City Records Office, Rutgers University's Alexander Library, and South Street Seaport Museum, all went to great lengths to provide materials for this project.

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2005 staff presentation at the National Maritime Museum, the 2006 Omohundro “Warfare and Society in Colonial North America and the Caribbean” conference and Mystic Seaport Museum’s 2006 conference “Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Power in Maritime America” and the 2008 Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association. Members of the public who attended presentations at the South Street Seaport Museum and the New York Chapter of the African-American Genealogical and Historical Society also provided helpful comments. “Seeking Freedom in the Atlantic, 1713-1783,” published by the *Journal of Early American Studies*, on which this dissertation is based, drew insightful comments from an anonymous reader and George Bordeaux, *EAS*’s editor. Philip D. Morgan shared both research materials and his expertise. In transforming that article into this dissertation, Christopher L. Brown provided guidance as how to frame the project, and after reading each chapter supplied insightful comments. John Murrin, Paul G. E. Clemens, and Deborah Gray White, read each chapter of this dissertation, and provided encouragement and advise as to how improve the work. My advisor, Jan Ellen Lewis proved to be both an encouraging mentor and a model for the level of scholarship that I should strive for.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAS	American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.
ABG	African Burial Ground, New York, New York.
ADM	Admiralty Records, Royal Navy.
AHR	<i>American Historical Review</i>
BL	British Library, London, United Kingdom.
BRO	Bristol Records Office, Bristol, United Kingdom.
CSPC	<i>Calendar of State Papers Colonial</i>
CO	Colonial Office Records.
CMD	Colored Mariner Database.
CRRI	<i>Colonial Records of Rhode Island</i> , ed. John Russell Bartlett, 10 vols. (Providence, 1859).
DLAR	David Library of the American Revolution, Washington's Crossing, PA.
EAS	<i>Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal</i>
FO	Foreign Office Records.
GRO	Gloucestershire Records Office, Gloucester, United Kingdom.
HCA	High Court of Admiralty Records.
HSP	Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
JAH	<i>Journal of American History</i>
JCBL	John Carter Brown Library, Providence, Rhode Island.
JER	<i>Journal of the Early Republic</i>
LCP	Library Company of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
LOC	Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
MCC	<i>Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York, 1675-1776</i> , ed. Herbert L. Osgood, 8 vols. (New York, 1905).
MSM	Mystic Seaport Museum of America, Mystic, Connecticut.
NEQ	<i>New-England Quarterly</i>
NYGBR	New York Genealogical and Biographical Record.
N-YHS	New-York Historical Society, New York, New York.
NMM	National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, United Kingdom
NYPL	New York Public Library, New York, New York.
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , ed., H.C.G. Matthew; (Oxford, 2004).
PCRO	Portsmouth City Records Office.
PMH&B	<i>Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography</i> .
RIHS	Rhode Island Historical Society.
SP	State Papers.
T	Treasury Records.
TASD	<i>Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database</i>
TNA	The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.
WMQ	<i>William & Mary Quarter</i>

INTRODUCTION

*The wandering sailor ploughs the main,
A competence in life to gain.
Undaunted braves the strong seas,
To find at last content & ease.
In hopes when toils & dangers are o'er
To Anchor on his native shore.¹*

In 1815, John Thompson Smith drew an illustration of Joseph Johnson with the ship HMS *Nelson* on his head.² A disabled merchant mariner, Johnson had neither a pension, nor due to his foreign birth, any right to parish charity. Wearing a headdress that embodied West Indian and African traditions, Johnson presented a public persona of a life, like that of many eighteenth century colored mariners, which spanned the various maritime communities of the British Atlantic - African, West Indian, American, and English. Johnson was a figure who never attained Lord Nelson's iconic status. Nevertheless, he commanded respect and attention as a well-known street performer in London's markets. While begging, Johnson would bow with his ship model, creating what one observer described as "the appearance of sea-motion." Many other colored mariners, American, English, Lascars, and Africans, made England their home in the years after the American Revolution. Some colored sailors, such as the former navy seaman Billy Waters who made a living by "the scraping of cat-gut" on London streets and appearing on London's stages, gained fame through performances in which their maritime identities played a central role. Others barely eked out an existence begging on London's streets, leading some "Poor Blacks" to immigrate to Sierra Leone. In contrast,

¹ Journal of William Richardson, 1780-1819, "The Wandering Sailor," Frontpiece, JOD/156/1-3, NMM.

² This illustration is contained in *Vagabondiana, or Anecdotes on Mendicant Wanders through the Streets of London* (London, 1817), Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.

men such as “old man Cuffe,” fled their masters in the Americas to establish lives as British mariners.³ While these men can be seen as reflecting Britain’s maritime heritage, they were also symbolic of the mobility of colored mariners in the eighteenth century Atlantic world, and represented the use by slaves of North America’s maritime industry as a tool to obtain freedom. This dissertation is the story of how slaves in Britain’s northern colonies in North America attempted to obtain freedom and “competence in life” by using the ocean to connect to ports throughout the Atlantic world. It considers their efforts to find the “content & ease” that many mariners, both white and colored, found difficult to obtain, how the permeable boundaries between free and enslaved status in northern colonies both assisted their flight via the sea and resulted in their re-enslavement, and how they were able to “anchor” themselves in various Atlantic ports after escaping enslavement.⁴ And in telling the stories of these men’s lives, this dissertation demonstrates that slaves’ “relationship to the sea” was, as Paul Gilroy has observed, “especially important.” These maritime fugitives were part of “movements of

³ Paul Edwards and James Walvin, *Black Personalities in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge, 1983), 16-19 (“Cuffe”), 165-166 (“Johnson”); Philip D. Morgan, “British Encounters with Africans and African-Americans, circa 1600-1780,” in *Strangers in the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan (Chapel Hill, 1991), 207; Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: Britain, The Slaves and The American Revolution* (London, 2005), 180-181. A contemporary portrait of Billy Waters by David Wilkie can be seen in Hakin Adi, “Black People in Britain,” in *Representing Slavery: Art, Artefacts and Archives in the Collections of the National Maritime Museum*, ed. Douglas Hamilton and Robert J. Blyth (London: 2007), 95.

Please note throughout the text the word “master” encompasses males and females.

⁴ Bernard Bailyn, “The Idea of Atlantic History,” *Itinerario*, 20 (1996), 26. As described in Chapters 1 and 3, escape via the sea in northern British North American colonies was largely limited to men. See Tables 14-1 and 14-2. This was due to a number of different factors, such as women having less freedom of movement than male slaves, the maritime industry’s masculine ethos, and women’s child-rearing responsibilities. Lisa Norling, *Captain Ahab Had A Wife: New England Women and the Whalefishery, 1720-1870* (Chapel Hill, 2000); Billy G. Smith, “Black Women Who Stole Themselves in Eighteenth century America,” in *Equality in Early America*, ed. Carla Gardina Pestana and Sharon V. Salinger (Hanover, NH, 1999), 134-59; Suzanne Stark, *Female Tars: Woman Aboard Ship in the Age of Sail* (Annapolis, 1996); Margaret S. Creighton, and Lisa Norling, ed., *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World: 1700-1920* (Baltimore, 1996); Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York, 1985). However, some women, such as Philla from Tappan, New York, “endeavour[ed] to get on board some vessel” so as to escape via the sea. *New-York Mercury*, June 24, 1754. Their struggles to do so are described in Chapter Three.

black peoples” across the Atlantic in which individuals crossed “borders in modern machines that were themselves micro-systems of linguistic and political hybridity.”

While for most African-Americans, their experience with European ocean-faring vessels was the horrific Middle Passage, for others, these vessels represented both “slavery and exploitation.” For maritime fugitives, ocean-faring ships offered freedom of movement and the opportunity to escape the brutality of slavery ashore.⁵

In 1717 William Burgis completed a six-foot wide panoramic illustration of New York’s waterfront that provided a vivid depiction of the central place the maritime industry played in New York’s and other northern cities’ economic and social lives (Illustration 1). Burgis showed a harbor filled with sloops, brigantines and schooners, as well as wharves and shipyards, bustling with activity associated with New York’s coastal and overseas trade. Three years later Peter Cooper painted a panorama of Philadelphia in which the maritime industry played a similar central role. Merchants of the time saw the prominence of ships and buildings in Burgis’s and Cooper’s works as reflections of their social status and wealth; maritime tradesmen saw in these paintings an acknowledgement

⁵ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA, 1993), 12, 16; W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, MA, 1997), 3, 11. Enslaved watermen were, as a number of historians of southern slavery have noted, frequently found among slave runaways. David Cecelski, *Waterman’s Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina*. (Chapel Hill, 2001), xvi; Gerald W. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth Century Virginia* (New York, 1972); Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York, 1974), 123-24, 200-205; Tom Costa, “What We Can Learn from a Digital Databases of Runaway Slave Advertisements,” *International Social Science Review*, 76:1-2 (2001): 36-43; Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth century Chesapeake & Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill & London, 1998), 340-341. As detailed in Chapter Three herein, slave mariners similarly were prominent among northern fugitives.

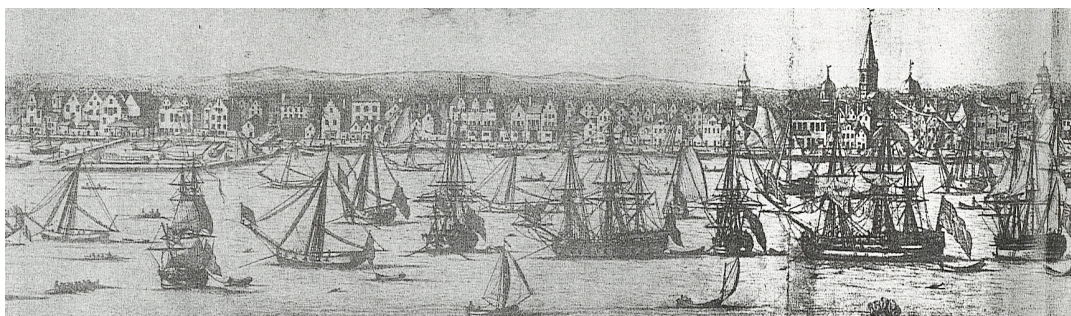


Illustration 1: William Burgis, *View of New York, 1718* (Permission of Rutgers University, Special Collections, Alexander Library).

of their significance within a critical component of the colonial economy. While New York and Philadelphia may not have been, as Newport was, “completely dependent on the sea for sustenance and livelihood,” the sea and maritime industries were critical to the economic viability of all three cities. Travelers to these cities noted the large number of traders from “Britain, Ireland, Holland, France, Spain, Portugal, up the Mediterranean, the West Indies, Spanish Main, as well as [the] other colonies.” The maritime industry and trading networks depicted by Burgis and Cooper had quite a different connotation for slaves than for northern merchants and tradesmen. Trading relationships between northern merchants and the West Indies brought numerous slaves to slave markets at the wharves, coffee houses, and taverns of New York, Newport, and Philadelphia.⁶ The wharves, dockyards, and shorefront artisan shops were where numerous slaves labored as

⁶ Patrick M’Robert, “Tour Through Part of the North Provinces of America,” Carl Bridenbaugh, ed., *PMH&B* 59 (1935): 138. For other contemporary travelers to northern port cities see Dr. Alexander Hamilton, *Gentleman’s Progress: The Interarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, 1744*, Carl Bridenbaugh, ed. (Chapel Hill, 1948); Andrew Burnaby, *Travels Through the Middle Settlements in North America, in the years 1759 and 1760: with observations upon the state of the colonies* (London, 1775); and Peter Kalm, *The America of 1750: Peter Kalm’s Travels in North America: The English Version of 1770* (New York, 1966). Cooper’s painting, “The Southeast Prospect of the City of Philadelphia,” is the oldest surviving canvas painting of an American city and occupies a central place in the Library Company of Philadelphia’s Reading Room. Visual evidence of Newport having a similarly vigorous maritime industry is contained in an illustration that Burgis completed not long after he finished his illustration of New York. Elaine Forman Crane, *A Dependent People: Newport, Rhode Island in the Revolutionary Era* (New York, 1985), 47.

stevedores, draymen, coopers, and sail makers. For slaves, the maritime industry was not simply the muscular, vibrant, economic engine that most whites understood it to be, but rather, the means by which they were enslaved and kept so.

However, in the seventy-year period between the Treaty of Utrecht and the Treaty of Paris, slaves, both those living in northern port cities, as well as those from distant rural regions, came to see the northern maritime industry as a potential portal to freedom.⁷ This perception of northern harbors and the ships docked there as doors to freedom was due to the size and strength of the northern maritime industry, slaves' maritime skills, and the large transient and multicultural population in northern ports, which provided ample opportunities for fugitive slaves to hide while they sought berths on ships. These opportunities for freedom through northern harbors expanded and contracted during the eighteenth century due to factors, such as economic booms and recessions, and imperial policies, which were beyond the control of slaves and their masters. It was, however, the exigencies of warfare, with resulting maritime labor shortages, which provided the greatest opportunities for fugitive slaves. Thus, while the two decades following the end of Queen Anne's War saw a relatively small number of fugitive slaves flee enslavement by seeking berths on ships, during the wars of the mid and late eighteenth century – the War of Jenkins's Ear, King George's War, the Seven

⁷ Slaves seeking freedom in Northern port cities did not see their portals to freedom as being limited to New York, Newport and Philadelphia. Other northern ports, such as New London, Boston and Piscataqua, also served as magnets for runaways, although on a smaller scale than was true for the three cities analyzed in this dissertation. For example, the overwhelming majority of Connecticut fugitive slaves came from coastal settlements and almost forty percent of the province's fugitive slave advertisements contained warnings to ship captains not to harbor runaways. Guocom Yang, "From Slavery to Emancipation: The African Americans of Connecticut, 1650s – 1820s," Ph. D. diss., University of Connecticut, 1999: 177, 179. This phenomenon of slave flight to northern ports can be seen as a precursor to the larger maritime underground railroad on the North American coastline via which numerous southern slaves escaped in the nineteenth century. Cecelski, *Waterman's Song*, Chap. 5; David W. Bright, *A Slave No More: Two Men Who Escaped to Freedom, Including Their Own Narratives of Emancipation* (New York, 2007), 86.

Years War and the American Revolution – the number of runaway slaves who obtained, or at least attempted to find, freedom by employment on the numerous vessels berthed in northern harbors, increased dramatically.

With slave labor in northern ports characterized by mobility and frequent access to the sea via work in the maritime industry, slaves frequently were able to escape the shackles of enslavement, albeit, sometimes only for brief periods. This study will explore the instability of northern slavery by demonstrating that slaves' ability to escape via the sea was shaped by six inter-related factors: conflicts between whites over slave labor, particularly those between merchants and ship captains; slave owners' need to hire out slaves; slave agency, including familiarity with the maritime industry and a relatively high degree of artisan skills and linguistic ability; environmental factors, such as the anonymity that northern ports provided fugitive slaves, the weather, and slaves' access to Trans-Atlantic shipping; imperial conflicts and economic policies; and simple chance, which enabled some slaves to obtain freedom while others, though often equally as determined and capable, remained enslaved. The inter-relationship among these six factors created unique opportunities in northern colonial port cities for slaves to escape enslavement and create identities within the Atlantic. In the period between the Treaty of Utrecht and the Treaty of Paris opportunities for slaves to permanently escape expanded and contracted in northern ports as each of these six factors changed over time.

Many traditional histories of slavery have presented it as a southern institution. With far greater numbers of slaves residing south of the Mason-Dixon Line, this emphasis is somewhat understandable. A number of historians of northern colonies have reinforced this emphasis by largely ignoring the nascent black population while focusing

on political and economic institutions. As several recent studies and museum exhibits have shown, slavery in northern colonies was pervasive during the colonial era and important to the economic viability of those colonies.⁸

Slaves occupied important places in northern port cities.⁹ The slave population of each of the three cities studied exceeded ten percent of their total population throughout the eighteenth century, with New York City's slave population being closer to twenty percent. Trade was the life-blood of New York, Newport's and Philadelphia's economies, with Atlantic trade profits being a "dynamic element" in these economies, and many merchants in these cities profiting, directly or indirectly, from the slave trade.¹⁰

Commercial exchanges with the West Indies, Europe and American interior hinterlands

⁸ For an example of a study of a northern colony that scarcely dealt with slavery see Sun Bok Kim, *Landlord and Tenant in Colonial New York: Manorial Society, 1664-1775* (Chapel Hill, 1978). Joanne Pope Melish's *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca, 1998) illustrates the intentional deletion of slavery from northern history. Discussions of black life in northern colonies can be found in Ira Berlin & Leslie Harris, eds., *Slavery in New York* (New York, 2005); Ira Berlin, "Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society in British Mainland North America," *American Historical Review* 85:1 (1980): 44-78; Robert E. Desrochers, "Slave-For-Sale Advertisements and Slavery in Massachusetts, 1704-1781," *WMQ*, 3rd Ser. 59 (2002): 623-664; Robert K. Fitts, *Inventing New England's Slave Paradise: Master/Slave Relationships in Eighteenth century Narragansett, Rhode Island* (New York, 1998); Gary B. Nash, "Slaves and Slaveowners in Colonial Philadelphia," *WMQ*, 3rd Ser., 20 (1973): 223-256; William D. Pierson, *Black Yankees: The Development of an Afro-American Subculture in the North* (Amherst, 1988); Jean R. Soderlund, "Black Women in Colonial Philadelphia," *PMH&B* 107 (1983). Recent museum exhibits on northern slavery include *Slavery in New York* and *New York Divided: Slavery and the Civil War*, presented by the N-YHS in 2005-2006 and 2006-2007, and *Captive Passage: The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Making of the Americas* presented by The Mariners Museum, Newport, VA, 2002-2003.

⁹ Throughout the period in question Charleston was also a significant port with a sizable black maritime presence. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 9, 214, 236-244, 342. I have not included Charleston in this study for several reasons. While there were a number of South Carolinian slave mariners, South Carolina's maritime economy lacked several elements present in northern ports, e.g., substantial privateering fleets and the presence of British naval ships. Including Charleston would have also expanded the scope of research beyond a manageable level. Finally, the inclusion of Charleston would have shifted the focus of this dissertation from an analysis of northern urban slavery.

¹⁰ Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 36; Evarts B. Greene and Virginia D. Harrington, *American Population Before the Federal Census of 1790* (New York, 1952); Robert V. Wells, *The Population of the British Colonies in America before 1776* (Princeton, 1975), 100, 112, 143; W. Bryan Rommel-Ruiz, "Atlantic Revolutions: Slavery and Freedom in Newport, Rhode Island and Halifax, Nova Scotia in the Era of the American Revolution," Ph. D. diss., University of Michigan, 1999, 142-144; Gary B. Nash, "The New York Census of 1737: A Critical Note on the Integration of Statistical and Literary Sources," *WMQ*, 3rd Ser., 36:3 (July, 1979): 428-435; Bernard Bailyn, "Slavery and Population Growth in Colonial New England" in *Engines of Enterprise*, ed. by Peter Temin, (Cambridge, MA & London, 2000), 253-259.

all played important roles in their economies. Shipping news, dispatches concerning maritime disasters and letters concerning foreign affairs, all regularly appeared in Philadelphia, New York, and Newport newspapers. Numerous advertisements in these papers provide ample evidence of the flux of peoples through port cities; deserting sailors, eloping women, runaway apprentices, all joined the hundreds of fugitive slaves seeking freedom in and through these ports.¹¹ An analysis of how slaves in these cities used the maritime industry to obtain freedom can both provide a richer understanding of northern slavery and maritime life, demonstrate the Atlantic nature of the lives of northern slaves, reinforce the growing understanding that “slavery was sustained by maritime activity” and illustrate the opportunities for freedom that maritime employment provided to slaves in the northern colonies. Given that there are few studies of urban slavery in colonial British North America, this dissertation will also fill in a gap in the historiography of both slave studies and Atlantic history.¹²

The review of more than twenty-six hundred fugitive slave advertisements, thirty-two hundred sale advertisements and four hundred slave advertisements seeking slaves provides a solid quantitative basis for this study. These advertisements served to frame the nature of slavery in these northern cities, as well as the extent and nature of maritime flight. Using a variety of English language sources, I have also created a database of more than eighty-seven hundred colored mariners that illustrate the Atlantic world that

¹¹ Studies of colonial runaway wives and apprentices include Maureen Alice Taylor, *Runaways, Deserters and Notorious from Rhode Island Newspapers* (Camden, ME, 2001); Kirsten Denise Sword, “Wayward Wives, Runaway Slaves, and the Limits of Patriarchal Authority in Early America.” Ph. D. diss, Harvard University, 1999; Billy G. Smith “Black Women Who Stole Themselves in Eighteenth century America” in *Inequality in Early America*, ed. Carla Gardina Pestana and Sharon V. Salinger (Hanover, NH, 1999); Sharon V. Salinger, “*To Serve Well and Faithfully*”: *Labor and Indentured Servants in Pennsylvania, 1682-1800* (Cambridge, 1987). The terms *Caribbean* and *West Indies* will be used interchangeably throughout this dissertation.

¹² David Cannadine, “Introduction,” in *Empire, the Sea and Global History: Britain’s Maritime World, c. 1763-1840* (New York, 2007), 4.

maritime fugitives participated in.¹³ In addition to providing a quantitative analysis of maritime flight, this dissertation seeks to reduce some of the anonymity that has long shadowed our understanding of individual slaves' lives in colonial America. As Gary Nash has noted, white mariners "are perhaps the most elusive social group in early American history because they moved from port to port with greater frequency than other urban dwellers, shifted occupations, died young, and, as the poorest members of the free white community, least often left behind traces of their lives on the tax lists or probate records." Fugitive slaves, especially those who fled via the sea, are even more difficult to trace; they sought to conceal their true identities, and "seldom sailed their live courses on a single tack." Few muster rolls for eighteenth century British and American merchant ships have survived, and not until 1764 did the British Navy require that the birthplace of crewmembers be included in ships' musters. With the frequent sale of slaves in northern colonies, and the lack of slave surnames, tracing the lives of slaves can often be an exercise in frustration. While advertisements, muster rolls, logs and admiralty records contain only small samplings of how enslaved people defined themselves, there are sufficient snippets of information containing the "voice[s] of deliverance" to give humanity to these often anonymous enslaved individuals. The stories of colored maritime fugitives such as John Incobs, Ben Freebody, Caesar Cabbott and John Harman described in Chapters 3-5, while fragmentary, shed light both on the nature of northern urban slavery, particularly the critical role that the maritime industry played in slaves' lives.¹⁴

¹³ Henry Louis Gates, "Writing 'Race' and the Difference it Makes," in *"Race," Writing, and Difference*, ed. Gates, (Chicago, 1986), 11-12; Appendix A "Fugitive Slave and Slave Sale Advertisements" details the process used to select these advertisements and the methodology to analyze the advertisements. Appendix B "Colored 18th Century Mariners Database" (CMD) details the sources and method by which colored mariners were identified.

¹⁴ Gary Nash, *Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), 16; Daniel Vickers with Vince Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea*:

Two terms used in this dissertation, – “colored mariner” and “maritime fugitive” – are central to this dissertation. Many historians use the term “black jacks” or “black sailors” when referring to African-American seamen. Other historians have utilized the term “Creole” when referring to “black people of native American birth.”¹⁵ As the numerous references to “mulatto” “yellow” and “mustee” in fugitive slave advertisements make clear, race and skin color were more nuanced in eighteenth century British North America than a black-white polarity would imply. With the New York and New England whaling industry a locale where Native Americans, mustees, blacks, and mulattos often found refuge, employment, and a shared community, applying a black-white polarity would be particularly inapt for this dissertation. Instead, I use the term “colored mariner” as it is how many colonial officials often referred to dark-skinned seamen, whether they be Negro, Mulatto, Mustee or some category of mixed African ancestry.¹⁶ I also avoid use of Ira Berlin’s construction of the term “Creole.” To use Berlin’s terminology of “Creole” would undermine a central contention of this dissertation – that a number of the slave fugitives did not see their race as immutable, but rather something that could be transformed by their dress, by locales they found themselves, by work they did, and by the legal systems they utilized to achieve freedom.¹⁷ Similarly, rather than focus solely on

Yankee Seafarers in the Age of Sail (New Haven, 2005), 4.

¹⁵ Bolster, *Black Jacks*; Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), 286n1.

¹⁶ Lawrence A. Clayton, “Life at Sea in Colonial Spanish America: The New World Experience,” in *Seamen in Society*, ed. Paul Adam (Bucharest, 1980), III, 22 quoting a Letter from Lima’s Merchant Guild to the Real Tribunal del Consulado, 1753-1754 (Dark-skinned seamen referred to as mariners of “a broken color”). As Judge Higginbotham aptly noted, status in colonial America was “a matter of color,” not that one was black rather than white. A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., *A Matter of Color: Race and the American Legal Process* (Oxford, 1980).

¹⁷ Russell Lawrence Barsh, “‘Colored’ Seamen in the New England Whaling Industry” in *Confounding the Color Line: The Indian-Black Experience in North America*, ed. James F. Brooks (Omaha, 2002): 76-107. An example of a mixed-race slave in New York was the “Mestee Boy Saint John,” manumitted in 1765 by Benjamin Gomez. Minutes of Court of General Quarter Sessions of the Peace, Vol. 5, 1732 to 1772. I want to thank Noah Gelfand for this reference. Mixed Indian-Negro slaves were also common on Long Island.

“black mariners,” my use of the term “maritime fugitives” is intended to provide a more precise framing to the individuals discussed in this dissertation. Included within this term are any colored enslaved fugitives who attempted to flee by the sea, whose owner believed they were fleeing via the sea, who were known to have obtained berths, or who were dressed as sailors when they ran away. While not all of these individuals found berths or were successful in fleeing, they all envisioned escape via the sea, and for some, lives as mariners.¹⁸

This dissertation contains five chapters. Chapter One demonstrates the centrality of ports to northern slavery by establishing the ports’ geographic and economic importance to the larger economic and social systems of Pennsylvania, New York, Rhode Island and nearby provinces. It engages in an analysis of the number, gender, age, and ancestry of the enslaved populations in New York, Philadelphia, and Newport, as well as their maritime backgrounds. The chapter examines the nature of slave labor in these port cities, the mobility most slaves in these urban environs had, and the opportunities for freedom created by life in northern port cities. Chapter Two considers how schools and taverns in northern ports acted as sites where slaves were able to gain skills and information that enabled them to create social networks and assisted them to escape via the sea. Chapter Three explores how slaves escaped from their masters’ garrets and found

Patricia and Edward Shillingburg, “The Disposition of Slaves on the East End of Long Island from 1680 to 1796,” http://www.shelter-island.org/disposition_slave.html (accessed Jan. 31, 2007); *Recovery*, 1733, TNA HCA 1/99 (New York Indian sailor John Whittney charged with killing *Recovery*’s captain). Native Americans and African-Americans also established mixed-race families in non-coastal communities such as Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Amy C. Schutt, *Peoples of the River Valleys: The Odyssey of the Delaware Indians* (Philadelphia, 2007), 103.

¹⁸ N.A.T. Hall, “Maritime Maroons: Grand Marronage from the Danish West Indies,” *WMQ*, 3rd Ser., Vol. 42, Issue 4 (Oct. 1985): 476-498. Barbara Brown and James M. Rose’s *Black Roots in Southeastern Connecticut, 1650-1900* (Detroit, 1980) have demonstrated that numerous individuals of mixed black and Native American heritage lived in the area between New London and the Rhode Island border, making abundantly clear the pitfalls of continuing to use Black-White racial descriptions of slaves in British North America.

haven in the forecastles of Atlantic ships. It does so by demonstrating the process whereby colored individuals transformed themselves by exchanging ozenbrigg trousers and shirts that marked them as enslaved for clothes that publicly demarked them as mariners - tarred pants and pea jackets. Chapter Four considers how the eighteenth century's imperial wars provided expanded opportunities for freedom in ports. The fifth chapter focuses on the possibilities and limits for freedom in the Atlantic for maritime fugitives from northern ports. It considers the choices these men faced as to which ships to sign onto, and the choices slaves faced as to where to flee. Some ports and segments of the Atlantic maritime community welcomed these runaways, while others closed their doors to maritime fugitives. Pirate boats in the early decades of the eighteenth century, Spanish colonies during the first-half of the century, Scarborough, England in the mid-eighteenth century, and English ports in the Revolutionary War era, will serve as case studies to illustrate the shape and nature of what Jane Landers has called a "Negroid Littoral."¹⁹

* * * * *

Joseph Johnson knew the vagaries of maritime life. He experienced the storms of the North Atlantic, was subjected to ship captains' arbitrary discipline, awoke to the scamper of rats, worked pumps to save a vessel from leaky timbers, and contended with rotten food.²⁰ Despite such difficult working conditions, he and thousands of colored

¹⁹ Jane G. Landers, "Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose: A Free Black Town in Spanish Colonial Florida," in *Colonial America: Essays in Politics and Social Development*, 5th ed., ed. by Stanley N. Katz, John M. Murrin, and Douglas Greenberg (New York, 2001), 595-619.

²⁰ As the paytickets for HMS *Monsieur* that were "gnaw'd to pieces by the Rats" and the "rat eaten slops" of HMS *Garlands* demonstrate, sailors and rats shared space in naval forecastles. HMS *Monsieur* Lts. Logbook, 1780-1781, NMM ADM/L/M/273; Navy Bd. In-Letters, Sept. 5, 1769, TNA ADM 106/1182/233. Rats were also commonly found on merchant and slave ships. Charles Lorimer, *Letters to a Young Master Mariner on some Subjects Connected with His Calling* (London, 1853), 33; Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, 170. As the HMS *Eltham*'s logbook illustrates, rotten food was a concern for mariners

individuals saw the sea as an avenue to meaningful lives. Maritime work offered decent wages, movement to locales that provided greater freedom than in British North America, and work that others respected. However, unlike their white mariner colleagues, Johnson and other colored seamen served at sea under a significant detriment – that their dark skin marked them as being eligible to be enslaved. Thus, in the most elemental ways, the lives of Johnson and other colored mariners were considerably more constrained than those of white colleagues like William Richardson. Let us start by examining these individuals' work in northern ports.

("Surveyed six casks of Oatmeal and condemned ...eight bushels 3 gallons which were thrown overboard: it being rotten & not fit to eat"). HMS *Eltham* Lts. Logbook, 1736-1745, NMM ADM/L/E/93.

CHAPTER ONE

THE GEOGRAPHY, DEMOGRAPHY AND MOBILITY OF SLAVE LIFE IN NORTHERN PORT CITIES

What the diverse Europeans who settled North America, whether the Spaniards at St. Augustine, the Virginia Company at Jamestown, the Pilgrims on the *Mayflower*, or the numerous other European settlers, all had in common was a desire to find safe harbors. They sought places to establish new homes and trading posts, regions that offered economic possibilities and religious freedom, and havens from the vicissitudes of the Atlantic Ocean. Philadelphia, New York and Newport each provided havens European settlers desired. As will be detailed in this chapter, geography shaped these cities' economies, the lives of Europeans who settled these ports and the lives of slaves forcibly transported to northern colonies. The cities' locations, natural characteristics, built environments, and changing weather and tides, contributed to which people and products flowed into and out of these ports, and when they did so. In these constantly changing ports, runaways, as well as failed merchants and confidence men were able to create new identities.¹ The backgrounds and diversity of the enslaved, and the varied nature of the work slaves performed, all significantly shaped slavery in northern ports. And finally, mobility, both within ports, and between the cities and other regions, was the defining characteristic of slavery in Philadelphia, New York, and Newport.

Northern port cities were maritime communities. While not all North American colonies were, as Rhode Island was described, "but a line of a seacoast," Philadelphia, New York and Newport were each reliant upon and integrated into the larger Atlantic

¹ An example of a confidence man creating new identities in northern ports was the trickster Tom Bell, who engaged in some of his confidence schemes in New York and Philadelphia. Steven C. Bullock, "A Mumper among the Gentle: Tom Bell, Colonial Confidence Man," *WMQ* 55:2 (Apr. 1998), 231-258.

world.² These cities' success relied, in large part, upon their residents' abilities to use the sea for economic gain. As Elaine Forman Crane aptly characterized Newport, "In a word, [it] depended on the sea." Newport was a city in which "almost every male inhabitant went to sea at some point and almost every fortune originated aboard ship." While Newport's dependency on the ocean may have been greater than either Philadelphia's or New York's, each of these urban centers' prosperity was intertwined in mercantile activities that required maritime expertise. Mariners comprised one of the largest occupational groups in northern ports; in Philadelphia, they constituted one-fifth of the city's population. Unlike in the nineteenth century, most colonists did not turn their backs on the Atlantic to focus inland. Instead, with maritime income being the "principal source of labor income" and merchant seamen comprising the largest occupational group in British North America's major ports, colonists' lives, livelihoods, and very identities were inextricably tied to the sea. The primary orientation of many Northern colonists, free and unfree, was facing east; towards the sea and a world many knew quite well. Colonial ties to the sea extended far beyond mariners working on blue water vessels.³ Merchants' livelihoods depended upon ships bringing and taking goods to and from vital overseas markets. Hundreds of sail makers, stevedores, ship carpenters and coopers' livelihoods relied upon working on merchants' vessels. Docks were the economic centers of northern ports, where large numbers of longshoremen, coopers, shipbuilders and other dockworkers were employed. The profits of tavern and coffee house proprietors came

² "Memorial to Congress from the General Assembly of Rhode Island," Jan. 15, 1776, JCBL.

³ Crane, *A Dependent People*, 35; Billy G. Smith, "The Material Lives of Laboring Philadelphians, 1750 to 1850," *WMQ* 38:2 (Apr. 1981), 190. The role ports played as centers of information and transportation was widely understood. During the Revolution, American military authorities required paroled officers not "to reside in or near any sea port," so as to limit their access to important information and their ability to flee to British forces. Resolution of United States Congress, May 21, 1776, N-HYS.

from seamen and traders spending money in their establishments. These colonists understood that their lives were intimately connected to the sea, and that, in Fernand Braudel's words, the sea provided "the means of exchange and intercourse, if man [wa]s prepared to make an effort and pay a price." Slave and master may have "see[n] the sea" differently, but for each, the breaking waves of the Atlantic represented more than mere background noise to their lives. Instead, the sea was central to how northern port cities, and slavery in those ports, operated. It also was a primary force in shaping the lives of free and enslaved individuals.⁴

The merchants of Philadelphia, New York, and Newport shared a "commercial pragmatism" and sought "to have a little trade together." This desire for trade created vibrant communities in all three cities and opportunities for slaves to obtain their freedom. In the first half of the eighteenth century New York, Newport and Philadelphia each underwent significant development that saw the three cities grow into commercial centers whose scale rivaled that of British provincial ports such as Glasgow, Hull and Bristol. Northern merchants and traders developed commercial networks across the Atlantic that tied the three cities into competitive markets in which individual prosperity

⁴ Crane, *Dependent People*, 9, 35; Sarah Deutsch, "The Elusive Guineamen: Newport Slaves, 1735-1774," *New England Quarterly*, 55:2 (July 1982), 250; Vickers and Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea*, Introduction; Jay Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle, Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700-1807* (Philadelphia, 1981), 26; Richard Brandon Morris, *Government and Labor in Early America* (New York, 1946), 225; Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian country: A Native history of Early America*, (Cambridge, MA., 2001), 11; Gary B. Nash, Billy G. Smith, and Dirk Hoerder, "Labor in the Era of the American Revolution: An Exchange," *Labor History* 24:3 (Fall 1983), 434; Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (NY, 1972-73), Preface; Sarah Palmer, *Seeing the Sea: the Maritime Dimension in History* (Greenwich, UK, 2000). A considerable number of Philadelphians and New Yorkers also worked in the maritime industry. For example, in 1750 approximately 10% of Philadelphia's workforce was employed either in shipbuilding or seafaring. Mary McKinney Schweitzer, "Economy of Philadelphia and its Hinterland" in *Shaping a National Culture: The Philadelphia Experience, 1750-1800*, ed. Catherine E. Hutchins (Winterhur, Del., 1994), 126. Symbols of colonial maritime culture were numerous in northern ports. Trade signs depicting this culture hung over countless businesses. "Shore and Harbor," *Seaport* 39:2 (Summer 2004), 20-21.

came to be seen as benefiting the common good.⁵ The three cities, while sharing some similarities in their approach to trade, particularly their robust West Indies trade, developed their maritime economies differently. The variances in each port's approach had divergent impacts upon their respective slave populations.

Geography

Travelers remarked that New York was “large and well built,” and had “an urban appearance,” with a profusion of shipping in its harbor.⁶ Over the course of the eighteenth century the population of New York City expanded tremendously, increasing 57 percent between 1720 and 1740 and 51.5 percent between 1771 and 1790. The city reputedly had the “best” harbor in North America, situated at the northern end of New York Bay, six miles distant from the open waters of the Atlantic. Travelers to the city entered through the Verrazano Narrows, a picturesque channel. The channel's narrowness served as a barrier to high winds and storms, providing New York harbor with protection for ships that many other Atlantic ports lacked. Sailing through the harbor, described by Patrick M'Robert as having “a beautiful prospect,” ships proceeded to dock at the wharves that lined the East River from the Battery to Corlear's Hook. The demonic “very dangerous” tides of the East River, which gave rise to the name of Hell's Gate, a narrow twenty foot wide channel where the river meets Long Island Sound, made traveling on or crossing the river hazardous for all but experienced boat men. Many a New Yorker, such as John Crum, a free black who attempted to cross the river to go to Hallet's Cove,

⁵ Arthur L. Jensen, *The Maritime Commerce of Colonial Philadelphia* (Madison, WI, 1963), 2; Gary B. Nash, *Red, White and Black: The Peoples of Early America* (Englewood Cliffs, 1982), 210-212.

⁶ Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and other Writings*, ed. by Vincent Carretta (New York, 2002), 131-132; Hamilton, *Gentleman's Progress*, 45-46. The importance of shipping to New York was emphasized in contemporary images of the city. Throughout the eighteenth century, artists typically depicted New York not as a bustling streetscape, but as an extension of its harbor and maritime sector. A good example of this is J. F. W. De Barres's “View of New York,” 1781, NMM HNS 148; <http://www.nmm.ac.uk/collections/explore/object.cfm?ID=HNS%20148> (accessed Aug. 21, 2005).

drowned when unable to navigate the river's swift tides. To facilitate ship repairs and shelter vessels from severe winter storms, British naval ships made a regular practice of moving upriver to Turtle Bay for the winter months, "it being unsafe to continue before the Town by reason of the great quantities of Ice that are carried up & down th[e North] River, with ye Tydes." There warships were serviced by shipping businesses on the bay, operated by Mangle Jansen Roll and other maritime workers. Most other ships berthed throughout the year at East River wharves, as the river was deep enough to accommodate large vessels, and ships were protected during the winter from ice that sometimes drove "with great force" against ships in the Hudson River. Although ice floes could make navigation on the Hudson during the winter hazardous, the river's brackish waters resulted in it rarely completely freezing over. Notwithstanding these favorable conditions, the harbor's channel was narrow, and large ships needed to be well piloted to avoid being "easily cast upon a sand."⁷

⁷Peter Kalm, *Travels into North America Containing Its Natural History, and a Circumstantial Account of its Plantations and Agriculture in General, With the Civil, Ecclesial and Commercial State of the Country, the Manners of the Inhabitants, and Several Curious and Important Remarks on Various Subjects*, trans. John Reinhold Forster (1770-1771), 1:253.; Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness: The First Century of Urban Life in America* (New York, 1955), 303; Samuel McKee, *Labor in Colonial New York, 1664-1776* (Port Washington, NY, 1965), 303; John K. Alexander, "The Philadelphia Numbers Game: An Analysis of Philadelphia's Eighteenth century Population," *PMHG* 74 (1974), 314-324; Raymond Augustus Smith, III, "A Traveler's View of Revolutionary America" (Ph. D. Diss., University of Texas, Austin, 1981), 390, 395, 414, 434-435 quoting Searle (1777), O'Hara, (1780), Cresswell (1776) and Stuart (1776), Biddulph (1779), and M'Robert (1775); HMS *Gosport* Lt. Logbook, 1744-1748, NMM ADM/L/G/43; HMS *Seaford* Lts. Logbook, 1712-1715, NMM ADM/L/S/194; HMS *Rose*, Lts. Logbook, 1777-1778, NMM ADM/L/R/59; Oliver Popenoe, "The Minthorn Family of New York City," *NYG&BR* 138:2 (Apr. 2007), 111. "A Chart of the coast of New York harbour with the soundings view of landmark," (London, 1779), NMM HNS 146 (<http://www.nmm.ac.uk/collections/explore/object.cfm?ID=HNS%20146> (accessed Aug. 21, 2005)); and "Nautical Directions to sail into the harbour of New York, &c.," NMM HNS 147 (<http://www.nmm.ac.uk/collections/explore/object.cfm?ID=HNS%20147> (accessed Aug. 21, 2005)), detail the narrow openings and shallow channels of New York's harbor. Icing could stop shipping, as it did "from the middle of November [1740] to the latter end of March" 1741, a period when New York experienced "weather more severe this winter, than ha[d] been known for many years," freezing ink wells and leaving the poor without wood. Captain's Log, HMS *Flamborough*, 1741, TNA ADM 51/4190; *American Weekly Mercury*, Jan. 15, 1741; *New-York Weekly Journal*, Feb. 2, 1741; William Smith, *History of the Province of New York*, ed. Michael Kammen (Cambridge, MA, 1972), 2:49. HMS *Gosport* was among the numerous British naval ships that docked in Turtle Bay for the winter. HMS *Gosport* Muster

During the first quarter of the eighteenth century New York was a relatively minor colony within Britain's empire. Lightly populated, its importance was largely due to the colony acting as a buffer against possible French attacks coming from Canada. With a populace of Dutch, English, Irish, Scots, and a considerable number of enslaved African Americans, New York had one of the more heterogeneous populaces in the Atlantic. Under the Dutch, the colony largely relied upon the fur trade, but by the second quarter of the eighteenth century the colony's economy had become focused on trading agricultural products. This trade led to a continuous circulation of merchants, ship captains, officials and individuals of more modest means into and out of New York.⁸

New York's merchants lacked a staple product to export. Although the colony milled flour, distilled molasses into rum, packaged potash and stacked staves for export, the merchants of New York found themselves scrambling constantly to keep ahead of changing markets. Inadequate enforcement of quality controls caused many to believe Philadelphia's flour was "superior" to New York's, and led to the rise of Philadelphia in the first quarter of the eighteenth century as a center of flour exporting. New Yorkers made their profits provisioning the British and foreign West Indies sugar islands. As West Indian planters focused on harvesting sugar, New Yorkers found riches in sending pork, oysters, corn, beef, and naval stores to the islands. The city's merchants cobbled together partnerships to send numerous sloops, schooners and brigs to the Caribbean hoping to beat their neighbors and competing Philadelphia, Newport, and Boston

Rolls, 1742, TNA ADM 36/1375. The Hudson River iced on several other occasions during the eighteenth century. Cornelius Cuyler Letterbooks, 1724-1737 and 1752-1764, AAS, Vol. 3, 21 Dec. 1756 Letter from Albany to son Phillip.

⁸ Michael Kammen, *Colonial New York: A History* (New York, 1975); Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York to 1898* (Oxford and New York, 1999); Cathy Matson, *Merchants and Empire: Trading in Colonial New York* (Baltimore, 1998); Sara Stidstone Gronim, "Imaging Inoculation: Smallpox, the Body, and Social Relations of Healing in the Eighteenth Century," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 80:2 (2006), 250.

merchants to rich West Indies markets. Almost one-half of all ships leaving New York between 1715 and 1765 went to the West Indies. Prominent merchant families, such as the Beekmans, made considerable profits refining sugar. After Parliament enacted the Molasses Act of 1733, New Yorkers became proficient at using bribes and fraudulent documents to take their provisions to the French West Indies where premium prices could be obtained.⁹

Located at the southern edge of Narragansett Bay on Aquidneck Island, Newport commanded the central of three passages into the bay. A compact city, Newport spread out over less than a mile along Aquidneck's shoreline and extended inland in most locations no more than three or four blocks. In the cove area of the harbor, created by Queen Street's extension from the island to a narrow isthmus curling into the bay, shipwrights and carpenters repaired the ships critical to the port's economy.¹⁰ A series of wharves – Redwood's, Gardner's, Malbone's, Taylor's, Bannister's – protruded from

⁹ William I. Davison and Lawrence J. Bradley, "New York Maritime Trade: Ship Voyage Patterns, 1716-1765," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly* 60 (1971): 314-15; Simon Middleton, *From Privileges to Rights: Work and Politics in Colonial New York City* (Philadelphia, 2006), 100, 192-193; Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 120-121; Thomas J. Davis, "New York's Long Black Line: A Note on the Growing Slave Population, 1626-1790," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 2:1, 43-45; Gov. Crosby Speech to Assembly, Apr. 25, 1734, TNA CO 5/1056; Michelle L. Craig, "Contraband Coffee: Smuggling and other Tricks of Trade," App. B, paper presented at "Atlantic Economies in the Age of Revolutions," Library Company of Philadelphia, Sept. 19, 2003 (West Indies provision trade constituted between 28.3 % and 34% of New York's and between 27.6% and 33% of Philadelphia's inbound shipping between 1768 and 1773). New York found a market for some of its flour in Bermuda. Answers to the Queries of the Council of Trade and Plantations, 1733, TNA CO 37/12, ff. 124, 125v, 128, 129-132, 133v, 134-137. However, New York's general lack of success in the flour trade in comparison to Philadelphia may have been, as Cadwallader Colden observed in 1721, due to its exporters "think[ing] themselves at liberty to bring their Bread and Flour...to the weight house or not as they please." (quoted in *From Privileges to Rights*, 148). The reliance of some West Indies islands, including Barbados, on provisions from northern colonies appears to have lessened by the end of the eighteenth century. Justin Roberts, "Working between the Lines; Labor and Agriculture on Two Barbadian Sugar Plantations, 1796-1797," *WMQ* 63:3 (July 2006), 558, Table 1. Northern merchants used flags of truce, under which they returned enemy prisoners, as opportunities to trade with the enemy. BFBR 466-5-11/6/58, JCBL.
http://pike.services.brown.edu/repository/repoman.php?verb=render&id=1160785359440802&view=show_molds (accessed Oct. 19, 2006).

¹⁰ Newport's layout and its numerous wharves are illustrated in J. F. W. De Barres's "A plan of the town of Newport in the province of Rhode Island," 1776, NMM HNS 87A
<http://www.nmm.ac.uk/collections/explore/object.cfm?ID=HNS%2087> (accessed Aug. 21, 2005).

Newport's shoreline into the bay, enabling coasters, West Indies trading vessels, and ocean-going ships to expeditiously unload their cargoes. With its harbor on the bay side of the island, boats docked there were sheltered from harsh Atlantic winter storms. Due to its location west of the Gulf Stream, Newport's harbor did not ice, keeping it open year round. A quarter-mile off shore, Fort George on Goat Island provided a measure of military protection. Newport's residents put these natural advantages to good use.

Newport lacked a hinterland supplying it with large quantities of agricultural products for the Atlantic market. Prior to 1730, the city was largely dependent upon Boston and New York for European goods. To counteract this competitive disadvantage, Newport's merchants became middle-men, sending their vessels to other colonies to transport their products. By 1741 Governor Ward reported that "we have one hundred and twenty sail of vessels employed in the trade, some on the coast of Africa, others in neighboring colonies, many in the West Indies, and a few in Europe." In comparison to other New England cities, Newport proved hospitable to transients such as seamen. Having a large maritime sector, the city was a community of widows and had a substantial need for maritime labor. Town elders frequently permitted poor transients to post bonds rather than being "warned out." In its trade with the West Indies, Rhode Island exported fish, lumber, provisions and Narragansett Pacers, and brought back molasses and sugar. When short of hard currency, Newport traders sold slaves to Narragansett planters to obtain horses and provisions for the West Indies market. By the mid-1760s twenty-two distilleries, mainly located in the harbor's cove area, converted West Indies molasses into rum that the city's slavers, or "Rum-Men" as they were called, used to purchase African slaves. During the eighteenth century, no other North American

seaport's economy was as reliant on molasses, rum and slaves, as was Newport.¹¹

The slave trade, in the period from 1737 to the Revolution, became a “staple of Rhode Island commerce” on which most other businesses in the city depended. As John Manisty noted in 1731, “[N]o trade [was] push’d with so much spirit as the Affrican.”¹² Along with the city’s West Indies trade, the African slave trade enabled Newport to become one of North America’s major cities. In the eighteenth century, seven hundred and forty-five Rhode Island slaving voyages brought 92,433 Africans from their homelands across the Atlantic. Fewer than 79,000 of these Africans survived the Middle Passage to the Americas. A wide variety of Newport’s residents were involved in the slave trade. In addition to the hundreds of mariners manning the slavers, men like George Gibb supplied bread for ships’ crew and slaves. Blacksmiths, including Thomas and Benjamin Hardy, provided slave ships with shackles, while Prince Miller, Josiah Smith, and other caulkers worked to ensure slavers were water-tight. These men helped Rhode Island ships control “as much as 60 to 90 percent” of the slaving voyages from North America. While Jay Coughtry contends that Rhode Island’s slave trade was dominated by a small group of elite merchants, more recent scholarship indicates that the colony’s slave traders included a wide cross-section of occupations and interests. By 1772 more than seventy-nine percent of Newport’s heads of households assessed £5 or more were

¹¹ John J. McCusker, *Rum and the American Revolution: The Rum Trade and the Balance of Payments of the American Colonies* (New York, 1989), 397; *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*, ed. John Russell Bartlett, 10 vols. (Providence, 1862), Vol. 4, 12 (hereinafter “RCRP”); Gov. Hunter’s Answers to Inquires by the Board of Trade, TNA CO 137/19, ff. 37-44v; Crane, *Dependent People*, 47-49; Lynne Withey, *Urban Growth in Colonial Rhode Island: Newport and Providence in the Eighteenth Century* (Albany, 1984), 58; Margaretta A. Lowell, *Art in a Season of Revolution: Painters, Artisans, and Patrons in Early America* (Philadelphia, 2005), 226. Newport’s lack of a hinterland can be contrasted with Charlestown, and Dutch ports in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, whose hinterlands were critical to these ports’ economies. Melvin M. Knight, “The Geohistory of Fernand Braudel,” *Journal of Economic History*, 10:2 (Nov. 1950), 214. Other northern cities, including Boston, supplied provisions to the West Indies. Amelia C. Ford, ed., “An Eighteenth Century Letter from a Sea Captain to his Owner,” *NEQ* 3:1 (Jan. 1930), 136.

¹² Rommel-Ruiz, “Atlantic Revolutions,” 45.

involved in the slave trade, either as slave traders, ship captains, or merchants. Slaving also served to finance many of Newport's other profitable ventures, including whaling and candle-making, sectors in which slaves were frequently employed. In short, the very economic viability of eighteenth century Newport rested upon its African slave trade.¹³

For Newport, the molasses its ships brought back from West Indian islands, British and foreign, served as an important currency in the development of its slave trade. The passage of the Sugar Act in 1764 "struck precisely at the city's economic jugular," its reliance on imported molasses and sugar. While the Act cut the duty from six pence to three pence per gallon tax on foreign molasses, its providing for non-jury trials of smugglers, and requiring of regular inspection of incoming vessels, promised to act, in Governor Stephen Hopkins' words, as "an absolute prohibition" against the importation of foreign molasses. Having been able to smuggle foreign molasses due to lax enforcement, Rhode Islanders faced the possibility that lucrative sources of sugar and

¹³ Contract to purchase horses, dated March 11, 1765, BFBR 680-8-1/8/66, JCBL, <http://pike.services.brown.edu/repository/repoman.php?verb=render&id=1157644557919802&view=showmods> (accessed Oct. 19, 2006); Crane, *A Dependent People*, 2, 21; Rachel Chernos Lin, "The Rhode Island Slave-Traders: Butchers, Bakers and Candle-Stick Makers," *Slavery and Abolition*, 23:3 (Dec. 2002), 21-38; Rachel Chernos, "The Atlantic Slave Traders and Their Communities in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries," M.A. Thesis, Queen's University, Kingston, Canada, 1997, 61, 91; Withey, *Urban Growth in Colonial Rhode Island*, 71-76; Invoice, George Gibb to Nicholas Brown, BFBR 643-5, item 12, JCBL, http://dl.lib.brown.edu:8080/dl_reader/reader?mets=http://pike.services.brown.edu/metsrecords/1157641593515476.xml, (accessed Oct. 19, 2006); Invoice, Hardy, Thomas and Benjamin to Nicholas Brown and Co., Aug. 8, 1764, BFBR 643-5, item 22, JCBL, <http://pike.services.brown.edu/repository/repoman.php?verb=render&id=1157641944201718&view=showmods> (accessed Oct. 19, 2006); Invoice Miller, Prince to Nicholas Brown & Co., Sept. 13, 1764, BFBR 643-5, item 9, JCBL, http://dl.lib.brown.edu:8080/dl_reader/reader?mets=http://pike.services.brown.edu/metsrecords/1157641532622379.xml (accessed Oct. 19, 2006); George Francis Dow, *Slave Ships and Slaving* (Topsfield, MA, 1927), 225; Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle*, 5-21; Answer of Gov. of Massachusetts to several queries received from Council of Trade and Plantations, 2 Mar. 1737, TNA CO 5/879, fos. 135-146d, 139-145d; Rommel-Ruiz, "Atlantic Revolutions, 63-64; Contract dated Aug. 4, 1776, BFBR 338-11-8/14/76, JCBL, http://dl.lib.brown.edu:8080/dl_reader/reader?mets=http://pike.services.brown.edu/metsrecords/1157640414312694.xml (accessed Oct. 19, 2006) (agreement to permit Moses Brown to provide free labor rather than the slaves he previously provided the chandlery); *RCRI*, Vol. IV, 191, 225, 424. Jay Coughtry has identified 954 known Rhode Island slaving voyages in the period between 1709 and 1807. Coughtry, *Notorious Triangle*, 239-285.

molasses would be cut off. In its 1764 Remonstrance to the Board of Trade protesting the imposition of taxes on imported molasses and sugar, colonial officials contended that if the duties were not repealed, Rhode Island's distilleries would cease operating, two-thirds of the colony's vessels would be made "useless," and a considerable number of seamen would be put out of work, "very sensibly effect[ing] the present and future naval power and commerce of Great Britain." Clearly, despite the hyperbole in the report to the Board of Trade, Rhode Island's slave trade was of more than a "little consequence."¹⁴

Although settled after New York and Newport, Philadelphia thrived, and by the mid-eighteenth century was the largest city in the thirteen colonies. With a reputation for a stable and fair government, a streetscape that offered a "noble" and "fine appearance," a water supply described by Peter Kalm as "good [and] clear," and a religious tolerance that was friendly to non-English Europeans, Philadelphia attracted large numbers of Germans, Dutch, and Irish settlers. Confined to a narrow band of buildings along the Delaware River, its development resulted in alleys and subdivisions that undermined William Penn's plan for a "green country town."¹⁵ Its location one hundred and ten miles from the ocean, and at a place where the Delaware River was nearly three-quarters of a mile wide, enabled the largest ships to dock at Philadelphia. The city became a leading Atlantic shipping center with Philadelphians owning in the period from 1722 to 1775 not

¹⁴ Elizabeth Donnan, ed. *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, 4 vols., (Washington, DC, 1930-35), 3:203-205; Fred Anderson, "Bringing the War Home: The Revolutionary Experience of Newport and New York," *Reviews in American History*, 15:4 (Dec. 1987), 575-584; *New-York Mercury*, Feb. 13, 1764; *The Correspondence of the Colonial Governors of Rhode Island, 1723-1775*, ed. Gertrude Selwyn Kimball (Boston & New York, 1903), 320. It was said that "a guinea, being placed over one eye, had a considerable effect, while another guinea rendered [Customs officials in Rhode Island] blind to what was going on." Edward Peterson, *History of Rhode Island* (New York, 1853), 86.

¹⁵ Richardson, "The Wandering Sailor," Vol. 1, p. 81; Sally Schwartz, "*A Mixed Multitude*": the Struggle for Toleration in Colonial Pennsylvania (New York, 1987), 104-105; Beth A. Twiss-Garrity, "Double Vision: The Philadelphia Cityscape and Perceptions of it," in *Shaping a National Culture: The Philadelphia Experience, 1750-1800*, ed. Catherine E. Hutchins (Winterhur, Del., 1994), 6; Michael Zuckerman, "Can Words Speak to Things? An Inconclusive Conclusion," in *Shaping a National Culture*, 368; Kalm, *Travels into North America*, 133.

fewer than 3,241 ships. Its one significant geographic drawback was that Philadelphia was susceptible to being blocked by ice during the coldest periods of the winter. Such icing conditions led to high unemployment during the winter among the city's mariners.¹⁶ Despite the Delaware's icing, hundreds of ships ascended the Delaware each year towards Philadelphia. Many of these vessels were drawn to Philadelphia due to its development as the hub of North America's flour trade. Situated near both the Delaware River and Hudson River agricultural regions, Philadelphia was well suited to act as a regional hub for the flour trade. By establishing in 1722 a system for inspection of flour that assured buyers of the product's quality, Philadelphia was able to establish dominance in the flour trade.¹⁷ The inspection system enabled Pennsylvania to establish a reputation for its flour superior to that of competing colonial exporters, and to develop a market in southern Europe for its flour. Pennsylvania was so successful in its development of the overseas flour market that in 1731 "great quantities" were shipped to the West Indies and by the 1770s, flour, bread, and wheat accounted for approximately three-quarters of Philadelphia's exports. Philadelphia became the busiest North American seaport, and within the British Atlantic its shipping was only surpassed by London and Liverpool. As the clearinghouse for grain from throughout the thirteen colonies, Philadelphia came to be called the "Mart of America," with its merchants acting as middle-men between

¹⁶ Nash, Smith and Hoerder, "Labor in the Era of the American Revolution," 423; Marion V. Brewington, "Maritime Philadelphia, 1690-1837," *PMHB* 63 (Apr. 1939), 93-117; Andrew Drury, "A Chart of the Delaware Reiver and Bay," 1777, NMM G246:2/2 Delaware," <http://www.nmm.ac.uk/collections/explore/object.cfm?ID=G246%3A2%2F2> (accessed Aug. 21, 2005). The Delaware River's numerous sandbars also could make ships' voyages up the river hazardous. University of Delaware *Messenger* 14:3 (2006), www.udel.edu/PR/Messenger/05/03/pickingup.html (accessed July 10, 2007). Newspaper dispatches concerning the Delaware freezing regularly appeared in the Philadelphia newspapers each winter. Examples include *American Weekly Mercury*, Jan. 16, 1722, Dec. 22, 1724, Dec. 19, 1732, Jan. 1, 1741; *New-York Weekly Journal*, Jan. 5, 1747; *New-York Mercury*, Jan. 1, 1759; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Feb. 25, 1771.

¹⁷ Arthur L. Jensen, "The Inspection of Exports in Colonial Pennsylvania," *PMB&H*, 78:3 (July 1954), 275-297.

colonial millers and foreign buyers.¹⁸

Slave Residential Patterns

In each of these three cities, as in most northern ports, slaves lived within the same homes as whites. Unlike slaves in rural areas, slaves rarely lived in separate quarters with other adult slaves. Nor were they, as were slaves in Spanish Town and Kingston, Jamaica, confined to slave yards on the fringes of the towns. While their masters typically lived in bedrooms on the first floors of residences, slaves in northern cities slept in garrets, attics and small rooms adjoining kitchens. These living arrangements led to startling “visual juxtapositions” that characterized colonial cities; whites and blacks, rich and poor, women and men, free and enslaved, all living under one roof, literally on top of each other. The cramped spaces in northern ports made impracticable houses with wings set aside as slave quarters, as Abraham Demarest had in his rural Closter, New Jersey residence, or the “Negro houses” on some large rural Pennsylvania farms. Slaves’ privacy in urban residences was very limited, particularly for women who spent much of their days within their masters’ homes. As a result of the small slaveholdings of most northern masters and the lack of privacy in urban residences, outdoor spaces, taverns, and other communal meeting places were critical for slaves in creating and maintaining social networks.¹⁹

¹⁸ Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (New York, 1986), 70-135; Louis Jensen, *The Maritime Commerce of Colonial Philadelphia* (Madison, WI, 1963), 5; James G. Lydon, “Fish and Flour for Gold: Southern Europe and the Colonial American Balance of Payments,” *The Business Review* 39:2 (Summer 1965), 171-183; Answers of Lt. Gov. to Board of Trade’s Queries, Mar. 15, 1731, TNA CO 5/1268, ff. 99, 100-102; James Read to Edward Shippen, 1771, quoted in John Flexer Walzer, “Transportation in the Philadelphia Trading Area, 1740-1775” (Ph. D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1968), front piece. The city’s ships were owned and controlled by a limited number of elite male merchants. Sheryllyne Haggerty, *The British-Atlantic Trading Community, 1760-1810: Men, Women, and the Distribution of Goods* (Leiden, 2006).

¹⁹ Diana diZengra Wall, “Twenty Years After: Re-examining Archaeological Collections for Evidence of New York City’s Colonial African Past,” *African-American Archaeology*, No. 28 (Spring 2000),

Although the residential patterns of slaves in the three cities differed, with slaves in New York concentrated in the wards along the East River, while those in Philadelphia and Newport were more widely dispersed, the nature of slave labor was similar and gave enslaved peoples in each city ready access to shipping from throughout the Atlantic.

The East and South Wards, each located along the East River, were where most of New York City's slaves resided. The East Ward was a densely populated quarter of alleyways and narrow streets, bounded by Maiden Lane to the north, Smith Street to the west, William Street to the east, and Burgher's Path to the south. Merchants with overseas trading interests, such as Frederick Philipse, had their warehouses in the ward, and the city's shipyard was situated along the East River. Coopers, sail makers, ship carpenters and other maritime artisans lived in the ward. The area was filled with non-residents, as ships disgorged their sailors and travelers who found temporary lodging in boarding houses. Approximately twenty-five percent of the ward's population was black, many of whom, such as the rope-maker Mink, worked in maritime industry. In contrast to

<http://www.diaspora.uiuc.edu/A-Anewsletter/newsletter28.html#anchor14439436> (accessed Sept. 3, 2006); Bernard L. Herman, *Town House: Architecture and Material Life in the Early American City, 1780-1830* (Chapel Hill, 2005), 20; Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 98-9; Berlin and Harris, *Slavery in New York*, 75; Graham Russell Hodges, *Slavery, Freedom & Culture among Early American Workers* (Armonk, NY and London, 1998), 40; James Robertson, *Gone is the Ancient Glory: Spanish Town, Jamaica, 1534-2000* (Kingston and Miami, 2005); William Davis Miller, *Early Houses of the King's Province in The Narragansett Country* (Wakefield, RI, 1941), 12-13; *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser*, Jan. 30, 1775; Jean R. Soderlund, "Black Importation and Migration into Southeastern Pennsylvania, 1682-1810," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 133:2 (Jun. 1989), 147 (From 1710 to 1770 the number of slaves per Philadelphian decedent never exceeded .65). Even some rural regions near New York, Philadelphia and Newport had small slaveholdings. See e.g., "1761 Assessment List of Flatbush, Kings County," *NYGBR* 137:3 (July 2006), 188-190 (51 slaveowners owned 127 slaves) and some rural slaves lived in small rooms above kitchens. *New York Times*, Mar. 25, 2007, 33. Chapter Two discusses the role that taverns and schools played in creation of slaves' social networks.

The starkness of these living arrangements can be seen in the excavation of George Washington's Philadelphia residence which he shared with his slaves while president. As President Washington stood in the home's sweeping bay window greeting dignitaries, his slaves were required to stay in an underground passageway out of sight. The passageway was used for transporting food from the kitchen to the dining area. Thus, while Washington and his slaves shared close quarters, in a city where abolitionism was a signal topic, the president's status as a slave owner was kept from the public view. Stephan Salisbury, "Slavery laid bare: A historic platform for dialogue on race," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 20, 2007.

the city's overall slave population, which had a female majority, approximately one-half of the East Ward's slave population was black adult males. Considerable numbers of hired enslaved men regularly came into the area, swelling the number of black maritime workers. This youthful male population constituted a lively black maritime quarter. While not of the size or scale of London's or Bridgetown's black maritime communities, the East Ward was probably the most vibrant black maritime quarter in British North America. The ward's black men were among the first of the city's slaves to hear important news, whether of the Treaty of Utrecht, the commencement of the War of Jenkins's Ear, or the arrival in 1765 of the *Edward* from England with the hated tax stamps. As such, these maritime workers were connected to the larger Atlantic world and were important cogs circulating information among the city's slave population. The "blackness" of the ward's population may have merely "hurt" the eyes of some English travelers, but for colonial officials it caused great concern. Slaves from the East Ward played central roles in the 1712 insurrection, and in 1741 were suspected by colonial officials of having been leaders in a plot to overthrow the municipal government. However, the interests of slave owners, whether prominent slave trader and colonial official Rip Van Dam, or ship captain Robert Gibb, were to maintain a low-cost, controlled maritime work force. The desire for slave labor in this maritime district would trump concerns about the dangers of dense and mobile slave populations.²⁰

²⁰ Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes, ed. *The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1648-1909* (New York, 1915-28), 1:192, 251-261, 5:658-659, and 6:658; Nan A. Rothschild, *New York City Neighborhoods, The 18th Century* (San Diego, 1990), 31-32, 68, 80; Carl Abbott, "The Neighborhoods of New York City, 1760-1775," *New York History* 55 (1974), 35-54; Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 166-7; Patrick M'Robert quoted in Graham Russell Hodges, *Root & Branch: African Americans in New York and East Jersey, 1613-1863* (Chapel Hill, 1999), 108; Vivienne L. Kruger, "Born to Run: The Slave Family in Early New York, 1616-1827," Ph. D. diss., Columbia University, 1985), 94-100, 217-219; Brig *Kitty* (Delaney), Account Book, 1777, HCA 30/753; F. L. Engleman, "Cadwallader Colden and the New York Stamp Act Riots," *WMQ* 10:4 (Oct. 1953), 562, 578; . Only twenty-five percent of the East Ward's slaves were children.

Located directly south of the East Ward, the Dock Ward did not have the same number of slave laborers as the East Ward. It did however have the city's largest percentage of slave owners. The 1703 census indicated that eighty of the ward's one hundred and twenty-four households, or seventy percent, owned a slave. The ward's residents were among New York's wealthiest merchants. The Dock Ward contained New York's principal business district located around the marketplace at Hanover Square and the City Dock. Both the marketplace and the City Dock were centers of information from throughout the Atlantic. Slaves were sent by their masters to pickup European goods sold at the marketplace. While there slaves overheard the merchants discussing the latest news brought into the city by ship captains and from European papers. At the waterfront and the City Dock, where many slaves worked as stevedores, sail makers and ship carpenters, enslaved men learned which ships were leaving the port, when, and to where. They overheard captains regularly discuss their manning needs and the attributes they desired in mariners.²¹ In the cosmopolitan swirl of the East and Dock wards, enslaved individuals did not face the confinement of isolated rural life, but instead, were exposed to a wide variety of cultures; Dutch, English, West Indian and African.²²

Philadelphia's black population became concentrated in the Northern Liberties and Southwark districts in the years after the Revolution. In contrast, before independence and gradual emancipation, enslaved individuals were widely dispersed among the city's neighborhoods. Although Benjamin Franklin in 1770 declared that "perhaps, one family in a Hundred.... has a slave in it," the large majority of the city's

²¹ Thelma Wills Foote, *Black and White Manhattan: The History of Racial Formation in Colonial New York City* (Oxford and New York, 2004), 82; Edgar J. McManus, *A History of Negro Slavery in New York* (Syracuse, 1966), 105.

²² Shane White, *Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770-1820* (Athens, GA: 1991), 206; *New-York Mercury*, Apr. 4, 1763 ("fit to come to Market").

slave owners had one or two slaves. In fact, Franklin himself owned at least seven slaves.²³ Slaves were owned by merchants and professionals living in Center City, as well as by artisans and mariners living in Southwark. A considerable number of the city's slaves worked as domestics. Many other Philadelphian slaves, including the thirteen slaves employed at John Phillips' Southwark ropewalk, worked in the maritime sector. Almost ten percent of the city's slave owners were mariners or ship captains, and masters also employed their bondsmen as ferrymen on the ferries running across the Delaware River. (Not all slave ferrymen were male. Alice, at Dunk's Ferry seventeen miles to the north of Philadelphia, navigated ferries across the Delaware). While some of the mariners' slaves were probably women who did domestic work, their number was small. The vast majority of Philadelphia mariners did not own property; nine Philadelphia mariners had no taxable assets other than their slaves. Thus, it is likely that the large majority of slaves owned by mariners were purchased to work at sea. As Gary Nash has noted, "racial attitudes of colonial Americas and the general apprehension of slaves" in cities make it "likely that most of these seagoing Philadelphians purchased slaves to work on board ships."²⁴ Just as New York slave maritime workers were among the first to hear news of important events, ship owners' plans and needs for seamen, slaves on the Philadelphia waterfront were also well placed to understand the ebb and flow of the Atlantic maritime economy.

²³ Gary S. Nash, "Franklin and Slavery," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Apr. 28, 2006, www.aps-pub.com/proceedings/1504/150408.pdf (accessed Aug. 21, 2006).

²⁴ Leonard Price Stavisky, "Negro Craftsmanship in Early America," *The American Historical Review*, 54:2 (Jan. 1949), 318-19; John F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania in Olden Times*, 3 vols. (rev. ed. Philadelphia, 1900), I:597-8.. It should be noted that "not a single official census was taken in [Philadelphia] during the colonial period." Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, MA & London, 1988), 163-64; Gary B. Nash, "Slaves and Slave owners in Colonial Philadelphia," *WMQ* 30:2 (Apr. 1973), 224, 244, 248-251; Nash, "Franklin and Slavery."

Slaves were owned by a wide variety of individuals and were dispersed throughout Newport. By the eve of the American Revolution one-third of Rhode Island's slaves resided in Newport and nearly thirty percent of the city's white population owned at least one slave. The city's slaves generally lived in attics or garrets in their masters' homes.²⁵ Artisans used slave labor to create hats, and work as rope makers, blacksmiths, peruke makers, drivers of carts, sail makers. Merchants and professionals bought slaves to be household servants and cooks. Mariners and sea captains purchased slaves both to serve as domestic workers and to join them in maritime work. Consistent with the pattern throughout New England of slaves tending to be clustered in coastal ports and along waterways, blacks constituted between 13.53% and 18.27% of Newport's population in the period between from 1730 to 1774, with slaves being a sizable presence in most of the city's districts (Table 1-3). Whether one was walking on Thames Street, which ran parallel to and along the city's shoreline, or further inland on Broad Street, encountering slaves on Newport's streets was an everyday occurrence in this congested, compact port city. The greatest concentration of black workers was in the areas around Newport's cove and wharves where wealthy merchants, who tended to own the greatest numbers of slaves, and maritime enterprises, which regularly employed slave labor, were both located. Slaves worked on Newport's ships as caulkers and other maritime related trades, giving them ready access to information about the Atlantic maritime economy. In addition, slaves in this mid-sized city had a good deal of liberty of movement. The life of

²⁵ The 1774 Rhode Island census found that 68% of the colony's households held less than three African slaves. Pierson, *Black Yankees*, 25. In contrast to the large slave-holdings of some Narragansett planters, very few Newport residents owned more than several slaves. Cf. William Robinson's 19 slaves listed in his estate inventory in 1751. Carl R. Woodward, *Plantation in Yankeeland: The Story of Cocumscussoc, Mirror of Colonial Rhode Island* (Chester, CT, 1971), 72. Many urban slaves slept on hay laid over the floor of kitchen lofts, while others slept in stables. *New York Conspiracy*, 26-27.

Pompe Stevens, a stone carver, is illustrative. In 1766, Pompe Stevens picnicked with his friend Caesar Lyndon, Governor Josiah Lyndon's slave, and several other slaves. They had what for any Newport laborer would have been considered quite a sumptuous feast: a roasted pig, bread, butter, corn, rum and coffee. Stevens, the future husband of Phillis Lyndon, and his friends were trusted to travel unsupervised nine miles from Newport. Like many slaves in New York and Philadelphia, Stevens and his friends were able to save money earned from activities such as trading and peddling. These Rhode Island slaves were probably only unusual in the extravagance of their meal, not in their travels.²⁶

Northern Slave Trade

Just who was enslaved in northern cities and became part of the flow of information and peoples through the Atlantic was largely a function of how the northern slave trade operated. During the eighteenth century neither Philadelphia, New York, nor Newport was the vibrant slave trading center Charleston was. Each of these northern cities lacked a neighboring agricultural region harvesting staple crops such as rice or sugar that would have had made use of large numbers of slaves cost efficient.²⁷ Despite

²⁶ Crane, *Dependent People*, 52; Louis P. Masur, "Slavery in Eighteenth century Rhode Island: Evidence from the Census of 1774," *Slavery and Abolition*, VI (Sept. 1985), 139-150; Lorenzo J. Greene, *Negro in Colonial New England, 1620-1776* (New York, 1942), 72-99; Yang, "From Slavery to Emancipation," 179; *Newport Mercury*, Jan. 16, 1759, Sept. 4, 1759, Feb. 13, 1764, July 9, 1764, Mar. 21, 1768, Apr. 17, 1769, Nov. 11, 1771, Apr. 27, 1772, Aug. 18, 1781; *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, Oct. 18, 1766. Newport was not the only Rhode Island port with a sizable enslaved population. The 1774 census found that 10.6% of Bristol's 1,209 residents were Negroes. John Demos, "Families in Colonial Bristol, Rhode Island: An Exercise in Historical Demography," *WMQ* 25:1 (Jan. 1968), 50.

²⁷ Smith, "A Traveler's View of Revolutionary America," 597 quoting Du Roi the Elder (1779), 159. A single slave who "worked on the farm of a minister with pastoral obligations" has been described as the typical Rhode Island slave holding. John Wood Sweet, *Bodies Politic: Negotiating Race in Early America, 1730-1830* (Baltimore, 2003), 5. Ministers such as Dr. James MacSparan, "depended mainly upon slave labor," and "himself performed very little actual farm labor." Woodward, *Plantation in Yankeeland*, 88-89. Although Narragansett plantations produced cheese, livestock, and grains for export, mainly to the West Indies, their slave holdings were far smaller than those in the Carolina Lowcountry. The relatively small slaveholdings led a number of Narragansett slave masters to have their slaves live in the main house. Fitts, *Inventing New England's Slave Paradise*, 75, 132. Small slave holdings were also common among Long Island and northern New Jersey slave owners. Richard Shannon Moss, *Slavery on Long Island: A Study of Local Institutional and Early African-American Communal Life* (New York & London, 1993), 72; Graham

the lack of nearby staple crop agriculture, each of these cities developed slave markets that were important to their economic success. In these markets slaves experienced degradation similar to that of the more active Charleston market. Purchasers examined slaves for sale on the streets of these cities “exactly like cattle,” with slaves required to “walk up and down for [a purchaser], move their limbs, and do everything they are asked to do, so he can see if they are capable of work.” Northern slave markets supplied farmers in outlying agricultural regions, where the “large majority of slaves” were sold, with agricultural laborers, skilled artisans, and domestics. Urban elites seeking domestics found such enslaved laborers in each of the ports’ slave markets. And for many middling whites and artisans, both in cities, as well as in rural areas, enslaved labor was provided by such markets. By the mid-eighteenth century slave labor became predominant in certain trades. The iron forges of Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York became reliant on skilled slaves, hiring bondsmen such as Ishmael, who, as a result of his employment, lived a considerable distance from his master. References to slaves employed by the Sharpsborough Iron-Works, the Spotswood forge, and other Mid-Atlantic forges could be regularly found in newspapers. Farmers in the Hudson Valley, Long Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and the Narragansett region of Rhode Island, purchased slaves, as they believed them to provide better returns on their investment than indentured servants. These white purchasers regularly bought dark-skinned men, women, boys and girls imported from Africa, the West Indies, other North American colonies, and the wine islands, in the taverns, coffee house, wharves, and private residences of northern ports. Each city also had an internal slave market in which enslaved individuals

Russell Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North* (Madison, WI, 1997), 17-19; “1761 Assessment List of Flatbush, Kings County,” *NYGBR* 137:3 (July 2006), 188-190.

were sold between residents of the cities and adjoining rural communities. The sale of slaves provided commissions to brokers and auctioneers, fees for the printers who published the hundreds of slave sale advertisements and employment to hundreds of maritime workers. In short, slavery was central to the economic well-being of many northern colonists.²⁸

When in 1713 Spain awarded to England an *asiento* permitting English slave traders access to Spain's American colonies, the English presence on the west coast of Africa expanded considerably. These developments occurred at the same time that "hard usage" caused a large group of New York slaves led by "African newcomers" of the "Nations of Caramantee and Pappa" to attempt to take over the city. The 1712 slave insurrection reinforced for many northern slave purchasers a preference for "seasoned" West Indies slaves, rather than slaves imported directly from Africa. Until 1712, many of the slaves imported into New York came from Africa, with one hundred and eighty-five African slaves imported into New York in the three years preceding the uprising.²⁹ When

²⁸ John Bezis-Selfa, "Slavery and the Disciplining of Free Labor in the Colonial Mid-Atlantic Iron Industry," *Pennsylvania History*, 64 (Summer 1997), 271-272; Ronald L. Lewis, *Coal, Iron and Slaves: Industrial Slavery in Maryland and Virginia* (Westport, CT: 1979), 168; Peter O. Wacker and Paul G. E. Clemens, *Land Use in Early New Jersey: A Historical Geography* (Newark, 1995), 100-101; Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North*, 45-46; *Freeman's Journal or North-American Intelligencer*, Oct. 3, 1781; *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, Apr. 10, 1781; *New-Jersey Gazette*, Aug. 25, 1779; *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, June 20, 1768; Christopher R. Doughtry, "Cornwall Furnace Archival Survey and Research Action Plan," July 2007, http://www.cornwallironfurnace.org/CORNWALL_FINA.pdf (accessed Sept. 4, 2007). Slaves also worked in Rhode Island forges, such as the Brown Brothers' Hope furnace at Scituate or the Forbes & Allen Canaan, Connecticut furnace. *Providence Gazette & Country Journal*, Jan. 12, 1771; *Newport Mercury*, Apr. 27, 1772; William B. Weedon, *Early Rhode Island: A Social History of the People* (New York, 1910), 330; Bill of Sale for a Negro boy named Ki, June 8, 1771, Swann Galleries, *Printed & Manuscript African-Americana*, February 21, 2008 (New York, 2008), Lot 2. David Waldstreicher, "Capitalism, Slavery, and Benjamin Franklin's American Revolution," in *The Economy of Early America: Historical Perspectives and New Directions*, ed., Cathy Matson (University Park, 2006), 193; Charles Nicolls Account Book, 1758-1760. N-YHS (Commission of 17 shillings paid for the sale of a Negro boy).

²⁹ Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, 3:444; Klingberg, *Anglican Humanitarianism in Colonial New York*. James Lydon and John McCusker have previously tabulated New York slave imports. However, McCusker relied solely on Inspector General Ledgers, TNA CUST 16/1 and significantly undercounted slave imports. McCusker, *Rum and the American Revolution*, 564-565, 719n24.

sold into slavery in New York the treatment and employment of these Africans varied “according to the inclinations of individual slaveowners.” Many New York slaveowners engaged in “hard usage” of their bondsmen. Having come from societies in which slaves often inherited their masters’ goods for faithful service, imported Africans became deeply resentful when their expectations as to how they would be treated were not met. Members of the Pawpaw and Cromantee tribes played prominent roles in the 1712 Slave Insurrection during which eight whites were killed, ten more wounded, and a number of buildings burnt. In the aftermath of this uprising, many northerners came to see West Indies slaves as less rebellious than their African cousins. From the awarding of the *asiento* to 1724 twice as many West Indian slaves were imported into New York as African slaves.³⁰ The importation of greater numbers of West Indian slaves continued right up to the 1741 slave conspiracy trials. Seventy percent of the 4,361 slaves identified as being imported into New York in the years between 1715 and 1740, came from the West Indies.³¹

Contrary to what one historian of New York’s slave trade has asserted, there was

While utilizing the more complete Naval Officer Records, TNA CO 5, Lydon also undercounted slave imports. James G. Lydon, “New York and the Slave Trade, 1700-1774,” *WMQ*, 35:2 (Apr. 1978), 384. See Notes 52-53 below.

³⁰ Table 2-2. From 1713 to 1724 1,055 West Indian slaves were imported, while only 529 African slaves were brought into New York. The most complete account of the 1712 Slave Insurrection remains Kenneth Scott, “The Slave Insurrection in New York in 1712,” *New-York Historical Society Quarterly*, 45 (Jan. 1961): 43-74. Thelma Wills Foote’s “Some Hard Usage”: The New York City Slave Revolt of 1712,” *New York Folklore*, Vol. XVIII, Nos. 1-4 (2000): 147-159, provides the best explanation for the insurrection.

³¹ Wax, “Negro Imports into Pennsylvania,” 261-287; *TASD*. Cf. “New York and the Slave Trade,” 382, which found a total of 3,864 imported slaves in this time period, of which 2,998 came from the West Indies, and *Black and White Manhattan*, 65 that found 1,478 West Indian and 3,260 slaves imported in the period between 1715-1775. Thelma Foote believes that Lydon’s estimate was perhaps higher due to Lydon doubly counting entries. My review of New York shipping records, Naval Officer Shipping Records, Inspector General Records, and data from the forthcoming Second Edition of *TASD* provided to me by David Eltis, indicates that Lydon and Foote each understated both the total number of slaves and African slaves imported to New York.

more than just a “very little slave trading in New York before 1748.”³² Unlike Philadelphia, which attracted considerable groups of European indentured servants, New York drew only limited numbers of white servants. Restrictive land ownership rules made New York an unattractive place for white Europeans. As Governor Bellomont observed, “Men will not care to become base tenants to proprietors in this province when they can buy the fee-simple land in the Jerseys for £5 *per* hundred acres, and, I believe, as cheaply in Pennsylvania.” Nor did New York receive significant numbers of convicted felons, who were largely sent to the West Indies or the Chesapeake. As a result, throughout the eighteenth century New York had a “strong demand” for enslaved labor, imported for its own use a larger proportion of slaves of other northern colonies, and was far more reliant on such workers than was Pennsylvania. In the period from 1710 to 1748 4,568 slaves were imported into New York, an annual average of one hundred and twenty slaves (Table 2-2). In comparison, Philadelphia annual slave imports were less than one-half that of New York’s (Table 2-1). These imports helped more than double New York City’s slave population from six hundred and three in 1703 to one thousand three hundred and sixty-two in 1723.³³

³² Lydon, “New York and the Slave Trade, 1700-1774,” 384. I do not rely on the data found in “New York and the Slave Trade” as my research indicates that Lydon significantly understated the number of slaves imported directly from Africa, with the total during 1715-1782 being 6,319, not the 2,800 Lydon believed likely. (Jill Lepore has indicated that other scholars had similar reservations regarding Lydon’s estimates. *New York Burning*, 285n21). Unfortunately, Lydon’s figures continue to be cited as authoritative concerning both the total of slave imports into New York and the West Indian and African backgrounds of those slaves. Walter C. Rucker, *The River Flows On: Black Resistance, Culture, and Identity Formation in Early America* (Baton Rouge, 2006), 33; National Park Service, “Historical Background of the African Burial Ground,” 10, <http://www.africanburialground.gov/Report/Chapter2.pdf> (accessed Sept. 18, 2006); Jeanne Chase, “New York Slave Trade, 1698-1741: The Geographical Origins of a Displaced People,” *Historie & Mesure*, 2006, Table 1, www.histoiremesure.revues.org/document870.html (accessed July 31, 2007).

³³ Gov. Bellomont to Council of Trade and Plantations, Oct. 21, 1697, TNA CO 5/1116, p. 121-134; “New York and the Slave Trade,” 387; Kammen, *Colonial New York: A History*, 162-167; Bridenbaugh, *Cities of Wilderness*, 143, 303; McKee, *Labor in Colonial New York*, 90-91; Lydon, “New York and the Slave Trade,” 381; Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, 3:444; Evarts

Tariffs imposed by the New York legislature in 1714 favored African slaves. The tariffs were implemented due to New Yorkers' belief that West Indies planters were, according to Governor Hunter, transporting north "the refuse of their Negroes and such malefactors as would have suffered death in the Places from when they came." Despite concerns about West Indies slaves and the import duties, until the slave conspiracy trials of 1741, a steady stream of slaves from Caribbean islands, characterized by Governor Rip Van Dam as "generally Refuse and very badd," were brought into New York. Many West Indian slaves were imported to the colony in small parcels on ships that had brought provisions to Caribbean islands. New Yorkers proved adept at smuggling slaves into Long Island and New Jersey to avoid paying duties that some of them characterized as "very high" and what Bristol merchants considered as "very detrimental" to the slave trade. This circumstance of substantial West Indian imports despite high tariffs and preference for African slaves appears to reflect a lack of supply of African slaves for New York buyers, i.e., that West Indian buyers during the first four decades of the eighteenth century were siphoning off the prime African slave imports. In this circumstance, some New Yorkers, like John Watts, gave explicit instructions to their ship captains to "lay a mile or two below Town and send up word," so as to off-load slaves at Perth Amboy. Edward McManus believes that "hundreds" of slaves were held in pens in

Greene & Harrington, *American Population Before the Federal Census of 1790*, 88-112. Greg O'Malley has estimated that between 1700 and 1710 200 slaves were imported into New York and 13 slaves into Philadelphia from the Caribbean. Greg O'Malley, "The Intra-American Slave Trade: Forced African Migration within the Caribbean and from Islands to the Mainland," American Historical Association annual conference, Jan. 6, 2005. Significant numbers of Madagascar slaves were imported into other British North American colonies in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. For example, 1,098 slaves from South-East Africa were imported into Virginia between 1719 and 1721. *TASD*; Lorena Walsh, The Chesapeake Slave Trade: Regional Patterns, African Origins, and Some Implications." *WMQ*, 3d Ser, 58:1 (Jan. 2001), Table A-1. The regular importation of slaves resulted in five New York counties - Richmond, Kings, Orange and Westchester - experiencing a 36.4% increase in their slave population between 1703 and 1712. Gov. Hunter to Council of Trade and Plantations, June 23, 1712, TNA CO 5/1050, No. 50, 51i-v.

Perth Amboy, specifically to be sold to New York purchasers seeking to avoid paying import duties. Numerous merchants did not shy from importing slaves from colonies that experienced slave uprisings. Following on the heels of slave uprisings in the West Indies and southern provinces, greater numbers of slaves from those colonies were shipped to northern ports.³⁴ Prior to the 1729 Antigua slave uprising slave imports to New York averaged one shipment and eight slaves per year. The year of the Antiguan rebellion saw a large upsurge in slave imports to New York. Seven shipments from Antigua in 1729, one with forty-seven slaves, resulted in ninety-four slaves coming to New York. Six years after the Antiguan uprising Jamaican slaves engaged in a bloody and extended rebellion. Notwithstanding the violent actions of Jamaican slaves, and much discussion of the uprising in colonial newspapers, northern merchants did not shy from purchasing slaves from the island. Ten separate parcels, with a total of one hundred and seventeen Jamaican slaves, were brought to New York in 1735. Similarly, in the aftermath of the 1739 Stono Rebellion, New Yorkers purchased several slaves imported from South Carolina.³⁵ In short, despite their protestations about “refuse” slaves, if the price was

³⁴ Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*; 3:442-444; Dorothy C. Barck, ed., *John Watts Letter Book, Merchant and Councilor, Jan. 1, 1762 – Dec. 22, 1765* (New York 1929), 355; Matson, *Merchants and Empire*, 202; A. J. Williams Myers, “Re-examining Slavery in New York,” *New York Archives* 1:3 (Winter 2002), www.archives.nysed.gov/apt/archivesmag.past_shtml#Winter2002Feature (accessed July 11, 2006) (Philipse family smuggling slaves at Rye); Mr. Fane to the Council of Trade and Plantations, Dec. 16, 1734, TNA CO 5/1057, ff. 13-16v; Petition of Bristol Merchants to the King, TNA CO 5/1057, ff. 4, 5. 5v, 7v; Governor Bellomont to the Board of Trade and Plantations, May 13, 1699, TNA CO 5/1042, Nos. 29, 29 I-V (“there are on in Nassau Island four harbours... where merchants run in a great quantities of goods, computed to be a third part as much as fairly imported at New York”). Naval Officer Returns are available for New York from 1715-1740, but do not exist for Philadelphia or Newport. Therefore, much of the analysis herein concerning slave imports focuses on New York.

³⁵ *American Weekly Mercury*, Jan. 7, 1735; *Weekly Rehearsal*, Feb. 3, 1735; *Boston Gazette*, Mar. 3, 1735; *New-England Weekly Journal*, Feb. 24, 1735; CO 5/1224, p. 140-141, 150, 164-165, 167, 184 (Antigua); CO 5/1225, p. 149, 154, 156, 159-160, 163, 167, 169 (Jamaica); and CO 5/1226, p. 56-57 (South Carolina). Examples of the fears aroused in northern whites by West Indies uprisings are contained in New York newspaper dispatches concerning the 1734 Jamaica slave uprising. *New-York Weekly Journal*, Aug. 26, 1734, Jan. 20, Feb. 24, 1735.

right, Northern colonists were willing to risk purchasing them. These risks would cause some northern slave masters to later rue their lack of selectivity, a problem they would also face after purchasing Spanish Negro mariners condemned as prize goods.³⁶

Whites' fears concerning transported "refuse" slaves were not without basis. One of the most notorious "refuse slaves" was Will, one of the slaves who in 1741 confessed to participating in an alleged conspiracy to kill New York's whites. Will, considered an "expert at Plots," had previously been pardoned for partaking in bloody slave uprisings in St. John's and Antigua. Although almost all slaves who confessed during the 1741 slave conspiracy trials were pardoned, a belief that it was "high Time to put it out of his Power to do any further Mischief," caused Will to be burned at the stake. Despite fears that "refuse slaves" caused uprisings wherever they were sent, northern judges frequently did not sentence convicted slaves to death, but rather had them transported to the West Indies. The 1741 slave conspiracy trials alone resulted in eighty-four convicted slaves being sent to foreign Caribbean colonies. A significant concern of colonial officials, both in the West Indies and British North America, when faced with slaves being convicted of capital crimes, was protection of slave masters' capital investments. Many colonies provided for partial compensation when slaves were executed. Transportation of convicted slaves provided colonial officials with the means to both protect the populace by removing criminal slaves and enabled slave owners to recover a greater proportion of the capital investments in their bondsmen.³⁷

³⁶ Chase, "New York Slave Trade," The problems caused northern slave masters by purchasing Spanish Negroes as prize goods are discussed in Chapter Four.

³⁷ Darold D. Wax, "Preferences for Slaves in Colonial America," *Journal of Negro History*, 58:4 (Oct. 1973), 380, 385; *Freeman's Journal or North-American Intelligencer*, Jan. 22, 1778; Daniel Horsmanden, *The New-York Conspiracy, or a History of the Negro Plot*, "A List of Negroes Committed on Account of the Conspiracy" (New York, 1969); Gregory O'Malley, "'These Enemies of Their Own Household': New York's Slave Conspiracy and White Anxiety of 1741," Honors Thesis, Boston University, 1999.

Despite concerns about West Indies slaves, a steady stream of such bondsmen found themselves sold on the docks, wharves and auction blocks of northern ports in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Customs officials' attempts to increase the African slave trade had little, if any, effect on the trade. During the second quarter of the century few shipments of African slaves reached New York, and New Yorkers continued to rely upon West Indian imports. Hundreds of slaves, such as the four Negroes transported from Montserrat in 1731 on the *Pelican*, found themselves brought north alongside Caribbean rum, sugar, molasses, lime juice and salt. From 1725 to 1749, far more slaves were imported to New York from the West Indies, southern colonies and the wine islands than came directly from Africa. The substantial number of slaves imported into New York, more than one hundred and forty-one slaves per year during the eighteenth century's second quarter, led Governor Hunter to complain in his 1734 address to the Assembly that "the vast disadvantages that attend too great importation of Negroes" did not dissuade New Yorkers from purchasing slaves.³⁸ Only in the aftermath

Transportation of criminally inclined slaves was a fairly regular method of punishment. After the Antigua slave revolt of 1736 forty-seven slave rebels were transported off the island. Northern colonial officials also regularly transported slaves convicted of serious crimes. See Brown and Rose, *Black Roots in Southeastern Connecticut, 1650-1900*, 126 (Slave Caesar Fitch was deported to the Bay of Honduras upon being convicted of counterfeiting); Benjamin Douglas to the King, Recognizance Pursuant to the Condition of the Pardon of the Negroe Man Named Falmouth, Misc. Mss. B. Douglas, Nov. 28, 1770, N-YHS. In transporting Falmouth, colonial officials may have been doing his master, Robert Gibb, a favor. Captain Gibb had commercial ties in the Spanish West Indies and may have been able to arrange a favorable sale of Falmouth. Similarly, a considerable number of the slaves transported after the 1741 conspiracy trials in New York City, were shipped to ports in which their owners had commercial or social contacts.

Ship captains benefited by transportation of convicted dark-skinned men. Courts seeking to rid a colony of a troublesome indentured servant or slave would on occasion require the convict to "be conveyed beyond Sea" and advertise the convict as one who "might prove very profitable to... Owners and Masters of Vessels trading to foreign Parts." *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, Oct. 7, 1769.

³⁸ Hodges, *Root & Branch*, 79-80; *New-York Gazette*, April 29, 1734; Rip Van Dam to the Council of Trade and Plantations, Nov. 2, 1731, TNA CO 5/1055, ff. 210-212, 213v.-215, 219-224, 225-226v; TNA CO 5/1225, p. 9 (Aug. 20, 1731). Graham Hodges claims that "in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, New York merchants preferred ships of slaves from Africa over those from the West Indies." Hodges did not conduct a complete review of CO 5 Naval Office Returns, or ship lists from New York newspapers to determine the origins of all slaves imported into New York. Neither my review of such records nor of the forthcoming second edition of the *TASD* supports Hodges' contention. While during

of the 1741 slave conspiracy trials, when imports dropped in the ensuing eight-year period to fewer than forty-four slaves per year, did New York's import market slacken.³⁹

Philadelphia's slave trade was small in comparison to New York's and Rhode Island's. While in December 1684 a parcel of one hundred and fifty African slaves imported to Philadelphia on the *Isabella* were "eagerly purchased by Quaker settlers who were engaged in the difficult work of clearing trees and brush and erecting crude houses," imports of African slaves to Pennsylvania were infrequent prior to the Seven Years War. Relying upon imports of Irish and German indentured servants, Pennsylvanians avoided the large capital investment necessary to purchase slaves. Instead, in the first half of the eighteenth century, only small shipments of West Indies and South Carolinian slaves were imported into Pennsylvania. In the period from 1684 to 1720 these limited imports resulted in Philadelphia's black population being approximately three percent of the city's total population.⁴⁰

The size and nature of slave imports by Philadelphians were shaped by four factors: conditions in exporting regions, economic conditions in Pennsylvania, tariffs, and the availability of indentured servants. Slaves transported up the Delaware River

1725-1749 there were 1,403 African slaves brought to New York, this was considerably less than the 2,029 West Indian slaves imported in the same period. Moreover, during the second quarter of the eighteenth century, African slaves comprised only 39.61% of all imports compared to 41.53% of the imports during 1715-1724. Table 2-2.

³⁹ Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 127. The "very badd" nature of West Indies slaves was the basis for Governor Rip Van Dam's request for approval of the importation of a shipload of African slaves without paying duties due to the ship having stopped first in the West Indies. TNA CO 5/1055. The drop off in slave imports after the 1741 slave conspiracy trials is more severe than some historians have previously believed. Jill Lepore, *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth Century Manhattan* (New York, 2005), 239; Lydon, "New York and the Slave Trade," 382-385; Cf. Table 2-2. Greg O'Malley's review of Caribbean export records found few vessels bound to New York with slaves in the post-1741 period. O'Malley, "The Intra-American Slave Trade," 25-26.

⁴⁰ Table 2-1; Soderlund, "Black Importation and Migration into Southeastern Pennsylvania, 144-145. South Carolinian imports include *American Weekly Mercury*, Sept. 26, 1723, Sept. 6, 12, 1739; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 7, 1737, September 25, 1740. Greg O'Malley estimates that there were only two shipments of West Indian slaves to Philadelphia annually. O'Malley, "The Intra-American Slave Trade," 26.

frequently were imported due to conditions in the regions exporting the slaves. For example, in 1737 a parcel of slaves imported on the snow *Martha* by Robert Ellis, one of Philadelphia's leading slave traders, arrived from South Carolina due to provisions being "very scarce" and Negroes dying for "want" in the Lowcountry. During times of economic distress in Philadelphia, such as at the end of Queen Anne's War, even these small imports ceased (Table 2-1).⁴¹ Tariffs had a significant effect upon slave imports to Philadelphia. Pennsylvanians' concerns about various "divers plots and insurrections... not only in the islands but ... [the insurrection] lately had in our neighboring colony of New York," led the Pennsylvania General Assembly in 1712 to establish a "prohibitive £20 duty on all new Negroes." The tariff was lowered, first in 1715 to £5 per head, and then in 1729 to £2 per head. After British colonial officials issued a circular in 1731 indicating they would not approve "any Law imposing Duties upon Negroes imported into Our Providence of Pennsylvania payable by the Importer," no duties were collected for the next thirty years. While they were in effect, tariffs had served to dampen Pennsylvania's slave imports. With large numbers of Irish servants immigrating to Pennsylvania between 1715 and 1720, it was uncommon before 1729 to see an advertisement in Pennsylvania papers for parcels of slaves. In this period, only a "few negroes" were imported into either West Jersey or Pennsylvania. The state of the slave

⁴¹ Nash, "Slaves and Slaveowners in Colonial Philadelphia," 225; Gary B. Nash, *First City: Philadelphia and the Forging of Historical Memory* (Philadelphia, 2002), 41; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 7, 28, 1737; Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia*, 2:264. German indentured servants comprised a large portion of Pennsylvania's work force. In 1732-1733 alone, eighteen ships with close to 3,500 German servants arrived in Philadelphia. In the five years immediately after King George's War, approximately twenty-eight thousand Germans arrived in Philadelphia. The numbers for Irish immigrants to Pennsylvania were not as large, but were still substantial, especially during 1715-1720, 1728-1729, and 1770-1775. Salinger, *To Serve Well and Faithfully*, 42-57. These surges in white indentured servants proved to be largely sufficient to supply Pennsylvania's labor needs. Richard S. Dunn, "Servants and Slaves: The Recruitment and Employment of Labour," in Jack P. Greene and J.R. Poole (eds.), *Colonial British America. Essays in the History of the Early Modern Era* (Baltimore and London, 1984), 182-183.

trade was succinctly summarized in 1715 by a Philadelphia merchant who entreated a correspondent "...send no more Negroes for sale, for our people don't care to buy." The four Barbadian slaves Thomas Sober advertised for sale in 1727 were the exception, not the rule. The lowering of tariffs in 1729 resulted in a steady stream of small parcels of West Indies slaves being brought into Philadelphia between 1729 and 1732. Parcels like the "very likely young Negroes" brought from Barbados in the Sloop *Rose*, in April 1729, helped increase blacks to approximately ten percent of the city's population by the early 1740s. Despite such slave imports, Philadelphia largely relied upon indentured servants as large groups of German and Irish indentured servants – "415 Palatines," "388 Palatines," and "200 Dutch or Swiss Passengers" - arrived on Philadelphia's docks in the years after 1732.⁴²

In the first half of the eighteenth century the slaves that were imported into Philadelphia came largely from the West Indies and southern British colonies. From 1720 to 1749 fifty-eight percent of the Philadelphia newspaper slave sale advertisements indicating the origin of the slaves were for Barbadian and Bermudian slaves. Other slaves came from St. Christopher's, South Carolina, Jamaica, and Antigua. Like the West Indies slaves imported into New York, those imported into Philadelphia were often referred to as "refuse slaves." In contrast to New York and Newport, Philadelphia received only one known parcel of African slaves prior to the Seven Years War. Unlike New York, which saw both absolute and proportional increases in its slave imports in the 1750s and 1760s, "the magnitude of slave importation [into Pennsylvania] was highest before 1720." Over

⁴² Darold D. Wax, "Negro Import Duties in Colonial Pennsylvania." *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, 97:1 (Jan. 1973); Gov. Burnet to Council of Trade and Plantations, Dec. 20, 1726, TNA CO 5/1054; 22-26; Nash, *Urban Crucible*, 69-70; Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia, and Pennsylvania*, 2:264; Salinger, *To Serve Well and Faithfully*, 53-57, 74; *American Weekly Mercury*, Mar. 16, 1727 & Apr. 17, 1729; *New-York Weekly Journal*, June 2, 1735; and *New-York Gazette*, Sept. 13, 1736, Oct. 3, 1737.

the course of the eighteenth century, except during the Seven Years War, Philadelphia became increasingly less dependent upon slave labor.⁴³

During the Seven Years' War Pennsylvania experienced labor shortages. Few indentured servants immigrated into the province during the war and many of the colony's servants enlisted in the military. The Philadelphia Society of Friends may have adopted antislavery testimony in 1755, but most Pennsylvanians quickly responded to the loss of their white servants by replacing them with imported slaves. From 1759 to 1764 eleven ships brought more than 1,000 African slaves to the Philadelphia region. Even with such increased numbers of slave imports, the size of Philadelphia's slave trade in relation to its total population was no larger than during earlier periods. With the Assembly imposing a £10 per head tariff in 1761, and indentured servants again arriving at the end of the war, Philadelphia's slave population thereafter fell sharply. By the mid-1760s the lack of slave imports caused Philadelphia's slave population to fall to 7% of the population.⁴⁴

In Philadelphia, as well as Newport and New York, African imports increased dramatically during the Seven Years War. This was due, in large part, to the lack of indentured servants migrating to North America during the war, and the enlistment of a considerable number of servants into military service. In Philadelphia alone, twelve

⁴³ *TASD*; Table 2-1; Soderlund, "Black Importation and Migration into Southeastern Pennsylvania," 146; Susan E. Klepp, "Seasoning and Society: Racial Differences in Mortality in Eighteenth Century Philadelphia," *WMQ* 51:3 (Jul. 1994), 475; Christopher Tomlins, "Indentured Servitude in Perspective: European Migration into North America and the Composition of the Early American Labor Force, 1600-1775," in *The Economy of Early America: Historical Perspectives and New Directions*, ed. Cathy Matson (University Park, 2006), 161. The only African slave imports in the pre-1757 period were those brought by the Brigantine *George* in 1747. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 25, 1747.

⁴⁴ Salinger, *To Serve Well and Faithfully*, 60-61; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 33; Soderlund, "Black Importation and Migration into Southeastern Pennsylvania," 147-149; Gary B. Nash and Jean Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees* (New York, 1991), 89; *TASD*. An unforeseen consequence of Philadelphians importing African slaves was the 1762 outbreak of dengue fever in the city was said to have been due to "a Vessel with Slaves from Africa" bringing the disease. Samuel Folke, quoted in Darold D. Wax "The Negro Slave Trade in Colonial Pennsylvania." Ph.d. diss., University of Washington, 1962, 265.

percent of the indentured servants enlisted.⁴⁵ As one prominent Philadelphian slave trader observed, northerners had to “make more general use of slaves” during the war. These “new slaves” became a larger proportion of all three cities’ fugitives. African slaves, such as the “new Negro Man” found in January 1759 by New York’s Night Watch at Crommeline’s Wharf and the three “New Negroes” with country marks who fled from Thomas Hill of New York, became ever more numerous during the war (Tables 11-4, 12-4, and 13-4). The numbers of slaves imported from non-African sources is less certain, as naval officers’ records are only available for New York from 1715 to 1740, and not at all for either Philadelphia or Newport. Greg O’Malley has estimated, based on a review of Darold Wax’s work and Caribbean customs records, that between 1711 and 1775 1,475 West Indies slaves were imported into Pennsylvania and New Jersey. A rough estimate of West Indies slaves imported into the three ports based on newspaper slave sale advertisements places the number at more than four thousand. Although sale advertisements do not provide a complete picture of the slave trade, undoubtedly understating its size, advertisements seeking to sell or purchase slaves do give a good sense of the nature of the slave markets in the three ports.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Salinger, *To Serve Well and Faithfully*, 60-61, 105-106; Thomas Willing to Coddington Carrington, Sept. 3, 1756, quoted in Wax, “The Negro Slave Trade,” 32. Gary Nash estimates that “for a brief period in the early 1760s slaves may have represented as much as 85 to 90 percent of the city’s bound laborers.” Nash, *Slaves and Slave owners in Colonial Philadelphia*, 245.

⁴⁶ *New-York Mercury*, Jan. 15, 1759; July 25, 1763; Tables 2-1 and 2-2. Darold D. Wax’s listing of West Indies slave imports into Pennsylvania, the *TASD*, my own review of Pennsylvania slave sale advertisements and shipping lists and Greg O’Malley’s “Intra-American Slave Trade” paper, serve as the basis of Table 2-1 setting forth Pennsylvania’s slave imports. “Negro Imports into Pennsylvania,” 261-287. Jay Coughtry and the *TASD* have exhaustively surveyed African imports into Rhode Island. The same level of detail is not available for West Indies imports into Newport due to the lack of naval officer records and there being only very limited newspaper service in Newport prior to 1758 (The *Rhode Island Gazette* was published between 1732 and 1733). Few advertisements for the sale of Newport slaves can be found in other newspapers during the period prior to 1758. See *Boston News-Letter*, July 11, 1720; *Rhode Island Gazette*, Oct. 3, 1732.

Philip Curtin estimated that in the 1760-1775 5,020 slaves were annually imported into Philadelphia. Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, WI: 1969), 216. More recent

Like Philadelphians in the first half of the century, Newport residents imported small parcels of West Indies slaves. Newport slaving voyages not involving African slaves would usually bring a handful of slaves to Rhode Island from the Caribbean or the southern colonies. The 1761 voyage of the Brown Brothers' sloop *George* to Surinam is typical of such imports. The *George's* captain was instructed to obtain "Six young Male Slaves from sixteen years of Age up." Many of the West Indian slaves brought to Newport came by themselves or with one or two other slaves. Men like the "Saylor, and a fine Papa Slave" offered to Abraham Redwood by Walter Nugent of Antigua, were imported to Newport regularly, but in smaller numbers than arrived in New York (Tables 2-1 and 2-3). Merchants involved in the African slave trade also imported into Newport small groups of West Indian slaves. In August 1747, John Banister, one of the city's most active slave traders, purchased the Negro Boy Fortune from the owners of the schooner *Success* that had brought the boy from Surinam. The African slaves imported into Newport were frequently those that Rhode Island ship captains were unable to sell in West Indian ports. Such imports included the three Gambian slaves Captain John Godfrey brought to Newport on the sloop *Mary*. Part of a group of more than one hundred and fifty slaves, almost all of whom were sold in the West Indies, these slaves were brought north in an attempt to find purchasers for them.⁴⁷

The large majority of slaves imported into Rhode Island during the eighteenth century came from Africa. Although in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, the

comprehensive analysis provided by the *TASD* shows just slightly more than 1,000 slaves were imported between 1751 and 1775.

⁴⁷ Lin, "The Rhode Island Slave-Traders," Figure 3; Nicholas Brown & Co., to Samuel Warner, Apr. 7, 1761, BFBR 549-3, item 1-4/7/61, JCBL, http://dl.lib.brown.edu:8080/dl_reader/reader?mets=http://pike.services.brown.edu/metsrecords/116075543114406.xml (accessed Oct. 19, 2006); *TASD* #36050. Slave sales were generally held at either the corner of Mill and Spring Streets or the juncture of Thames and North Baptist. Crane, *A Dependent People*, 51.

colony did “not hav[e] any commerce with Affrica,” between 1736 and 1772 over 1,800 African slaves were brought into Rhode Island in twenty-five separate slave ships. Only one hundred and fifty-nine of these Africans landed in Rhode Island prior to 1740. The African slaves included men such as the thirty-eight year old Mingo, who had Guinea marks on each of his cheeks, and twenty-six year old Jack, a member of the Pawpaw tribe. The large majority of the African-born slaves imported into Rhode Island were brought to the colony in the second half of the eighteenth century, with the overwhelming majority of these African slaves imported between 1757 and 1765. Some Rhode Island slavers, like the *Mary* in 1737 and the *Hope* in 1765, first brought parcels of African slaves to the West Indies before bringing to Rhode Island those slaves they could not dispose of in the Caribbean. Other slavers brought large parcels directly to the colony from Africa.⁴⁸

In the period between the end of Queen Anne’s War and the start of the American Revolution, more than seven thousand African slaves were imported into the three ports. More than sixty percent of those slaves came into New York City. Newport, the smallest of the three ports, imported forty percent more African slaves than Philadelphia, the largest of the three cities. The larger influx of African slaves into Newport directly resulted from the very active African trade the city’s merchants engaged in.⁴⁹

The years between the Seven Years War and the American Revolution saw significant changes in the slave trade and differences develop among slave imports into

⁴⁸ Lt. Gov. Wentworth to the Council of Trade and Plantations, Apr. 8, 1727, TNA CO 5/869; *TASD*, Voyages #36050 and #36303.

⁴⁹ *TASD*; TNA CO 5/1222-1228; Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle*, 167-171; “Negro Imports into Pennsylvania, 1720-1766,” 261-287; Tables 2-1 and 2-2. Although Newport slave vessels brought almost 79,000 Africans to slavery in the Americas, the overwhelming majority of the Africans were shipped to the West Indies. *TASD*; Coughtry, *Notorious Triangle*, Chap. 5.

the three cities. Slave imports into Philadelphia almost entirely ceased. In contrast, merchants in New York and Newport continued to import slaves, mostly African. The result of these two divergent patterns of slave imports was a greater degree of acculturation among Philadelphia's slaves than in the other two cities. In both New York and Newport African cultural influences remained strong.⁵⁰

Which enslaved individuals were employed in New York, Newport and Philadelphia was shaped by slave purchasers' preferences. Buyers regularly attended sales at the London Coffee House in Philadelphia, the corner of Mill and Spring Street in Newport, and New York's Merchant's Coffee House. The purchasers for these slaves were merchants desirous of servants who would enable whites to "engage in new professional, artisan and entrepreneurial activities," artisans needing skilled craftsmen they could rely on for long periods of time, maritime employers, and rural farmers. Merchants like the Brown Brothers of Newport, savvy entrepreneurs and slave traders, sought "likely young slaves" to work in their various enterprises, including shipping and

⁵⁰ Evidence of retained African traditions among slaves in each of the three cities can be seen from burial practices. In Philadelphia, in a separate section set aside in the Stranger's Burial Ground for blacks, Guinea slaves were observed "going to the graves of their friends early in the morning, and there leaving them victuals and rum." Slaves gathered on Sundays and holidays at Philadelphia's Burial Ground, where they were seen "dancing in the manner of their several nations in Africa." Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia*, II, 265; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 286n20. In New York, archaeological evidence from the African Burial Ground and contemporary reports demonstrate that slaves buried their own in the ABG with "Heathenish rites [sic] performed at the graves of their countrymen," including drumming, and that burial ceremonies included shrouding the deceased, and placing beads and other belongings in the coffins. *MCC* 3:296, 4:88-89; *Daily Advertiser*, Feb. 16, 1788; Foote, *Black and White Manhattan*, 140-143; New York City African Burial Ground History Final Report, ed., Edna Greene Medford, <http://www.africanburialground.com/History/ABG.pdf> (accessed Feb. 22, 2005) (Among those buried in the ABG were unknown numbers of whites, including British soldiers during the Revolutionary War). Newport's Common Burying Ground contains what is believed to be among the earliest African artwork in the New World, headstones carved by slave Pompe Stevens. African slaves such as Cuffe Gibbs, Cudjoe, Subiner, Nero and Dutchess Quamino, have their names on almost three hundred gravestones. The gravestones depict cherubs with curly hair and African facial features. James C. Garmon, "Viewing the Color Line Through the Material Culture of Death," *Historical Archaeology*, 28:3 (1994), 74-93; Elizabeth Zuckerman, "Newport Holds one of the Oldest Slave Cemeteries," *Dallas Examiner*, Jan. 9, 2005, http://www.colonialcemetary.com/pages/display_story.pdf (accessed Oct. 15, 2006); Fitts, *Inventing New England's Slave Paradise*, Chap. 6.

chandleries. Ship captains, such as New York's John Hunt, purchased young Negro boys to work as captain's servants on ships sailing between northern ports and the West Indies.⁵¹

Many slaves, however they were purchased or by whom, came to northern port cities with considerable knowledge of the larger Atlantic world. The West Indies market was a critical component in Philadelphia's, New York's, and Newport's economies. These ports so dominated trade with the West Indies that one London ship owner remarked in 1751, "Colonies have all the West Indian business to themselves." Two decades later the North American dominance of West Indies trade was evident from the very few British vessels that carried produce to Jamaica. Northern ports' trade with the West Indies included not only the importation of sugar, spices, and rum, but in the first half of the century, a regular flow of slaves. In this period, a significant portion of the slaves imported into the northern colonies came from Caribbean islands. Fugitive slave advertisements indicate that a substantial percentage of the runaway slaves from New York City - 70.6 percent of the slaves who came from outside British North America - were born in the West Indies. Slave importation data also indicates that more than fifty-five percent of New York's slaves in the period from 1715 to 1741 came from the West Indies. Rhode Island showed a similar preference for West Indian slaves. For Pennsylvanians, the preference for West Indies slaves during the first half of the eighteenth century was even more pronounced. From 1720 to 1748 sixty-one and a half

⁵¹ Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 8; Nicholas Brown & Co. to Esek Hopkins, Sept. 10, 1764, BFBR 643-6, item 1, JCBL, http://dl.lib.brown.edu:8080/dl_reader/reader?mets=http://pike.services.brown.edu/metsrecords/1157642129999104.ml (accessed Oct. 19, 2006); *New-York Journal or the General Advertiser*, June 4, 1772. Many slaves were sold in private residences, and on the docks and ships of northern cities. The greatest number of slaves was sold through printers of colonial newspapers.

percent of all slaves imported into Philadelphia came from the West Indies, with the remaining slaves largely coming from South Carolina (Table 2-1).⁵²

West Indies slaves imported to northern ports often arrived with maritime experience obtained in Africa or the Caribbean. African slaves imported to Bermuda, Barbados, Jamaica, and other West Indies islands came with knowledge of African “fishing traditions” that they shared with other slaves, as well as knowledge of fishing practices obtained from Caribbean Indians. The use of slaves as fishermen and boatmen in the West Indies was widespread. They were “a privileged slave subgroup” who “benefited from considerable trust and possessed liberties not granted to other slaves.” Jamaican estates, known as pens, used large numbers of slaves in fishing. One, the Great Salt Pond Pen, employed two hundred and three slaves in a sizable operation that provided the Spanish Town and Kingston markets with fish. As Thomas Thistlewood noted in his journal, many West Indies slaves supplemented their regular rations by capturing “great quantities of snook, tarpons, [and] mudfish.” Thistlewood used numerous slaves, including Dubbo, Jack, Quaw, Chub, Pompey, Sloan, Mulatto John, and an Ibo slave named Dick, to procure fish for his workers and the owners of the plantation. Slaves on other Jamaican plantations also were employed as fishermen. One, George, gained notoriety for the twenty-five pound snook he caught. Many West Indian slaves were employed in the maritime industry. Ports were filled with slaves who worked

⁵² Herbert C. Bell, “West Indian Trade Before the Revolution,” *American Historical Review*, 22:2 (Jan. 1917), 282n52; Charles R. Foy, “How Conflicts between Whites Shaped Slave Resistance in Colonial New York City,” (M.A. thesis, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ, 2002), Table 1-6. Thelma Wills Foote similarly found a very small African presence among New York runaways. Foote, *Black and White Manhattan*, 192. Slaves with maritime experience, both as watermen and on ocean-going vessels are likely to have been imported to northern colonies from South Carolina. Philip D. Morgan, “Colonial South Carolina Runaways: Their Significance for Slave Culture,” *Slavery and Abolition* 6 (Dec. 1985), 64. Examples of South Carolinian slave imports into New York include TNA CO 5/122, p. 24, 224, 255; TNA CO 5/1223, p. 30, 58, 96; TNA CO 5/1224, p. 39.

as mariners, fishermen and pilots. Some merchants, such as the St. Vincent merchant who owned thirty five seamen and six waterfront workers, employed maritime slaves on a large scale. These slave seamen were joined on the docks of various West Indies ports by slaves who worked as caulkers, sail-makers, and ship carpenters.⁵³

On certain West Indies islands, maritime slavery involved large numbers of slaves. On St. Eustatia, approximately three-fifths of its 5,000 slaves were either employed as seamen or in maritime support activities. Bermudian slaves comprised about two-thirds of the islands' mariners, with a majority of adult black men going to sea. Slave seamen, including the four sailors among the six mariners on the sloop *Elizabeth* that brought fourteen slaves to New York in 1718, had maritime skills that the eighteenth century historian William Douglass characterized as "equal to white men." It has been estimated that approximately one-fifth of Bermuda's numerous colonial mariners were enslaved. West Indies ship captains from Antigua, St. Croix, Barbados, and Jamaica, also used slaves as crewmembers on their vessels. Some of these enslaved mariners were engaged in sea service from their youth and, like Jamaican John Perkins, became pilots in the British Navy. While few achieved command of a schooner, as did Perkins, he stands as an example of the possibility of advancement for colored sailors in the British Navy.

David Gaspar has demonstrated that one-third of Antigua's ship crews were colored

⁵³ B.W. Higman, *Slave Population and Economy in Jamaica, 1807-1834* (Cambridge, 1976), 36; Richard Price, "Caribbean Fishing and Fishermen: A Historical Sketch," *American Anthropologist* 68:6 (Dec. 1968), 1365, 1370; Kevin Dawson, "Enslaved Watermen in the Atlantic World," Ph. D. diss., University of South Carolina, 2005, 132, 144, 149, 196, 199. Barbadian slaves' fishing abilities were considered critical to providing the island's residents with sufficient sustenance. Lt. Gov. Hope to Council of Trade and Plantaions, Mar. 20, 1724, TNA CO 37/11, ff. 113-117. The Drake Manuscripts, dating from 1590, contain drawings illustrating Caribbean Indians fishing adroitly. Philip D. Morgan, "Virginia's Other Prototype: The Caribbean," in *The Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550-1624*, ed. Peter C. Mancall (Chapel Hill, 2007), 365.

mariners.⁵⁴ On St. Eustatius, which exported a number of slaves to northern colonies, it has been estimated that almost two-thirds of the islands' five thousand slaves in 1790 were employed in the maritime trades, many as sailors on schooners. Colored Barbadian seamen were regularly used on custom vessels and paid the same salary as white mariners. The extent of maritime slavery in the West Indies is also evidenced by their employment on privateers both by free blacks and British naval officials. Upon his death, Benjamin Sims, a free colored Bahamian privateer, freed his nine slaves, all of whom presumably had worked aboard ship with him. Similarly, Admiral James Douglas, British commander in the Leeward Islands, employed slaves, some of whom had been free blacks captured and condemned to slavery as prize goods.⁵⁵

Caribbean slaves imported to northern colonies often had prior maritime experience, and were frequently the subjects of fugitive advertisements throughout North America. Fugitive slave advertisements regularly referred to men like thirty-year old

⁵⁴ Michael Jarvis, "Maritime Masters and Seafaring Slaves in Bermuda, 1680-1783," *WMQ*, 59:3 (July 2002), 612; *New-Jersey Gazette*, May 1, 1782; William Douglass, *A Summary, Historical and Political of the First Planting, Progressive Improvements, and Present State of the British Settlements in North America*, 2 vols. (London, 1760), I:148; N.A.M. Rodger, *Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London, 1986), 272; "Perkins, John [Jack Punch] (c. 1745-1812)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/50232> (accessed July 23, 2005); David Barry Gaspar, *Bondsmen and Rebels: A Study of Master-Slave Relations in Antigua* (Baltimore, 1985), 110-13, 138, 286-87n51; *New-York Evening Post*, June 19, 26, July 10, 1749; Gov. Worsley to the Council of Trade and Plantations, Nov. 16, 1724, TNA CO 28/18, ff. 110-128, 130-133; Wim Klooster, "Subordinate but Proud: Curaçao's Free Blacks and Mulattoes in the Eighteenth Century," *New West Indian Guide* 68: 3&4 (1994), 286-87 (In 1740, approximately two-thirds of Curaçao's seamen were non-whites). West Indian slave mariners regularly escaped in northern ports. *Pennsylvania Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*, Aug. 29, 1768 and Oct. 30, 1769; *Independent Gazetteer*, Sept. 27, 1783.

Slave pilots had greater mobility than most bondsmen. However, this led whites to being suspicious of them. During the American Revolution, several, including Perkins, were executed for alleged assistance of the Patriots. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 341-42.

⁵⁵ Richard Grant Gilmore III, "'All the documents are destroyed!' Documenting Slavery for St. Eustatius, Netherlands, Antilles," in Jay B. Haviser and Kevin C. MacDonald, eds., *African Genesis: Confronting Social Issues in the Diaspora* (London, 2006), 70-89; Pedro L. V. Welch, *Slave Society in the City: Bridgetown, Barbados, 1680-1834* (Jamaica, 2003), 85; Rodger, *The Wooden World*, 159-60; *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, Oct. 11, 1781; July 7, 1773, Indenture by Richard Cox, and John New of Nevis, BRO, Ref. No. 37941/19. That Jamaican slaves frequently worked on the water can be seen at Middy plantation, where almost 4% of the plantation's slaves were watermen. Deed, Middy Plantation, 23 Feb. 1796, TNA CO 108/174.

George, a West Indies-born slave who, when he escaped from New York's work house, was believed to "have gotten on board some vessel," or twenty-three year old Tom, a Bermudian-born slave, who fled from a New York ship he was employed on.⁵⁶

The benefits northerners gained from West Indian slaves' maritime skills were not limited to the profits slave traders made from the sale of experienced mariners. Traveling West Indian trade routes on a regular basis, northern ship captains undertook relatively short voyages in familiar waters with small crews. Captains and their crews had only a handful of slaves to watch, with West Indian slaves being imported in small parcels, averaging just two slaves per ship. Of six hundred and fifty-four ships bringing non-African slaves to New York between 1715 and 1764, five hundred and forty carried seven or fewer slaves. Many of these slaves were young men, ideal for maritime work. These conditions led some ship captains to see West Indian slaves they transported as men who could be members of their crews.⁵⁷ Bermudan slave imports to New York

⁵⁶ B. W. Higman, *Slave Population and Economy in Jamaica, 1807-1834* (Cambridge, 1976), 36, Richard Price, "Caribbean Fishing and Fishermen: A Historical Sketch," *American Anthropologist* 68:6 (Dec. 1968), 1364, 1370; Kevin Dawson, "Enslaved Watermen in the Atlantic World," (Ph. D. diss., University of South Carolina, 2005), 132, 144, 149, 196, 199; Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade to America*, 3:121-122; Gilmore, "'All the documents are destroyed!' Documenting Slavery for St. Eustatius, Netherlands, Antilles," 70-89. Jarvis, "Maritime Masters and Seafaring Slaves in Bermuda, 585-622. *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Sept. 25, 1769; *New-York Mercury*, Jan. 15, 1759. Examples of Bermudian-born maritime fugitives can be found in *American Weekly Mercury*, Aug. 8, 1733, May 29, 1735, June 9, 1737, Apr. 10, 1740; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 7, 1746; *New-York Gazette* (Weyman's), July 27, 1761, Oct. 4, 1762; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Oct. 15, 1770, Aug. 8, 1773; *Royal Gazette* (New York), Nov. 20, 1779; *Purdie & Dixon's Virginia Gazette*, Sept. 17, 1771. Even on West Indies plantations that did not regularly have its slaves engage in fishing, there were slave boatswains and coopers. Roberts, "Working between the Lines," Table 2. Barbadian slaves' fishing abilities were considered critical to providing the island's residents with sustenance. Lt. Gov. Hope to Council of Trade and Plantations, Mar. 20, 1724, TNA CO 37/11, ff. 113-117.

⁵⁷ "New York and the Slave Trade," 384, Table 6; TNA CO 5/1222-1227. See *King v Falmouth*, July 31, and Aug. 3, 1770, Parchments G-334 and K-314, County Clerk's Office, New York City; Benjamin Douglas to the King, Recognizance Pursuant to the Condition of the Pardon of the Negroe Man Named Falmouth, Misc. Mss., B. Douglas, Nov. 28, 1770, N-YHS; and TNA CO 5/1228, p. 7, 56, 64, 73, 94, and 107 for an example of a slave who regularly worked as a seaman for his ship captain master on a New York to West Indies trading route. Among the West Indians North American ship captains viewed as potential seamen were "Prize Negroes" captured at sea. Serena R. Zabin, "Places of Exchange: New York City,

illustrate this practice. During the economic depression Bermuda suffered in the 1730s, Bermudian slave imports into New York were common. Not fewer than forty-two Bermudian slaves were imported to New York during the period from 1725 to 1749, almost all in lots of one or two, a number of them on the Bermudian sloop *Mary & Margaret*. This sloop generally had eight men in its crew, making it an ideal candidate to have used the single slave it transported as an additional crewmember.⁵⁸ Northern ship captains recognized that West Indian slaves were “the glue of maritime commerce” and used them as crewmembers. By doing so, they were able to save ship owners a seaman’s salary. This practice made it more likely the slave would survive the voyage than if he were locked into the small 5’x4’x2’ space normally allocated to slaves on such ships.⁵⁹

The West Indies was not the only region with rich maritime traditions from which slaves were imported into northern ports.⁶⁰ During the last quarter of the seventeenth and the first decades of the eighteenth century, English and French pirates sought Madagascar men as mariners due to their well-known seafaring skills. At the same time, New Yorkers imported significant numbers of Madagascar slaves. Supported by prominent New York merchant Frederick Philipse, in the 1690s Adam Baldrige established a trading post in

1700-1763,” Ph. D. diss., Rutgers University, 2000, 65-68. The practice of ship captains employing slaves or captives as crew members was not limited to West Indies-North American trading vessels. See, e.g., Clare Anderson, “Convict Passages in the Indian Ocean, c. 1790-1860,” in *Middle Passages: Forced Migration and the Making of the Modern World*, ed. Emma Christopher, Cassandra Pybus & Marcus Rediker (Berkeley, 2007), 129-149.

⁵⁸ TNA CO 5/1226, p. 43; CO 5/1226, p. 90; and CO 5/1227, p. 69.

⁵⁹ Lydon, “New York and the Slave Trade,” 383n26.

⁶⁰ Slaves imported to northern ports from southern British North American colonies would also very likely have included individuals with maritime experience. Enslaved watermen were ubiquitous in the Carolina Lowcountry and the Chesapeake. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 236-244, 310-311. By time of Revolution, slaves were so prevalent on Virginian boats that the state’s Assembly passed an act requiring that “not more than one-third of the persons employed in the navigation of any bay or river craft...shall consist of slaves.” L.P. Jackson, “Virginia Negro Soldiers and Seamen in the American Revolution,” *Journal of Negro History*, 27:3 (Jul. 1942), 262. Even further inland, planters such as Thomas Jefferson, had a number of watermen working for them. Monticello Plantation Database, <http://plantationdb.monticello.org> (accessed Jan. 22, 2008) (five watermen listed as working on Jefferson’s plantations in 1774).

Madagascar, both to provision pirates who had “gone to Madagascar for lymes” and engage in slave trading. Madagascar sailors such as the young boy Dundee, who accompanied Captain Kidd to England, crewed on New York ships. Malagasy slaves’ attractiveness was not limited to their maritime background or their strength. With West African slaves from the Royal Africa Company’s slave factories typically costing £3 to £4, the ten shillings price of most Malagasy slaves enabled Philipse and other northern traders to make considerable profits. For more than two decades, despite the best efforts of the Royal Africa Company, Malagasy slaves were brought to northern ports by private traders. Elias Neau noted the numbers of Madagascar slaves brought to New York “doth increase daily.” Although Parliament enacted legislation in the early 1720s clearly barring private slave trade from Madagascar and instituted strong enforcement efforts, the presence of Madagascar slaves continued to be regularly observed in northern colonies through the first half of the eighteenth century.⁶¹

⁶¹ Letter from Jacobus Van Cortlandt to Mr. Jenkins, New York, Apr. 15, 1698, in Letter book of Jacobus Van Cortlandt, 1698-1700; Jacob Judd, “Frederick Philipse and the Madagascar Trade,” *New-York Historical Quarterly* 55:4 (Oct. 1971), 364; Arne Bialuschewski, “Thomas Bowrey’s Madagascar Manuscript of 1708,” *History in Africa* 34 (2007): 34; Letter from Elias Neau to David Humphreys, New York, June 23, 1721 in Letter books of the SPG; Daniel DeFoe, *A General History of the Pyrates*, ed. Manuel Schonhorn (London, 1724; reprint, 1999), 247; Richard Zacks, *The Pirate Hunter* (New York, 2002), 8, 208; Stephan Talty, *Empire of Blue Water: Captain Morgan’s Great Pirate Army, the Epic Battle for the Americas, and the Catastrophe That Ended the Outlaws’ Bloody Reign* (New York, 2007), 81; *TASD*, Voyages #25012 and #25014; *New-York Mercury*, Aug. 7, 1758, Oct. 11, 1762; Virginia Bever Platt, “The East India Company and the Madagascar Slave Trade,” *WMQ* 26:3 (Oct. 1969), 548-77; Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade to America*, 3:122. Examples of Madagascar slaves in New York can be found in *New-York Gazette*, Apr. 3, 1727, May 18, 1732; *New-York Weekly Journal*, May 10, 1736, May 2, 1737; *New-York Mercury*, Dec. 27, Jan. 3, 1763, May 11, 1767. See Lieutenant French Journal, NMM MSG/17 for an illustration of two Madagascar men in a “St. Augustine” canoe with a mast, sail and outrigger. After the *Crown Galley* brought a small group of Malagasy slaves to New York in 1721, direct importation of Malagasy slaves largely ended. The low cost of Malagasy slaves probably allowed William Walton and the other owners of the *Crown Galley* to make a profit, notwithstanding the death of half of the slaves who embarked in Madagascar. *TASD* #75307. Madagascar slaves were also purchased by residents of New Jersey, and imported into Virginia during 1719-1730 in large numbers. *American Weekly Mercury*, Aug. 1, 1723, Oct. 15, 1724; *TASD*; Walsh, “The Chesapeake Slave Trade,” Table 1. New York slaves were not only imported from Madagascar, but served as crew on slaving voyages to Madagascar. In 1698 Frank, a slave cooper, and Maramitta, a slave cook, were among the crew on the *Margaret* when it sailed to East Africa. It appears that at least one Malagasy slave from North America was transported from

Malagasy slaves were not the only enslaved Africans with maritime skills imported to the northern colonies. The skills of West African canoemen and fishermen had been long noted by European travelers. In the 1750s, at a time when a considerable number of Senegambian men had seafaring experience, both as Atlantic fishermen and on sailing boats with Portuguese sails and rigging, groups of Senegambian slaves with maritime experience were transported to New York, Philadelphia and Newport. One of these slaves, a Rhode Island bondsman named Senegambia, boasted of his father, a Gambian king, having a fleet of ships larger than the English. Of the African slaves imported to Pennsylvania whose origins are known, 57.7 percent were from Senegambia. Senegambian slaves also comprised 53.5 percent of African slaves imported to New York. The Upper Guinea coast was known for its skilled African seamen. Europeans employed as *grumetes* (Portuguese reference to an apprentice mariner or cabin boy) or *laptos* (derived from the Wolof word for sailor) from Africans familiar with maritime labor. These men included both free Africans and enslaved individuals who typically who gave half their wages to their masters. By the end of the eighteenth century, there were large numbers of *grumetes* working for the British along the Guinea Coast.⁶² It is likely

Britain to Australia in the years after the Revolution. Cassandra Pybus, *Black Founders: The unknown story of Australia's first black settlers* (Sydney, 2006), 4.

⁶² Robert E. Desrochers, Jr. "Not Fade Away": The Narrative of Venture Smith, an African American in the Early Republic," *JAR*, 84:1 (Jun., 1997), 52; Philip D. Morgan, "Black Experiences in Britain's Maritime World," in *Empire, the Sea and the Global History: Britain's Maritime World, 1760-1840* (New York, 2007), 110; Arne Bialuschewski, "Black People Under the Black Flag: Piracy and the Slave Trade on the West Coast of Africa, 1718-1723," unpublished essay, 2; George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Athens, OH, 2003), 7, 52, 141, 177, 207, 297; James F. Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce: The Senegal River Valley, 1700-1860* (Cambridge, 1993), 93, 117, 122. West African fishing practices were observed among slaves in other North American colonies. Wood, *Black Majority*, 200-202. On the Gold Coast hundreds of African canoemen transported slaves and large quantities of goods to European ships. The illustration drawn by Gabriel Bray, a second lieutenant on HMS *Pallas*, of three African canoemen in rough seas, is a vivid depiction of such men at work. Roger Quarm, "An Album of Drawings by Gabriel Bray RN, HMS *Pallas*, 1774-1775," *The Mariner's Mirror*, 81:1 (Feb. 1995), 32-44. Canoe skills assisted slaves in escaping and obtaining berths. *Newport Mercury*, June 24, 1734; *New-York*

that some of the Senegambian and Madagascar mariners transported to North America, would have gained exposure to European sailing practices during their middle passage to enslavement, when they “pulled and hawled” the ropes and sails of slave ships.

Madagascar and Senegambian slaves with maritime experience were regularly observed in northern ports. Prince, a man described as “of a Madagascar colour ... been much used to the sea,” and other African mariners regularly were subjects of fugitive and sale advertisements.⁶³

While slave purchasers may have been glad that many slaves imported into northern ports had maritime skills, the same was not true for older slaves. Advertisements indicated a strong distaste among buyers for older slaves, with only four-tenths of one percent of all advertisements seeking slaves thirty-five years of age or older. As Jacobus van Corlandt succinctly stated, “our Country-people do not Care to buy old slaves.” Neither a single New Yorker nor a Rhode Islander indicated a willingness to buy slaves thirty-five years of age or older. Out of the two hundred and twelve slaves sought in Pennsylvania newspaper advertisements, only in six did the buyers indicate a willingness to acquire a slave thirty-five years of age or older. In seeking to purchase slaves, northern whites demonstrated a strong preference for young males. Of slaves for whom ages were known, seventy-five percent of the slaves sought to be purchased were twenty years of age or younger and 64.4 percent of the slaves sought whose gender was known were male.

Gazette, Aug. 13, 1767.

⁶³ Philip Curtin, *Economic Changes in Pre-Colonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison, WI, 1975), 95-100; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 50-1, 58; Platt, “The East India Company and the Madagascar Slave Trade,” 548-77; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 20, 1742; *New-York Mercury*, Dec. 27, 1762; Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York, 2007), 152, 268-70. English observations of Senegambian fishing abilities dates to at least the first quarter of the seventeenth century. Richard Jopson, *The Golden Trade: Or, A discovery of the River Gambia, and the Golden Trade of the Aethiopians. Also, the Commerce with a great black Merchant, Buckor Sano, and his report of the house covered with Gold, and other strange observations for the good of our owne country; set down and collected in traveling, part of the yeares, 1620-1621* (1st published 1623; New York, 1968), 23.

New York merchant John Watts summarized well the attitude of northern slave owners: “[slaves] must be young the younger the better if not quite Children, those advanced in years will never do[.] I imagine a Cargo of them none exceeding thirty might turn out a fifty pounds a head gross Sales. Males best.” This preference for young healthy males did not result, as some assert, in the post-1741 period, in a shift “to an emphasis on child importations.”⁶⁴

Northern purchasers' desire for young male slaves did not necessarily result in experienced mariners being bought by slave masters in northern ports. The desire of northern buyers for male slaves is apparent from sale and purchase advertisements.

Rhode Island buyers preferred men in their teens and early twenties. Pennsylvanians and

⁶⁴ Letter of Jacobus Van Cortlandt to M. Mayhew, May 16, 1698 in Letter book of Jacobus Van Cortlandt; Barck, *Letter Book of John Watts*, 31-32; Medford, ed., “New York African Burial Ground, History Final Report,” xxii. Medford bases her conclusion regarding a shift to “child importations” on the large numbers of children buried in the ABG. Slaves’ disproportionately high child mortality is indicative of epidemics that had especially devastating effects on children, and the harshness of slavery in northern British North America, not that whites’ began buying large numbers of slave children in the post-1741 period. Tables 4-2 & 8-1. Medford’s conclusion also overlooks that archaeological analysis of the ABG skeleton remains did not determine exact dates for the burial of the remains and that those buried in the ABG “under age eight appear to have been born in New York.” “Historic Background of the African Burial Ground,” 11, <http://www.africanburialground.gov.Report.Chap1.pdf> (accessed Sept. 18, 2006). While slave child mortality of 40.2% was high, it was less than that of a similar sized sample of white children, 46.8%. “Skeleton Biology Final Report,” Chapter 7. http://www.africanburialground.gov/FinalReports/HUsbrABG_Ch7_Rvsd.pdf (accessed Sept. 18, 2006); “Deaths Recorded by the First Presbyterian Church, New York City, 1790-1792,” *NYGBR* 137:3 (July 2006), 218-224; *NYGBR* 137:4 (Oct. 2006), 304-306.

Whites’ desire to avoid owning elderly slaves was manifested in legislative enactments that made manumissions difficult. Concerned that owners would free elderly frail slaves, northern colonies set strict requirements for the manumission of slaves. New York’s Slave Code required the posting of a £200 bond, far in excess of the average purchase price of a slave. The desire to protect the public fisc resulted in very few slaves being freed, with only 16 New York City slaves being manumitted before the Revolution. Rhode Island also required a substantial bond be posted before a slave could be manumitted, resulting in few manumissions. *Colonial Laws of New York from the Year of 1664 to the Revolution*, 5 vols. (Albany, NY, 1894-96); Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England*, 280-298; Harry B. Yosphe, “Record of Slave Manumissions in New York During the Colonial and Early National Periods,” *Journal of Negro History*, 26 (Jan. 1941), 82; Woodward, *Plantations in Yankeeeland*, 92-93 (example of a Rhode Island manumission). Even when wills provided for slaves’ manumissions, “unjust Attempt[s]” were made to sell slaves who were to be emancipated. *New-York Gazette* [Weyman’s], July 18, 1763. Only a “handful” of Long Island and very few New Jersey slave masters manumitted their slaves. Moss, *Slavery on Long Island*, 131; Hodges, *Slavery & Freedom*, 94, 105, 121-122; Shillingburg and Shillingburg, “The Disposition of Slaves on the East End of Long Island from 1680 to 1796.”

New Yorkers had similar desires for young male slaves. New Yorkers advertising their desire to purchase slaves indicated a two-to-one preference for male slaves.

Philadelphians had an even more pronounced preference, seeking male over female slaves by almost a seven-to-three ratio. Despite such preferences for male slaves, and the importation of some parcels of African slaves with few children among them, there was a strong gender imbalance in each of the three cities. Northern purchasers could not compete with slave buyers from the Chesapeake, the West Indies or the Lowcountry region, either in quantity of slaves purchased or prices they were willing to pay, leaving northern purchasers to often settle for parcels with less than healthy males, children, and a substantial percentage of women. This resulted in more women being imported into the three ports than advertisements for the sale or purchase of slaves would lead one to believe would have been true. Such importation of female slaves led to increases in northern colonies' female slave populations. For example, in the period from 1755 to 1774, when females comprised a significant majority of the slaves imported into Rhode Island, the colony's female population increased by eighteen percent.⁶⁵

So while northern whites may have envisioned ports filled with strong enslaved men, in fact, this did not occur. A comparison of advertisements with population data indicates that not only did importation practices shape which slaves lived in northern port cities, but that buyers' cultural preferences played a role in which slaves remained in

⁶⁵ Morgan, "Black Experiences in Britain's Maritime World," 112; (On average, only 6% of Senegambian slaves were children); Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 58-63; Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle*, Chap. 5; Hodges, *Root & Branch*, 77; Rommel-Ruiz, "Atlantic Revolutions," 156. Northern colonies' difficulties in competing for prime young male slaves dates back to the beginning of English rule. As Peter Stuyvesant noted in 1664, slaves sent to New York "were, on average, quite old, and as the skipper alleges, rejected by the Spaniards." Donnan, *Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, 3: 429. The gender imbalance was even more pronounced in Providence. Christian Warren, "Northern Chills, Southern Fevers: Race-Specific Mortality in American Cities, 1730-1900," *Journal of Southern History*, 63:1 (Feb. 1997), 37, Table 2.

northern ports and which were sold to outlying rural areas. It was far more likely that a light-skinned slave, one described as “mulatto,” “yellow,” “Indian,” or “Mustee” would reside in a port city, than was true for those slaves characterized as “dark,” “black” or “Negro.” This was especially true for women. Northern slave owners professed a preference for light-skinned females to work as domestics in their home. The preferences for mulatto and other light skinned slaves should not be seen merely as a reflection of some slave owners’ desire for seasoned or less rebellious slaves. With mixed-race slaves compromised more than 20% of slave fugitives advertised in Pennsylvania, New York and Rhode Island newspapers, it is clear that interracial sexual relations were common in northern colonies (Table 10-2). The relationship between slave John Gwin and Irish woman Peggy Kerry that came to colonial officials’ attention during the 1741 New York conspiracy trials was only one of many such inter-racial couplings. At the same time, dark-skinned men, most often African-born, were sold to outlying rural regions. The result was that the gender makeup of agricultural slaves was generally the mirror image of nearby northern ports. In both 1738 and 1755, less than 30% of King County’s slave population was female, while Narragansett’s slave population was 58% male. Similarly, although Jean Soderlund could not determine exact gender proportions among Chester County, Pennsylvania’s slave population, she has demonstrated that during the second half of the eighteenth century there were more than sufficient numbers of women in this rural region to have a rate of natural increase substantially greater than among Philadelphia’s slave population.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Soderlund, “Black Importation and Migration into Southeastern Pennsylvania,” 147-150; Moss, *Slavery on Long Island*, 70; Fitts, *Inventing New England’s Slave Paradise*, 80; Kenneth E. Marshall, “Powerful and Righteous: The Transatlantic Survival and Cultural Resistance of an Enslaved African Family in Eighteenth century New Jersey,” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 23:2 (Winter 2004): 29-30

The result of the movement of adult male slaves into the countryside was that a number of African-born dark-skinned experienced mariners did not remain in the ports into which they were first imported. Instead, they often found themselves considerable distances from ocean's shores. For example, in 1765, James, a "likely young Negro man" from Rock Hill, Maryland, was believed to have fled his rural master to seek a berth. The enslaved man had been brought to Maryland from Georgia. An experienced mariner, James was "used to the Sea" and had recently been on a man of war, although whether as a fugitive who was recaptured or as a servant to a British officer is not known. Two years earlier, Prince, a twenty-eight year old Madagascar slave, who "has been used to the sea," fled his Ulster County master seeking a berth, presumably in New York City. The prior year, Harry, a six foot Long Island slave wearing a sailor's hat sought a berth by pretending he was a free sailor. Each of these men, and scores of other rural maritime fugitives, had to find their way over long distances to reach their intended goal of a docked ship. In doing so, maritime fugitives trod a path frequently walked by many white seamen. When unable to get a berth, they, like John Ashmead, walked considerable

(Hunterdon County, New Jersey in 1745 had 244 males and 216 female slaves, while in 1772 the county had 586 male slaves and only 509 female slaves).

John Gwin, also known as Caesar, paid for the board of Peggy Kerry, mother of his child. Each was hanged after being convicted of participating in the alleged slave conspiracy. Horsmanden, *The New-York Conspiracy*, 113-116.

The level of inter-racial sexual relations has long been disputed among historians. While W. E. B. Du Bois estimated that by 1860 between 13 and 25 percent of African Americans had white ancestry, Eugene Genovese dismissed the higher figure without substantiation as "probably too high," speculating that "little more than 10 percent of the slave population had white ancestry." Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 414. See also Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (Boston, 1974), 132. Given that more than 24% of the fugitives advertised in Rhode Island newspapers were described by their masters as either "Mulattoo" or "Mustee," it seems clear that Genovese underestimates mixed-race ancestry among slaves. See *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 21, 1761, Jan. 5, 1764, May 15, 1781 for examples of fugitive slaves with spouses of a different race, and *New-York Mercury*, July 15, 1765 for an example of a Mulatto woman married to a white man. Slave women were sold for having mulatto children. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 27, 1775.

distances to seek work in distant ports.⁶⁷ With their masters advertising their flight and unknown slaves walking alone often assumed to be fugitives, these men needed to be clever, healthy, and strong to reach their destinations. While some did, others did not.

At the same time rural runaways faced the barrier of long-distance travel to reach ports, the attitudes of northern urban slave masters towards children and pregnant women served to limit the ties male slaves had to port cities. The typical slave owner in Philadelphia, New York and Newport owned one or two slaves and did not value young slave children. Slave masters wanted to avoid the cost and expense of clothing and feeding slave children. When unwanted slave children were born, some slave masters sought to “give [them] away.” Rarely did children grow up in the same house as their parents, as slavery often separated “Children from parents” and “Husbands from wives.” Most northerners were antagonistic towards pregnant women, valuing their productive work more than their reproductive labors. Masters frequently opposed slave marriages. With few adult slaves living with slaves of the opposite sex, and adult female slaves representing a majority of the three cities' slave populations, such opposition to children raised significant barriers to northern urban slaves maintaining long-term relationships and nuclear families. Unlike in southern colonies, slave women were not viewed as providers of additional labor, but rather as burdens. Not infrequently northern slave owners would sell slave women at “half [their] value” due to the women having children without a husband or because they were “notable breeder[s].” To attract buyers, Northern masters described slave women as a “likely barren Negro Wench,” or “married several years without having a child.” Frequently northern owners, such as the anonymous owner

⁶⁷ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Dec. 10, 1765; *New-York Mercury*, Dec. 27, 1762; *New-York Mercury*, Oct. 10, 1762; Voyages of John Ashmead, 1758-1782, Biog. A827a, 1880, HSP.

who advertised the sale of his slave due to the slave's "too great a fondness for a particular wench," sold their slaves because they thought family connections decreased their value.⁶⁸ Being sold once compromised family ties. Being sold multiple times was almost a guarantee such ties would be torn asunder. Masters' desire that their slaves not procreate is vividly illustrated by the comment of one Philadelphia newspaper contributor who wrote, "in this city, negroes just born, are considered as an encumbrance only, and if humanity did not forbid it, they would be instantly given away." The hostility of northern slave masters to slave children is evidenced in the lack of care many masters provided their slave children. Archaeological analysis of the skeletons of children buried in New York's African Burial Ground found that "fifty percent of [the] dead children show evidence of metabolic disease, the vast majority of which indicates anemia (most likely to have resulted from malnutrition and diseases)."⁶⁹

⁶⁸ *Rivington's Gazette*, Oct. 19, 1775; John Sallient, "Slavery and Divine Providence in New England Calvinism: The New Divinity and a Black Protest, 1775-1805," *NEQ* 68:4 (Dec. 1995), 600. Residents of northern cities tended to have lower fertility rates than did residents of frontier areas. Carole Shamas, "The Housing Stock of the Early United States: Refinement Meets Migration," *WMQ* 65:3 (July 2007), 583. Some northern slave masters acted with utter contempt towards pregnant slave women. In 1748 the slave Phyllis was pregnant when her New York master confined her in a small room with a "chain Bound her arms and made fast to a partition" and provided only food full of worms. Refusing to eat the spoiled food, Phyllis died of starvation while delivering a child. Case of Phyllis, Negro Slave of New York City, October 22, 1748, Coroner's Proceedings in the City and County of New York, Columbia University Rare Book Room.

⁶⁹ *American Weekly Mercury*, Aug. 1, 1734, Sept. 3, 1741; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Post-Boy*, May 17, 1756, Jan. 10, 1757; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Oct. 13, 1757; *Newport Mercury*, Nov. 20, 1759, Jan. 1, 1760, Feb. 13, 1764, Jan. 1, 1765, Apr. 4, 1766, Jan. 1, 1775; *Pennsylvania Chronicle & Universal Advertiser*, Nov. 16, 1767; *New-York Journal or General Advertiser*, Mar. 23, 1775; *Providence Gazette & Country Journal*, Feb. 20, 1768, Apr. 21, 1781; *Pennsylvania Packet & General Advertiser*, June 28, 1773; Smith and Wojtowicz, *Blacks Who Stole Themselves*, 20; Michael L. Blakey, "The New York African Burial Ground Project: An Examination of Enslaved Lives, a Construction of Ancestral Ties," www.huarchivesnet.howard.edu/0008huarnet/August.htm (accessed July 8, 2005). As Billy G. Smith and Philip D. Morgan have noted, slavery in Philadelphia "thwart[ed] the family lives of its victims" and resulted in the black population failing to reproduce. Billy G. Smith, "Black Family Life in Philadelphia from Slavery to Freedom," in *Shaping a National Culture: The Philadelphia Experience, 1750-1800*, ed. Catherine E. Hutchins (Winterthur, Del., 1994), 77-97; Morgan, "The Black Experience in the British Empire," 467. Connecticut slave owners were also not willing to have childbearing females or infants and would frequently sell a woman because she was a "breeder." Yang, "From Slavery to Emancipation," 139.

Imbalanced gender ratios in northern rural areas also adversely hampered the ability of slaves in those regions in forming families. Hodges, *Slavery, Freedom & Culture*, 39; Moss, *Slavery on Long Island*,

Some women not only had their children sold away from them, but were themselves sold when they bore additional children. While in the first two decades of the century Chesapeake buyers frequently purchased slaves in pairs of one woman and one man, rare was the northern owner who purchased a husband and wife. Female slaves constituted a considerable majority of the slave populations in Philadelphia, New York and Newport. The gender imbalance in New York was almost two-to-one at the beginning of the eighteenth century, although it lessened over the course of the century. Pregnant women and women with young children were sometimes sold together, but the overwhelming majority of slave sales were of single individuals. When Cadwallader Colden sold a female slave to a Barbadian purchaser, he did it to remove the woman from her children, saying: "I could have sold her to good advantage, but I have several other of her Children which I value and I know if she should stay in this country she would spoil them." Even when family members were advertised for sale together, almost half of such slaves were not ultimately sold with their family members. The lack of family life for many slaves in northern ports is demonstrated by the large number of slaves sold by themselves. Of more than 2,000 slave sale advertisements in New York newspapers, 68.6 percent of the advertisements were for a single slave. Considering that many of the other advertisements were for imported parcels, it appears likely that as many as three-quarters of the sales of slaves living in New York were of single individuals. Rarely did a group of slaves find an owner willing to keep them together after his or her death. Abraham Van

48; Jessica Kross, *The Evolution of an American Town: Newtown, New York, 1642-1775* (Philadelphia, 1983), 109-110. The practice of giving away slave children was most prevalent in Massachusetts. Desrochers, "Slave For-Sale Advertisements and Slavery in Massachusetts, 1704-1781, 623-644. Patricia Bradley's extensive study of various colonial newspapers led her to observe that "advertisements for free babies were rare" outside Massachusetts. *Slavery, Propaganda, and the American Revolution* (Oxford, MS: 1998), 32. There were only a few such advertisements in New York, Rhode Island and Pennsylvania newspapers. E.g., *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, May 5, 1781.

Horne's direction that all his slaves be sold to his children, thereby sparing his slaves being split apart and sold to strangers, was uncommon.⁷⁰ Slaves resisted being sold away from family and friends. When Dutchess County farmer John Dykeman sold the daughter of his slave Ben to a New York City merchant, Ben retaliated by murdering his master. This violent resistance to the sale of a relative was unusual. However, as John Watts noted in 1763, some slave owners permitted their slaves "to chose their masters," perhaps to avoid such violent retribution. Notwithstanding such occasions when slaves were able to pick their masters, the practice of separating family members was widespread in the northern colonies. In 1788, after it had already enacted a gradual emancipation law, the Pennsylvania legislature felt compelled to prohibit breaking up slave families through sales. When it did so the legislature noted the "practice of separating [sic] is too often exercised." When a mother and child were sold together, these sales often resulted in mothers and/or their children being sold to masters at a considerable distance from the child's father.⁷¹

As a result of the hostility of slave masters to young children and pregnant or nursing women, many adult males in northern port cities lacked "the sheet anchor of

⁷⁰ *Letter books of Cadwallader Colden*, Vol. I, 1711-1729, 39; Will of Abraham Van Horne, New York State Archives, Albany. There are few other examples of slave masters acting as did Van Horne. See. e.g., Francis Willis, Jr. 3 Feb. 1745 Letter to Charles Carter, Sol Fierstone Coll, Microfilm 1681, DLAR. More characteristic of northern slave owners' behavior is Jean Soderlund's finding, in her extensive search of Philadelphia wills, of not a single instance where executors were instructed to keep slave families intact. Jean R. Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit* (Princeton, 1985), 83.

⁷¹ Williams-Meyers, "Re-examining Slavery in New York"; Letter from John Watts to General Murray, July 4, 1763 in Letterbook of John Watts, 1762 to 1765, N-YHS *Collections* 61 (1928), 94; *New-York Mercury*, July 22, 1754; Thelma Wills Foote, "Black Life in Colonial Manhattan, 1664-1786, (Ph. D. diss., Harvard University, 1991), 206-209; Kruger, "Black Family Life," 86. Although Vivienne Kruger uses a 52.1% figure for all New York slaves living without family members, the number in New York City was probably considerably higher due to a lack of available housing. Kruger, "Born to Run." The 1703 Census lists very few adult male and female slaves living in the same household. The male and female slaves living together in Andrew Gravenrod's East Ward home were the exception, not the rule. Edmund O'Callaghan, ed., *Lists of Inhabitants of Colonial New York* (reprint, Baltimore, 1979). Slaves in Philadelphia were often sold to plantations in Delaware and Maryland by slave owners with close commercial and family ties to those regions. Nash, *Forging Freedom*: 155-161.

family.” Labor needs and lack of available housing led slave owners in northern ports to own individual slaves. In New York, it has been estimated that more than half of the slaves did not live with family members. Similarly, most slaves in Newport and Philadelphia lived with their masters and perhaps one other slave. In Philadelphia it has been estimated that only seven percent of adult slaves lived with another slave of the opposite sex. Not until the chaos of the Revolution, with its greatly increased possibilities of freedom through flight to British lines, did many slaves have the opportunity to reunite family units.⁷²

Slave Labor

While northern slave masters did not use slave gang labor, slave labor was important to the northern urban colonial economy. For elites, whether ministers or merchants, house slaves dressed in silk shirts, powdered wigs, white silk stockings, tailored trousers, and shoes with silver buckles, reinforced the elite status of their gentlemen masters. Domestic slaves cared for the children of whites, cooked their meals, drove their carriages, and delivered their letters. When merchant slave owners sold their slaves they frequently compared them to the “elegant” and “fashionable” plate and furniture they sold with the slaves.⁷³ Domestic slaves not only publicly pronounced the elevated status of their masters through the clothes they wore, but they also enabled men like

⁷² Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 13; Smith, “Black Family Life in Philadelphia,” 87.

⁷³ *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Jan. 11, 1773; M. S. Weiner, “Evidence on Somerset’s Case,” *Slavery & Abolition* (Apr. 2004), 123 (In 1767, while in New York City, James Steuart’s slave Somerset delivered letters for his master); *Pennsylvania Ledger*, Mar. 25, 1775 (Poem with slave boy sent as gift). Gentlemen also sold their slaves along with their church pews, libraries, and other indicia of their elevated social status. *Newport Mercury*, Sept. 27, 1773; *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, Mar. 19, 1774.

During the British occupation of New York females made up the large majority slaves advertised for sale. Judith L. Van Buskirk, *Generous Enemies: Patriots and Loyalists in Revolutionary New York* (Philadelphia, 2002), 140; Tables 4-1 & 4-3. Women and family groups were also more likely to flee from other North American colonies after Dunmore’s Proclamation. Gary B. Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), 27; Table 6-2.

Gregory Malbone, John Dickinson, and Robert Livingston, to engage in profit-making endeavors without the concerns of daily maintenance.⁷⁴

Slaves' skill, rather than muscle, was the basis of their value to most northern urban slave masters. Northern tradesmen employed slaves in various crafts, including as coopers, carpenters, and blacksmiths, often working alongside their slaves. Slave artisans became so numerous that a New York Assembly report noted white tradesmen's opposition to the "pernicious custom of breeding slaves to trades." When owners lacked sufficient work for their slaves, as they frequently did, they hired slaves out to others, often for low wages. With certain trades, such as ship carpenters, sailors, and shipwrights being particularly valued, this widespread practice enabled non-slave owners to hire skilled slaves without a significant investment of capital. By doing so, slave masters undermined the position of white laborers. The practice of hiring out also offered slaves opportunities to develop contacts with other slaves and free blacks and experience life away from their masters. Being hired out also enabled slaves inexperienced in maritime ways to develop seafaring skills that as James Oglethorpe noted could be "acquired only by Application and Industry." It also provided some slaves, as it did for Venture Smith, the opportunity to see what life as a free man might hold. Slaves were often hired out on trial basis for potential new owners to judge a slave's skills and personality. At the same time, slaves gauged their potential new master and could seek their approval or disapproval, depending upon which was in their interest. Hiring out was so common that in 1711 the New York City government designated the Meal Market on Wall Street as the authorized place for hiring and selling of slaves. Slaves were also regularly hired out in

⁷⁴ *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Jan. 11, 1773, Feb. 12, 1776; *Royal Gazette* (New York), Mar. 13, 16, 1782; Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 8.

Newport and Philadelphia, as they were in other Atlantic ports, such as Bridgetown and Charlestown.⁷⁵

The nature of slavery in northern port cities was very different than in rural regions. Economically successful individuals, merchants or artisans, often found it necessary to diversify. Merchants, who might sell shoes, would also import Madeira wine and West Indian molasses, and in times of war, invest in privateering. Less well-off individuals, such as the cooper Geradus Comfort, engaged in multiple endeavors, finding profits in selling fresh water to New York's elite, while making casks for the city's ship captains. Even those who tended to work in a specific trade rarely restricted themselves to specialties in that trade. This same occupational fluidity held true for enslaved individuals in northern ports. Although many slaves had occupational skills, fugitive advertisements often indicated no occupation or labor skills for runaways. Only 15.9 percent of the two hundred and one Rhode Island fugitive advertisements indicated a runaway's occupational traits, while occupational information in New York and

⁷⁵ Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 127; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 11; *MCC, 1675-1776*, 1:458; Journal of the Accounts of the City of New York, Oct. 1714 – June 1717, NYC Chamberlain's Office, NYC Accounts, Archives of the City of New York; Christopher Bancker Journal, 1718-1739 (BV Bancker, Christopher), N-YHS, Dec. 15, 1738 entries; John Taylor Day Book, 1762-1768, N-YHS; David Korbin, *The Black Minority in Early New York* (Albany, 1971), 9; *American Weekly Mercury*, June 18, 1730; *Newport Mercury*, Jan. 9, Feb. 3, 1775, Sept. 28, Nov. 8, 1776, Jan. 2, 1778; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 4, 1768; *Pennsylvania Chronicle & Universal Advertiser*, June 3, 1771, Nov. 7, 1772; *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, Apr. 27, 1772; *The New-Hampshire Gazette, and Historical Chronicle*, Sept. 9, 1768; *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, Mar. 1, 1777, July 11, 1778; *Five Black Lives: The Autobiographies of Venture Smith, James Mars, William Grimes, The Rev. G. W. Offley, and James L. Smith*, Introduction by Arna Bontemps (Middletown, CT, 1980), 18; Morgan, "British Encounters with Africans and African-Americans," 191-192; Julie Anne Sweet, "The Sailors' Advocate: James Ogelthorpe's First Philanthropic Venture," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 91:1 (Spring 2007), 1-27. Masters in southern colonies were also known to hire slave mariners. Weiner, "Evidence on Somerset's Case," 121-22.

Hiring out could also have negative consequences for slaves. Slaves hired out as mariners did not always find ideal working conditions. Richard Trevit Pompey and other slave mariners hired out fled due to "bad usage" by ship captains. Sweet, "Bodies Politic," 316. Some urban masters hired their slaves out to plantations to punish slaves who had repeatedly escaped. Sword, "Wayward Wives," 26.

James Fenimore Cooper in several of his novels depicts New York slaves being hired out as soldiers. James D. Wallace, "Cooper and Slavery," <http://www.oneota.edu/~cooper/articles/ala/1992ala-wallace.html> (accessed Sept. 11, 2006).

Pennsylvania advertisements were only slightly higher (Tables 7-5, 8-5 and 9-5). While some masters may have believed that occupational information would not assist in recovering their slaves, the absence of stated labor skills was more likely a reflection that with many slaves having been sold frequently and employed in multiple jobs, slave owners did not identify slaves with particular skills. Like white artisans who changed their occupational titles frequently, the labor of northern slaves was diversified. During their lifetimes, enslaved individuals in New York, Pennsylvania or Rhode Island would likely find themselves performing a variety of tasks. Over fifty-eight percent of all advertisements seeking slaves did not indicate particular occupational skills the purchaser was seeking, with less than 19 percent of Rhode Island want advertisements stating occupational preferences. The fluidity of the northern slave labor market is clearly illustrated by the large number of slave sale advertisements characterizing slaves as fit for "town or country," i.e., capable of working in any environment.⁷⁶ When one notes the frequency with which slaves were described as having had former owners, it is apparent that it was common for northern slaves to be resold, sometimes repeatedly. More than four thousand slaves were advertised for sale in Pennsylvania, New York, or Rhode

⁷⁶ Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*, 17 (The Bridges family sold a Negro Woman in 1741 "fit for Town or Country"). Graham Hodges and Allen Brown's review of 662 New York and New Jersey fugitive advertisements found that only 22.9% of the advertisements indicated occupational traits. Of those advertisements Hodges and Brown identified as indicating occupational skills, 41.5% were for musical skills. Graham Russell Hodges and Allen Brown, *Pretends to be Free: Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey* (New York & London, 1996), Table 6; Middleton, *From Riches to Privileges*, 112. Of the 2,643 Pennsylvania, New York and Rhode Island fugitive slave advertisements, more than 70% of the advertisements did not note the slave's occupational traits (Table 6). Some owners characterized their slaves as "fitting for any work." *New-York Gazette*, Jan. 20, 1736. Slave masters' desire that their slaves be "versatile" dated to the very first imports into the northern colonies. Julie Winch, *A Gentleman of Color: The Life of James Forten* (Oxford and New York, 2002), 9-10. Unlike in the South Carolina Lowcountry, northern agricultural production rarely involved the use of slave "drivers" or "foremen." As a result, there were few northern male slaves tied to the region by privileged work status. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 220-221; Erskine Clarke, *Dwelling Place: A Plantation Epic* (New Haven, 2007), 3-4.

More than 84% of the slave sale advertisements in Rhode Island newspapers contained no reference to slaves' occupational skills. Table 13-5.

Island newspapers in the period between 1727 and 1783. Scores of other slaves were sold without their owners advertising their sale. Sold when their masters absconded or died, slaves such as Obadiah Williams' unnamed Negro man found themselves moved again and again. New masters often required slaves to do different tasks than they had performed for their former masters. The changed circumstances caused by sales sometimes benefited slaves by providing them with an understanding of both rural and urban communities, and often, of the larger Atlantic world.⁷⁷

As in England, where a "significant minority" of blacks was sailors, in northern maritime communities slaves could be found in all sectors of the maritime economy throughout the eighteenth century.⁷⁸ Slaves worked on oyster boats, whaling ships, fishing boats, privateers, pirate vessels, coaster sloops, ferries, and blue sea ships. These men were in motion for most of their lives. Enslaved mariners such as Pomp crewed on ships carrying fish caught by colored fishermen to other northern colonies. Men such as Pistuel worked as seamen on slaving ships in which they transported Africans to North America. They often fished on Sundays to supplement their normal food rations, and occasionally, as did Venture Smith, used the proceeds from selling fish to purchase their freedom. Slaves' presence on northern vessels was so common that "in some cases an

⁷⁷ *New-York Weekly Journal*, Sept. 6, 1736. Given that numerous slaves were sold privately and mortality among slaves in northern ports was significantly higher than for whites, those slaves who survived to adulthood were likely to have had more than one owner.

The movement of slaves in northern colonies through their sale continued into the nineteenth century despite gradual abolition in most of those colonies. See e.g., *American Citizen*, Dec. 21, 1805.

⁷⁸ Philip D. Morgan, "The Black Experience in the British Empire, 1680-1817," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. II, P. J. Marshall, ed. (Oxford and New York, 1998), 471; Paul Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront: American Maritime Culture in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia, 2004), 25. Slaves were employed as mariners in northern ports in Connecticut and Massachusetts, as well as in Philadelphia, New York and Newport. Daniel Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen: Two Centuries of Work in Essex County* (Chapel Hill, 2001), 18-20, 28-29; Yang, "From Slavery to Emancipation," 177-190. By the 1690s, colored seamen had become a "common sight" in British ports. Steve Murdoch, "John Brown: A Black Female Soldier in the Royal African Company," World History Connected, http://worldhistoryconnected.press.uiuc.edu/1.2/murdoch.html#_edn26 (accessed Feb. 2, 2008).

entire crew might be made up of men in bondage,” and their employment as mariners was recognized in such literary works as *Voyages and Adventures of Monsieur Pierre Viaud*. Slave fugitives were described as wearing “whaling dress,” “sailor’s trowsers,” and “tarry trowsers.”⁷⁹ Scores of runaways had previously worked as mariners, or were doing so when they fled their masters. Slave seamen, with their bowed legs and knowledge of the sea, moved from northern port to northern port. Not all had, as Philadelphian Peter did, an Indian wife and four black lovers in various ports of the Mid-Atlantic. Yet life at sea provided mobility that enabled mariners of color to connect with women in far-away places. Whether they remained in one port or moved among many, slaves’ presence on northern waterways was ubiquitous. Lewis Morris’s slaves, considered “excellent water navigators,” were regularly seen on the Hudson River transporting goods from his Westchester plantation to New York City markets. Like Frederick Philipse’s Frank, many slaves piloted ferries, boats and canoes to the city for their masters. Not all could be found at city taverns calling “for a Mugg of Beer,” as had Frank in 1741, but the presence of slave boatmen was commonplace on New York City’s streets. Slave ferrymen, such as the man who drowned while piloting the ferry between New York City and Long Island in 1767, were encountered by foreign visitors as they traveled through the northern

⁷⁹ Moss, *Slavery on Long Island*, 102; *Five Black Lives*, 17; Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront*, 26; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 27; *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, Jan. 14, 1775; *Newport Mercury*, Aug. 31, 1772; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Nov. 5, 1779; *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, July 1, 1769; *New-York Mercury*, Nov. 12, 1764; Donnan, *Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, 3:151 (Pistuel); Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia*, I:597-8. Indentured servants also fished to supplement their diet. *The Infortunate: The Voyage and Adventures of William Moralay, an Indentured Servant*, ed. Susan E. Klepp and Billy G. Smith (University Park, PA, 1992), 60. Slave fishermen could be found throughout the Atlantic. In 1770 South Carolina established a separate fish market, acknowledging that fishing was “principally carried on by Negroes, Mulattoes, and Mestizoes.” Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 240.

The extensive use of slaves as mariners and boatmen in northern colonies should be contrasted with the experience in South Carolina and Chesapeake. In these southern colonies, “most slave owners feared the loss of control that seafaring inevitably involved,” and it was only an “occasional slave” mariner found on board ships sailing out of the Lowcountry and Chesapeake areas. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 238-39.

colonies. Fish caught by slave fishermen filled baskets on the docks of New York, Philadelphia, and Newport to be shipped to the West Indies. In Rhode Island the regularity of cod shipments to Jamaican planters led to the fish being referred to as “Jamaica fish,” as the protein in even nearly rotten grades of dried cod was used as inexpensive food for West Indian slave laborers and was the “leading return cargo” for many North American traders who sought West Indies salt to cure their fish. Colored sailors were listed on Newport ship account lists. Seamen such as Duggo Onions, Silone Jepson, Cape, Caesar Hammond and Currenttee, mariners on the *Adventure*, were among Newport’s colored sailors who worked on large ships crossing the Atlantic, the men who manned the Bristol ferry, the crews of fishing boats that provided employment for many of Newport’s inhabitants, and the watermen on the numerous small boats and shallops that traversed Narragansett Bay.⁸⁰ Regularly being hired out in New York and New Jersey, slave pilots guiding vessels on the island waterways of the New York region were commonplace. The dozens of masters who attempted to sell slaves with maritime experience hoped this skill would be more attractive to buyers than the risk they would use this skill to flee.⁸¹ Ship captains’ “indiscriminate hiring practices” led to hundreds of

⁸⁰ Kross, *The Evolution of an American Town*, 215; *New-York Journal or General Advertiser*, Jan. 8, 1767; Richard E. Bond, “Shaping a Conspiracy: Black Testimony in the 1741 New York Plot,” *EAS* 5:1 (Spring 2007), 77; Horsmanden, *Journal*, 136; Crane, *A Dependent People*, 34 (By 1764, Newport had more than 2,200 mariners); Governor Charles Warren Lippitt, *Rhode Island’s Early Efforts in the Revolution* (Newport, 1896), 4; Smith, *Black Family Life in Philadelphia*, 82; Rommel-Ruiz, “Atlantic Revolutions,” 148; Mark Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History* (New York, 2002), 208-13; “Slavery and Justice: Report of the Brown University Steering Committee,” 11, http://www.brown.edu/Research/Slavery_Justice/documents/SlaveryAndJustice.pdf (accessed Oct. 19, 2006); W. Jeffrey Bolster, “Black Sailors Making Selves,” in *Captive Passage: The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Makings of the Americas* (Washington, DC, 2002), 181-182; *American Weekly Mercury*, Feb. 1, 1742. The reliance of West Indian planters on North American fish is evidenced by Tory Alderman Brook Watson’s opposition to immediate abolition based, in part, on the consequences abolition would have on the trade of North American fish in the West Indies. Albert Boime, *The Art of Exclusion: Representing Blacks in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, DC, 1990), 32.

⁸¹ Examples of sale advertisements of slaves with maritime experience include *New-York Gazette, Revived in the Weekly Post-Boy*, Mar. 14, 28, 1748, Mar. 20, 1749, Oct. 28, 1751; *New-York Gazette*, Mar. 14,

maritime fugitives obtaining berths on privateers, merchant vessels, whaling ships, and oyster vessels. Slave mariners were particularly noticeable in the northern oyster and whaling industries.⁸²

During the eighteenth century, oysters were an important food staple throughout much of the British Atlantic. They were a particularly important component of the northern economy, where oyster captains fought over access and control of oyster beds. Travelers remarked on the “great quantity of the finest oysters” in the Delaware, the “oysters by shiploads” offered for sale in New York City, Raritan Bay having “the best oysters in America,” and there being “great Plenty of Oysters” all along the Connecticut coast. South of Philadelphia, the Chesapeake Bay had a vibrant oyster industry, providing oysters for Philadelphians, residents of other Mid-Atlantic towns, and slaves on the Delmarva Peninsula. Rhode Islanders “greatly benefited by the great plenty of oysters, taken in the bays, coves, rivers and harbours” of that colony. Numerous sellers of northern farms noted that their properties were “very convenient for...Oysters.” Vessels used as “Oyster Boats” were advertised throughout the middle colonies and New England. Their presence was so common that even thieves when caught with stolen boats

1758; *New-York Evening Post*, Aug. 5, 1751; *New-York Mercury*, Sept. 2, 1754, Jan. 10, Feb. 21, 1757, June 20, 1757, Dec. 4, 1758, Jan. 8, Feb. 26, Sept. 10, Oct. 1, 1759, Aug. 4, Nov. 24, 1760, Nov. 2, 1761, Aug. 22, 1763; *New-York Gazette, or the Weekly Post-Boy*, Dec. 5, 1757; *New-York Gazette (Weyman's)*, July 6, 1761, Mar. 3, 1762; *New-York Mercury*, Oct. 19, Dec. 7, 14, 1761, Aug. 16, 1762, Sept. 10, 1764; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, July 9, 16, 1770, Nov. 18, 1771, Apr. 3, 1775, Nov. 25, 1776, July 28, 1777, July 27, 1778, Oct. 26, 1778, Mar. 20, 1780, Dec. 9, 1782; *Newport Mercury*, Nov. 11, 18, 1771; *Royal Gazette (New York)*, Feb. 10, 13, 1779, July 12, Nov. 11, 1780; *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, Oct. 20, 1780.

⁸² *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Nov. 23, 1772; *New-York Gazette and Northern Intelligencer*, Oct. 20, 1783; Hodges, *Root & Branch*, 108; TNA CO 5/1222, p. 136; Foote, *White and Black Manhattan*, 198; CMD. Fish were one of the most important export products New England had during the pre-Revolutionary period. Slave mariners such as Beverly merchant Thomas Davis's Cato were employed in obtaining this critical food source for West Indian slaves. Other slaves, such as Peter Frye's "Negro," were hired out by their masters to help cure the cod before it was shipped south. Christopher Paul Magro, "The New England Cod Fishing Industry and Maritime Dimensions in The American Revolution," Ph. D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2006, iv, 82-3, 125.

claimed to have been innocently seeking oysters. Advertisements contained references to “oyster wenches” and “oyster knives.” William Richards of Philadelphia, Nicholas P. Tillinghaft of Newport, and other sellers of oysters, advertised the bountiful oysters they had for sale, as did owners of taverns and “houses of entertainment,” such as John Hill’s New York “Oyster House” and the free black Cato, whose curried oysters drew many to his New York tavern. The bountiful presence of oysters could be seen in the streets of northern cities and on the tables of northern colonists. They paved some of Philadelphia’s streets and were used as building materials in New York and other northern cities. Oyster shells even played a role, albeit overlooked, in fires that erupted in New York in 1741. In his confession, Adolph Phillipse’s slave Cuffee stated that when he procured a hot charcoal to set fire to his master’s storehouse, he placed the “lighted charcoal in his pocket between two oyster shells,” and then ran from Phillipse’s residence to the storehouse. The veracity of this confession, given as the slave was about to be burnt at the stake, is highly questionable. But the detail of placing a hot charcoal into oyster shells has the ring of truth, an everyday detail that lent credibility to a confession told on pain of death. The constancy of oysters in the lives of northern port residents, whether Cuffee, Adolph Phillipse, or any other northern port resident, was hard to miss. Oyster beds were “within sight” of New York’s docks. When the tide was out, carts were pulled directly out onto nearby oyster beds, with harvested oysters being “driven on shore by one flood tide.” Throughout the eighteenth century, oyster shallops crowded the dock at the end of New York’s Broad Street, and the wharves along the Delaware River. Northern merchants, such as New Yorker Charles Nicolls, regularly bought casks of oysters that were sold among the plentiful “lobsters, sea and fresh-water crabs” at Coenties Slip and

the city's markets. More humble northerners, who regularly ate oysters, purchased oysters from street carts often operated by blacks. The ubiquitous presence of oyster boats in northern waterways was even remarked on by privateer seamen.⁸³

The significance of the northern oyster industry is made apparent by legislative measures taken to protect the integrity of the oyster beds. For example, to safeguard oysters during their egg-laying season, in 1715 New York's government barred harvesting of the beds between May 1st and September 1st. In 1757 the New York legislature reenacted the prohibition on harvesting from May thorough August, due to a belief oysters harvested in the summer were of inferior quality. Rhode Island similarly instituted conservation measures to protect its oyster industries, including in 1766 barring the use of drags that were believed to have "destroy[ed] more oysters then are taken by

⁸³ Kalm, *Travels into North America*, I, 90; *Gentleman's Progress: The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, 1744*, ed. Carl Bridenburgh (Chapel Hill, 1948), 39; E.A. Benians, ed., *A Journal of Thos. Hughes: For his Amusement, & Designed only for his Perusal by the time he attains the Age of 50 if he lives so long* (1779-1789) (Cambridge, 1947), 55; Mark Kurlansky, *The Big Oyster: History on the Half Shell* (New York, 2006), 65, 82; Oscar R. Williams, "The Regimentation of Blacks on the Urban Frontier in Colonial Albany, New York City and Philadelphia," *Journal of Negro History* 63:4 (Oct. 1978), 336-7n10; Thomas F. DeVoe, *Market Book: A History of the Public Markets of the City of New York* (New York, 1970), 1:242-335; Davis, *New-York Conspiracy*, 99; *American Weekly Mercury*, April 8, 1736; *Pennsylvania Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*, Dec. 28, 1761, Jan. 16, 1769, Dec. 15, 1775; *Pennsylvania Packet*, Sept. 14, 1772, Dec. 14, 1772; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 22, 1744; *Newport Mercury*, May 27, 1771, Nov. 21, 1771, July 25, 1774; *Rivington's New-York Gazetteer*, Feb. 10, 1774; *New-York Mercury*, Dec. 11, 1758; Journal of House of Representatives of New York, Nov. 26, 1702, TNA CO 5/1185, 19-20, 31-41; Gov. Lord Cornbury to the Council of Trade and Plantations, July 12, 1703, TNA CO 5/1048, 61, and TNA CO 5/1220, 65-69; Woodward, *Plantation in Yankeeland*, 97; RCRI, Vol. 6, 508; Sanna Feirstein, *Naming New York: Manhattan Places & How They Got Their Names* (New York, 2001), 39, 61. Blacks operation of oyster carts continued despite legislation such as the 1715 New York law that prohibited slaves from selling "any oysters in the City of New York at any time." Williams, "The Regimentation of Blacks on the Urban Frontier," 332. Oysters continued to be harvested in abundant quantities well into the nineteenth century from the Delaware region north to Narragansett Bay. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania*, 471-472; Kurlansky, *The Big Oyster*, 88-139; Bayley E. Marks, "Skilled Blacks in Antebellum St. Mary's County, Maryland," *The Journal of Southern History* 53:4 (Nov. 1987), 542.

As Richard Bond has recently shown, slave trial testimony, although often given under duress, "detailed the utterly ordinary elements of [slaves'] daily lives." Bond, "Shaping a Conspiracy," 65.

In his journal, the American seaman Jacob Nagle remarked that due to the Tories sending out small boats to attack vessels, in January 1781, "not even an oister boat dare leave Philadelphia for the Capes without being run a shore..." *The Nagle Journal: A Diary of the Life of Jacob Nagle, Sailor, From the Year 1775 to 1741*, John C. Dann, ed. (New York, 1988).

them.” Such conservation measures proved successful. As the captain of HMS *Roebuck* would have acknowledged when he ran aground on a Chesapeake Bay oyster bed in 1776, America’s coastal waterways were replete with oyster beds.⁸⁴

Slaves were key players in this vibrant northern oyster industry. While enslaved oystermen may have “dominated the oyster industry” in southern colonies, numerous slaves also worked in northern oyster beds. By the second decade of the eighteenth century, many small boats from New York and New Jersey harvested oysters from Raritan and New York bays, while two hundred boats worked the oyster beds on Long Island’s southern coastline. There was concern on both sides of New York Bay over slaves’ role in the oyster industry as evidenced by New York in 1715, and New Jersey in 1719, barring slaves “from taking or selling oysters.” The economic and social impact of slaves working on these oyster boats was not limited to feeding northern colonists. Boats “loaded with oysters” beyond their capacities overset, causing the death of slave sailors. Oyster captains such as John Cannon, commander of New York’s oyster fleet, became rich from the labor of their maritime slaves. Oysters that Cannon’s slaves and other enslaved mariners, such as the young negro fellow who worked as an “oyster,” harvested were frequently pickled and became part of the stream of provisions that northern vessels were “daily carrying” to the West Indies. Thus, coerced northern maritime labor supplied sustenance for West Indies slaves, and was an important cog in triangular trade between northern ports, the West Indies, and Africa. Caribbean slaves who were fed North

⁸⁴ Charles Nicolls Day Book, 1780-1781, N-YHS; *Independent Reflector*, Nov. 22, 1753; Kurlasky, *The Big Oyster*, 65, 79, 82-83; Kalm, *Travels into North America*, I, 325; Smith, “Traveler’s View of Revolutionary America,” 410-430; Kammen, *Colonial New York*, 281; “The Journal of Madam Knight,” in *Colonial American Travel Narratives* (New York, 1994), ed. by Wendy Martin, 64; Middleton, *From Privileges to Riches*, 213-214; *RCRI*, Vol. 6, 508; *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, Apr. 2, 1776; *New-York Journal*, Apr. 11, 1776. Other legislative measures to protect oyster beds are referenced in *New-York Gazette*, Nov. 29, 1762; *New-York Journal*, Nov. 13, 1767 and *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, Nov. 24, 1770.

American oysters harvested sugar cane that was used to make molasses. Rhode Island and New York merchants purchased the molasses and distilled it into rum. Millions of gallons of such rum were used by North American slavers, mostly Rhode Islanders, to purchase slaves on the African coast. From 1709 to 1775 Rhode Island slavers alone exported 5,213,704 gallons of rum to Africa. While more than ninety-five percent of the slaves purchased by northern ship captains were sold in the Caribbean or southern colonies, 3,255, or 45.6 percent of all African slaves brought to northern ports, were transported in North American ships. The paucity of records in which individual slaves are identified makes it impossible to say with certainty which of these slaves may have found their way onto northern oyster shallows, such as Captain John Hewes's in East New-Jersey. However, given the maritime background of many African slaves imported into northern ports, and that oysters were harvested by Africans all along the West African coast, from Gambia to Angola, it appears likely that African slaves with experience harvesting oysters worked on northern oyster boats. Slave mariners, including those imported from Africa, continued to be central players in the northern oyster industry into the mid-nineteenth century.⁸⁵

A similarly important maritime industry in which northern slaves worked was the whaling industry. With a regular stream of drift whales in the area, during the seventeenth century Nantucket's Native Americans established a vibrant shore whaling sector. With

⁸⁵ Dawson, "Enslaved Watermen," 113, 200; Kurlansky, *The Big Oyster*, 77, 83; Estate Inventory of John Cannon, Jan. 1763, Pintard Papers, Box 8, Folder 14, N-YHS; *American Weekly Mercury*, Oct. 12, 1732; *Pennsylvania Packet*, Nov. 11, 1780; Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle*, 1997), 112n27. In the post-Revolutionary era, Chesapeake oysters were used to reseed northern oyster beds. *The Big Oyster*, 133-134; *American Weekly Mercury*, Feb. 7, 1721, Oct. 12, 1732, Apr. 8, 1736; *New-York Mercury*, Jan. 28, 1754; Michael Sokolow, "'What a Miserable Life, A Sea Faring Life Is': The Life and Experiences of a Nineteenth Century Mariner of Color" (Ph. D. diss., Boston University, 1997); *Archaeological Perspectives on Ethnicity in America: Afro-American and Asian American Culture History*, ed. Robert L. Schuyler (Farmingdale, NY: 1980), 49 (Black maritime community at Sandy Ground, Staten Island, New York engaged in oystering).

the decline in drift whaling, shorefront communities turned to deep sea whaling.

Throughout the eighteenth century New England's and Long Island Sound's whaling industry was a robust economic sector that provided employment to hundreds. Although no colonial whaling ships crews was known to have an all black crew, as had the *Loper* in 1830 when it made what the *Nantucket Inquirer* described as the "Greatest Voyage ever made," fugitives and seamen such as Venture Smith regularly crossed the Sound in search of whaling berths. Nantucket with a sizable fleet was the center of the industry. Between 1715 and 1748 its whaling fleet increased tenfold. In the early decades of the eighteenth century, many members of whaling crews were Nantucket-born Indians, who were described as "very dexterous and nimble upon the water in their whaling boats." Native American seamen such as Redhead Eagle and Joseph Johnson could also be found on naval and merchant vessels. As whaling voyages lengthened, ships and their crews became larger, and disease decimated Nantucket's Native American population, the island could no longer supply the whaling industry with sufficient numbers of mariners.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Eric Jay Dublin, *Leviathan: The History of Whaling in America* (New York, 2007), 66-73, 91, 205-206; Col. Nicholson and Col. Vetch to Earl of Sunderland, June 28, 1709, TNA CO 5/9, 25; W. Jeffrey Bolster, "Putting the Ocean in Atlantic History: Maritime Communities and Marine Ecology in the Northwest Atlantic, 1500-1800," *AHR* 113:1 (Feb. 2008), 34; HMS *Seahorse*, Pay Roll, 1719 - Mar. 1725, TNA ADM 33/316; Barbara W. Brown and James M. Rose, *Black Roots in Southeastern Connecticut* (Detroit, 1980), 214; *American Weekly Mercury*, May 16, 1723 (fifty whaling ships lost at Nantucket due to the "late high Tide"); Demos, "Families in Colonial Bristol, Rhode Island, 42. By 1764 there were only one hundred and forty-eight "Indians" living on Nantucket. Fifty "Negroes" also lived on the island. Robert Johnson, "Black-White Relations in Nantucket," *Historic Nantucket*, Spring 2002, <http://www.nha.org/history/hn/HNracrelations.html> (accessed Feb. 1, 2008). Examples of Nantucket Indians with whaling experience in other northern colonies included Job and Hezekiah, who in 1734 fled from William Leggetts of Westchester by stealing Leggetts' periauger and sailing north. *New-York Gazette*, Mar. 11, 1735. Long Island Sound was a heavily trafficked waterway for maritime fugitives seeking berths in ports on Long Island and New England. Examples of such maritime fugitives include *New-York Gazette*, revived in *Weekly Post-Boy*, Nov. 18, 1751; *New-York Mercury*, Nov. 24, 1760, Oct. 26, 1770, Mar. 21, 1763, Sept. 12, 1774, *New-York Gazette*, Mar. 3, 1755; *New-York Gazette* (Weyman's), Nov. 15, 1762, Aug. 1, 1763; *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, July 26, 1756, Nov. 5, 1770, Sept. 6, 1779; *Newport Mercury*, Nov. 11, 1776; *Royal Gazette* (New York), Aug. 2, 1783; *Connecticut Gazette*, July 18, 1798.

The decline in Nantucket's Native American mariner population should not be understood as an indication that Native Americans stopped working on Atlantic vessels. Native Americans from Connecticut continued to ship out from New London and other New England ports. Jason Mancini, "Beyond

By the 1760s, with Nantucket's Native American population reduced to 136, the majority of crews on Nantucket whaling ships came from various mainland ports, including Newport. On some Nantucket whaling ships mainlanders comprised between seventy and eighty-four percent of the crew. Skilled seamen found little attraction to whaling due to its difficult working conditions. Colored sailors considered whaling a "last resort" due to its physical demands and the legal limits local laws placed on their acquiring tools and land. However, a "great number" of Nantucket whaling crew members were colored seamen such as Cunningham, who was cast ashore on the island. They included Paul Cuffe and his brother who, prior to being captured by enemy forces during the Revolution, had been on three whaling voyages. These colored men comprised a larger proportion of whaling crews than they did within Massachusetts' population. Nantucket whaling crews included both slaves hired out by their masters and fugitive slaves. Those hired out included Quash, who in 1774 was hired out by his Bristol, Rhode Island, master, Nathaniel Briggs, the slaves Gideon Cheat, York, William West, and Prince Boston, whose master's suit to recover his wages for a whaling voyage resulted in the slave being awarded his freedom. Fugitives such as George Gregory were believed to have headed to Nantucket to go whaling. Other slaves used their experience whaling as did Will Johnston in 1775 to find another berth so as to escape his ship captain owner. They did so despite difficult working conditions, because whaling voyages were where slaves "stood [the] least chance" of being recaptured, with many voyages extending for a year or more. Maritime fugitives would have found free Negroes such as Prince on

Reservation: Indian Mariners and Communities of Color from New London County, 1710-1870," 10-13, paper presented at "Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Power in Maritime America" conference, Mystic Seaport Museum of America and the Sea, Oct. 28, 2006. Fugitive slaves found haven in Pequot communities in Mashantucket and Lantern Hill, with Mohegans at Montville and among Niantics in East Lyme, Connecticut. Email Jason Mancini, May 18, 2007.

Nantucket whalers to share their messes with. The significant presence of blacks on New England whaling vessels in the last quarter of the eighteenth century is illustrated by the *Speedwell* from Martha's Vineyard. When captured in 1781, the *Speedwell* was loaded "with casks of blubber" and manned by a crew of ten. Of the ten seamen, seven were described as "Black hands" - Joel Rodgers, John Joel, John Simons, Isack Yoknut, Joseph Pomit, Solomon Weeks and Moses DeWit. By 1790 so many of the African Americans who worked on the island had married Native American women that three-quarters of the island's population was of African-American or Native American ancestry.⁸⁷

Slave mariners were also employed in Newport's slaving trade. In the 1760s and 1770s the Newport slaver *Adventure*'s crew included the colored mariners Duggon Onions, Prince Miller, Currentee, Silione Jepson, Cape, Ceasar Hammond, and Ephraim

⁸⁷ Lamont D. Thomas, *Rise to be a People: A Biography of Paul Cuffe* (Urbana, 1986), 8; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Mar. 3, 1743; Fitts, *Inventing New England's Slave Paradise*, 123; Lisa Norling, "The Sentimentalization of American Seafaring: The Case of New England Whalefishery, 1790-1870," in *Jack Tar in History: Essays in the History of Maritime Life and Labour*, ed. Colin Howell and Richard J. Twomey (Fredericton, 1991), 165n3; Blacks on Nantucket, 1773-1886 Coll, Folder 1, NHA; Isabel Kaldenbach's Inventory of Black Nantucketers of the Nantucket Historical Association, <http://www.nha.org/library/NantucketBlacksdatabase2.htm> (accessed Feb. 1, 2008); Agreement between Aaron Sheffield and Nathaniel Briggs, Sept. 6, 1775, Rev. Pardon Grey Seabury Coll., Spec. Collections, NBFPL; *Connecticut Gazette*, Feb. 17, 1775; *Newport Mercury*, Oct. 20, 1766, Aug. 15, 1774, May 22, 1775; James Farr, "A Slow Boat to Nowhere: The Multi-Racial Crews of the American Whaling Industry," *Journal of Negro History* 68:2 (Spring 1983), 159; Dolan, *Leviathan*, 123, 222, 225; *Speedwell*, New-York Vice Admiralty Court, 1777, TNA HCA 32/454/12; *Speedwell*, New-York Vice Admiralty Court, 1781, TNA HCA 32/454/2; Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront*. Advertisements seeking Indian whaling mariners who had fled their Rhode Island owners continued to be printed through the pre-Revolutionary era. *Newport Mercury*, Feb. 9, 1762. Colored mariners from Nantucket could be found on British naval ships, as well as merchant ships. HMS *Greyhound* Pay Rolls, 1776, TNA ADM 33/345, 520. The crews of American whaling ships had slave mariners, maritime fugitives and free blacks, such as Venture Smith's son, working on them from throughout New England. *New-Hampshire Gazette*, July 1, 1759; *Five Black Lives*, 21. When New Bedford commissioned a statute of a whaler in the first quarter of the twentieth century the town's oldest whaler believed the most suitable model would have been a colored whaler. Sidney Kaplan, "Lewis Temple and the Hunting of the Whale," *NEQ* 26:1 (Mar. 1953), 78.

During the American Revolution, British attacks on American whaling vessels resulted in all American whaling ports, except for Nantucket, ceasing operations. Dolan, *Leviathan*. In the years after the American Revolution many Nantucket whalers relocated to the United Kingdom or to Hudson, New York. Margaret B. Schram, *Hudson's Merchants and Whalers: The Rise and Fall of a River Port 1789-1850* (New York, 2005), 16-43, 1360-147. Keletso E. Atkins believes that between forty and fifty percent of American whaler crews in the South Atlantic at the end of the eighteenth century were colored seamen. Keletso E. Atkins, "The 'Black Atlantic Communication Network': African American Sailors and the Cape of Good Hope Connection," *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 24:2 (1996), 23.

Meves, a "Mulatto seaman." Miller was said to have "stayed away on a ship to Philadelphia." Other Newport slave mariners such as Samuel Freebody's Ben were hired out on African trading voyages. While this work was a "prison stint" that subjected these men to slave insurrections and disease on the African coast, it also provided slave mariners with valuable experience they could then use to find berths as free mariners.⁸⁸

Slaves' presence was particularly noticeable on the docks, wharves, and maritime districts of northern ports. Philadelphia's merchants regularly hired slaves to perform maritime work on the city's docks and wharves where gangs of slaves regularly labored. In May 1762 John Brown hired four Negroes for eight days of rowing his barge. During the summer of 1768 Brown hired Mount's Negro, Low's Negro and Cato to repair his schooner.⁸⁹ Many of Philadelphia's sail makers were slaves, a number of whom were advertised for sale. Some, as did the free black James Forten, put their experience as seamen to use working in sail lofts. Groups of slave ship carpenters were also sold in Philadelphia, some by sellers from as far away as Virginia.⁹⁰ In New York's congested

⁸⁸ Rommel-Ruiz, "Atlantic Revolutions," 148, 215; Robert Champlin, *A Rhode Island Slaver: Trade Book of the Sloop Adventure, 1773-1774* (Providence, 1922); 1774 [1784?] Letter regarding Ben, RIHS, Mss. Vol. 16, p. 97; *Slave Ship*, 228. Rommel-Ruiz mistakenly believed that Ben went to Nova Scotia at the end of the American Revolution. "Atlantic Revolutions," 1. In fact, Samuel Freebody filed a legal claim in 1784 against Captain Brattle for having detained Ben in New York for nine years until the slave was returned to Newport "in August 1784." Letter regarding Ben, RIHS, Mss. Vol. 16, p. 99.

Those slaves who obtained berths on slaving ships, generally found both harsher conditions and better pay. For example, during a voyage in 1762-63, sailors on the Brigantine *Royal Charlotte* received between £559 and £721. Their monthly wages ran from £30 for a boy Edward Strentthfield, to £70 for seamen. In contrast, sailors on the Philadelphian merchant vessel *Mary* had annual incomes of £32. Account Book, Brigantine *Royal Charlotte*, 1762-1763, Slavery Mss. Box 2, N-YHS, Smith, "The Material Lives of Laboring Philadelphians," 164.

⁸⁹ Memorandum Book, John Brown Papers, HSP, AM 8180 Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*, 17. Slaves could also be found working on the docks of ports throughout the Atlantic. Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* (Cambridge, 1987), 29, 62; Foote, *Black and White Manhattan*, 73, 76; Nash, "Slaves and Slaveowners in Colonial Philadelphia, 250-251.

⁹⁰ *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, Feb. 21, 1778; *Pennsylvania Packet or the General Advertiser*, Dec. 6, 12, 19, 26, 1780; Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*, 18-19, 73. Carpenters, such as Norton Minors, were valued by ship captains for their ability to keep ships afloat and were often paid higher wages. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 227; Michael Dash, *Batavia's Graveyard: The True Story of the Mad Heretic Who Led History's Bloodiest Mutiny* (New York, 2002), 402; Hodges, *Root & Branch*, 106.

East Ward, slaves could be found working as stevedores, doing the heavy lifting necessary to load the numerous vessels filling the city's harbor. Ship carpenter Henry Cruger had his slave work with him repairing the sloop *William & Elizabeth* and the brig *General Gage*, while Geradus Comfort's slave Jack worked as a cooper along side Comfort's two sons-in-law in New York. Enslaved men, such as Christopher Duyckinck's slave Boston, made sails for the city's numerous ships. Slave coopers were so frequently hired by white merchants that in 1743, New York's white coopers petitioned the city's Common Council for relief from the "great numbers of slaves in that occupation." Despite the petition slaves continued to be employed as coopers in New York and other northern ports. References to black coopers appeared in slave sale, fugitive, and purchase advertisements, as well as muster rolls from the Seven Years War. Numerous enslaved men like Quam, who fled his Providence master in 1770, or Jack, who lived near Philadelphia's drawbridge, were experienced coopers, whose skills were highly valued.⁹¹ Hundreds of slaves working as sail makers, caulkers, carpenters, rope makers, pilots, and stevedores enabled Newport's ships to sail throughout the Atlantic. Slave labor was also employed by Newport's merchants to outfit and rig the port's ships, including slave ships that brought Africans to Rhode Island. Men such as Dick worked as

⁹¹ Foote, *Black and White Manhattan*, 177; Lepore, *New York Burning*, 264-5; Parish Transcripts, November 1743, folder 156, N-YHS; Middleton, *From Privileges to Riches*, 212; Horsmanden, *The New York Conspiracy*, 129 and "A List of Negroes Committed on Account of the Conspiracy," *New York Colonial Muster Rolls, 1664-1775*, 2 vols., Third Annual Report of the State Historian of the State of New York, Appendix "M," 439-1130, reprinted Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc. (Baltimore, 2000); *New-York Mercury*, Nov. 12, 1764; *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, Aug. 4, 1770 (Quam); *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, Aug. 19, 1777 (Jack). Similar complaints about slave laborers were lodged by Charlestown's shipwrights, and Philadelphiaian tradesmen in 1721. Morris, *Government and Labor in Early America*, 182-5; Charles H. Wesley, "Negro Suffrage in the Period of Constitution-Making," *Journal of Negro History* 32:2 (Apr. 1947), 150. References to slave coopers include *Newport Mercury*, Feb. 21, 1763; *New-York Mercury*, Oct. 15, 1763; *Rivington's New-York Gazetteer*, Aug. 11, 1774; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 3, 1753, Mar. 18, 1755, Dec. 23, 1762; *Pennsylvania Chronicle and General Advertiser*, June 4, 1770. A slave sale advertisement with an image of a slave cooper is contained in *New-York Journal or General Advertiser*, Jun. 23, 1768.

shipwrights alongside their masters. The Negro Anthony and scores of Newport slaves were hired out by their masters to outfit ships. Others, such as Primus and Bonner, worked as crew members on slavers. These slave maritime artisans were part of a large mixed-race work force building and repairing ships in northern ports. Native American men such as ship riggers Thomas Mosset, Gurden Wyaugs, Peter Neshoe, and Daniel Uncas worked alongside slave laborers on the USS *Confederacy*. Slave maritime artisans could also be found working on British naval ships in northern ports. John Juba, a Jamaican-born 25 year old carpenter, and other slaves were hired out by their masters to the navy. Black stevedores, carpenters, caulkers, shipwrights and other maritime tradesmen could also be found in smaller northern ports.⁹²

Slaves' work in the northern maritime industry was frequently divided by gender. As was true along the African coast, it was the men who piloted European vessels, worked as stevedores and ship carpenters, and who were hired out as seamen on blue sea boats, privateers, as well as on coasters. While slave men may have worked on ships and gone to sea, slave women in northern ports, as they did in ports throughout the Atlantic, played key roles in supporting the maritime industry. By providing most of the domestic

⁹²*Newport Mercury*, Dec. 26, 1758; Rommel-Ruiz, "Atlantic Revolutions," 148; John Banister Day Book, 1746-1750, p. 157, 374, 387, 472, 475, 527, RIHS Mss. Coll. 919; Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, 3:135-136; HMS *Albroughs* Pay Book, 1773-1774 TNA ADM 33/428; Frigate *Confederacy* Papers, 1776-1786, HSP, Coll. 222, Folders 18-19; Brig *Kitty* Account Book, 1777, TNA HCA 30/753; Vessel account, Dec. 1767 – June 1768, MSM, VFM 974 (Prince, Caesar, Hammond and a Mulatto, worked on New London sloops *Hope* and *Venus*). A number of the Native American ship riggers who worked on the USS *Confederacy* subsequently sailed on the ship and fugitive slaves signed onto the vessel. *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, Oct. 14, 1780. North American slave mariners were also hired out by their masters to work on British naval ships. (In 1697 Ruth Knile's slave was impressed and died on a British war ship, resulting in Massachusetts legislature granting Knile 20 pounds compensation. Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England*, 188).

Black maritime workers could also be found on the docks of British ports. See, e.g., "Wapping Bristol," Nicholas Pocock, c. 1760, BCM (Pocock shows what appears to be men of African ancestry among Bristol maritime workers in Bristol's Sydenham Trust's shipyard).

work in northern ports, slave women freed whites and slave men to engage in sea-based activities. They also marketed fish, with many fish peddlers being black women.⁹³

While maritime skills were valued in slaves, these skills could also cause one to be sold to the West Indies. Northern slave masters not infrequently sold their coopers, riggers, caulkers and sail makers to new masters in the Caribbean, where their skills were greatly valued. Men such as Norton Minors, "a caulker and ship carpenter" who belonged to two New York merchants, were sold to West Indies masters. In the West Indies these men joined the scores of other slaves who performed such maritime work, including for northern colonists with business ties in the islands. Other northerners, such as Nathan Allen, used their slaves as mariners on voyages to the West Indies or sent them there to work in the maritime trades.⁹⁴

With the Admiralty having difficulties in convincing white artificers to go to the West Indies, the British Navy regularly used slaves to perform caulking, rope making, sail making and other critical repair work. So many Jamaican whites hired their slaves to the navy that naval officials believed many slave owners were "subsist[ing] chiefly on their Negro's Pay" from naval work. By 1773 British authorities estimated that fifteen percent of 170,000 Jamaican slaves were engaged in maritime trades. Among the slaves

⁹³ Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving "Port" 1727-1892* (Athens, OH, 2004), 76-77.

⁹⁴ *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Nov. 12, 1770; *New-York Weekly Post Boy*, Nov. 20, 1760; Opinion of the Jamaica Agents on Petition of Jeffrey Yellowtown to Council of Trade and Plantations, Mar. 8, 1697, TNA CO 137/4, No. 48, 48I and CO 138/9, p. 79 (referring to caulkers and ship carpenters as "most valuable"), TNA T 1/490/159, Sept. 24, 1772 Survey of Negroes Employed in the Government Service; Allen Family Collection, Folder 1, General Merchandise Ledger, 1758-1766, AAS; George Thomas Jan. 6, 1742 Letter, TNA ADM 354/117/208. The unwillingness of British caulkers to work in Jamaica and other West Indies islands led the British Navy to regularly employ slave caulkers. Receipt of warrants for shipwrights, carpenters and caulkers, Aug. 8-9, 1741, TNA ADM 106/939/21, 69; TNA ADM 106/901, fol. 22 (John Cudjoe, a slave, employed as caulker by Navy at Port Royal). Slaves' maritime skills were also valued by Spanish West Indian colonial officials. Evelyn Powell Jennings, "War as the 'Forcing House of Change': State Slavery in Late-Eighteenth Century Cuba," *WMQ* 62:3 (Jul. 2005), 411-440. As Dominica's governor noted, the "assistance" of Negro slaves was indispensable to the British control of its West Indies colonies. July 29, 1775 letter from Thomas Shirley to Treasury. TNA T1/513/317-318.

who worked in the King's Navy Yard in Jamaica was Cudjoe, a leader in the island's 1745 slave uprising. As Gabriel Bray's mid-1770s painting depicts, Admiral Davers and other naval officials in Antigua regularly authorized the employment of Phillip, Norton, Charley and scores of other slaves repairing men-of-war (Illustration 2). Slave caulkers were similarly used in St. Lucia to repair British men-of-war. The presence of slaves performing maritime work was common throughout the British Atlantic world, making it likely that merchants with commercial connections throughout the Atlantic would move and sell their maritime skilled slaves to places where there was need for such skills.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Nov. 3, 1743 Adm. Davers letter to the Navy Office, NMM ADM/B/123; Jan. 17, 1757 Adm. Davers letter to Navy Bd., NMM ADM/B/141; Jan. 21, 1757 Adm. Davers letter to Navy Bd., NMM ADM/B/142; Duncan Grant Crewe, "British Naval Administration in the West Indies, 1739-1748," (Ph. D. diss., University of Liverpool, 1978), Appendix A (Negroes worked at the Navy's Port Antonio Dockyard, Jamaica); G. Hinde, Account of King's Negroes working at the yard in Port Royal, Jamaica, 8 Nov. 1738, TNA ADM 106/91/26; William Pencak, "Maritime Trades," in *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1619-1895: From the Colonial Period to the Age of Frederick Douglas*, <http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0004/e0362?hi=2&highlight=1&from=quick&pos=1> (accessed Oct. 9, 2006); Sept. 24, 1772, Survey of Negroes Employed in the Government Service, TNA T 1/490/159 (313 Negroes in the service of the British Navy on Tobago, St. Vincent, Grenades and Dominica); Muster Roll, HMS *Beaver*, April 1-13, 1771, TNA ADM 36/7331 (20 Antiguan Negroes caulkers employed by *Beaver*); Nov. 3, 1743, Adm. Davers Letter, NMM ADM/B/142; HMS *Grafton* Lts. Logbook, 1780, NMM ADM/L/G/127; HMS *Beaver* Muster Roll, 1776, TNA ADM 36/7331; HMS *Perseus* Muster Roll, 1779, TNA ADM 36/8172; Harry Scarupa, "A Maritime Heritage," *American Visions* 12:4 (Aug. 1997), 50-52 (slaves employed in Bermuda naval dockyard). Slaves were regularly employed by the Royal Navy wherever its ships docked. For example, when HMS *Blonde* was docked in Charlestown in 1780-81, Monkey and Hercules and scores of other slave shipwrights and carpenters repaired the ship. HMS *Blonde* Muster Roll, 1781-1782, TNA ADM 36/9256. Slaves were also employed by the Spanish Navy in its Havana dockyards. Evelyn Powell Jennings, "War as the 'Forcing House of Change': State Slavery in late Eighteenth-Century Cuba," *WMQ* 62:3 (Jul. 2005): 411-440.



Illustration 2. Gabriel Bray, “A Ship Hoved Down and Burnt Off,” c. 1771, NMM BHC1116.

At the same time that maritime work provided northern slaves with knowledge of shipping and the larger Atlantic, bondsmen in certain occupations tended to be rooted in single locations and moved infrequently. Blacksmithing was one such trade. Blacksmiths were sold and sought after in each of the large northern ports. Some of these men had worked in the numerous forges of the Chesapeake, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, where they were the primary labor force in the Spotswood, Charming, and North East forges, and the Sharpsborough Iron-Works. Others had worked on farms in adjoining rural areas,

while a third group of these men spent most of their lives working for blacksmiths in cities. With skills that were highly valued, these men frequently remained with the same owner over extended periods of time. They were generally sold only when economic conditions were poor. The long-term effects of blacksmithing, like that of many trades, were evidenced in slaves' bodies.⁹⁶ Some enslaved blacksmiths such as Stephen Sampson found their "left hand wrist[s were] very weak." This disability resulted from slaves holding heavy pieces of metal in their left hands as they hammered and shaped the metal with their right hands.⁹⁷ While Sampson's owner may have found a buyer for him, it is not likely it would have been a mariner. Hands that could not grab a sail in stormy weather or could not lift heavy loads onto a vessel were seen by ship captains as conditions disqualifying men from the decks of ships. Blacksmiths with disabilities were rare among maritime fugitives, even those who dreamed of a life at sea.⁹⁸

Should slaves, whether blacksmiths, rope makers, or even chimney sweeps, obtain maritime skills, their value to their masters greatly increased. As Olaudah Equiano's narrative makes abundantly clear, slave mariners were often among the most valuable assets slave masters owned. Equiano faithfully served his master Lieutenant Pascal during the Seven Years War. Returning to England, the young slave believed his service entitled him both to freedom and the same prize monies that others on Pascal's ship had

⁹⁶ *American Weekly Mercury*, June 2, 1737; *New-York Mercury*, Feb. 26, 1759; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 30, 1756, July 30, 1777; *Newport Mercury*, Mar. 26, 1764, Nov. 11, 1765, June 15, 1767, Apr. 19, 1773; *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, Jan. 5, 1771 and Apr. 27, 1772; *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, Oct. 21, 1779, Dec. 6, 1780, June 25, 1782; *Pennsylvania Chronicle and General Advertiser*, Oct. 10, 1768, Aug. 29, 1772; *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, Dec. 12, 1774, May 9, 1780; *New-Jersey Gazette*, Aug. 25, 1779; Bezis-Selfa, "Slavery and the Disciplining of Free Labor in the Colonial Mid-Atlantic Iron Industry," 271-272; Simon Newman, *Embodied History: The Lives of the Poor in Early Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 2003), 106.

⁹⁷ *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, Mar. 31, 1764.

⁹⁸ An example of a blacksmith imagining a life at sea is Joseph Haight, who in 1772 drew a picture of the Schooner *Defyance* with a reference to "Jonathan Haight, Commander" in his account book. Joseph Haight Account Book, 1771-1779, AAS. Such imaginings did not always lead to a life at sea; none of the maritime fugitives from Philadelphia, New York or Newport was a blacksmith.

received. To his dismay, Equiano found that Pascal had sold him to a merchant ship captain. Subsequently resold at Montserrat by the captain, Equiano worked as a slave mariner for three years. Through adroit trading on voyages in the West Indies and North America, Equiano accumulated sufficient funds to purchase his freedom. When Equiano then approached his master, Robert King of Philadelphia and Montserrat to buy his freedom, King expressed considerable reluctance to lose a bondsman who had provided returns far in excess of his purchase price.⁹⁹

Equiano's story was not unique. Whites in northern ports repeatedly found value in using their bondsmen as mariners. Slave masters such as Samuel Lynde in Boston and Cornelius Wynkoop and Evert Bancker from New York hired their slaves onto privateers. In doing so, they frequently found themselves enriched from the prize monies their slaves had earned. On one voyage alone, Bancker obtained a more than one hundred and thirty-five percent return on his quarter-share investment in a slave he sent privateering. Masters publicly advertised the productivity of their slave mariners. For example, in 1780, an anonymous New York slave master attempted to entice buyers for his slave mariner by noting the slave "has paid his Master upwards of £100 cash per year" during the previous five years. John Yeates and other Philadelphians also "shipt out" their slaves to ship captains.¹⁰⁰ The 1763 *Newport Mercury* advertisement that indicated that a buyer

⁹⁹ Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavas Vassa, An African, The African Written By Himself* (New York, 1791), reprint Early American Digital Archive, http://www.mith2.umd.edu/eada/html/display.php?docs=equiano_narrative.xml&action=show (accessed Feb. 5, 2008), 77. Slave mariners who sought to make money through trading often found their enslaved status and dark-skin worked to their disadvantage. Like Equiano, Venture Smith complained of being regularly being "taken advantage of by people whom I traded." Each man encountered the reality that no matter how competent a mariner they might be, they were often treated on land as second-class citizens. *Five Black Lives*, 22-23; *Equiano's Travels: The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavas Vassa the African*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York & Washington, D.C., 1967), 78.

¹⁰⁰ July 7, 1743 Letter John Baley to John Yeates, John Yeates Coll., HSP, Coll. 740. A master's entitlement to his bondsmen's prize monies was recognized by the Admiralty. Apr. 20, 1747, Vol. 1, Anno.

“Wanted, 5 Negro Men, not exceeding 25 Years of Age; 3 of them Sailors, and two Masters of the Cooper’s Trade” was hardly unusual. Slaves both enriched their masters and freed them from manual labor to engage in other profitable entrepreneurial activities. Hiring out slaves onto boats was not limited to those with masters in large port cities. Smaller coastal ports, such as those in Monmouth County, New Jersey, also had vessels with hired out slaves working as mariners.¹⁰¹ Northern slaves with maritime skills not infrequently were able to leverage their value to negotiate with slave owners to temper the masters’ control over them. As a result, these mariners “lived existences of privileged exploitation.”¹⁰²

Slave Mobility

If the movement of peoples was, in Bernard Bailyn’s insightful characterization, the “transforming phenomenon” of colonial British North America, mobility was particularly critical to the operation of North American cities. In an era of immense changes that Edmund Burke described as “the great map of mankind [being] unrolled at once,” immigrants, ships, refugees, and goods continually entered and left these ports. So did many slaves. Numerous slaves imported into northern colonies came with considerable knowledge of the larger Atlantic world. They included Muslims from Senegambia, mariners from the Dutch and Danish West Indies, European-trained blacksmiths, and considerable numbers of Spanish Negroes. Men like Robert and London

62, p. 60, Opinions of Sir George Lee on Maritime Law, 1700-1758, HSP Coll. 361. West Indies privateers also employed slave seamen. For example, in 1745 the privateer *Dowdall* employed 14 slave mariners due to many of the ship’s crew having been impressed. Richard Pares, “The Manning of the Navy in the West Indies, 1702-63” in his *The Historian’s Business and Other Essays* (Oxford, 1961), 173-97.

¹⁰¹ Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 8; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, July 10, 1780; *Royal Gazette* (New York), July 12, 1780; Cornelius Wynkoop to Evert Bancker, Jr., Bancker Papers, N-YHS; Bancker Account Book, 1760-1765, June 1760 and August 1761 entries; *Newport Mercury*, Feb. 7, 1763; Lawrence William Towner, *A Good Master Well Served: Masters and Servants in Colonial Massachusetts, 1620-1750* (1998), 112; Hodges, *Slavery & Freedom in the Rural North*, 12.

¹⁰² Dawson, “Enslaved Swimmers and Divers in the Atlantic World,” 1348; Hodges, *Root & Branch*, 110.

from St. Christopher's, who were brought to northern ports on trips with their masters, came with an understanding of the larger Atlantic world. Slaves' lives in the northern colonies, despite strict social and legal controls, involved regular movement around and between those cities.¹⁰³ In contrast to southern plantation slaves who learned slowly and incompletely about whites and their ways, slaves living in New York, Newport and Philadelphia resided in cosmopolitan settings. Slaves, whether cartmen or chimney sweeps, moved about the ports almost at will in the course of their work. As one master observed, bondsmen "never staid long in one place" and were said to have more free time than their northern rural counterparts. Such freedom of movement made some slaves express "Disgust to the Country Life." Slaves' movements brought them in frequent contact with peoples from throughout the Atlantic world, providing them with knowledge of the opportunities available elsewhere. This mobility is reflected in newspaper dispatches concerning slaves finding lost watches on docks, shooting bears in the outlying marshes, bringing goods to market, and drowning while at sea. One European

¹⁰³ Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America* (New York, 1988), 4-5; Linda Colley, *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh: A Woman in World History* (New York, 2007), xxv; Irving H. Bartlett, *From Slave to Citizen: The Story of the Negro in Rhode Island* (Providence, 1954), 14; Edward H. Knoblach, "Mobilizing Provincials for War: The Social Composition of New York Forces in 1760," *New York History* 78 (1987), 147-72; *New-York Mercury*, Feb. 26 and Sept. 10, 1759; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Post-Boy*, Aug. 29, 1768; Christopher Hodson, "'A Bondage So Harsh': Acadian Labor in the French Caribbean, 1763-1766," *EAS* 5:1 (Spring 2007), 97-98 (Acadian refugees sent to New York). Movement of peoples into and out of northern cities increased during the second half of the eighteenth century and maritime fugitives seeking opportunities in northern ports were part of a trend of increased mobility among North Americans. Douglas Lamar Jones, "The Strolling Poor: Transiency in Eighteenth century Massachusetts," *Journal of Social History* 8:3 (Spring 1975): 28-54. Scotland, a Negro detained in Westchester County, New York, typifies this mobility. Originally from the West Indies, he came to Philadelphia before having been first taken up in Connecticut and then captured again in New York. *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Apr. 12, 1773.

As Paul Lovejoy has demonstrated, enslaved Muslims transported to the Americas tended to have come from urban settings in Africa and were experienced in dealing with peoples of varied cultural backgrounds. Paul Lovejoy, "The Urban Background of Enslaved Muslims in the Americas," *Slavery and Abolition* 26:3 (Dec. 2005), 349-376. It is not clear how many Muslim were imported into northern colonies, but given that Muslim slaves were transported from Senegambia and northern colonies imported considerable numbers of Senegambian slaves, it is reasonable to conclude that Muslim Senegambian slaves were in northern ports in the eighteenth century. Michael Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (Cambridge, 2005), 371.

traveler observing the multitudes of blacks moving about New York's streets commented, "it rather hurts a European eye to see so many Negro slaves on the streets."¹⁰⁴ The daily routines of slaves such as William Chancellor's three sail makers required them to purchase needles and other supplies throughout the Philadelphia's Southwark and Center City districts, work in Chancellor's sail loft, and make deliveries of sails to ships docked at wharves along the Delaware River. Cornelius Van Ranst's sail maker John, the four Philadelphia slaves who in 1768 were described as having had "eight to twelve years" experience working as sail makers, and other slaves in northern ports were often unsupervised by their masters for extended periods of time. Slaves' movement was also a function of masters frequently hiring them out to other whites for temporary employment. Hired out over time to a number of different employers, slaves gained familiarity with a variety of neighborhoods, including ports' maritime quarters. Owners were not hesitant to hire slaves to work on ships, including privateers. Thus, when the New York merchant George Janeway lacked work for his two slaves Sharp and Jackie he hired them out for journeys on privateers. Similarly, during the Seven Years War, Dr. Amos Throop of Providence hired out his slave Newport Greene as a mariner, while in 1775, John Littlefield of New Shoreham, Rhode Island, sent his mustee slaves Jeffrey and Titus "to

¹⁰⁴ *New-York Gazette* (Weyman's), Sept. 26, 1763; *New-York Mercury*, Apr. 13, 1767; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Post-Boy*, June 16, 1768, Nov. 24, 1777; *New-York Journal or General Advertiser*, Mar. 19, 1772; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 8, 1774; Frank J. Klingberg, *Anglican Humanitarianism in Colonial New York* (Richmond, 1940), 127. Patrick M'Robert quoted in *Root & Branch*, 108. Slaves in northern ports were part of a larger Atlantic world peopled by many men "who had been elsewhere or who [were] on [their] way home" or for whom migration became a way of life. Alison Games, "Beyond the Atlantic: English Globetrotters and Transoceanic Connections," *WMQ* 63:4 (Oct. 2006), 679; Jones, "The Strolling Poor," 28, 39 (majority of transients in Massachusetts seaports were from outside the colony). As Frank J. Griffin and Cheryl J. Fish have noted, much of the African-American experience in the Americas was "characterized by migration, mobility, and travel." Griffin and Fish, *A Stranger in the Village: Two Centuries of African-American Travel Writing* (Boston, 1998), xiii.

sea on a whaling voyage,”¹⁰⁵ Rather than hire out their slaves, some masters permitted their bondsmen to seek work with others. As one frustrated master noted, some slaves used their moving about looking for work as a “pretence” by which they escaped.¹⁰⁶

The movement of slaves also involved traveling with their masters between residences in the city and in the country. Men like William Smith and Cadwallader Colden frequently moved their slaves between city and country residences. Government officials like Governor Shirley traveled across the Atlantic with their slaves. Elizabeth Drinker and other white women had slaves drive them around and between northern cities. James Somerset, the subject of Justice Mansfield’s famous *Somerset* decision, and other slaves from southern colonies found themselves brought north to ports such as Boston and New York, where they moved about running errands for their masters. Slaves in New York and Philadelphia, like many Mid-Atlantic colonists, often viewed New Jersey as a “mere pathway between” the two cities. Evidence of slaves as having been in distant cities, and traveling at sea or on ferries with their masters can be found in the frequent fugitive slave advertisements or in newspaper dispatches. Although enslaved,

¹⁰⁵ Charles Nicolls Account Book, 1758-1760, N-YHS; Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 47; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Nov. 24, 1777; James Lydon, *Pirates, Privateers and Profits* (Upper Saddle River, NJ, 1970), 44-48, 193-4, 242; *Newport Mercury*, Oct. 9, 1775; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 5, 1743, Aug. 29, 1754; *Pennsylvania Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*, May 9, 1768; *New-York Gazette or Weekly Post-Boy*, July 24, 1758. See *American Weekly Mercury*, June 18, 1730; Ann Elizabeth Schuyler Account Book, 1737-1769 (BV Sec. Schuyler, N-YHS, 111 [May 1, 1737] and 185 [April 12, 1740]); James Pitcher Ledger, 1766-1782, N-YHS for examples of slaves being hired out. See Thomas Witter Ledger Account Book, New York City, 1747-1768, N-YHS, Jan. and July, 1747 and May, 1750; William D. Faulkner, Brewer, Ledger Book D, 1773-1790, N-YHS; and Inventory and Administration of the Estate of Adolph Philipse, NYPL for examples of slaves hired out as sailors. Hiring out slaves was also a common practice in Philadelphia and Newport. Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 11, 15-16, 286n27. Examples of hiring out in those cities include *Newport Mercury*, Feb. 6, 1764, Jan. 9, Feb. 3, 1775, Sept. 28, Nov. 8, 1776, Jan. 2, 1778; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 4, 1768; *Pennsylvania Chronicle & Universal Advertiser*, June 3, 1771, Nov. 7, 1772; and *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, Mar. 1, 1777, July 11, 1778. The uncommonness of slaves working their entire lives in one trade was sometimes cited by their owners as a remarkable trait. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Oct. 11, 1770 (“brought him up to that business only”).

¹⁰⁶ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 8, 1742. “Pretence” that assisted slave mobility also included some whites engaging in subterfuge to facilitate slaves traveling after dark. Besides providing a return on their capital investments, hiring of slaves also was believed to reduce the chances of enslaved individuals engaging in acts of resistance. Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 101, 185.

these men and women were often “international travelers,” whether as sailors on privateers, servants accompanying their masters abroad, or human chattel being transported to new masters in foreign colonies.¹⁰⁷

Slaves’ movement around and through ports had limits. Local concerns, imperial mandates and the forces of nature restricted and shaped slave mobility. Outbreaks of epidemics kept residents of outlying regions from coming to northern cities. In 1746, when a smallpox outbreak occurred in New York, trade in the city came to a near standstill, for “the Small pox keeps the Country people & ye [sic] Indians from Town.”¹⁰⁸ Wars also closed ports. British blockades during the American Revolution and temporary embargos during King William’s War left ships and slaves stranded in Philadelphia, New York, and Newport. In the 1760s and 1770s non-importation embargos also halted movement into and out of northern ports. Severe weather conditions similarly restricted slave mobility. During the winter of 1741-1742 frigid weather and repeated snow storms kept slaves and most other New Yorkers indoors.

Despite such limits, slaves’ mobility concerned whites and led to legislative enactments that sought to restrict their movement. Slave masters and colonial officials

¹⁰⁷ Smith, “Traveller’s View,” 343. Examples of such movement between residences are described in *New-York Mercury*, and Flag of Truce, Aug. 2, 1778, Aaron Burr Correspondence, Folder 3, Burr Corr., AAS; Weiner, “Evidence on Somerset’s Case,” 123-124; Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Champaign, 1995), 251. Dispatches concerning slaves traveling with their masters by sea include *New-York Weekly Post-Boy*, Apr. 10, 1749; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Feb. 8, 1768; *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, Jan. 9, 1781; *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker*, ed., Elaine Forman Crane (Boston, 1991), I: 220. When Governor Shirley traveled to England in 1754 he was accompanied by his slave Scipio Shirley. HMS *Mermaid* Muster Roll, 1754, TNA ADM 36/6075. Even the Chief Justice of New York’s Supreme Court had to have his slave transported back from Rhode Island when the bondsman was accused of participating in the alleged 1741 conspiracy to burn down New York. Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 202.

¹⁰⁸ Abigail Franks to Naphtali Franks, December 4, 1746, in *The Lee Max Friedman Collection of American Jewish Colonial Correspondence: Letters of the Franks Family, 1733-1748*, ed. Leo Hershkowitz and Isidore S. Meyer (Waltham, Mass., 1968), 132-134, quoted in Gronim, “Imaging Inoculation,” 252. Maritime fugitives who previously had smallpox, such as William Derham, were able to survive the smallpox outbreaks that took large numbers of colonists. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, November 15, 1753.

were particularly concerned that the sea provided an outlet for slaves' escape. They expressed apprehension as early as 1702 that bondsmen, such as the four black and Indian slaves indicted for stealing a boat, were fleeing New York. To restrict the steady stream of fugitives leaving via the sea, New York's Slave Code made it illegal for ship captains to assist or hire runaways. Twelve years later Rhode Island passed similar legislation. The problem of slaves fleeing via the sea was a persistent problem. By 1757 Rhode Island legislators felt compelled to enact legislation assessing a £500 fine against commanders of privateers and other ship captains who carried slaves out of the colony. That these mandates did not succeed is evidenced both by the more than seven hundred northern fugitives slave masters identified as maritime fugitives and the individual story of Toby. In 1771 Toby's master, John Bayard, advertised the slave's flight from the Philadelphia workhouse. Not only had Toby previously escaped and gotten to New York by a ship, but his master was certain the enterprising bondsman was headed to a Delaware River dock to set sail for the West Indies. Legislative enactments and owners' desires were not to keep Toby and scores of other northern slaves from setting off on voyages they hoped would free them.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Kenneth Scott, *New York Court Records, 1684-1760: Genealogical Data from the Court of Quarter Sessions* (Washington, DC, 1982), 1-19; MCC 1:222-24, 276-77; CRRI, 4:179, 6:65; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 13-15; *New-York Weekly Journal*, 1771. New York's Slave Code was enacted, in part, due to a concern that "a Number of slaves in the City of New York ... have been found oftentimes guilty of Confederating together in running away." Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York, 1943), 168-69. As is detailed in Chapter Two, colonial officials' efforts to restrict slave mobility, was not limited to their flight via the sea. Many regulations were enacted that sought to limit slaves' access to alcohol and to gather in groups. As with legislation concerning flight via the sea, these regulations proved to be ineffective. See, e.g., Hall, "Maritime Maroons," 484-85 and Pedro L.V. Welch, "Madams and Mariners: Expressions of Self-Confidence Among Free Coloured Women in Barbados, 1750-1834," paper presented at Conference of the Association of Caribbean Historians, April 7-12, 1997 for a description of efforts by Danish and British colonial officials to control maritime flight.

When slaves did work at sea, whites were concerned that "it is a very dangerous thing to let a negro know navigation." Whites and slaves each understood that the sea symbolized "possibilities for mobility, escape and freedom." Julius S. Scott, III, "Afro-American Sailors and the International Communication Network: The Case of Newport Bowers," in *Jack Tar in History*, 38-9. In the nineteenth

Attempts to restrict slave movement were not limited to seeking to control slaves who sought to flee on waterways. New York's Slave Code, one of the most comprehensive in the northern colonies, barred innkeepers from selling liquors to slaves, restricted slaves' movement after dark, prohibited gatherings of more than three slaves, and forbade slaves from selling food in the streets. For example, in 1715, Peter the Doctor, a free black believed to have been involved in the 1712 slave uprising, was convicted of entertaining the slaves of prominent New York merchants. These restrictions included requiring any slave out after nine o'clock at night to carry a lantern and authorized white New Yorkers to stop and whip any slave found in the city's "streets, lanes and alleys" after dark without the required lantern.¹¹⁰ South Kingston, in the Narragansett area of Rhode Island was similarly concerned about the movement of slaves. In 1718, if a slave was found in the residence of a South Kingston free black, both would be whipped. The town also enacted a law that authorized any constable to seize all slaves attending Election Day gatherings. Pennsylvania similarly enacted statutes attempting to control the movement of slaves. In 1705 large gatherings of slaves were prohibited. Any slave found more than ten miles from home without a pass was to be whipped.¹¹¹

These efforts at controlling slave movement had little success. Slave defiance of whites ran the gamut from visiting friends without a master's permission to punching

century southern slave maritime workers' mobility would enable men, such as Thomas J. Jones, to assist their wives and children to flee via the sea and then escape themselves. Cecelski, *Waterman's Song*, xv.

¹¹⁰ Queen v "Doctor Peter," Aug. 2, 1715, Court of General Quarter Sessions, County Clerk's Office; *New-York Weekly Post-Boy*, Feb. 10, 1755; *Rivington's New-York Gazetteer*, Dec. 9, 1773; *Root & Branch*, 77, 88.

¹¹¹ Rommel-Ruiz, "Atlantic Revolutions, 117; Watson, *Annals*, 263; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 14; Donnan, *Documents*, II:422. Unauthorized slave gatherings were common in other North American colonies. See, e.g., L.H., Roper, "The 1701 'Act for the better ordering of Slaves': Reconsidering the History of Slavery in Proprietary South Carolina," *WMQ* 64:2 (Apr. 2007), 406; *Boston Evening-Post*, Jan. 16, 1732

New York City Mayor William Merritt in the face when he sought to disperse a group of loud slaves. Whipping the Mayor's attacker at "every corner of every street" may have silenced the assailant, but it failed to end slave violence. The 1712 Slave Insurrection in New York City met with a similarly brutal response after eight whites were killed and a score wounded. The burning, hanging, and breaking alive on the wheel of participants in the insurrection may have quelled the uprising, but it did not serve to end slave misbehavior. By 1724 New York's High Sheriff complained that the law "for regulating Negro and Indian Slaves in the Night time" was not being enforced. In 1730 the New York Assembly claimed that "many Mischiefs have been Occasioned by the too great Liberty allowed to Negro and other Slaves." Such complaints gave rise to a new Slave Code that required slaves out after dark to carry a lantern, forbade slaves from gathering in groups of more than three or to drink in taverns without the permission of their owners. Pennsylvania showed similar concerns over slave gatherings. In 1717, 1726, 1738, 1741, 1750, and 1751, unruly Sunday gatherings of slaves at the Burial Ground and at the Court House caused whites to call for the suppression of such group activities. Like the 1681 order issued in New York against "Negros and Indian Slaves their frequent meetings and Gathering themselves together in Great numbers on the Lords Day," these attempts to control slave gatherings largely failed. Thus, while whites may have desired and sought to regulate slave behavior, slaves frequently found avenues for resistance and community building.¹¹²

¹¹² Remonstrance of February 2, 1724, Misc. Mss. Dugdale, William, N-YHS; *MCC*, 1:92 (Oct. 1681); Manuscript Records of the Court of Assizes, New York Municipal Archives, 35-36 (1682 order against slaves congregating together); Minute Book of the New York Supreme Court of Judicature, 1693-1701, County Clerk's Office, New York City; *Colonial Laws*, II:560, October 29, 1730.

Perhaps the case that best illustrates the successes and limits of whites' ability to control slave movement was the struggle between New York colonial officials and the city's slaves that arose from slaves' transporting water. While "man [may] ha[ve] always been a slave to water," as one historian of New York's water supply claims, it was New York City's slaves that enabled the port's colonial elites to have clear potable water. With the Hudson brackish up to Haverstraw, New Yorkers lacked ready access to fresh water. Ship captains, travelers and residents all complained of the city ground water's saltiness. Residents used rain cisterns and shallow wells to provide themselves with drinking water. Despite the construction of several deeply dug public wells, an increasing population polluted the ground waters by dumping "Tubbs of Odour" into the city's streets. The numerous complaints about the foul well water led many residents to limit their intake of the city's water. Most New Yorkers instead drank beer or rum, or boiled water for tea. The fortunate few, the city's elites, had their slaves fetch fresh unspoiled "tea water" from wells on the outskirts of the city. This practice of obtaining clear water for their well-off masters required slaves to walk from the East and Dock Wards, where most of the city's rich merchants resided, across the city to the furthest western reaches of the city. There they went to Gerardus Comfort's house next to his dock on the Hudson River, where the cooper dispensed "Comfort's Tea Water," i.e., fresh water, from a well. Overseeing the operation of Comfort's shop was his slave Jack. The slaves who regularly made this walk included Alderman John Pintard's Caesar, and Cuffee, the bondsman of prominent merchant Adolph Philipse. These long sojourns across the city enabled Caesar, Cuffee and many other slaves to meet slaves and free blacks and develop and maintain networks of friendship, kinship, and information. Even slaves who had not been at

Comfort's were told of "what had been talked of." Those fetching water were also believed to have conspired together when "great numbers of them [sic] meet in the same place." With Gerardus Comfort frequently absent from his shop and Jack left in charge, "great numbers" of slaves who came to Comfort's establishment to "fetch tea water" socialized and perhaps even conspired, away from whites' prying eyes. While some slave masters may have "made a noise" about their bondsmen staying at Comfort's for extended periods and not all slaves had the "great deal of idle time" that Cuffee did, fetching water at Comfort's provided a number of slaves with the opportunity to frequent John Hughson's tavern, directly next door to Comfort's well. As Joseph Murray's slave Adam noted about Murray's other slave Jack, it was "suspected that he had been at Hughson's" after going to fetch water at Comfort's because Jack "was generally drunk" when he returned from his jaunt to Comfort's. Among those who gathered at Hughson's were rural slaves visiting the city's markets. Some of these out-of-town slaves claimed that geographical distance meant they could not have taken part in the conspiracy to burn the city, a defense the Supreme Court summarily dismissed.¹¹³

With no primary source of the events of 1741 other than the self-serving summary of the trial testimony compiled by Chief Justice Horsmanden, the existence of a

¹¹³ *New-York Weekly Journal*, June 29, 1741; Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 78, 103, 105, 127, 180-1, 185, 191-2, 196, 201. Although the slave of a Supreme Court Justice, Cuffee believed he "could come at what he pleased." While such a statement might be viewed as boasting, it has the ring of truth to it given both Cuffee's earlier criminal activities as a member of the Geneva Gang. Some of the rural slaves were said to have been brought to Hughson's by the tavern owner pretending to leave town to fetch firewood with his sleigh.

Cadwallader Colden noted that Philadelphians were healthier than New Yorkers, in part, because "the water in [New York] is not near so good as there." Charles H. Weidner, *Water for a City: A History of New York City's Problem from the Beginning to the Delaware River System* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1974), 1, 14; Gerard T. Koeppe, *Water for Gotham: A History* (Princeton, 2000), 21, 26-27; Davis, *The New-York Conspiracy*, 101-102; Bond, "Shaping a Conspiracy," 77. Alexander Hamilton commented on New York's water being "hard and brackish." Hamilton, *Gentleman's Progress*, 88. Although Herbert Aptheker refers to New York City slaves conspiring in 1740 to "kill their masters by poisoning the water supply," there is no contemporary account of this occurring. Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, 192.

conspiracy, who may have taken part in it, and the nature of the plot, have been the subject of numerous conflicting scholarly interpretations.¹¹⁴ What is known with certainty

¹¹⁴ Among modern commentators on the 1741 trials Edgar McManus and Winthrop Jordan viewed the events through the prism of whites being in “the grip of hysteria.” McManus, *A History of Negro Slavery in New York*; Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1555-1812* (Chapel Hill, 1968), 117-118. While Herbert Aptheker also saw white hysteria in the events, he, like Eugene Genovese, concluded that a slave conspiracy existed. Herbert Aptheker, *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* (New York, 1951), 4; Eugene Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge, 1979), 26, 42. Ferenc M. Szasz also contended that a slave conspiracy existed, but not to “burn the buildings and take over the town,” but rather to rob “the richer citizens of New York City.” Szasz, “The New York Slave Conspiracy of 1741,” *NYH* 48 (1967), 217. Thomas Davis’s *A Rumor of Revolt: The “Great Negro Plot” in Colonial New York City* (New York, 1985), did not focus on the question of the existence of a conspiracy, but found “beyond question that blacks in New York City during 1741 clearly talked of doing damage to the society enslaving them.” (xiii).

In recent years some scholars have applied Atlantic History and Legal History approaches to the events of 1741. Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker contend that the city’s slaves and poor whites made up a “motley proletariat” that was “Atlantic in scope.” Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston, 2001), 174-210. Peter Hoffer in *The Great New York Conspiracy of 1741: Slavery, Crime, and Colonial Law* (Lawrence, KS, 2003) applies a narrow legal reading of the term “conspiracy” to find that a conspiracy did exist, but contends that the slaves were not guilty of the plot charged by the prosecution.

In the past decade, a variety of other historical analytical approaches have been applied to the events of 1741. Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace agree with McManus that evidence is not present to establish conspiracy, except perhaps of slaves seeking to hide multiple burglaries. *Gotham*, 159-166. Philip D. Morgan contends that “there are strong grounds for being skeptical about the extent or even reality of a conspiracy in New York City in 1741.” Philip D. Morgan, “Conspiracy Scares,” *WMQ* 59:1 (Jan. 2002), 164-165. In contrast, Graham Russell Hodges and Leslie Harris each stress inter-racial cooperation among slaves and poor whites that erupted into a conspiracy to attack whites. Hodges, *Root & Branch*, 99; Leslie Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery, African Americans in New York City, 1623-1865* (Chicago, 2003), 43. Serena Zabin posits the unknowable nature of the events, which given Horsmanden’s biased retelling of the events and the paucity of other records, is a reasonable perspective on the matter. Zabin, “Places of Exchange; Serena R. Zabin, ed. *The New York Conspiracy Trials of 1741* (Boston, 2004). Richard E. Bond states he “tends to agree with historians who have claimed that the plot was mostly a product of white anxiety.” “Ebb and Flow: Free Blacks and Urban Slavery in Eighteenth century New York,” Ph. D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2004, Introduction. Thelma Wills Foote takes an original approach to the events of 1741 by shifting the focus from the question of the existence of a conspiracy to looking at the purpose of the plot and the trials that ensued. She argues the plot should be seen as part of a “colonist discourse of conspiracy” that “galvanized [whites] into a unified community that rallied behind the ruling party’s program for purging traitors.” Foote, *Black and White Manhattan*, 160. The literary scholar Andy Doolen has set forth the most persuasive analysis of the events of 1741, arguing that “the war [with the Spanish] and the conspiracy scare work[ed] together to reinforce white racial solidarity in New York.” Andy Doolen, “Reading and Writing Terror: The New York Conspiracy Trials of 1741,” *American Literary History*, 16:3, 382 (2004). In the most recent book on the events, Jill Lepore does not state a clear position on the question of the existence of a conspiracy, except to point out Justice Horsmanden’s personal agendas make the credibility of his account dubious. In her analogizing of the events of 1741 to the 1693 Salem witchcraft trials, Lepore appears to agree with Burrows and Wallace. Lepore, *New York Burning*, 203.

However one understands the events in New York City in 1741 they need to be placed within a larger global context of imperial rivalries, fears of slave rebellions and concerns over the dangers fires posed in compact, congested urban areas. See Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angélique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montréal* (Athens, GA, 2007). The dangers of urban fires were regularly commented on in colonial newspapers. See, e.g., *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*,

about the events of 1741 is that Robert Todd's slave Dundee and many others had been sent to fetch water at Comfort's and visited Hughson's tavern for several years before the conspiracy trials. When this became known to colonial officials they took one of the few measures that effectively limited and controlled slave mobility. In early 1742 legislation was enacted that prohibited blacks from obtaining water at any well other than the closest neighborhood well. This legislation effectively removed blacks from the trade of carting water and eliminated an opportunity for resistance and community building that slaves had regularly used. Like an earlier law that prohibited blacks from working as cartmen, the 1742 legislation restricted slave labor as a means of ensuring employment for whites and solidifying white support for the colonial regime. However, as northern whites continued to rely upon slave labor, slaves' mobility in the crowded streets and alleys of northern cities would remain a source of concern for governmental officials and slave masters throughout the colonial era. When slaves were required to travel, as were Abraham Kip's enslaved servants from lower Manhattan to his farm on the East River at present day 35th Street, they were provided with opportunities to be in contact and develop relations with a variety of people, including rural slaves.¹¹⁵ Mobility among slaves was not limited merely to catching up with friends and family members. Not infrequently, slaves' freedom of movement led to more serious problems for colonial officials. Philadelphian slaves regularly stole from whites and broke into their homes. In 1741 fires were set by slaves in New York City, and at the same time a series of fires

Apr. 30, 1782.

¹¹⁵ *MCC*, 1675-1776, 1:136-137; *New-York Weekly-Journal*, June 29, 1741; William Ingraham Kip, *Historical Notes of the Family Kip of Kipsbury and Kip's Bay* (Albany, 1871), 27. By 1744 Dr. Alexander Hamilton noted spring water was being transported into the city in large casks, and white "Tea-Water Men" roamed the streets selling water by the cup and the keg. New York's Common Council had, in 1691, made an earlier effort to prohibit slaves working as cartmen, decreeing that "no slave be suffered to work... as a porter." Milton M. Klein, *The Empire State: A History of New York* (2001), 155-156. However, despite this enactment, slaves continued to be employed by the city's markets and merchants.

were set by a Negro in Hackensack, New Jersey. Slaves in Somerset County, New Jersey conspired to set fire to their masters' barns and "Cut the throats of their Masters and Sons." Thirteen slaves in Schenectady, New York were believed to have set a fire. In 1743 Spanish Negroes and other "prize slaves" conspired to flee by taking over privateer boats in Newport harbor. By the mid-eighteenth century, large groups of slaves were gathering for Rhode Island Election Day celebrations, with the election of black Governors and slaves dressing up in clothes provided by their masters. Despite their fears of such independent behavior by slaves, northern whites did not create armed militias to guard against slave uprisings. New York's Night Watch, much ballyhooed in the aftermath of the 1741 conspiracy trials, petered out with little effect on slave behavior.¹¹⁶

Northern slaves often found themselves moved against their will as sales caused them to be uprooted. More than two thousand advertisements were placed in New York's newspapers announcing the availability of slaves for sale. Thirteen hundred sale advertisements ran in Philadelphia's newspapers, while Rhode Island newspapers contained more than two hundred sale advertisements for seven hundred slaves (Tables 3-1, 4-1, and 5-1). Among the more than five thousand slaves sold through such advertisements were "Spry" healthy Negro boys, a girl described by her master as "a daughter of mine," and a "young Negro fellow," all whom found themselves forcibly

¹¹⁶ Fitts, *Inventing New England's Slave Paradise*, 111; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 14; Jean R. Soderlund, "Black Women in Colonial Pennsylvania," *PMHB* 107:1 (Jan. 1983), 35-56; Manuscript Records of the Court of Assizes, New York Municipal Archives, 35-36; Foote, *Black and White Manhattan*, 199; *New-York Weekly Gazette*, Dec. 7, 20, 1730; *American Weekly Mercury*, Apr. 9, 1741, May 7, 1741; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Mar. 3, 1743; *New-York Mercury*, Aug. 17, 1761; *New-York Journal or General Advertiser*, June 4, 1772; *American Weekly Mercury*, June 23, 1743. Slaves believed to have participated in the 1741 slave conspiracy had "no fear" of the Night Watch. Horsmanden *New-York Conspiracy*, 75, 89. Although New Yorkers complained about the Night Watch's inefficiency and cost, after 1741 whites did not detect any large-scale slave conspiracies. *The Independent Reflector*, Dec. 14, 1752. The lack of such a conspiracy in light of the increased numbers of African slaves imported into the colony appears to underline the critical role water men played in the events of 1741.

transported to new owners.¹¹⁷ In what Ira Berlin has called the “Second Middle Passage,” slaves were moved in many directions. Bondsmen found themselves forcibly transported throughout North America and the West Indies.¹¹⁸ Men like the New York slave cook who had masters in the West Indies, South Carolina, and New York City, or Angolan John, who first was sold to a master in Jamaica, before being sold to a New Yorker and then a Philadelphian, found themselves living in a variety of regions of the Atlantic. Family connections among slave owners served to move slaves about the colonies. Cornelius Cuyler and his son Philip were far from unusual in their regular selling of slaves that resulted in bondsmen being moved considerable distances. Scores of slaves were sold for “want of employ,” others were sold due to the death of their masters, some because of the business failures of their owners, and others as punishment for wayward behavior. Vivienne Kruger found that more than eighteen percent of New York slaves sold via bills of sale were sent to new owners more than twenty-five miles from their former masters. The 1741 New York slave conspiracy trials alone resulted in eighty-four slaves, or more than ten percent of New York City’s male slave population, being

¹¹⁷ May 11, 1790, Letter Eleanor Turniss to Standish Forde, Reed & Forde Papers, HSP Coll. 540, Box 3, Correspondence, 1786-1790; *New-York Gazette, revived in the Weekly Post-Boy*, June 22, 1752; *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, Jan. 8, 1763; Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade to America*, 3:459.

¹¹⁸ Sept. 16, 1776, Shippen Family Papers, HSP, Coll. 595, Vol. 12, p. 52; Society Misc. Coll., HSP, Coll. 425, Box 11-A, f. 1b; “Cadwallader Colden Letters and Papers, 1711-1775,” 9 vols., *Collections*, 67:200-2; Philip L. White, ed., *The Beekman Mercantile Papers, 1746-1799* (New York, 1956), Vol. 1, 64; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Mar. 25, 1771 (1013); TNA CO 5/1222, p. 41; TNA CO 5/1223, p. 80, 93; TNA CO 5/1224, p. 217; TNA CO 5/1225, p. 27, 63, 116; Walter E. Minchinton, “Slavery and Servitude: The Seaborne Slave Trade of North Carolina,” *North Carolina Historical Review*, 71 (1994), 3-5, App; Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, Chap. 4; July 7, 1743 Letter, John Bayley to John Yeates, John Yeates Coll. HSP, Coll. 740; Apr. 26, 1715 Letter, R.R. Logan to Thomas Fearon, R.R. Logan Coll., HSP, Coll. 383; Nov. 7, 1771 Letter, Richard Peters to Isaac Hunt, Richard Peters Coll. HSP, Coll. 498. Some slaves were sold due to their refusal “to go with [their] Master to South Carolina.” *New-York Gazette*, Sept. 26, 1737. Other slaves were able to prevent their sales to southern and West Indian colonies. *Royal Gazette* (New York), Oct. 19, 1782, Feb. 1, 1783. Slaves’ resistance to being sold resulted in a number being returned to their original owners. George Nagel to Bernard Goetz, Mar. 2, 1772, cited in Darrold Wax, “Negro Resistance to the Early American Slave Trade,” *Journal of Negro History* 51:1 (Jan. 1966), 14-15.

transported to foreign plantations, mainly in the West Indies. Among the transported slaves were some, like Robert Todd's bondsman Dundee, who had previously been threatened with sale "beyond the sea."¹¹⁹ The transportation to the West Indies of slaves facing execution was a regular practice. For example, in 1770, after having been found guilty of attempted rape and attempted murder of his master's wife, the slave mariner Falmouth was pardoned and shipped to the Spanish West Indies.¹²⁰

Not infrequently slaves were sold multiple times. Like Olaudah Equiano, who was sold multiple times and moved about the Atlantic, many northern slaves found themselves "transported from owner to owner in a bewildering series of transfers."¹²¹

Venture Smith's being sold three times before he was thirty-one years old was far from

¹¹⁹ *New-York Gazette*, Jan. 20, 1736; *New-York Weekly Journal*, Sept. 6, 1736; Cornelius Schuyler Letterbooks, AAS, Vol. 4, 30 Jan. 1761 letter to son Phillip and 3 July 1762 Letter to son Henry; Horsmanden, *The New-York Conspiracy*, 49 and A List of Negroes; Kruger, "Born to Run," 209-210; Lepore, *New York Burning*, Appendix B. Domestic slaves in England were sometimes punished by selling them to North American masters. *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, Oct. 7, 1783. There is an irony to New York's shipping its rebellious slaves to Spanish West Indies colonies given that only the previous year the city's papers contained warnings that the governor of Spanish Florida continued to seek "forment and countenance [British] slaves in rebellion." *New-York Weekly Journal*, May 22, 1740. Although there is no evidence that establishes with certainty that New York sent its convicted slaves to the Spanish West Indies to "forment" rebellion, such an outcome would surely have pleased New York colonial officials. Twenty-three years later, English boasted of sending "Numbers of untractable Negroes" to the Spaniards. *New-York Gazette*, Oct. 15, 1764.

Henry Cruger's slave Hanover who was indicted but not brought to trial for his part in the alleged 1741 conspiracy, made his way to Jamaica. In 1745 the Jamaican Governor noticed Hanover's name on a list of indicted slaves from Justice Horsmanden's *Journal* and had the slave "apprehended, and sent him hither to be delivered up to Justice. *New York Conspiracy*, 217; Lepore *New York Burning*, 173, App. B and C; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 26, 1745.

Seventeen forty-one is remarkable as being the only year between 1729 and 1783 in which a slave sale advertisement was not placed in a New York newspaper. This was undoubtedly a result of the uproar over the allegations of a slave conspiracy and the much publicized trials before Justice Horsmanden.

¹²⁰ *King v Falmouth*, Parchments G-334 and K-314, County Clerk's Office, New York City; Benjamin Douglas to the King, Recognizance Pursuant to the Condition of the Pardon of the Negroe Man Named Falmouth, Misc. B. Douglas, Nov. 28, 1770, N-YHS. An attachment to another slave, visiting taverns or having a loud child could cause the slave to be sold. *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Apr. 3, 1775; *Rivington's New-York Gazetteer*, Oct. 26, 1775; *Royal Gazette* (New York), Feb. 26, 1780.

¹²¹ Geraldine Murray, "Olaudah Equiano, Accidental Tourist," *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 27:4 (Summer, 1994), 551. Theses transfers included being sent out on "tyrals" to prospective buyers. *New-York Mercury*, Feb. 16, 1767; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Aug. 15, 1768. Scholarship regarding the tremendous expansion in intra-colonial slave trade includes Johnson, *Soul by Soul*; Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge, MA, 2005); and Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison, WI, 1989).

an uncommon story. As did Sambo of West Jersey, northern slaves often “had many masters.” Northern slaves found themselves moved through a maze of ownership that both distressed them and, at the same time, provided them with knowledge of the Atlantic world. Contrary to how colonial northern slavery was depicted by nineteenth century writers, the majority of northern slaves did not live their entire lives in a single master’s home. For example, the slave Golia, who had once been owned by Cornelius Tebout of New York, was taken on a privateering cruise by Captain Oman. Captured, he was condemned at Fort Dauphin as a slave, and then sold to a Dutchman from St. Eustatia. The Dutchman thereafter sold Golia to a ship captain named Leacraft, who then “transferred his Property to the Owners of the Brig Sally.” Other slaves, like Joseph Allicock’s Peter, had three owners within several years, while the Spanish mariner Fernando Bernell had three slave masters in the year before the Vice Admiralty Court decreed him a free man.¹²² These multiple sales caused untold numbers of slaves to be moved among masters throughout the Atlantic. Golia was but one of thousands of slaves sold multiple times. As Gregory O’Malley has shown, in the eighteenth century, more than 100,000 Africans were either transported from the British West Indies to North America or within the Caribbean itself. Thus, many enslaved Africans were moved multiple times before arriving in northern ports.¹²³

¹²² *Five Black Lives*, 17; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Dec. 19, 1765. An example of a nineteenth century writer who described northern slaves as living their entire lives with a single master was James Fenimore Cooper. Cooper’s protagonist in *Satanstoe* also claimed that slavery in colonial New York “was of the kindest character.” Wallace, “Cooper and Slavery,” *New-York Gazette* (Weyman’s), Sept. 5, 1763; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, May 11, 18, 1778; *Reports of Cases*, 29-31.

¹²³ *Rivington’s New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, July 6, 1775; Gregory O’Malley, “Final Passages: The British Inter-Colonial Slave Trade, 1619-1808” (Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 2006). Perhaps the most notorious of northern slaves who moved around the Atlantic due to being sold was Will, a believed ringleader in the alleged 1741 conspiracy to burn New York City. From St. John’s, where he was a leader in a slave uprising, he was transported and sold in Antigua. In the 1736, Will again participated in a slave revolt where he escaped the noose by turning state’s evidence. He was then shipped to New York,

Brought to America with maritime experience and valued for their maritime skills, many northern slaves found that the compact confines and shifting labor markets of Philadelphia, New York, and Newport provided opportunities for mobility not possible in rural areas. The reliance of these ports on overseas trade and the fluidity of port labor markets placed many slaves in regular contact with the larger Atlantic maritime economy, whether as dockworkers, sail makers, or seamen on oyster and whaling ships. As one slave master noted, slave mariners had a “disposition of mobility” that marked them as different, less capable of being controlled than most slaves.¹²⁴ For youthful, strong, and healthy men, these conditions would prove to provide opportunities for escape via the sea that slaves in areas lacking busy ports often did not have.

sold to Providence, and returned to New York, before finally being “put it out of his power to do any further mischief,” and burned at the stake. Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 226. Sales of slaves could also result in skilled workers being sold together. Doing so enabled purchasers to undertake operations requiring numbers of artisans, such as sail-makers or rope-makers. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 5, 1743.

¹²⁴ Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 266.

CHAPTER TWO

Social Networks in Port Cities

Life in northern ports provided significant challenges to slaves seeking to create and maintain social connections. Rarely living in houses with other adult slaves and frequently sold far away from family and friends, many slaves in northern ports were without family units or large groupings of unrelated adults that elsewhere provided slaves with supportive communities. What tools did slaves use to create social networks while in Philadelphia, New York and Newport? In their efforts did northern slaves establish social networks that assisted maritime fugitives to escape? And what steps did colonial officials take to limit slaves' efforts to build and maintain social connections?

Many institutions such as black churches, mutual aid societies, and anti-slavery groups that would be bulwarks of northern black communities during the Early National era did not exist prior to 1783. Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, James Forten, Peter Williams, Sr., and other leaders of such groups were free men with jobs and independent lives that few blacks had during the colonial era. These men used their abilities and independent lives to help create cohesive black communities in the Early National period.¹ During the colonial era, social networks for enslaved peoples in northern cities were established both within educational settings developed by white religious figures as well as in the boisterous spaces of taverns and public houses. Such social networks not only provided slaves with connections extending far beyond the walls of their masters' houses, but also assisted maritime fugitives flee enslavement. By focusing on education

¹ Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 111-139, 204-05, 221; Winch, *Gentleman of Color*, 205-308; Hodges, *Root & Branch*, 176-186; Jeanne Chase, "Strange Fruit," *Reviews in American History* 28:3 (2000), 367-73. Shane White considers the idea of a black community in New York prior to 1810 as "slippery." White, *Somewhat More Independent*, 182.

and drinking, this chapter will seek to illustrate the means and the limits to slaves creating social networks in northern ports.

“Reading the Bible to a Few Negroes”

Learning to read and write was central to the struggle of enslaved individuals to create lives with some independence from their slave masters. Most slaves had limited access to books and few learned how to write. In the period prior to the Revolution, slaves’ used literary skills to learn Scriptures and to obtain personal freedom. When slaves did write, it was most often forged passes. In the 1770s, reading, whether of the *Somerset* decision or Dunmore’s Proclamation, increasingly became a means by which enslaved individuals obtained information that assisted some to become free. The Philadelphia slave who threatened a white woman with references to “Lord Dunmore and his black regiment,” is likely to have read of the Virginian Governor’s Proclamation and understood that it shifted the balance of power in her relationship with whites.² Whites understood that it could be a dangerous for slaves to acquire reading and writing skills. Reading enabled slaves to know what whites were doing, while writing allowed slaves to forge passes, draft petitions and write letters. Literacy also opened up the possibility that slaves might seek to exhort their betters. These were developments that frightened whites who understood that “reading [and writing] meant power to eighteenth-century slaves.” These fears led West Indies officials to threaten British seamen with punishment if they were caught “reading the bible to a few Negroes,” and for some North American

² Richard Newman, “Liberation Technology: Print and African American Emancipation in the Late 18th Century” conference paper, *The Atlantic World of Print in the Age of Franklin*, Philadelphia, 29 Sept. 2006; *Newport Mercury*, Oct. 12, 1772; Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 246, 460-61. The literacy of African Muslims set them apart from many of their African contemporaries. Sylviane A. Diouf, “American Slaves Who Were Readers and Writers,” *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* No. 24 (Summer 1999): 124-25.

legislatures to bar the teaching of slaves to read or write.³ With most white North Americans believing that dark skin color was evidence of an individual's intellectual inferiority, few whites considered African slaves worthy of receiving an education.⁴

White North Americans from a variety of religious backgrounds believed that conversion of slaves contravened the well-established British belief that "no Christian might hold another Christian as a slave." Masters often expressed concern that conversion would emancipate their slaves, while many slaves believed baptism would result in their "escape" from slavery. In contrast, Anglican clergymen saw the conversion of slaves as necessary to save bondsmen's souls and believed that conversion would "inspire ...slaves love and obedience to their masters and mistresses." Edward McManus has characterized this tension between the views of most slave masters and Anglican preachers as "the impossibility of preachment with reality."⁵

Religious instruction of slaves almost invariably involved teaching them to read.

To be baptized in the Church of England required that one know Scriptures. The detailed

³ Aaron Thomas: *The Caribbean Journal of a Royal Navy Seaman*, Jan. 30, 1799, <http://www.library.miami.edu/archives/thomas/journal2.html> (accessed June 6, 2006). Eric J. Seeman, "'Justice Must Take Place': Three African-Americans Speak of Religion in Eighteenth-Century New England," *WMQ* 56:2 (Apr. 1999), 392; Frank Lambert, "I Saw the Book Talk: Slave Readings of the First Great Awakening," *Journal of Negro History* 77:4 (Winter 2002), 186, 190. Sweet, *Bodies Politic*; Manisha Sinha, "To 'cast just obliquy' on Oppressors: Black Radicalism in the Age of Revolution," *WMQ* 64:1 (Jan. 2007), 149-160 and Emily Blanck, "Seventeen Eighty-Three: The Turning Point in the Law of Slavery and Freedom in Massachusetts," *NEQ* 75:1 (Mar. 2002): 24-51. Each considers the impact of slaves' petitions for freedom.

⁴ Jordan, *White over Black*, 269-276; Shane White, "Impious Prayers: Elite and Popular Attitudes Towards Blacks and Slavery in the Middle-Atlantic States, 1783-1810," *New York History* 67 (Jul. 1986), 263; Robert J. Swan, "John Teasman: African-American Educator and the Emergence of Community in Early Black New York City, 1787-1815," *JER* 12:3 (Autumn, 1992), 331. Although Cotton Mather set up a school for them, he believed educating Negroes was dangerous as "the worst servants are those that have had most Instruction bestow'd upon them." Towner, *A Master Well Served*, 150n36. Whites' belief that blacks were intellectually incapable continued for decades after the Revolution. Richard Raikes testimonial, July 5, 1815, D149 R38, GRO (regarding a candidate for writing master, Raikes wrote, "Unfortunately he is a Mulatto").

⁵ Jordan, *White over Black*, 180; Klingberg, *Anglican Humanitarianism in Colonial New York*, 16; Elias Neau letter, July 4, 1704, Vol. XIII, New York, Lambeth Palace Library Papers of the SPG in Foreign Parts, Foreign Copying ("SPG Lambeth Papers"), Reel 13, LOC; McManus, *A History of Negro Slavery in New York*, 334.

knowledge of Scriptures Anglican ministers demanded generally required reading the Bible. Thus, the idea of instruction of slaves raised for many whites both concerns that baptized slaves could no longer be enslaved and a fear that literacy would make slaves independent of their slave masters. Despite such concerns, religious groups did provide some religious and literacy instruction to slaves. While the numbers of slaves instructed may have been small, with “attempts at providing rudimentary education for Negroes [being] scattered, ephemeral, and on the whole, unsuccessful,” for some slaves in northern ports the impact of such instruction was significant. The efforts of the Society for the Propagation of the Bible (“SPG”) and Sarah Osborn will be used to explore just how education and religious instruction enabled slaves to create social networks and assisted some maritime fugitives in their flight to freedom.⁶

Although the Dutch Reformed Church in New York had made efforts in the 1630s to train black slaves “in the knowledge of Jesus Christ,” by 1655 the Church limited baptism to “people knowledgeable in the faith.” With the Dutch Reformed Church not undertaking to establish a school for slaves in New Amsterdam, language barriers and cultural differences served as substantial hurdles to slaves obtaining church membership.⁷ After Britain’s conquest of New Amsterdam, efforts to provide religious instruction to the colony’s slaves did not get underway for four decades. The SPG led efforts at bringing New York’s blacks into the Anglican Church. Established in 1701, the SPG sought to promote “a sufficient Mainteyance...for an Orthodox Clergy to live amongst them [our Plantacons, Colonies, and Factories beyond the seas, belonging to the Our

⁶ Jordan, *White Over Black*, 354.

⁷ Hodges, *Root & Branch*, 16-23. Later in the eighteenth century, some ministers in the Dutch Reformed Church agreed to baptize slaves. However, as John Jea’s master informed him, many members of the Dutch Reformed Church believed Africans lacked souls and could not be saved. *Root & Branch*, 123-24.

Kingdom of England], and that such other Provision be made, as may be necessary for the Propagation of the Gospell in those Parts.” SPG’s efforts included establishing and supporting a catechetical school to instruct slaves in New York.⁸

In 1703 SPG’s efforts resulted in Elias Neau opening an Anglican school for blacks. A slaveholder and partner with John Cruger, one of New York City’s leading slave traders, Neau was not a rebellious preacher seeking to overturn the institution of slavery. A French-born Huguenot, he came to North America in the 1690s. On a trip to London in 1692 he was captured by a French privateer. Neau then served on French galleys before being released at the end of King William’s War. Converting to Anglicanism, Neau proposed to the SPG the founding of a school for the religious instruction of New York City’s Negro slaves. In arguing for the creation of the school, Neau described New York as “full of Negroes, who Dance & Divert themselves for they are kept in the same manner as horses,” with white slave owners focused on “get[ing] from [their slaves] all the Work one Can” rather than providing religious instruction to their bondsmen.⁹

Neau’s first task was to convince New Yorkers to permit the instruction of their slaves. While Anglican Bishop William Fleetwood espoused baptism of slaves, most white New Yorkers were of the belief that baptism would emancipate their slaves. To counter this significant hurdle, Neau, along with Reverend William Vesey, the rector of

⁸ Quoted in William Webb Kemp, *The Support of Schools in Colonial New York by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts* (New York, 1913), 28; Sharpe, “Proposals for Erecting a School,” 354. SPG’s efforts to convert slaves was consistent with King Charles II’s Royal Instructions of May 29, 1686 to “find out the best means to facilitate & encourage the Conversion of Negroes & Indians with the Christian Religion.” William Renwick Riddell, “The Slave in Early New York,” *Journal of Negro History*, 13:1 (Jan. 1928), 65.

⁹ Elias Neau to Chamberlayne, April 30, 1706, SPG Lambeth Papers, Reel 13, LOC; Elias Neau to Mr. John Hodges, New York, 10 July 1703, Vol. XIII, SPG Lambeth Papers, Reel 13. School masters, such as Samuel Grainger and Peleg Barker, often owned slaves. *Weekly Rehearsal*, Apr. 15, 1732; *Newport Mercury*, Apr. 19, 1773.

Trinity Church, undertook to lobby the New York Assembly to enact a law that “confirmed the rights of masters over their slaves after baptism.”¹⁰ As Reverend Sharpe observed, for slaves in SPG schools, the “motive to their diligence in attaining a sufficient measure of knowledge in order to be baptized” would be greatly increased.¹¹ After the New Jersey Assembly enacted such a law in 1704, the New York Assembly in 1706 passed legislation that it hoped would end the widespread belief that “baptism would free slaves” by clearly stating that baptism “shall not be any cause or reason for the freeing” of slaves. It also made slavery perpetual by providing children of slave mothers would be slaves for life. To encourage slave masters to permit instruction of their bondsmen, both Reverend Vesey and Reverend Sharp promised Neau they would preach on the necessity of having slaves baptized.¹²

In his efforts to establish a school for instruction of slaves, Neau had to overcome church elders’ serious reservations about his fitness as an Anglican religious leader. A layman of French ancestry and a merchant, Neau was believed to lack the qualifications necessary for an SPG catechist. He was however, energetic, skilled in his teachings, and empathetic with the plight of slaves, himself having experienced life as a coerced worker. “Creeping into Garrets, Cellars and other nauseous places, to exhort and pray by the poor slaves when they are sick,” Neau proved a capable catechist for New York’s enslaved population. He was able not only to overcome the initial skepticism of Anglican minister

¹⁰ Neau to Chamberlayne, April 30, 1706, SPG Papers, Reel 13; Hodges, *Root & Branch*, 58; *Anglican Humanitarianism in Colonial New York*, p. 265. See Hodges, *Root & Branch*, p. 59 and Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA: 1990), 135-38, 141-42 for contrasting interpretations of Fleetwood’s position on slavery and slave baptism.

¹¹ Sharpe, “Proposal for Erecting a School,” 318.

¹² *The Colonial Laws of the State of New York* 1:597; Elias Neau to Mr. Chamberlayne, Vol. XIII, SPG Lambeth Papers, Reel 13. Masters’ concerns regarding Neau’s activities may have had some justification. Neau admitted to having some slaves baptized “without consent of their masters.” Klingberg, *Anglicanism Humanitarianism*, 127, 130, 132.

Reverend Vesey, but to win the support of Dutch ministers who urged their slave-owning members to have their slaves educated by Neau. The former Huguenot's success is evidenced by the list of masters who sent their slaves to receive instruction and be given catechisms; on the 1705 list, Governor Cornbury was the first slave owner noted.¹³

Neau held classes in a room on the third floor of his home specifically prepared for that purpose. In an eight hundred and eighty square foot space, Neau provided benches for the slaves to sit on. Neau's classes were held on Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons. There often were only eight or ten slave students at the Wednesday and Friday classes, leading Neau to drop the Monday classes in favor of Sunday meetings to attract larger groups of slave attendees. He also moved the meetings to the evenings to accommodate slaves' work schedules. Slaves who worked every day "except on Sunday" were "dull and sleepy" after long days of physically demanding work. These were far from ideal instructional conditions. However, in contrast to other Anglican instructors, Neau was not required to travel long distances to reach his students nor did he lack a regular instructional location.¹⁴

Slaves who attended Neau's instruction often came from the homes of New York's merchant class. The slaves of two mayors, Rip van Dam and Paul Richards, the colony's governor, and bondsmen owned by the prominent De Peyster, Van Horne, and

¹³ Reverend John Sharpe, "Proposals for Erecting a School, Library, and Chapel at New York," in *Collections for the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1880* (New York, 1881), 354; William Vesey Oct. 26, 1704 letter, Vol. XIII, SPG Lambeth Papers, Reel 13; Oct. 3, 1705 Elias Neau, Vol. XIII, SPG Lambeth Papers, Reel 13.

¹⁴ Elias Neau July 22, 1707 letter to SPG Secretary, Vol. XIV, New York, SPG Lambeth Papers, Reel 14; Sharpe, "Proposals, p.354; John Thomas June 12, 1709 letter to SPG, Vol. XIV, SPG Lambeth Papers, Reel 14. On Sundays, when Neau claimed he had "above 100" students, his students were packed into space that modern Building Codes would deem unduly cramped and unsafe. Rules of the New York City Department of Buildings, Section 15-02, http://www.nyc.gov/html/dob/downloads/bldgs_code/BuildingCode_entire2004.pdf (accessed Jan. 10, 2008) (Permissible occupant load for a place of assembly with movable seats is 10 sq. ft. per person, limiting an 880 square foot space to 88 persons).

Philipse families, all attended classes at Neau's home. Most came from the East Ward, where the city's merchants congregated. These well-known patrons may have sent their slaves to reinforce their social status. It is also possible that their slaves were agreeable to attending the classes, having been exposed to Anglicanism in their masters' homes or that Neau sought out wealthy backers' bondsmen in order to give his enterprise credibility. With many of the students living near each other, they were able to create a space that they and others whom they told of the school felt comfortable in. However, not all of the slaves attending Neau's instruction came from elite homes or with their masters' encouragement. "Many" were said to have "come to catechism unknown to their masters," evidencing slaves' hunger for religious education, a communal space away from their masters, and reading instruction.¹⁵

Neau's school proved attractive to New York's enslaved population both because its instructor demonstrated an enthusiasm for teaching the city's blacks as well as Neau's use of instructional methods that paralleled African cultural practices. Neau did not come to his task with a knowledge, understanding or interest in African culture. Instead, by drawing on his experiences as a young Huguenot and showing a willingness to adapt his teaching approach as he went along, Neau found the means to make European Christianity attractive to Africans with very different religious practices. Having the instruction in his home provided a comfort for the enslaved that they would not have found in Trinity Church, where their presence was not particularly welcomed. A charismatic instructor, Neau began each evening class with a group prayer. This practice drew on "love festivals and sacred theater learned during [Neau's] Huguenot upbringing." Neau initially then followed the group prayer with "8 or 10 verses of scripture," to

¹⁵ Bond, "Ebb and Flow," 273-75; Klingberg, *Anglicanism Humanitarianism*, 127, 130, 132.

support his exhorting the slaves to reform their morals. The instructor soon found other techniques, included use of call-and-response, to be more effective. Neau's use of call-and-response to teach Scripture was a fortunate choice. This instructional method mirrored established African practices. Doing so resulted in his students being receptive to his preaching. Neau also used song as a key instructional tool. His students apparently enjoyed this practice, participating "with pleasure." Through blending African cultural forms into a traditional European preaching of the scriptures, Neau met with greater success than did most other ministers attempting to educate and convert slaves.¹⁶

What ultimately was key to the success of Neau's school was the active participation of its students. Coming to Neau's house for two hours every Sunday, as well as on weekday evenings after long days of hard work, these bondsmen put to good use much of scarce free time they had. Unlike other slaves characterized as "idle," Neau's students worked hard. In order to be baptized, they needed both to master a new theology and to learn to read the Bible, something an average of fifteen slaves did each year.¹⁷ This was not a sizable number, but it was still indicative of men and women striving to better their lives.

A "great many" slaves came to Neau's classes but two or three times. While students staying only for a limited period might typically be considered an indication of an instructor's ineffectiveness, in Neau's case this would be misleading. Neau gave "catechisms & other books" to a large number of slaves, many of whom he believed "came only for the books." Some of the books were given to young men and women who

¹⁶ Hodges, *Root & Branch*, 53-57; Bond, "Ebb and Flow," 270-71.

¹⁷ Rev. Samuel Auchinuty, Jan. 2 & June 29, 1762, Mar. 30 & Sept. 29, 1763, Mar. 29, 1764 Letters to SPG, SPG, MSS B, Vol. 2, Reel 57, LOC; Hodges, *Root & Branch*, 55-57; Bond, "Ebb and Flow," 271; Klingberg, *Anglican Humanitarianism*, 149.

upon receiving the requested books “went away in haste.” Hungry for knowledge, some of these slaves may have taken Neau’s preaching of the importance of private family worship to heart. Just as likely, some grabbed religious books for their own secular purposes, including spending time in their garrets struggling over Scripture in the hopes of becoming literate and eventually freeing themselves from the bonds of enslavement. While Neau felt he “could not refuse” the slaves’ requests, he knew he was being negligent with SPG’s funds by not subsequently getting the books back.¹⁸ Still he understood that much of the students’ learning took place outside the classroom and was willing to accommodate those who would not stay for extended instruction.

Among those flocking to Neau’s house for instruction were “several sailors, Negroes and Indians from Bermuda and other places.” These men came when “their vessels were in harbor.” The seamen, who often arrived after Neau had begun services, took with them “small tracts, books and catechisms so that they might learn at sea.”¹⁹ In gaining literacy, these men made themselves more valuable in the maritime world. Whether some eventually put those literary skills to learning navigation or forged a certificate of freedom so if captured at sea they would not be resold or used their reading skills to find solace in the Bible, Neau’s generosity provided these mariners with a key that some would be able to use to unlock doors to freedom.²⁰ Although they may have only shared space on Neau’s third floor for short periods with some of New York’s

¹⁸ Elias Neau Mar. 1, 1707 to Mr. Chamberlayne, Vol. XIV, SPG Lambeth Papers, Reel 14; Hodges, *Root & Branch*, 57, 60. SPG religious instructors throughout North America would continually bemoan the “want” of catechisms. Jennifer Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America* (Boston, 2005), 147-48.

¹⁹ Hodges, *Root & Branch*, 60.

²⁰ Olaudah Equiano described how literacy both opened the world of words and books to him and also assisted in his learning the most valuable of maritime skills, navigation. *Interesting Narrative*, 59. For examples of Bermudian slave mariners carrying passes identifying themselves as free “in Case they should be taken by the Enemy,” see Morgan, “Encounters with Africans and African-Americans,” 195.

slaves, the Bermudian sailors are likely to have made a powerful impression on the New Yorkers. Skilled jack tars valued by their masters, Bermudian seamen traveled extensively along the North American coast.²¹ The same men who obtained books from Elias Neau in New York were likely to have spent time in Charleston, Philadelphia, Bridgetown, and other Atlantic ports. Knowing the wider Atlantic, Bermudian seamen sitting alongside the slave of Mr. Wilson, the City Sheriff, may have described to him a world in which his morning did not start by awakening in a cold garret but instead involved looking out over a blue sea in which dolphins and unidentifiable birds greeted incoming ships and colored seamen visited the four corners of the Atlantic. Bermudian seamens' descriptions of their lives would have likely caused some New York slaves to consider lives at sea. Transients such as the Bermudian slave sailors ensured that the instruction in Neau's house was not solely of a religious nature and not simply the passage of information from Neau to his students. Instead, Neau's third floor in many ways replicated the life that his students experienced in the streets of New York and other ports: diverse, dynamic, requiring continual adaptation and filled with opportunities for those who were skilled, savvy, alert and fortunate.

The transient seamen who took some of the SPG instructor's religious pamphlets or catechisms were likely to have shared those materials with crew mates when back aboard ship. The depiction of mariners reading below deck was a staple of eighteenth century maritime painting, evidencing one of the chief ways seamen spent their free time

²¹ See Jarvis, "Maritime Masters and Seafaring Slaves in Bermuda," for a detailed description of Bermudian slave mariners' lives. The presence of Bermudian slave mariners in other northern ports can be seen in fugitive slave advertisements. *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, July 12, 1781.

at sea.²² As Equiano noted, sailors taught each other to read, often using religious tracts.²³ Neau's students and Equiano had the good fortune to be given books with which to regularly practice reading. Not all slaves or maritime fugitives were so lucky. John Perkins was a black mariner who started as a naval pilot in 1775 and within four years commanded the schooner *Punch*. Perkins was apparently quite successful as the Jamaican legislature supported his claim of having captured more 300 prizes. Despite Admiral Rodney's efforts, Perkins was never promoted beyond lieutenant until becoming post commander in 1797. This may have been due to prejudice against him as a black officer, but is also likely to have been due to Perkins' probably being illiterate. Given that the duties of a naval officer or a merchant ship captain involved maintaining a ship's log and reading and responding to correspondence (whether from the Admiralty or a ship owner), literacy was key to becoming master of a ship.²⁴

By 1712 Neau's school was a bustling center of learning. Scores of slaves attended his classes. Neau's teaching methods may have proved successful in the classroom, but many whites remained unconvinced as to the benefits of his work. When in 1712 a number of New York's slaves "of the Nations of the Carmantee and Pappa, plotted to destroy all the whites, in order to obtain their freedom," Neau's school was closely scrutinized. In a conspiracy caused by what New York's Governor acknowledged was "hard usage," the slaves organized to set fire to a house. When whites responded to

²² See, e.g., Augustus Earle, *Life in the Ocean Representing the Usual Occupations of the Young Officers in Steerage of a British Frigate at Sea*, c. 1820-37, NMM BHC 1118.

²³ Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and other Writings*, 91-92.

²⁴ Philip D. Morgan, "Black Experiences in Britain's Maritime World," in *Empire, the Sea and Global History: Britain's Maritime World, c. 1763-c. 1840*, ed. David Cannadine (New York, 2007), 119; Rodger, *Wooden World*, 272 and "Perkins, John [Jack Punch] (c.1745-1812)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/50232>]. Although Rodger believes Perkins to have been "functionally literate," no letters survive for him. See also O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 180, 243, 314n19. Morgan notes that Perkins was one of the few, if the only, long-serving naval officer who never reached Britain.

the alarm, the slaves shot and stabbed “as many as they could.” Eight whites were murdered and another twelve were wounded. In the aftermath of the 1712 Insurrection many whites, including some religious leaders, disagreed with Governor Hunter. Many New Yorkers believed that the uprising had been “executed by those who have been instructed” and that Neau’s school was where slaves planned the uprising. The year after the uprising Reverend John Sharpe, chaplain of the city’s fort noted that many slaves believed “Christianity would make them free.” Concerned that his students might have been involved and facing considerable hostility from other whites, Neau closed his school in the aftermath of the revolt. He was able to reopen the school only with the very public support of Governor Hunter, who sent four of his slaves to Neau’s school.²⁵

After Neau died in 1722, a series of inexperienced ministers with little interest in educating New York’s slaves were appointed by the Anglican Church to oversee his school. The hunger among the city’s slaves for religious instruction was apparent in the “swarms of Negroes” who came to the instructor’s door in the first years after Neau’s death seeking to be taught. But within four years the lack of enthusiasm by Anglican instructors resulted in “few slaves” receiving instruction.²⁶ Most SPG teachers were hostile to baptism of slaves and had little interest in confronting continuing hostility by other whites to religious instruction for blacks. SPG work with New York’s slaves shifted to educating young black children. By 1751 twice the number of children were being baptized as the number of adults.²⁷ This trend accelerated with the SPG’s opening of a school for children in 1760. Advertisements for the school called for the “Instruction of

²⁵ Scott, “The Slave Insurrection in New York, 1712,” 43-74; Foote, “‘Some Hard Usage’,” 147-150; Sharpe, “Proposals,” 353; Lepore, *New York Burning*, 184-85.

²⁶ Klingberg, *Anglican Humanitarianism*, 139.

²⁷ Klingberg, *Anglican Humanitarianism*, 148.

Thirty Negro Children”. Slave children were to be instructed in “Reading, and in the Principles of Christianity, and likewise Sewing and Knitting.” The advertisements drew few students and the school remained largely empty. In the Spring of 1761, the SPG instructor notified the Secretary of the Associates that only thirteen additional students had joined the school. Not until the following September did the school reach its full capacity.²⁸

Children who attended the school were very young, averaging seven years of age. Girls outnumbered boys by more than two to one. The youthfulness of the students was likely due to slave masters not wanting older children to be taken from work that provided their masters with income. Rather than have young boys receive religious instruction, masters put them to work as chimney sweeps, cleaning out stables, stocking shelves and wheeling goods to ships. The small children who did attend SPG’s school spent a good deal of time working on writing and verbal tasks.²⁹ How the children who attended the school, which closed when Mrs. Lowner, the schoolmistress died in 1774, thereafter put their new-found literacy skills to use cannot be determined with any certainty. It is likely that they shared their skills, and books, with family members, widening the circle of literacy within New York’s slave community.

In the decades before the American Revolution, the SPG in London continued to urge colonists to treat Negroes “not barely as slaves and upon the same level with

²⁸ *New-York Gazette* [Weyman’s], Sept. 15, 22 and Oct. 13, 1760; Samuel Auchmuty to the Secretary of the Associates, Sept. 19, 1761, SPG papers, Series B, Reel 57.

²⁹ Kemp, *Support of the Schools*, 257-58. Sale advertisements for slave boys performing work profitable for their masters included *New-York Mercury*, Mar. 7, 1763, May 19, 1766 and Jan. 12, 1767 (chimney sweeps); *New-York Gazette*, Oct. 19, 1730 (housework); and *New-York Gazette*, Mar. 27, 1749 (valet). At least one slave owner claimed his slave boy chimney sweep could earn a potential purchaser £150 per year. *Royal Gazette* (New York), Apr. 9, 1783.

labouring beasts...[but as] Souls Capable of being made eternally happy.”³⁰

Notwithstanding the SPG’s prodding, by March of 1764 Reverend Auchinuty wrote SPG officials that, “not one single Black, has been admitted by me to the holy Communion.”³¹

SPG’s educational efforts were largely ended by the American Revolution. As Reverend Littleton, the Secretary of the Bray Associates observed to Granville Sharp in 1783, except for schools on Bermuda, all of the Associates’ schools in the Americas had “been discontinued since the beginning of the American Troubles.”³²

The SPG’s focus on educating children rather than adults limited adult New York slaves’ chances of becoming literate. Without formal instruction or sympathetic masters, slaves were reliant on less formal means to learn how to read and write. Some were able to do so. Most were not. While some individual slave owners, such as John Jea’s, assisted them in learning to write, most did not. Instead men such as Anthony, who felt sufficiently knowledgeable in Scripture to be described as “pretends to be a preacher, and sometimes officiates in that capacity among the Blacks,” typically learned to read with the assistance of other literate slaves or free blacks. With many New York City slaves sold to masters in isolated rural communities or frequently hired out, opportunities to gain literacy were often curtailed. The large numbers of African slaves imported into New York during the Seven Years War also kept reading rates among New York City slaves low. The result was that although Neau’s school provided slaves with both a comfortable social gathering place and assisted some slaves to learn to read, his efforts and those of

³⁰ Graham Russell Hodges, “The Emergence of a New Black Religious Identity in New York City and Eastern New Jersey, 1624-1807,” in *Mighty Change, Tall Within: Black Identity in the Hudson Valley*, ed. by Myra B. Young Armstead (Albany, 2003), 20.

³¹ Rev. Samuel Auchinuty, Mar. 29, 1764 Letter to SPG, SPG, MSS B, Vol. 2, Reel 57, p. 20, LOC.

³² 24 July 1783 Addendum to 22 July 1783 Letter from Granville Sharp to Dr. Wilson, Granville Sharp Papers, GRO, D 3549/13/1/W29. SPG’s educational efforts in the southern colonials were rather limited. 22 July 1783 Letter from Granville Sharp to Dr. Wilson, Granville Sharp Papers, GRO, D 3549/13/1/W29.

other SPG instructors resulted in only a small number of slaves becoming literate. Cato who fled with a forged pass and Jack who was able to read were exceptional among New York area slaves.³³

The experiences of slaves receiving religious and reading instruction in Newport demonstrates the limits of religious education. Through the efforts of Sarah Osborn, slaves in Newport during the spiritual revivals of the 1760s received weekly Bible and prayer instruction. Osborn had started a school in the 1740s to help support her family, as her husband was dogged with business failures. Being a member of the conservative First Congregational Church at a time when Newport's Congregationists were dominated by the more liberal Second Congregational Church led by Ezra Stiles, Osborn came to be seen as a religious leader, especially by the women of her congregation, who were a majority of its active membership. She led prayer groups in her house that by the time of the New Light revival in the 1760s caused her home to be filled most nights with large crowds of people, including Baptists, sometimes as many as 525.³⁴ Slaves were provided with time with Osborn on Sunday evenings for Biblical instruction and prayer, while free blacks, forming an "Ethiopian Society" met in her kitchen on Tuesday evenings. In an April 1765 letter to her spiritual advisor Joseph Fish, Osborn suggests it was the slaves' spiritual excitement that brought "white lads and neighbors daughters also [to] press in" and join the revivals in Newport. When some of Newport's elite questioned her "keeping a Negro House," Osborn expressed her pleasure in sharing the bible with the city's

³³ *New-York Gazette*, Aug. 29, 1757; *Rivington's New-York Gazetteer*, Mar. 31, 1774; *New-York Gazette and the Weekly-Mercury*, Nov. 10, 1783; *New-York Journal or General-Advertiser*, Jan. 12, 1775. Literacy among Philadelphia and Newport slaves was not very high either. Jack Jones was remarkable both because he served on several Philadelphia privateers and his being one of the few Pennsylvanian slaves described as being able to "read, and write a tolerable hand." *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 23, 1776.

³⁴ Mary Beth Norton, "'My Resting Reaping Times': Sarah Osborn's Defense of Her 'Unfemine' Activities, 1767," *Signs* 2:2 (Winter, 1976): 515-29; Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, "Spiritual Pilgrimage of Sarah Osborn (1714-1796)," *Church History* 61:4 (Dec. 1992), 409-410.

slaves. Doing so clearly put Osborn outside the mainstream of Newport religious and educational endeavors. Her altruistic view of nurturing slaves ran counter to the market ethos of most Newport residents who viewed blacks as commodities to be exploited. Support for Osborn's preaching, despite the reservations some had with a woman leading religious instruction, was due to her warning slaves that any disturbance would "at once" end any further gatherings. As a result, it is not surprising that there is no record of disturbances by Newport's slaves attending her services.³⁵

Through Osborn's efforts, an unknown number of the city's slaves learned to read and understand the Bible. Some of her students were believed to have started prayer groups in the households they worked. Probably just as importantly, in providing a quiet space to read and contemplate, Osborn offered spiritual respite sorely lacking in the lives of her enslaved students. She was not believed to have taught slaves how to read, but it is likely that some of her students gained at least some basic reading skills by attending her prayer sessions.³⁶ Whether they were able to use such skills to assist them in escaping enslavement cannot be ascertained. What can be said is that those slaves who were able to read and write were more likely to flee and be successful in doing so.

Like Neau, Osborn's instruction of slaves lasted only a limited time. Osborn's failing health in the 1770s led to her ending religious instruction. Although her minister Samuel Hopkins undertook instruction of Newport's slaves, the numbers attending such instruction fell sharply.³⁷ Osborn's religious instruction did have an impact beyond

³⁵ Crane, *Dependent People*, 79.

³⁶ David William Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney, *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements* (Columbia, SC, 2003), 12; Norton, "My Resting Reaping Times," 515-29; Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America*, 243.

³⁷ James Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860* (Oxford, 1998), 57-8.

Newport. A network of free blacks and slaves that coalesced from Osborn's activities included individuals who became active in the movement to spread Christianity to Africa, including John Quamine and Newport Gardner. Gardner, an African-born slave, was purchased when he was fourteen by Caleb Gardner, a Newport ship captain. Newport spoke the African dialect of Fanti as well as French. Although Newport continued to be called Occramer Marycoo by other black Newporters, he became acculturated in British customs. Given the opportunity to study with a local voice teacher and becoming literate, Newport Gardner came to operate his own music school. Having become a devotee of Samuel Hopkins' Calvinist church, in 1823 he sailed to Africa as part of a re-colonization effort. Thus, although Osborn's failing health in the 1770s led to her ending religious and reading instruction, her influence continued on.

In contrast to New York and Philadelphia's slave children, Newport's were largely ignored when it came to organized education. It was not until the 1770s when "a benevolent institution of a company of gentlemen, in London" provided funding that Mary Brett opened a school in her house on High Street near Trinity Church for the "instruction of thirty negro children" in "reading [and] sewing."³⁸ Within less than a year Brett was experiencing difficulty attracting a sufficient number of children sent by their masters for instruction. As a result, Brett placed an advertisement informing the public that she would "be obliged" to close the school in six months if "the number [of students] cannot be nearly kept up for the future." It is not clear whether slave parents or masters were the reason for the lack of attendance, but the latter seems more likely. Despite such pleas, Mrs. Brett was compelled to close the school. In 1774 she advertised that the

³⁸ *Newport Mercury*, Aug. 10, 1772.

school “for the instruction of NEGRO children, gratis, is again opened to all societies.”³⁹

Thus, it is unlikely that Newport’s slave children were instrumental in spreading literacy among the city’s slave population.

Elias Neau and Sarah Osborn stand out as unusual among white North Americans in their belief that enslaved Negroes should receive religious instruction and that the risks involved in doing so were outweighed by the benefits of converting slaves. Anthony Benezet, who established a night school for blacks in his home, engaged in similar educational efforts in Philadelphia.⁴⁰ Such instruction provided slaves with places away from their masters, enabled some to learn to read, and assisted slaves to create social networks. The literacy, contacts, and solace found in these places of instruction permitted some slaves to flee their masters. For the vast majority of those slaves who attended Neau’s and Osborn’s religious meetings, a connection to a greater being was the most tangible and valued thing they obtained from their instruction. The social networks created during slave gatherings would be of a very different character.

Frolics, Fiddling, Dancing, and Rum: Slave Gatherings and Drinking

The economic and social success of many northern whites relied upon slaves whose behavior they sought to tightly control. The nature of slave labor required bondsmen to move about northern ports, often with minimal supervision, leading masters to value “faithful fellow[s]” who worked “without inspection.”⁴¹ The tension caused by these two opposing factors was evident in colonial officials’ considerable anxiety over

³⁹ *Newport Mercury*, Apr. 5, May 3, 1774; *Dependent People*, 79; *Newport Mercury*, Mar. 14, 1774.

⁴⁰ One of the earliest efforts to educate Negro slaves was undertaken by Philadelphia Quakers. In 1698 the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting advised “all masters of families among friends do Endeavour to bring their negroes to the publick meetings of worship on first days.” Henry J. Cadbury, “Negro Membership in the Society of Friends,” *The Journal of Negro History*, 21:2 (Apr. 1936), 151-213. 152;

⁴¹ *Boston Gazette*, June 5, 1750.

the behavior of enslaved individuals. “Gentlemen in authority” expressed concerns over late-night slave gatherings, while town meetings discussed controlling “great disorders and disturbances” by slaves. Regulations and orders were issued that attempted to limit the gathering and movement of slaves. White gentlemen and officials fretted not merely that bondsmen were moving about transporting goods or delivering messages, but also were concerned that slaves were acting independently and in contravention of whites’ desires. Such fears were not entirely without merit.⁴²

Under the cover of darkness, slaves stealthily walked to gatherings in empty warehouses, in fields and behind the unmarked doors of unlicensed taverns. In these communal spaces, slaves danced, played fiddles, gambled on cock fights, drank drams, played cards, and engaged in other merriment. And while together, they swapped information regarding friends who had run away and whites who would make good masters to be hired out to, boasted of stealing clothing or shoe buckles without being caught, and shared the news of the British victory at Havana. Stories, music, and dancing: each made slaves’ lives a bit more bearable. How successful were slaves in using these gatherings to develop social connections? And how successful were officials and masters in limiting slave movement and gatherings? As is shown below, despite whites spending a good deal of time and effort attempting to control slaves, such associations were created and served to sustain many slaves. These connections did not,

⁴² Conroy, *In Public Places*, 125; *Boston Gazette*, Mar. 26, 1751. In asserting that whites had cause to be concerned about the movement and gatherings of their bondsmen, I do not mean to deny that many whites irrationally feared independent acts by slaves. Rather, slave movements and gatherings, which were largely done to create social connections, also served the purpose of undermining white control, and sometimes involved criminal acts. As such, whites had some justification to fear slave gatherings, even if many times whites saw conspiracies where perhaps there were none. Morgan, “Conspiracy Scares,” 159-66.

however, rise to the level of black communities that developed in northern cities in the Early National era.⁴³

Slave gatherings took a variety of forms, both informal meetings and large gatherings. Although much has been written about slaves gathering to conspire against whites, most slave gatherings were for more peaceful purposes. As they worked, slaves encountered other slaves from different wards, bondsmen peddling their masters' agricultural products in the streets, and rural slaves delivering goods to markets.⁴⁴ Mr. Walters' Quaco and two other Negroes being observed talking together as they strolled New York's Broadway and James Carpenter's slave running into Benjamin Brenton's slave London on Newport's Thames Street while delivering some of Carpenter's Irish linens were common occurrences in northern ports.⁴⁵ On Sundays, free from the obligation of work, slaves walking with their friends filled the streets of Philadelphia, New York and Newport. Slaves walked to religious services or instruction. Others, like Pedro, strolled with friends and then met other slaves with whom they went to markets or taverns. Some slaves sauntered about on Sundays simply to move away from their masters' gazes.⁴⁶ On their walks, all were part of a fluid and hybrid black Atlantic culture. This culture was vividly evidenced each week by the "jig or breakdown" that slaves danced in port markets. Whether the jig was, as Thomas DeVoe contends, brought to the markets by rural slaves, or made its way to northern ports with black mariners

⁴³ White, *Somewhat More Independent*, 182.

⁴⁴ Thomas F. DeVoe, *The Market Book: Containing A Historical Account of the Public Markets of the Cities of New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Brooklyn, with a Brief Description of Every Article of Human Food Sold Therein, the Introduction of Cattle in America, and Notices of Many Remarkable Specimens* (New York, 1862), 322, 344-45. During the 1741 conspiracy trials, there were several references to rural slaves coming into the city. Horsmanden, *New-York Conspiracy*, 185.

⁴⁵ Horsmanden, *New-York Conspiracy*, 27, 59; *Newport Mercury*, May 28, 1764 and Dec. 30, 1765.

⁴⁶ Horsmanden, *New-York Conspiracy*, 216.

familiar with similar dances in London, cannot be said with certainty.⁴⁷ What can be said is that just as walks about city streets helped link together slaves from a variety of areas and backgrounds, so too did dances at markets

In addition to daily work encounters, Sunday strolls and jigs at markets, there were larger, more formal slave gatherings. These took the form of funerals, frolics, holiday celebrations, and meetings in taverns.⁴⁸ Funerals, with large groups of enslaved individuals participating in African rituals of grief and remembrance caused officials particular concern. Officials often required day-time funerals, for which many masters would not release their bondsmen, so as to keep slave funeral gatherings small. To ensure that the size of slave funerals in fact stayed compact, officials also specified the number of slaves permitted to attend funerals; in New York, no more than twelve, exempting the grave diggers and the corpse bearers.⁴⁹ Despite such restrictions, slaves in northern ports frequently followed African traditions in the burying of their dead.

⁴⁷ DeVoe *The Market Book*, 1:344; Linebaugh, *London Hanged*, 135; Jacqui Malone, *Steppin' on the Blue: The Visible Rhythms of African-American Dance* (Champlain, 1996), 48-50. Dancing was also used by elite whites, albeit in very different forms, to create sociability in northern port cities. Zabin, "Places of Exchange," Chap. 5.

⁴⁸ The most notable of the slave celebrations were Pinkster and Election Day. Pinkster was the celebration of Pentecost or Whitsuntide. This event contained synchronized African and European traditions that New York's slaves selectively adapted from. A central feature of Pinkster celebrations was the inversion of roles with a black man taking on the role of king for a day. As Shane White has convincingly argued, Pinkster only became a black festival during the late eighteenth-century, and it was more firmly established in Albany than New York City. Shane White, "'It Was a Proud Day': African Americans, Festivals, and Parades in the North, 1741-1834," *JAH* 81 (1994): 13-50C. It should be noted that slaves celebrated Whitsuntide earlier in the eighteenth century, including at John Hughson's tavern in 1741. Election Day in Rhode Island saw the election of a black slave governor for a day and the use of African wit to ridicule the white establishment. The celebration, with its use of role reversal common in West African cultures, and "music of the fiddle, tambourine, the banjo [and] drum," reflected the African heritage of its participants. Pierson, *Black Yankees*, 117-40; Henry Bull, "Memoir of Rhode Island," *Newport Rhode Island Republican*, April 19, 1937, quoted in Berlin, "Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society on British Mainland North America," 54.

⁴⁹ Conroy, *In Public Places* 125; Towner, *A Master Well Served*, 144; *MCC*, 3:296 and 4:86-88; Williams, "The Regimentation of Blacks on the Urban Frontier," 333. Limitations on slave funerals after sunset also evidenced hostility to African traditions of holding communal events in the evening. Sobel, 1988, 33; Christian Georg Andres Oldendorp, *History of the Mission of the Evangelical Brethren on the Caribbean Islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John*, ed. Johann Jakob Bossard (Ann Arbor, 1987), 381.

Excavations at New York City's African Burial Ground have uncovered evidence of a variety of African burial practices among the city's enslaved population. These included the wrapping of bodies in linen shrouds, covering the coffins with palls, placing objects of value, such as beads and ear-bobs, with the dead, and decorating at least one coffin with a heart-shaped Akan symbol. The Akan symbol, which Howard University archaeologists have identified as "the adinkra symbol, *Sankofa*," signified "connections between the past, present, and future."⁵⁰ It is clear that while whites may have wished slaves not congregate to bury their dead or practice African rituals, they in fact did so. As Reverend Chaplain Sharpe observed, New York's slaves were buried "by those of their own country and complexion" who conducted what he described as "Heathenish rites."⁵¹

One of the most noticeable large slave gatherings occurred during Philadelphia's semi-annual fair. Held in May and November, the fairs attracted large numbers of "mix'd Companies of vicious Servants and Negroes." At these festivals young men and women drank and played games with slaves "dancing after the manner of their several nations." Enslaved individuals from throughout Philadelphia and the Delaware River valley

⁵⁰ Michael L. Blakey, "Bioarchaeology of the American Diaspora in the Americas: Its Origins and Scope," *Annual Review Anthropology* 30 (2001): 387-422; Blakey, "The New York African Burial Ground Project: An Examination of Enslaved Lives"; Cheryl J. LaRoche and Michael L. Blakey, "Seizing the Intellectual Power: The Dialogue at the New York African Burial Ground," *Historical Archaeology* 31 (1997): 84-106; Cheryl J. LaRoche, "Beads from the African Burial Ground, New York City: A Preliminary Assessment," *Beads: Journal of the Society of Bead Researchers* 6 (1994): 3-30. The "sameness" in how most of the deceased were buried in the ABG "suggests that the ethnically diverse Africans shared agreed-upon traditions that had been created by drawing on the similarities of many African customs and adapting to the circumstances they found in New York." African Burial Ground, Final History Report, 183.

⁵¹ Sharpe, "Proposals for Erecting a School," 355; Valentine, *Manual of the Corporation of New York*, 567. For a description of the various African burial rituals that may have been employed by slaves at the ABG see "African Burial Ground, Final History Report," 175-186. African burial rituals also appear to have been employed by Philadelphia's slave community. *Watson's Annals*, Vol. 1, Chap. 50. Although African burial practices were fairly common among North American slaves in the eighteenth century, it is unclear if they were employed when the three hundred slaves in Newport's African Burial Ground were buried. Ross W. Jamieson, "Material Culture and Social Death: African-American Burial Practices," *Historical Archaeology* 29:4 (1995): 39-58; James C. Garman, "Viewing the Color Line Through the Material Culture of Death," *Historical Archaeology* 28:3 (1993): 80-2. Given that many of the slaves imported into Newport were African-born, it is likely African burial practices were employed by the city's enslaved peoples.

attended the fairs. In addition to providing opportunities for socializing, the fairs also proved conducive to slave escapes, as slaves fled “more than at any other time.” By 1775 the fairs were banned by the Pennsylvania Assembly as tending to “debauch the morals of the people.” Among the individuals whose morals suffered were women enticed by seamen to flee their slave masters.⁵²

Efforts to control slave gatherings, whether for funerals, fairs, or other social purposes, did not succeed. For example, Pennsylvanian colonial officials attempted to control gatherings of unfree peoples beginning in 1693. By 1741 the Philadelphia Grand Jury noted that “great disorders” on Sundays by “servants, apprentice boys and numbers of Negroes” were occurring regularly. Disorders also took place on weekday evenings when “great numbers of Negroes and others sit [until late].”⁵³ In 1761, with little change observed in slaves’ behavior, Philadelphia’s mayor felt compelled to have republished a summary of the 1741 legislation. And yet, despite the continual efforts of colonial cities from Boston to Philadelphia to restrain slave behavior, even whipping those who lacked passes from their masters, enforcement measures failed to deter slaves from gathering in groups and creating social connections. These measures included proclamations or orders prohibiting slaves from traveling at night without a lantern, hiring themselves out, “gadding abroad on the first day of the week” without a pass from their master, being out after nine P.M., or gathering in groups of more than three.⁵⁴ The persistence of large gatherings is strong “evidence of their importance” within the enslaved community.⁵⁵

⁵² Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (New York, 1976), 50, 102; *American Weekly Mercury*, July 28, 1737; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 12, 1761; Waldstreicher, “Capitalism, Slavery, and Benjamin Franklin’s American Revolution,” 194; *Watson’s Annals*, Vol. 1, Chap. 50. Just as New York and Rhode Island fugitives tended to flee after the harvest (Tables 12-6 and 13-6), the same appears to be true of Pennsylvania’s fugitives who fled in considerable numbers during the Fall fair (Table 11-6).

⁵³ Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America*, 50; Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*, 10n9.

⁵⁴ A Law for Regulating Negroes and Slaves in the Night Time, April 22, 1731, Broadside Collection,

Slaves also came together in smaller gatherings, often at frolics in the homes of free blacks, in open fields and industrial buildings. In Boston, slaves regularly left their masters' houses without permission. Some took fowl, bread, and rum to late night meetings in warehouses "to make merry." As early as 1692 New York officials expressed concerns that slaves were gathering at the homes of free blacks and causing "great discord." After the 1712 slave insurrection, colonial officials enacted a law authorizing the fining of any free "Negro, Indian or Mulatto" who entertained a slave ten pounds a day. In 1741, Adam, Braveboy, Othello, and Curacoa Dick all were described as having been "frolicking" at a free Negro's house in New York's Bowery where a fiddler played. The same year, Jack testified that he and another slave had "a dram" at Mrs. Wendell's. Whites described observing slaves "dancing to a fiddle" in local homes. These gatherings were not unusual.⁵⁶

To whites' dismay, the threat of fines did not deter free blacks from entertaining slaves. Free blacks who provided liquor to slaves were believed to be the cause for

NYPL; MCC, 3:254 & 296; Paul Crawford, "Footnote on Courts for Trial of Negroes in Colonial Pennsylvania," *Journal of Black Studies* 5:2 (Dec. 1974), 171; Williams, "The Regimentation of Blacks on the Urban Frontier," 334; Riddell, "The Slave in Early New York," 68; Conroy, *In Public Places* 125; Towner, *A Master Well Served*, 146-7. Colonial legislation often made little distinction between enslaved and free dark-skinned individuals. Williams, "The Regimentation of Blacks on the Urban Frontier," 330.

⁵⁵ Lovell, *Art in a Season of Revolution: Painters, Artisans, and Patrons in Early America* (Philadelphia, 2005), 240; MCC 1:277. New York had a similar lack of success in controlling the gathering of groups of slaves. Laws prohibited the gathering of more than four slaves were ignored as large groups of slaves gathered both on holidays such as New Year's, English coronations, monarch birthdays, St. Patrick's Day and market days. In 1712 the slave uprising was planned during a New Year's gathering. Scott, "The Slave Insurrection in New York in 1712," 43-74; Foote, "Some Hard Usage," 147-59.

⁵⁶ *Boston Evening-Post*, Jan. 16, 1738; Jose C. Curto, *Enslaving Spirits: The Portuguese-Brazilian Alcohol Trade at Lucanda and its Hinterland, c. 1550-1830* (Leiden, 2004), Chap. 1; Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 182, 195, 199, 213, 222; MCC, Aug. 8, 1692; *New York Laws*, 1: Dec. 10, 1712. In New York, more than one-quarter of the skilled fugitive slaves were described as having musical talent, usually as fiddlers. Slaves who could play fiddle were able to earn money playing in port markets and at frolics and were valued by owners for their musical abilities. In 1741 Adam testified that he had been paid "two Dutch dollars" to fiddle. The prevalence of fiddles at slave frolics is evident from the 1741 trial testimony in which Bastian noted that there had been "no fiddle" at a frolic at John Hughson's tavern. *New York Conspiracy*, 140, 200; Richard Crawford, *America's Musical Life: A History* (New York, 2001), 106-107. The prevalence of musical talent among slaves has been observed among other slave populations in the Americas. Klooster, "Subordinate but Proud," 285; Table 11-4.

bondsmen's disorderly behavior. While few free blacks were, like Cato, operators of licensed taverns, many operated unlicensed public houses in Newport and other northern ports. Free blacks would not only entertain slaves but also provide critical assistance to individuals who sought to escape the shackles of enslavement. Sometimes free slaves did both. For example, Peter the Doctor, a free black believed to have been a ringleader in the 1712 slave uprising, was subsequently convicted of running a disorderly house where he entertained slaves. Even fourteen year old girls such as Hagar, who escaped her Baltimore master in 1766, received assistance from free blacks in ports' "Negro Quarters." Whether fugitives such as Ned Levy had previously spent time in disorderly houses run by free blacks in Philadelphia's Northern Liberties before he hid among free blacks there in 1776 cannot be stated. However, given the regular movement of slaves in northern ports and the frequent reporting of slaves being entertained by free blacks, it is reasonable to speculate that Ned and many other fugitives found haven among free blacks in ports.⁵⁷

At many, if not most slave gatherings, drink was present and seen as critical in creating sociability. This is hardly surprising given that drink had been important in a number of West African cultures from which northern slaves came and was central to the thriving colonial tavern culture in port cities. Beer and wine figured prominently in pre-colonial African religious and secular ceremonies. For example, in colonial Angola, wine

⁵⁷ Queen v "Doctor Peter," Aug. 2, 1715, Court of General Quarter Sessions, County Clerk's Office; Crane, *A Dependent People*, 104; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 6, 1766, May 1, 1776. Cato operated Cato's Road House in New York. Williams, "Regimentation of Blacks on the Urban Frontier," 336-337n10 citing Alice M. Earle, *State-Coach and Tavern-Days* (London, 1938), 40-41. For other examples of free blacks entertaining slaves see *Rex v Elizabeth and Peter*, Supreme Court, New York County, Reel 32, p. 92, New York City Municipal Archives, New York, NY; *Root & Branch*, 48, 89 (As early as 1670, Domingo and Manuel Angola, free Negroes, were "strictly charged" by New York officials that they and the rest of the city's free African population not entertain "any servants or helps whether Christians or Negroes on pain of forfeiting their freedom"). Even young children recently imported into northern ports were believed to have found haven with free blacks. *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, Dec. 1, 1781

and brandy were omni-present, with there being wide-spread use of indigenous wines before European contact. As the events of 1741 in New York disclosed, despite long-standing prohibitions on the sale of liquor to slaves, slaves used drink for a number of different purposes, including committing to communal action and group celebrations. “Drinking a dram” to endorse their agreement to partake in a plot against whites was how many slaves, including Peter Jay’s slave Brash and Mr. Kip’s slave Harry, testified they “consent[ed] to burn the houses and kill the people.” Even those slaves who denied participating in the alleged 1741 plot acknowledged drinking. When Obadiah Hunt’s slave Warwick claimed not to have been involved in the planning of the alleged conspiracy, his defense was he had been “in liquor” at the time and unaware of what others were doing.⁵⁸ Thus, whether or not there was an actual conspiracy to burn New York City in 1741, what is apparent is the central role drink and tavern life played for many slaves. Contrary to the advice given to British seamen, many northern slaves used liquor as “a soother of the mind,” a means to take their minds off the numbing brutality of their daily existence.⁵⁹ And in contrast to the controlled settings of religious instruction, taverns and dram houses provided places slaves could socialize away from the prying eyes of masters and other whites.⁶⁰

Many whites agreed with the concerns expressed by the Philadelphian “S.B.” that “the constant Cabals” of slaves gathering “every Night and every Sunday” could result in uprisings to the “great Terror of the Kings Subjects.” S. B. believed that while sober most

⁵⁸ Kenneth Christom, “Historical Overview of African-Americans and Alcohol,” *Journal of Black Studies* 25:3 (Jan. 1995), 319; Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 187, 203, 224.

⁵⁹ MCC I: 85-86 (1680 law prohibiting the sale of liquor to slaves); Charles Lorimer, *Letters to a Young Master Mariner on Some Subjects Connected with His Calling* (London, 1843), 10.

⁶⁰ The testimony in the 1741 conspiracy trials also reveals how infrequently constables entered illegal drinking establishments.

slaves would not go to the “desperate length” of violent uprisings, but noted “how much they are addicted to Spirituous Liquor.” With “little dram Shops [o]n every Corner and Alley,” liquored-up slaves were described as acting with “great and uncommon impudence.” While one might see S.B. as simply a disgruntled slave owner whose slave may have stumbled home drunk one night, the evidence supporting the central role of taverns and drink in the lives of slaves in northern ports is quite compelling and supports the belief of many whites that “strong liquor, or the quest for it” drove slaves to crime.⁶¹

Fugitive advertisements contained many references to slaves being “much addicted to liquor,” “apt to drink,” or being “fond of drink,” evidencing a connection in many whites’ minds between slave resistance and drinking.⁶² This connection can plainly be seen in the slave trading patterns in Pennsylvania, New York, and Rhode Island. When purchasing slaves whites in all three colonies sought sober bondsmen. Pennsylvanians stressed sobriety over all other personal traits of slaves when advertising an intention to purchase a slave. Rhode Islanders and New Yorkers, while emphasizing that slaves be of “good character” or “well-recommended,” also placed a strong emphasis on a slave’s sobriety. These advertisements were not mere wishful thinking. Instead, they reflected whites’ anxiety that they could not control their slaves and a belief drinking by slaves led to criminal behavior.⁶³

⁶¹ *American Weekly Mercury*, Aug. 10, 1738; Williams, “The Regimentation of Blacks on the Urban Frontier,” 330.

⁶² *New-York Gazette*, Jan. 31, 1738; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 28 1748; *New-York Mercury*, Aug. 11, 1760; Slaves frequently stole alcoholic beverages, as the name of New York’s most notorious slave gang, the Geneva Club, implies. Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 86. In newspaper accounts of the gang’s exploits, it was referred to as Black Masons, a sarcastic reference to slaves imitating white Freemason club life. *New-York Gazette*, Feb. 7, 1738; *New-York Weekly Journal*, Feb. 13, 1738; Zabin “Places of Exchange,” 192-3,

⁶³ When advertising slaves for sale, whites also stressed the bondsmen’s sobriety. Table _-4,.

In spite of concerns about slaves' drinking, some whites found it in their self-interest to sell slaves liquors and spirits. Account books demonstrate that merchants' economic self-concern often served to undercut slave masters' attempts to control their slaves' behavior. Charles Nicolls, one of New York's largest wine and liquors merchants, regularly sold rum and cordials to New York slaves. In 1754 Joo, James, and Ambo, Peter Hack's Derry, John West's Jack, Thomas Hall's Taff and Titus, and Captain Major's Nero, all found access to rum at Mr. Nicolls's store. Nicolls often noted that he sold liquor to these bondsmen "with leave" from their masters. However, the extent of such "leave" is not clear. Several of the slaves frequently purchased small amounts of liquor while others, such as Peter Hack's slave Derry purchased 1 ½ gallons of rum and a quart of cordials in less than six weeks.⁶⁴ Other merchants also sold alcohol to slaves. The ledger of William Townsend of Oyster Bay, New York indicates that blacks purchased rum, often in small amounts. And in rural New Jersey, slaves also were regularly sold rum in small amounts. The illegal sale of liquor to slaves was not limited to white merchants. Free blacks did so too.⁶⁵

Slaves not "keeping the Lord's Day," an act that Douglas Greenberg characterized as "heavy with overtones of rebellion and pagan savagery," was a constant source of concern for colonial officials. On Sundays, despite the efforts of Elias Neau and other religious leaders, port city streets were full of slaves dancing and engaging in a variety of other social activities.⁶⁶ When the New York Common Council sought in 1731 to limit

⁶⁴ Charles Nicolls Account Books, Nicolls Collection, N-YHS. Colonial officials expressed concerns about whites selling "small measure" of liquor to slaves and placed restrictions on such sales. Robert Earle Graham, "The Taverns of Colonial Philadelphia," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 43:1 (1953), 319.

⁶⁵ "Negro Ledger, 1761-1762," William Townsend Papers, N-NYS.

⁶⁶ Greenberg, *Law Enforcement*, 74; Elias Neau to Mr. John Hodges, New York, July 10, 1703, Vol. XIII, SPG Lambeth Papers, Reel 13.

slaves playing, engaging in sports, and socializing on the first day of the week, they failed. Ten years after the Council's action, the prosecuting attorney in the 1741 conspiracy trials contended that the planning for the conspiracy had "been chiefly contrived and promoted at meetings of negroes in great numbers on Sundays." Just where was it that these "disorderly persons" were headed on a day they should have been listening to Anglican preachers speak of the obligation to obey one's master? Many were, as Massachusetts Governor Jonathan Belcher observed, drinking in taverns and public houses.⁶⁷

In Philadelphia's Hell Town, New York's Dock Ward, and Newport's cove area, taverns and illegal public houses were believed to be a great temptation to entertain servants, apprentices, and "even Negroes."⁶⁸ Slaves congregated in taverns unknown to their masters. There scores of "black Gentry" could be found "in a very merry Humour, singing and dancing, having Violin, and Store of Wine and Punch." Slaves found social connections in taverns from the opening of such drinking establishments. In 1641, the year New York's first tavern commenced business, eight blacks, or almost seven percent

⁶⁷ *Boston Post-Boy*, Sept. 3, 1739; Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 167. Many northern slave masters agreed with Cotton Mather that servants and slaves who disobeyed their masters were violating God's commands. Towner, *A Good Master Well Served*, 39.

⁶⁸ Steve Rosswurm, *Arms, Country and Class: The Philadelphia Militia and the "Lower Sort" in the America Revolution, 1765-1783* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1987), Chap. 1. From their first establishment in northern cities, taverns played important roles in the lives of slaves in northern ports. Since at least the mid-1600s, hundreds of Africans were bought and sold out of taverns and grog houses. Slaves often first glimpsed the streets of northern ports from auction blocks in front of taverns. *Harper's Monthly Magazine* in 1895 contained a vivid illustration of slaves being traded in front of a New Amsterdam tavern in the mid-1600s. (A copy of the illustration is contained in *Root & Branch*, 30). When dark-skinned mariners were captured on enemy vessels, they too were often sold at local taverns. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 24, 1749 and July 5, 1744; *American Weekly Mercury*, July 13, 1732 and Oct. 18, 1733; Desrochers, "Slaves-for-Sale Advertisements and Slavery in Massachusetts, 1704-1781," 627; Richard J. Koke, "War, Profit and Privateers along the New Jersey Coast," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly* 41 (1957), 323; *New-Jersey Gazette*, May 1, 1782. Given taverns' place as the point of entry for many into North American slavery, enslaved men and women who subsequently used northern taverns to build social connections would have been aware of the irony in having done so and probably delighted in it.

of the city's slave population, were involved in a brawl at a New York tavern.⁶⁹ Two decades later a teenage slave girl, Lysbeth Anthonissen, was convicted of setting afire her master's New York tavern. By 1680, these and other criminal acts in taverns led the Common Council to restrict the sales of liquor to slaves. Such laws proved ineffective. The six shilling fine was not a sufficient deterrent to keep many tavern and dram shop owners from selling drinks to slaves, especially since bondsmen often provided white tapsters with stolen goods from which tidy profits could be made.⁷⁰

Colonial travelers to northern ports frequently remarked on the role that taverns and other public drinking establishments played as "entertainment center and community crossroads." Taverns were often shared spaces used for diverse purposes. In addition to being sites of entertainment or celebration, taverns also served as centers of criminality, places of refuge, and seamen halls for hiring. Slaves used taverns for all these purposes. The enclosed space of a tavern served "to loosen, both physically and psychologically, the bonds of servitude," just as Sunday markets did for many plantation slaves.⁷¹ As Justice Horsmanden observed, gatherings in taverns provided opportunities for slaves to form "schools of mischief." While officials recognized this problem and took steps to limit slaves' access to taverns, slaves usually had little difficulty finding a drink.⁷² By

⁶⁹ Council Minutes [4:83-85], January 1641, *Calendar of Dutch Historical Manuscripts in the Office of the Secretary of State, Albany, New York, 1630-1664*, ed. Edmund B. O'Callaghan, 74. For slaves who did not drink, such as the Muslim Job Ben Solomon, who was said to have refused a drink at a North American tavern, tavern culture was not a welcoming place. Donnan, *Documents II*: 421-2.

⁷⁰ *Boston Evening-Post*, Jan. 14, 1740; Council Minutes [vol. 10, pt. 3], *Calendar of Dutch Historical Manuscripts*, 258-259; MCC I: 85-86, 276-77; Morris, *Select Cases*, 408-9; Towner, *A Master Well Served*, 141.

⁷¹ Williams, "The Regimentation of Blacks on the Urban Frontier," 330; *Rum and Punch*, 77; Roderick A. McDonald, "Independent Economic Production by Slaves on Antebellum Louisiana Sugar Plantations," in *Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas*, ed. Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan (Charlottesville, VA, 1993), 289. Slaves could also find themselves impressed from waterside taverns. Lemisch, *Jack Tar v John Bull*, 384.

⁷² Sue Peabody and Keila Grinberg, *Slavery, Freedom, and the Law in the Atlantic World: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston & New York, 2007), 41 (Gov. Phélypeaux April 6, 1713 Letter: Martinique

1719 public drinking establishments were “an institutionalized feature of Boston society,” and were well established in New York, Newport, and Philadelphia by the 1730s. The second half of the eighteenth century saw a dramatic increase in public drinking. For example, from 166 licensed taverns in New York City in 1744, the number grew to 218 in 1757, 334 in 1762 and to 396 in 1773. During the American Revolution, British commanders attempted to control the “pernicious Effects” of public drinking by limiting the number of taverns in New York to 200. These numbers do not provide an accurate number of drinking establishments, as many operated without licenses. In Boston during one nine year period ninety-seven individuals were indicted for serving drinks without a license, while in other northern ports, courts such cases took up a considerable proportion of the criminal docket. Douglas Greenberg has characterized these disorderly houses as “a microcosm of a society out of control.” Perhaps a better characterization would be that colonial port taverns and public houses were environments in which laborers, seamen and slaves all created communities within spaces they wanted to be outside the control of elites and colonial officials. Unlicensed public houses and dram shops offered these groups the ability to create sociability elites were legally allowed to exercise in dance halls and licensed taverns, spaces off-limits to slaves.⁷³

Taverns were spaces that slaves were familiar with, not simply as customers but as employees. Slaves were commonly employed in northern port taverns. Many licensed

Superior Council enactment calling for “all the cabarets held by both Negroes and whites along the sea” to be torn down due to “disorders committed there).

⁷³ Conroy, *In Public Places*, 123, 126; *Gentleman’s Progress*, 206n9 (In 1746 there were 845 taverns and grog shops in Maryland); Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 183; *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Jan. 10, 1780; Greenberg, *Crime and Law Enforcement* 52-68, 97; Zabin, “Places of Exchange,” Chap. 4-5. expressed concerns to British commanders During the Revolution Kings County slaves regular attendance of parties in New York led Kings County freeholders to request British officials to limit drinking establishments. *Generous Enemies*, 147.

Boston tavern owners owned slaves.⁷⁴ Tavern owners in other northern ports were no less shy about employing slave labor in their businesses. New York tavern owners Obadiah Hunt, George Burns and John O'Brien each owned slaves that they employed in their businesses.⁷⁵ In advertising their slaves' escape, tavern owners made evident the significant numbers of enslaved familiar with the business of providing liquid relief to working peoples. William Callendar, Mr. Nicholson, John Smith, Robert White, and many other tavern owners bemoaned the loss of their bondsmen.⁷⁶ At the same time, a number of owners selling slaves advertised their bondsmen as being "serviceable in a Tavern." Having served food and drink in such establishments, Richard Baker's slave Cajoe and others who worked in taverns were comfortable in such spaces.⁷⁷

If the playing of Fives, Ninepins, Longbullets, and other similar games was said to serve to entice young people to "mispend their Time" in taverns, the same could be said for slaves. Games served as a pleasant diversion from the constant labor of most northern slaves. While childhood games, like the marbles Adam and Quack played as boys, may not have been regularly played in port taverns, card playing and cock-fighting were. Dundee testified how he lost money playing papa with Jack, Cook and Jenny at John Hughson's house. A number of slaves admitted watching and gambling on cock-fighting. Many of these gatherings included whites. When Adam attended a cock-fighting match at the house of Adolph Philipse in 1740, the white tavern owner John Hughson was in attendance. An unidentified white man who was married to a mulatto girl attended

⁷⁴ Conroy, *In Public Places*, 125.

⁷⁵ *New York Weekly Journal*, Oct. 6, 20, 1735; *New-York Gazette*, Aug. 18, 1763 and Sept. 29, 1763; *Royal Gazette*, Sept. 2, 1778 and July 25, 1781; *New-England Chronicle*, Dec. 28, 1775; *Dunlap's Pennsylvania Gazette or General Advertiser*, Apr. 22, 1777.

⁷⁶ *American Weekly Mercury*, Sept. 30, 1731; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 23, 1754, Feb. 14, 1778.

⁷⁷ *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, May 10, 1777; Lepore, *New York Burning*, App. C.

frolics with Braveboy and other slaves. Clearly, while dance halls in northern ports may have been limited to whites, gatherings in the unlicensed taverns, docks, and warehouses of northern cities were often multiracial.⁷⁸

As events along New York's East River in July 1743 demonstrate, slaves and other "outcasts of the nations of the earth" did not always see eye-to-eye or find friendship with each other while drinking.⁷⁹ Concerns over appropriate roles among whites and blacks limited the scope of slaves' social lives. In the beginning of July, an "unruly" black sailor found himself dunked in the East River. It was reported that the dunking was done to cool the man's "courage."⁸⁰ Whether the seaman challenged the authority of an officer, was being put in his place by white workers, or simply fell out with some crewmates cannot be ascertained. But the newspaper dispatch does imply a limit to the sociability that black tars found when with whites. Such limits clearly were true for slave women who attempted to take on jobs traditionally performed by white men. Not long after the disruptive black mariner was cooled off, workers on the East River docks would have witnessed the tarring and feathering of a woman by the crew of the privateer *Castor*. The woman had attempted to obtain a berth by disguising herself as a male seaman.⁸¹ Whether on docks or in taverns, slaves could not assume that white

⁷⁸ *New-Jersey Gazette*, May 28, 1779 (£6 fine if participated in such games without Tavern owner's leave); *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Mar. 6, 1775 (tavern owners allowing "rassing and frolicking"); Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 180, 195, 199, 222. The regularity of slaves engaging in such games is evidenced by New York City Council's enactment of a law providing for the whipping of any slave who was "Convicted of Gaming or Playing in the Streets of this City, or in...ANY House[,] Out House[,] or Yard within the same for Money." *MCC*, Feb. 20, 1722.

⁷⁹ Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker argue that the "outcasts of the nations of the earth" formed an Atlantic Proletariat. *Many-Headed Hydra*, Chap.6. I am not persuaded as to the extent of class solidarity that Linebaugh and Rediker argue for existed in northern ports, as they tend to understate the role of individual concerns in actions slaves and seamen took. However, their argument that in the aftermath of the English Civil War laborers in the Anglo-American world began to think in terms of class is a well supported position.

⁸⁰ *New-York Weekly Post-Boy*, July 17, 1743.

⁸¹ *New York Post-Boy*, July 25, 1743.

workers felt comfortable with them or cared to share their company. Careless repartee could place one in danger.

If gaming in public drinking establishments was an important diversion for slaves, criminal enterprises centered in such places served a more serious, and to whites, more disruptive function. Greenberg has accurately described the criminality that took place in taverns, whether licensed or unlicensed. Most prosecutions of unlicensed drinking establishments tended to be connected to thievery.⁸² Taverns such as John Hughson's in 1741 came to be seen by slaves and white workers alike as trading posts, where slaves brought what they could steal and whites fenced the stolen goods.⁸³ When the young British seaman Christopher Wilson docked in New York he quickly learned from fellow crew members in which drinking establishments he could buy and sell stolen goods. Having observed Spanish pieces of eight in the drawer of Rebecca Hogg's shop, Wilson quickly met Prince, Cuffee, and Caesar, each an experienced thief, at John Hughson's. With the information from Wilson, the three slaves broke into Hogg's house and stole Rebecca's money along with cloth, snuff-boxes, knee buckles, and other pieces of worked silver. The stolen goods were brought back to Hughson's to be fenced. George Clarke, New York's Lieutenant Governor claimed in 1738 that illegal transactions, such as selling stolen clothes to tavern keepers, promoted the "habit of idleness" in many. In fact, these transactions hardly caused idleness, but instead were the product of active minds and hands that sought to partake in the eighteenth century's consumer revolution. Slaves, seamen, and women all participated in an informal economy that relied upon pawning and bartering of goods, particularly clothes. In colonial economies where specie

⁸² Greenberg, *Crime and Law Enforcement*, 68.

⁸³ Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 182.

was scarce, clothing was often used by slaves and working whites to barter. The clothes stolen by the Mulatto Sall Hammet, and the “men and women’s cloathing” Philly, a “black, big negro” was suspected of having stolen, were seen by fugitives as valuable items, both for resale and for changing one’s appearance.⁸⁴ Slaves throughout the Atlantic world used stolen clothes as currency; bondsmen accused in the 1741 New York conspiracy and St. Eustatia slaves each sold stolen clothes.⁸⁵ Despite legislation prohibiting the “buy[ing] or tak[ing] in pawn from [slaves] any wares ... or any other Kind of goods whatsoever,” clothing was regularly fenced with whites’ willing accomplices in the trade. In tippling houses, dives, unlicensed taverns, dram houses, and some licensed taverns, “slaves, Negroes, servants, apprentices, and sailors were entertained and often given credit when they could not pay cash.”⁸⁶

Slave gangs, such as the Geneva Club, used taverns as centers of operation. Three years prior to robbing Rebecca Hogg, Caesar, Prince, and Cuffee were caught stealing from Baker’s Tavern “a large Quantity of strong Liquor.” The men were sentenced to be publicly whipped on each street corner in the city. Pelted with “Snow balls and Dirt” as they were carted through the streets of New York before being publicly whipped, the men were not deterred from continuing to engage in criminal enterprises. Instead, for the next three years they regularly stole clothes, candlesticks and cloth from the city’s whites. They fenced their goods, often “tied up in a large table cloth,” with John Hughson at his

⁸⁴ *Newport Mercury*, Nov. 28, 1768, July 3, 1770, Jan. 24, 1774; *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, Nov. 17, 1770; *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, Nov. 21, 1782; *Pennsylvania Packet or the General Advertiser*, Sept. 23, 1783; Shane White, “Slave Clothing and African-American Culture,” *Past and Present* 148, 160, 164. Whites often claimed they sold their slaves due to a lack of “ready” cash. *New-York Weekly Journal*, Jan. 2, 1749; *New-York Gazette*, Feb. 12, 1750; *New-York Mercury*, June 25, 1764.

⁸⁵ Horsamden, *New York Conspiracy*, 15-16; *Newport Mercury*, Mar. 21, 1774.

⁸⁶ Goebel and Naughton, *Law Enforcement*, 100. The fencing of clothes and the extension of credit in taverns may have caused some slaves who already had fled with stolen clothes to break back into their masters’ houses to steal additional clothes. *New-York Mercury*, Mar. 12, 1764.

public house near the Hudson River. When seeking to dispose of large quantities of goods, such as the fifty firkins of butter they stole from Peter Vergereau's storehouse, these ingenious criminals fenced the goods with Caesar's neighbor, the merchant John Romme. A relative of city councilman William Romme, the merchant was unlikely to be seen as a collaborator with slave criminals.⁸⁷ This informal economy centered in taverns, permitted bondsmen with an outlet to obtain money, guns, forged passes and other implements that could assist their flight from enslavement.⁸⁸

For maritime fugitives, taverns, dram shops and unlicensed public houses served as a "maritime underground railroad."⁸⁹ When slaves sought to flee via the sea, masters anticipated they would head to taverns. In 1771 William Bayard expressed such an expectation. When his slave Charles fled with a forged pass and "a number of clothes," Bayard felt compelled to warn tavern owners not to entertain the runaway.⁹⁰ Bayard, like many slave masters in the Americas, understood that taverns were often places where fugitive slaves, deserting seamen and others escaping the law, sought refuge and assistance.⁹¹

In large cities, taverns and boardinghouses played an important role in facilitating the labor market. Ship officers often required a month to hire a crew and have cargo

⁸⁷ *New-York Gazette*, Jan. 31, 1738; Horsmanden, *New-York Conspiracy*, 86. For background on the Romme family, see Howard S. F. Randolph, "The Rommen-Romme-Van Langstraat Family and the Romme Family: Showing Connections between These Two Families and the Elsworth Family of New York City," *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* 44 (1933): 330-341; and The "Elsworth Family of New York, with the Related Families of Rommen-Romme-Van Langstraat and Roome," *ibid*, 154-166, 255-267.

⁸⁸ Lieutenant Governor Clarke to the Lords of Trade, June 2, 1738, in O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents*, 115; Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 15-18; Zabin, "Places of Exchange," Chap. 4; Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 182. Wilson and other mariners who often shared tables in port taverns with slaves were part of an Atlantic community in which information and culture were regularly exchanged. Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 179-184; Zabin, "Places of Exchange," 146-152, 171-173.

⁸⁹ Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 182.

⁹⁰ *New-York Gazette and Weekly-Journal*, Jul. 15, 1771.

⁹¹ Pares, "The Manning of the Navy in the West Indies," 34 (St. Kitts merchant ship captains petitioned the island's Governor to prevent tavern owners from harboring mariners).

stored aboard before their vessels could leave port.⁹² During the time ship owners and captains were undertaking to get a ship ready to leave, maritime fugitives, Salem mariner Richard Cleveland, and many other young men drawn to the sea by a sense of adventure, overheard possibilities of berths while drinking drams in public houses and taverns.⁹³ Junior officers, charged with filling a ship's complement, understood the role taverns and public houses had in the circulation of maritime information and labor. They frequently used taverns as recruitment headquarters, posting handbills there seeking "Gentlemen, Sailors and others" for an upcoming voyage. Captain Kidd and a host of other northern ship captains recruited their crews this way, and in doing so, found themselves with colored seamen on their ships. As did scores of other maritime fugitives, Sam, a "well-known" cook in a tavern was believed to have fled by sea, while the owners of Jack and two Negro men who spoke no English believed each had sought berths on New York's ships.⁹⁴ They were joined by other runaways drawn by the handbills plastered on tavern doors and numerous newspaper advertisements calling for men "to try their Fortune" at the possibility of obtaining a berth, particularly on a privateer.⁹⁵ Waterside taverns such as the Ship-A Ground and the Boatswain and Call advertised their association with maritime workers. With ship captains, officers, and supercargoes mingling in taverns with seamen, port taverns provided settings where commercial and social exchanges occurred.⁹⁶

⁹² *Young Men and the Sea*, 78-9. In smaller towns like Salem, "word of mouth probably sufficed" to let seamen know a ship was being readied to leave port.

⁹³ Vickers, *Young Men at Sea*, 138-9; 161-2, 188; Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World*, 15.

⁹⁴ *New-York Gazette*, Sept. 29, 1763, Feb. 20, 1764, and Nov. 18, 1764.

⁹⁵ Rediker, *Between the Devil and Deep Blue Sea*, 67.

⁹⁶ Lydon, *Pirates, Privateers and Profits*, 249-250; Zacks, *The Pirate Hunter*, 10, 18; *New-York Weekly Journal*, Nov. 7, 1743; *American Weekly Mercury*, Mar. 30, 1732 and July 30, 1741; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 82; Conroy, *In Public Places*, 127.

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The education that slaves obtained, whether on the third floor of Elias Neau's house, at the weekly gatherings at Sarah Osborn's, during regular instruction in Anthony Benezet's or the Bray Associates' schools, or from being taught to read through less formal methods, gave slaves in northern ports a valuable tool to connect them to the larger Atlantic world. Sharper and other slaves understood that they could use documents to pose as something they were not so as to escape their masters.⁹⁷ When slaves learned to read, what once may have been rumor to illiterate slaves could become verifiable information. With slaves' establishing social networks centered in taverns, public houses and frolics, possibilities for exchange of news and corroboration of information was greatly increased. The mobility that characterized slave life in northern ports both facilitated the creation of social networks and allowed slaves to engage in discourses not possible in more physically isolated environments. These social networks may not have been as obvious as the ones discovered during the 1741 conspiracy trials, but whites understood they existed throughout the eighteenth century. For many maritime fugitives, these networks provided the support that enabled them to escape via the sea.

⁹⁷ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 28, 1770.

CHAPTER THREE

From the Garret to the Forecastle

Samuel Johnson observed that “A ship is worse than a gaol. There is, in a gaol, better air, better company, better convenience of every kind, and a ship has the additional disadvantage of being in danger.” Johnson’s remarks capture a certain truth about shipboard life: the harshness, danger and confinement that Atlantic sailors regularly encountered. But Johnson looked at maritime employment with the narrow prejudices of his class and ignorance of the economic and social forces that drew many to life at sea. Contrary to Johnson’s belief that most seamen could not “escape from” maritime employment once they went to sea, the majority of Atlantic mariners moved back and forth between the filth and stench of the forecandle that so turned Johnson’s stomach and jobs on land. Even men who described themselves as “naturally imbibed an inclination for a sea-faring life” did not spend their entire working lives as mariners. While many seamen would become, in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s phrase, “pale and feeble, seeking a passport to the hospital,” the physical rigors of maritime life did not dissuade thousands of young men from venturing to sea.¹ Among the men who moved between work on land

¹ James Boswell, *Boswell’s Life of Johnson*, eds. George Birkbeck Hill and L. F. Powell (Oxford, 1934), 2:438, 3:226. Vickers, *Young Men and the Sea*, 111-12, 127-28, 137-38, 156-57 ; Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, 189; Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Custom-House: Introductory to the ‘Scarlet Letter’*, *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Volume I* (Columbus, 1962), 6-7. The Navy recognized the unhealthy nature of the stench below decks and required that bellows-operated ventilators be used in the lower decks as frequently as possible. Brian Lavery, ed., *Shipboard Life and Organization, 1731-1815*, *Navy Records Series*, Vol. 138 (Aldershot, 1998), 11. The smells of a naval forecandle contrasted favorably to the “infected air” of slave ships in which many maritime fugitives had been transported to the Americas. Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 58-9.

Samuel Johnson’s statement that seamen could not escape from maritime employment is rather ironic. In 1758 his slave Francis Barber ran away and enlisted onto HMS *Stag*. Johnson’s efforts resulted in the bondsman being released from the navy. Carretta, “Black Sailors in the British Navy”; Muster Roll, HMS *Stag*, 1758, TNA ADM 36/6775.

and maritime employment were hundreds of fugitives who fled garrets in their masters' homes to obtain berth in ship forecastles.

Why the "inclination to go to sea"?

While Samuel Johnson may not have fully understood the dynamics that drew men to the sea, he correctly observed the brutishness and physical demands that made maritime labor one of the most dangerous and difficult jobs during the eighteenth century. The harshness of discipline and life aboard ship proved intolerable for some and unattractive to others. Seamen's "dangers and troubles" included falling from riggings to their death, loss of limbs and finding their wives had "remarried" while they were stranded at sea. Few seamen were fortunate enough to have captains who "acted the part of a father...expressing tenderness for any of them when ill." Life at sea was filled with misfortune. Mariners found themselves on boats that ran out of water or provisions, and had considerable difficulties getting paid, resulting in high insolvency rates among mariners.² It was a life that one seaman described as being used "like a dog." Although

² Ruth Wallis Herdon, "The Domestic Cost of Seafaring," in *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-1920* (Baltimore & London, 1996), 55-69; Marcus Rediker, "The Anglo-American Seaman as Collective Worker, 1700-1750," in *Work and Labor in Early America* (Chapel Hill, 1988), 257-258; Patricia Fumerton, *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England* (Chicago, 2006), 71; Peter J. Coleman, "The Insolvent Debtor in Rhode Island, 1745-1828," *WMQ* 22 (July 1965), 422n19; *Newport Mercury*, Apr. 1, 1765; *New-York Mercury*, Aug. 10, 1767 ("he had been so long missing, and given over for lost, that it is said his wife has lately entered into wedlock with another person."); <http://www.nmm.ac.uk/collections/explore/object.cfm?ID=PAD2198> (accessed Feb. 7, 2008) (Upon being greeted by a mass of pensioners at the Greenwich Hospital, Princess Caroline remarked, "Are all Englishmen missing an arm or a leg?"); Charles N. Robinson, *The British Tar in Fact and Fiction; the poetry, pathos, and humor of the sailor's life* (Detroit, 1968), 115, 117 (Seamen often did "not [have] the room to sit upright"); Log & Journal of the *United States*, 1784, HSP, Coll. AM 867 (When the *United States* came upon a Dutch East Indies Company ship it found the crew down to three half pints of water a day. Four days later the *United States* met another boat that had "nothing on board but Beef & Pork for her men to eat"). Examples of seamen finding life aboard ship intolerable include "George Wells Hang'd himself with one of the Points of the Fore Topsail," mariners going overboard due to extreme cold and sailors finding themselves becalmed at the equator jumping overboard to escape depression. HMS *Mercury*, Lt. Logbook July 1780 – July 1781, NMM ADM/L/M/273; *New-York Mercury*, May 28, 1753; Dash, *Batavia's Graveyard*, 105. Barnaby Slush's *The Navy Royal: or a Sea-Cook Turn'd Projector* (London, 1709), 16 provides a harsh depiction of life at sea for those with but "a pair of good Hands and Stout Heart" to recommend them.

some seamen may have eventually become ship captains, the vast majority experienced little social mobility. In short, going to sea meant entering a world filled with forces beyond a seaman's control. Given the stress of work at sea, why did northern fugitive slaves have an "inclination to go to sea"? What were the factors that pushed runaways away from alternative means of obtaining freedom? As was true for many runaways, maritime fugitives fled out of a desire for freedom, what Venture Smith characterized as the "privilege that nothing else can equal." In seeking freedom, what drew maritime fugitives to seek berths at sea was a lack of attractive alternatives, northern ports providing "excellent opportunities for the runaway to hide while in waiting," an ability to quickly put time and distance between one's self and a former master by shipping out, employers who asked few questions, and, contrary to Johnson's views, relatively attractive working conditions.³

For many fugitives, even those like the leather dresser Pomp, who had no or limited maritime experience, going to sea resulted from a lack of other good alternatives to obtain permanent freedom. Unlike indentured servants who had "liberty to complain" and could seek redress for abuse in the courts, slaves were considered property and had no legal recourse.⁴ Runaways seeking permanent freedom in southern and West Indian

³ Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets," 375, 381; Desrochers, "Not Fade Away," 42; *New-York Gazette, revived in Weekly Post-Boy*, Oct. 16, 1749; David Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways: Self-fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic," *WMQ* 56:2 (Apr. 1999), 256; David Kobrin, *The Black Minority in Early New York* (Albany, 1971), 35. Freed blacks also migrated to seaports. Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 3-48; George A. Levesque, *Black Boston: African American Life and Culture in Urban America, 1750-1860* (New York, 1994), 32-33, 50n32; Vickers, *Young Men and the Sea*, 177; Billy G. Smith, "The Vicissitudes of Fortune: The Careers of Laboring Men in Philadelphia, 1750-1800" in Stepehn Innis, ed., *Work and Labor Early America* (Chapel Hill, 1988), 221-250. Northern ports also were attractive to white men from the countryside where land was becoming increasingly scarce. Billy G. Smith, *The "Lower Sort": Philadelphia's Laboring People, 1750-1850* (Ithaca, 1990), 156. For the working poor, in North America and Great Britain, a berth at sea was often more attractive than unemployment on land. George Shelvocke, *A Voyage round the World by the Way of the Great South Sea* (London, 1726), 4.

⁴ Christine Daniels, "'Liberty to Complaine': Servant Petitions in Maryland, 1652-1797," in *The Many*

colonies often sought shelter in maroon colonies, such as in Virginia's Great Dismal Swamp, Jamaica's Blue Mountains, the vast interior of French Guinea or the "impenetrable eastern frontier" of Saint Domingue, where they enjoyed what whites considered a "wild and savage freedom." The geography of populated areas in northern colonies – flat with few hills – provided only limited areas in which fugitives slaves could find permanent refuge from their masters. Frontier areas north and west of northern port cities attracted some slave runaways.⁵ Fugitives like Robin, who in 1765 fled northward from New York with his pregnant companion Rose, having previously been "on an Expedition on the Frontiers," believed freedom could be found in remote northern areas. A few mustee and Indian maritime fugitives gained temporary refuge among Rhode Island's Indians before moving into a port. Men such as the mustee Frank, who in September, 1772 fled from his master before their ship was to depart for New York, may have sought haven in remnant tribal structures in Rhode Island before attempting to pass as free and sail to England.⁶ Other runaways, such as Peter, who fled into the Jersey Pine

Legalities of Early America (Chapel Hill, 1999), 229.

⁵ Bryan Edwards, *Observations on the Disposition, Character, Manners and Habits of Life, of the Maroon Negroes of the Island of Jamaica* (London, 1796), repr. as Appendix to vol. 1, *History of the West Indies* (London, 1789), 527 (I want to thank Kathleen Wilson for this reference); Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*, (Cambridge, MA: 1998), 120-21, 170. Although the Ramapo Mountains might have provided refuge for some fugitive slaves, Daniel Cohen believes such an assertion "unproven." Daniel Cohen, *The Ramapo Mountain People* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1974), 9. On smaller West Indian islands terrain with a high proportion of cultivated land only flight overseas offered a realistic prospect of a permanent escape from slavery. Hall, "Maritime Maroons," 485-91; Jan. 28, 1776 letter from Lord Germain to Weymouth. TNA SP 78/298/51; Extract of a Sept. 20, 1775 letter from Commander in Chief at Grenada. TNA SP 78/298.53-54. Recent archaeological studies indicate that even on small West Indies islands, that rugged coastal cliff areas offered shelter for maroons. Holly K. Norton and Christopher T. Espenshade, "The Challenge in Locating Maroon Refuge Sites at Maroon Ridge, St. Croix," *Journal of Caribbean Archaeology* 7 (2007), 1-17.

⁶ Smith and Wojtowicz, *Stole Themselves*, 12; John A. Sainsbury, "Indian Labor in Early Rhode Island," *New England Quarterly* 48:3 (Sept. 1975), 391-392; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 3, 1763; *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, Nov. 3, 1770 (Pomp known to be on sloop to the Carolinas); *Newport Mercury*, Sept. 28, 1772; George Van Cleve, "Somerset's Case and its Antecedents in Imperial Perspective," *Law and History Review* 24:3 (Fall 2006), 601-602; Foote, *Black and White Manhattan*, 198. Whether or not Frank heard of the *Somerset* decision from one of the twenty-two North American newspapers that contained the proceedings or from other sources, he was merely one of a number of North

Barrens, returned to remote areas where they had previously lived. These slaves who fled to frontier areas beyond English colonial officials' control were part of a very small group of runaways heading for remote regions inland. The few slaves who did escape to frontier areas tended to be Native Americans or, like the Perth Amboy Mulatto named Tom "pass for an Indian." Yet even Native American slaves sometimes found escape to frontier areas impractical during times when the tribes were seeking "Plunder and Scalps."⁷

Colonial northern newspapers were filled with reports of slave revolts from throughout the Atlantic. Uprisings in Jamaica, Antigua, St. Johns, Barbados, and South Carolina all were the subject of numerous northern newspaper dispatches. These reports of slave rebellions fueled northern whites' anxiety about their ability to control the behavior of their own slaves. Colonial officials reacted by enacting harsh Slave Codes that explicitly stated that masters had the right to physically punish a slave, short of murder or cutting off a limb. Unlike the success of Jamaican maroons, violent uprisings did not end favorably for rebellious northern slaves. The 1712 slave revolt in New York City resulted in the execution of eighteen slaves whose bodies were burnt, broken on the wheel, and hung in chains. The 1741 fires in New York City led officials to believe the city's slaves were engaged in a wide-spread conspiracy to kill their slave masters and take over the city. In the aftermath of months of hysteria and wide-spread anxiety over the alleged slave plot, colonial officials had fourteen slaves burnt at the stake, sixteen

American slaves who after the decision was published quickly moved to seek freedom in England. See Chap. Five; Bradley, *Slavery, Propaganda, and the American Revolution*, Chapter Four.

⁷ *New-York Mercury*, Oct. 16, 1765; *Providence Gazette*, Aug. 16, 1777; *New-Jersey Gazette* (Trenton), Apr. 17, 1782; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 9, 1751; *New-York Mercury*, Mar. 15, 1756; *Colonial Laws of New York*, 1:582-584 (1705 law reaffirmed in 1725 permitted the death penalty for any slave who was captured more than forty miles from Albany). In their review of 662 New York and New Jersey fugitive slave advertisements Graham Hodges and Allen Brown noted only ten in which the runaway fled to the "backcountry." Hodges and Brown, *Pretends to be Free*, 345.

others hanged and eighty-four transported out of the colony. While such episodic outbreaks of violent resistance may have resulted in the deaths of a few northern whites, they rarely resulted in slaves obtaining permanent freedom.⁸ Like the “Negroe Fellow” who, having been “a great Rogue,” found himself “sold to six or seven different Masters in a few Months” before he finally was executed for horse stealing, those slaves who engaged in violent resistance typically found themselves brutally punished, sold, or both.⁹ As one unidentified New England observer noted, it was “almost as impossible for Whites to fly in the air or change themselves into Cats,” as for slaves to “attempt the Destruction of the City when it is impossible that they should of escape the just & direfull vengeance of the Country.” Not all slaves or whites may have agreed with this writer’s view as to the events of 1741, but he perceptively depicted the futility of a violent uprising. With northern slaves having limited access to guns, being far fewer in number than in West Indian or southern colonies, and facing whites who were more than willing to use brutal force to put down any suspected or actual rebellion, northern slaves had little chance of a successful uprising.¹⁰ In the face of these circumstances, many northern

⁸ Willaim Renwick Riddell, “The Slave in Early New York,” *Journal of Negro History* 13:1 (Jan. 128), 68, 74; Jack D. Marietta and G. S. Rowe, *Troubled Experiment: Crime and Justice in Pennsylvania, 1682-1800* (Philadelphia, 2006), 31; Foote, “Some Hard Usage,” 147-150; Horsmanden, *New-York Conspiracy, A List of Negroes Committed*; Paul Butel, *The Atlantic* (London & New York, 1999), 184; *New-York Weekly Journal*, March 11, Apr. 15, May 10, Oct. 14, 1734, May 28, 1739; *New-York Gazette*, May 13, 1734; *American Weekly Mercury*, Jan. 1, 1734, May 3, Nov. 8, 1739. Examples of masters’ violence against slaves included William Pettit kicking his slave to death. *New-York Gazette*, Dec. 17, 1733.

⁹ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Apr. 11, 1754. Physical abuse of slaves, while far more common among plantation societies, also occurred in northern colonies and by people not often associated with the brutality Caribbean slave masters inflicted on their bondsmen. Examples include the unidentified New York female slave who died after being shot in the back, hit with a blunt object, severely beaten and having her arm fractured while being restrained, and the young fugitive slave who in 1704 was promised by the future King George I of England “he’d only cut off 2 of his fingers” if the slave promised not to run away again. Rucker, *The River Flows On*, 51; Mark A. Peterson, “The Selling of Joseph: Bostonians, Antislavery, and the Protestant International, 1689-1733,” *Massachusetts Historical Review* 4 (2002): 14.

¹⁰ Unidentified Letter, Aug. 1741, Curwen Family Manuscript Coll., Box 3, Folder 1, AAS; Philip D. Morgan and Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy, “Arming Slaves in the American Revolution,” in *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age* (New Haven, 2006), 185. *New-York Evening Post*, Jan. 7, 1745. Contrary to some testimony in the 1741 New York Conspiracy trials, slaves’ access to guns was

fugitives, such as the thirty-two percent of all fugitives advertised in the *Providence Gazette and Country Journal* from 1763 to 1798, the forty percent of Connecticut fugitives, and thirty-six percent of New York fugitives who escaped via the sea did so not because, as one West Indies slave said of New York slaves, they were “cowards,” but rather because doing so was more likely to lead to success than violent resistance.¹¹

Vessels as a means of escape had an advantage over all other means of resistance: ships quickly put space and time between a fugitive and his former master. Once a ship cleared the harbor, a master had little chance of recovering his runaway. The quickness of

fairly limited. Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 65. However, northern slaves appear to have greater access to guns than many historians have previously believed, as evidenced by a number of fugitives who had been injured in gun accidents (*New-York Gazette*, June 8, 1730; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Mar. 3, 1743; *New-York Mercury*, Aug. 5, 1765; *New-York Journal, or General Advertiser*, Sept. 10, 1767; *New-York Gazette; and Weekly Mercury*, Oct. 12, 1776) and the number of fugitives fleeing with guns (25 Philadelphia newspaper advertisements cited fugitive slaves fleeing with guns, and 11 such advertisements in New York City newspapers. Cf. Smith and Wojtowicz, *Blacks Who Stole Themselves*, 13 (3 fugitives fled with guns); Hodges and Brown, *Pretends to be Free*, Table 7 (4 runaways fled with guns)). Few slaves had both access to weapons and experience in using them. *New-York Mercury*, July 23, 1759. Not one of the hundreds of fugitive slave advertisement reviewed was for a woman fleeing with a gun.

¹¹ Taylor, *Runaways, Deserters, and Notorious Villains*, Volume I; Yang, “From Slavery to Emancipation,” 177. Suicide was not a rare response by northern slaves to the brutality of their everyday existence. Some slaves, such as Mr. Gamble’s “Negro Man,” who after having been “threatened with correction” and his patience waiting for his master to kill him being “exhausted,” “went into the Garret and hang’d himself with a Handkerchief.” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Apr. 11, 1754. Slaves not infrequently took their lives when faced with certain execution by whites. *American Weekly Mercury*, June 23, 1743; *New-York Mercury*, Aug. 6, 1764. However, for most slaves resisting their master’s control, work at sea offered a more attractive alternative.

Douglas Greenberg has argued that lessening slave violence in the second half of the eighteenth century was due to (1) antislavery feelings resulted in greater manumissions than earlier; (2) few African slaves reaching NY between 1750 and 1776; (3) slaves became an increasingly smaller proportion of the population; and (4) the “changing nexus of the particular experience of New York’s slaves rather than their declining numbers.” Douglas Greenberg, *Crime and Law Enforcement in the Colony of New York, 1691-1776* (Ithaca, 1976), 151-2 (Crimes against masters prior to 1750 comprised 67.6% of slave crime, while between 1750 and 1776 such offenses only accounted for 11.4% of slave crime). While increased antislavery sentiment may have “sensitized masters to the brutality inherent to the institution of chattel slavery,” it did not result in significant increases in manumission rates. Harry B. Yosphe, “Record of Slave Manumissions in New York During the Colonial and Early National Periods.” *Journal of Negro History*, 26 (Jan. 1941), 82 (only 16 manumissions prior to the Revolution). Nor can a lessening in the number of African slave imports into New York have been the cause for the decline in slave violence. Contrary to Philip Curtin’s assertion, upon which Greenberg relies, the numbers of African slaves coming into New York did not decline after 1749. In fact, the opposite is true, as almost three-quarters of the African slaves imported into New York during the eighteenth century landed in the city between 1750 and 1776. Table 2-2. In light of such evidence, it is reasonable to believe that after 1750 most slaves did not engage in violent resistance, feeling that after the events of 1712 and 1741, doing so was a futile venture

Some fugitive advertisements indicated returning slaves would receive “no punishment,” an indication that captured runaways were typically punished. *Pennsylvania Packet*, May 19, 1781.

a slave's disappearing by sea and the difficulty of knowing where the fugitive fled is well illustrated by a 1781 fugitive slave advertisement. The unnamed owner indicated that the slave Prince had fled by sea and requested that anyone with information as to the slave's whereabouts contact one of a list of individuals in Kingston, Savanna La Mar, Barbados, St. Eustatia, Antigua, St. Kitts, Liverpool, Bristol and London.¹² The advertisement evidences both the extent of the owner's transatlantic contacts and the wide range of possible places to which maritime fugitives could flee – England, British West Indies, and the foreign West Indies. While most maritime fugitives may not have been to “every Colony on the Continent, and ...some Parts of the West Indies,” as had the confidence man Tom Bell and perhaps Prince, maritime fugitives did move about the Atlantic world, and often with speed that confounded their masters.¹³

Lacking reasonable possibilities of permanent freedom by flight to a maroon community or the expectation that violent resistance would result in their permanent freedom, those slaves who sought to unshackle themselves often looked to the Atlantic. As Venture Smith told his master when threatened with being sold to the West Indies, many northern slaves were “willing to cross” the Atlantic to obtain their freedom. In doing so, they joined merchants, tradesmen and individuals from all walks of life in understanding that “almost the entirety of colonial life was linked with overseas trade,” in which northern coastal cities were part of a porous frontier that provided “porthole[s] of opportunity to a wider world.” Into this porous world enslaved individuals from throughout the world stealthily moved about seeking opportunities to use the sea to

¹² *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Aug. 6, 1781; Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 182.

¹³ Bullock, “A Mumper among the Gentle,” 232.

escape slavery.¹⁴ The attraction of port cities was not limited to maritime fugitives.

Eloping women, deserting soldiers and seamen, and runaway servants, all were part of a continual swirl of individuals seeking to escape bondage through flight to ports.¹⁵ Those opportunities were frequently in the maritime industry. In the eighteenth century Anglo-American mariners were valued as lynchpins to British economic and military might.¹⁶

Living in such maritime-dependent economies, from the earliest days of European settlement of the Americas slaves understood that the sea could not only be the means by which they were forcibly compelled into enslavement, but it could also be the way for them to obtain their freedom. Some slaves grabbed those possibilities by going “away in a bote” as their minister masters conducted Sunday services, while others stole ship captains’ skiffs. Maritime fugitives were “working men who got wet.” However, unlike many whites who went to sea, they did so not because of limited employment opportunities on shore, but rather because alternatives for freedom on land were lacking.¹⁷

¹⁴ Fitts, *Inventing New England's Slave Paradise*, 123; John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill, 1985), 10; Hall, “Maritime Maroons,” 489-490; Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800* (London, 1997), 396; Gary Wills, *Negro President: Jefferson and the Slave Power* (Boston and New Yor., 2003), 19 (“a hundred slave [circulated] through [Salem] at any one time”); *Boston Gazette*, Nov. 24, 1747.

¹⁵ Sword, “Wayward Wives, Runaway Slaves and the Limits of Patriarchal Authority in Early America”; Salinger, *To Serve Well and Faithfully*, 103; Taylor, *Runaways, Deserters and Notorious . Vol. I*; Smith, “Black Women Who Stole Themselves in Eighteenth century America,” Introduction.

¹⁶ Letter from John Adams to Thomas Jefferson (Aug. 4, 1785), in *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The complete correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams*, ed. Lester J. Cappon (Chapel Hill, 1959), 51-52. The Anglo-American merchant fleet was frequently referred to as the “nursery” of the British Navy. Gov. George James Breure to Lord Dartmouth in *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, ed. William Bell Clark (Washington, D.C., 1964), 1, 1298-99. The importance of the merchant fleet can be seen in the funeral of Jonas Hanaway, a founder of the Marine Society, who was the first philanthropist buried at Westminster Abbey. Isaac Land, “Bread and Arsenic: Citizenship from the Bottom up in Georgian London,” *Journal of Social History*, 39:1 (Fall 2005), 89.

¹⁷ Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World*, 94; *Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia, 1622-1632, 1670-1676*, Henry R. McIlwaine, ed. (Richmond, 1924), 241, 466, 467; David Alexander, “Literacy Among Canadian and Foreign Seamen, 1863-1899,” in *Working Men Who Got Wet*, ed. Rosemary Ommer and Gerald Panting (St. John’s, Newfoundland, 1980), 32. The same newspapers that were filled with fugitive slave advertisements often carried advertisements for lost or

With their comparative anonymity, sizable slave and free black populations, blacks and whites working alongside each other, and the continual movement of peoples through their streets, northern ports provided ideal havens for runaways who sought to be anonymous while awaiting opportunities to flee via the sea. Fugitive advertisements regularly referred to slaves who were “sculking” or hiding in port cities. Taking on alias, as did Caesar, one of the slaves convicted in the 1741 Conspiracy Trials, many escapees found ports ideal places in which to blend in. Fugitives hid near the docks, with free blacks and with white women. Domingo, Peter, and many other fleeing slaves were all believed to be harbored in northern ports by such individuals. Maritime fugitives also sought refuge in port taverns. There they found companionship, warmth on a cold night, food, and useful information. Men like the Princeton slave Constant, believed heading to New York to “procure a passage to the West-Indies,” would have likely found in East Ward taverns seamen who could have provided him with information regarding available berths. Other maritime fugitives came to northern ports from the West Indies on northern ships passing themselves as free. Like Torbay, a Jamaican “fisherman, store-negro and sailor,” these West Indian fugitives found New York and other northern ports attractive due to their relative anonymity.¹⁸ Not all of the runaways who lurked in the shadows of ports sought berths on a ship. However, like the Philadelphia cooper Newry who, after “sculking about” Mr. Israel Pemberton’s stables, was believed to have found a berth

stolen boats. Maritime fugitives were frequently the cause for ships’ losing their boats. *American Weekly Mercury*, Jan. 15, Apr. 24, June 5, 1740. Stealing canoes and small boats enabled maritime fugitives to escape quickly in shallow waters where larger vessels could not go. Using small boats, fugitives were able to disappear from their owners and make their ways to northern ports. See e.g., *American Weekly Mercury*, Nov. 10, 1737 (“took a Boat and went to Philadelphia”).

¹⁸ *Rivington’s New-York Gazetteer*, Nov. 3, 1774; *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, Sept. 11, 1779. While some fugitives lurked in the unsettled areas outside ports, in doing so they would have made it less likely to have been successful in obtaining a berth.

through the assistance of a white mariner, hundreds of fugitives fled via the sea.¹⁹

The maritime life that skulking fugitives sought has been described both as “virtual incarceration” and “as a job for those who wanted a relatively easy life.”²⁰ Neither of these views accurately captures the attraction of life at sea for maritime fugitives. Daniel Vickers is correct that seamen needed to “resign their spirits to continuous subordination.” Disobeying orders, even on privateers, could result in “such corporal Punishments” as officers thought “fit to inflict.”²¹ And the prospect of working in such a disciplined environment held little appeal for some slaves. For example, in 1773, Sir William Johnson’s slave Dick was captured on the Post Road between New York and Albany. “Not liking to go to Sea,” Dick escaped when he found he was to be “sent down to New-York to be shipt.”²² Although the hierarchical disciplinary structure of shipboard life could be harsh and unappealing to many a landlubber, to understand why fugitives found life at sea attractive it must be compared to the limits and brutality of life slaves faced in northern colonies. As both Jeffrey Bolster and Michael Jarvis have demonstrated with regards to Bermudian slave mariners, the choice of where to flee was viewed by slaves as a question of “what is my best alternative” and not merely a matter

¹⁹ *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, Apr. 16, 1776; *Pennsylvania Ledger*, Apr. 20, 1776; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Dec. 30, 1762; *New-York Mercury*, Sept. 7, 1761; *New-York Gazette* revived in *The Weekly Post-Boy*, June 27, 1748.

²⁰ Paul C. van Royen, “The National Maritime Labour Market” in *“Those Emblems of Hell”? European Sailors and the Maritime Labour Market, 1570-1870* (St. John’s, Newfoundland, 1997): 6, quoting Marcus Rediker and N.A.M. Rodgers.

²¹ Rediker, “The Anglo-American Seaman as a Collaborative Worker,” 259; Daniel Vickers, “Nantucket Whalers in the Deep-Sea Fishery: The Changing Anatomy of an Early American Labor Force,” *JAH*, Vol. 72:2 (Sept. 1985), 285; *American Revenge*, New-York Vice Admiralty Court, 1777, TNA HCA 32/267/2/1-6.

²² *New-York Mercury*, Feb. 21, 1757; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Nov. 15, 22, 1773. Some slaves saw life with their master as preferable to trying to scratch out an existence in a society that often was hostile to free blacks. Slaves, such as the Negro Kingston, asked for and received assistance from governmental officials to return to their masters. Almhouse Philadelphia Records, 1767-1837, HSP, AM 3225.

of being free or enslaved.²³ Northern slave codes permitted slave masters to engage in summary punishment of their slaves. Slave masters who believed their bondsmen needed to be “corrected” were rarely prosecuted for the abuse or even death of their slaves. For example, in 1735 when John Van Zandt horse whipped his slave to death, the New York City Coroner found the “Correction given by the Master was not the Cause of his Death, but that it was by the Visitation of God.” Rare was the case such as that of Philadelphian William Bullock or New Yorker William Petit when a slave master found himself tried and convicted for killing his slave. The physical abuse many northern slaves experienced could be seen in the physical toll their masters worked upon their bodies. Archaeological analysis of the remains in New York’s African Burial Ground found high levels of physical stress and indications of poor nutrition among the colony’s slaves. The risk of a flogging for failing to obey a ship captain was, for many maritime fugitives, a gamble that in light of the daily absolute control slave masters exercised, well worth taking. Even when not physically abused, many slaves in northern ports found themselves reduced to distressed circumstances. Being “almost naked” due to their masters’ refusal to provide clothing, slaves such as John Newkirk’s Hannah found themselves forced to steal clothes. Slaves’ preference for work at sea was directly related to the brutal nature of their enslavement ashore.²⁴

Sailors moved “between nations, crossing borders in modern machines that were themselves micro-systems of linguistic and political hybridity.” For colored mariners and

²³ W. Jeffrey Bolster, “African-American Seamen: Race, Seafaring Work and Atlantic Maritime Culture, 1750-1860,” Ph. D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1991, 57, 74-82; Jarvis, “Maritime Masters and Seafaring Slaves in Bermuda, 1680-1783,” 585-622.

²⁴ *New-York Weekly Journal*, Jan. 5, 1735; *American Weekly Mercury*, Mar. 11, Apr. 29, 1742; *New-York Gazette*, Dec. 23, 1733; ABG Final History Report, 171; NY Col. MSS 60:117. While New York’s ABG is the largest urban slave burial ground, other such burial plots in Newport and Portsmouth have been identified. See e.g., Michael Levenson, “A City Faces the Slavery in its Past,” *Boston Globe*, Jan. 23, 2006.

many slaves, the sea symbolized “possibilities for mobility, escape, and freedom.”²⁵ When slaves sought refuge on ships they became part of multi-racial communities. These communities were transformed as vessels sailed from port to port.²⁶ Crews changed dramatically as seamen died, deserted, were paid off, and discharged. For example, in August 1765 when HMS *Phoenix* docked at Cadiz, twelve Spanish mariners enlisted on the man of war, significantly altering the composition of the man-of-war’s mess. This “mobility, dispersion, and social diversity” of life at sea is what drew many marginalized individuals, including large numbers of runaway servants and fugitive slaves, to seek berths. Despite cramped and often difficult working conditions, maritime fugitives appreciated sea voyages for their relative freedom from the strictures of colonial America.²⁷ The same “autonomous mobility” that permitted eighteenth century sailors to move from ship to ship and find better working conditions and wages, assisted fugitive slaves. With captains and merchants recruiting “with more of an eye to muscle than complexion,” there were many opportunities for fugitive slaves to transform themselves to free tars in northern ports.²⁸

²⁵ Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 1, 12; Julius S. Scott, “Afro-American Sailors and the International Communications Network: The Case of Newport Bowers,” in *Jack Tar: Essays in Maritime Life and Labour* (Fredericton, New Brunswick, 1991), 38.

²⁶ Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, 144. The heterogeneous nature of the lower decks was “rarely, if ever acknowledged in visual imagery” of the time. Geoff Quilley, “The image of the ordinary seaman in the 18th century,” NMM, Maritime Art Greenwich, http://www.nmm.ac.uk/mag/pages/mnuInDepth/Essay.cfm?Essay=documents/essay/The_image_of_the_seaman.htm&Title=The%20image%20of%20the%20ordinary%20seaman%20in%20the%2018th%20century (accessed Feb. 5, 2008).

²⁷ Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront*, Part I; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 198; HMS *Phoenix* Payroll, 1765, TNA ADM 33/428. By the eve of the American Revolution, concerns over black mariners led the Danish West Indies to impose restrictions on their movement. Hall, “Maritime Maroonage,” 485, 490. Slaves fleeing to Royal Navy vessels was not limited to the Western Atlantic. See, e.g., Letter June 29, 1754 from A. Cartes to Sir Thomas Robinson, TNA SP 89/48/288-289.

²⁸ W. Jeffrey Bolster, “‘To Feel Like a Man’: Black Seamen in the Northern States, 1800-1860,” *JAH* 76 (1990), 1179; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 101. Other fugitives who sought refuge on ships may have been homosexuals who sought refuge in all male communities on long-term voyages. Barry Richard Burg, *Sodomy and the Pirate Tradition: English Sea-Rovers in the Seventeenth-Century Caribbean* (New York, 1995), xxxviii. The value of slave mariners is evident from advertisements

The working conditions maritime fugitives encountered at sea were a significant improvement over what they experienced while enslaved. Better food, decent wages, and a working environment in which they were more humanely treated all enticed maritime fugitives to seek berths at sea. As Equiano noted, black sailors “ate the same food as their white counterparts, wore the same clothes, shared the same quarters, received the same pay, benefits, and health care, undertook the same duties, and had the same opportunities for advancement.”²⁹ This was most certainly not the description of northern slaves’ lives.

In contrast to the paucity of provisions many slaves received from their masters, mariners “expected to get better food.”³⁰ While seamen may not have enjoyed the “excellent good fayre” of beef, plumb puddings, mince pies and wines, that HMS *Assistance*’s officers were served, they were given 5,000 calories a day. The Navy’s food servicing program provided salted beef, butter, cheese, bread and beer, so that food rarely was a source of violent conflict on warships. Although the quality and variety of the food may not have met modern dietary standards, lacking daily fruit and vegetables, naval provisions were far better than that most eighteenth century working men and women ate. Neither those maritime fugitives who spent their entire lives in northern colonies nor those who had previously been enslaved in the West Indies were fed as well. Caribbean slaves received a daily allowance of “one pint of corn and one-seventh of a pound of fish.” Northern slaves received similarly poor rations. John Jea, a New York slave, described the food he received as:

Indian corn pounded or bruised and boiled with water...and about a quart

trumpeting their maritime experience. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 22, 1746, July 23, 1747, Oct. 9, 1755.

²⁹ Carretta, *Equiano, The African*, 74-75.

³⁰ Equiano, *Equiano’s Travels*, 76; Rogers, *The Wooden World*, 87 (“Food was one of the attractions of the Navy”). Naval food regulations give a good description of what naval crews ate. Lavry, *Shipboard Life and Organization*, 5.

of sour buttermilk poured on it; for one person two quarts of this mixture, and about three ounces of dark bread, per day, the bread was darker than that usually allowed to convicts, and greased over with very indifferent hog's lard.³¹

Slaves' diet was characterized by the Society of Friends as not "proper food" and was believed to have caused northern slaves to "fail soon after thirty." Slaves' rations were also considerably less nutritious than the diet of urban working poor, often coming "close to a regime of bread and water." Although an adult male required not less than 2,700 calories, and considerably more if doing manual labor, slaves received as little as 1,800 calories. Maritime fugitives would have found striking the contrast between the rations they received as slaves and the provisions provided naval seamen. Admiralty vitualling regulations required close inspection of food provided by vendors, resulting at times in the condemning of food as "rotten & not fit to eat." In doing so, the Navy understood what Samuel Pepys observed decades earlier, that "seamen, love their bellies above everything else."³² Even on merchant ships, which generally did not provide as good provisions as the British Navy, food surpassed that which slaves and even white

³¹ "The Life, History and Unparalleled Sufferings of John Jea, the African Preacher," in *Pioneers of the Black Atlantic: Five Slave Narratives from the Enlightenment, 1772-1815*, ed. Henry Louis Gates and William L. Andrews (Washington, D.C., 1998), 369. Naval and merchant captains were concerned that the lack of fresh fruit and vegetables resulted in their crew suffering from scurvy. Log & Journal of *United States*, 1784, HSP; AM 867; Log of Captain Samuel Wallis on the *Dolphin* during voyage around the Globe, 1766 to 1768, Xerox of original with Public Library of New South Wales, Sydney Australia, NMM MS75/161; Letter from Samuel Cornish in "Arrogant" off Monti Christi, to the "Monarch" off Jamiaca, 12 Dec 1782, Reynolds Family Correspondence, D340a/C30, Gloucester Archives, Gloucester, United Kingdom. Naval food improved over time. Sir Henry Mervyn observed in 1629 that, "empty bellies" were said to make "the King's service worse than a gallery slavery." Fumerton, *Unsettled*, 94. Although cheese and butter were provided to naval sailors, it often spoiled. Sweet, "The Sailors' Advocate," 1-27. The diet of northern poor was a bit more nourishing than that provided slaves, as it included beef broth, porridge or fish, and bread and cheese. Minutes of the Justices, Church Wardens, and Vestrymen of New York City, 1647-1747 (June 3, 1736), NYPL. It was unusual that Northern slaves were provided with fresh vegetables, such as Dr. James MacSparren's slaves who on June 26, 1745, were given "green Peas." Woodward, *Plantation in Yankeeland*, 102. Cf.

³² R.C. Holmes, "Sea Fare," *Mariner's Mirror*, 35 (1949): 139-140; Janet McDonald, *Feeding Nelson's Navy* (London, 2004), Introduction, 16-38; Smith, "The Material Lives of Working Philadelphians," 168; Klepp, "Seasoning and Society," 481; Smith, "Lower Sort," 97-99; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 2, 1780; NMM ADM/L/E/93, HMS *Eltham*, Lieutenant's Log, 1736-45; J.R. Ward, *British West Indian Slavery, 1750-1834* (Oxford, 1988), 105-107, Table 7.

workers received on land. In 1776 the crew of the Massachusetts privateer *Tryannicide* “complained that they could not live” on the limited provisions they had received due to supplies of rice and molasses being exhausted. The ship’s master, Captain John Fish “ordered the steward to give [the crew] $\frac{1}{4}$ more beef or pork,” something most slaves rarely were fed. In addition, sailors regularly supplemented their shipboard diets by fishing.³³

With northern slaves, such as Joseph Patterson or Captain De Lancey’s Sam, being “noted” cooks, maritime fugitives could find berths as ship cooks. Colored men worked as cooks on a wide variety of Atlantic ships, including slavers. For example, between 1796 and 1807, thirty-six black cooks served on fifty-three slave voyages from Liverpool. Even men with no maritime or cooking experience such as William Moralay were hired as cooks on Atlantic merchant vessels. Cooking was often seen as a feminine task and was not a respected position on board, making it far from ideal employment. However, a cook’s position served the runaway’s primary goal: to obtain a place on board and get away from his master. While age would have generally disqualified them from being part of a crew reefing the sails, cooking skills enabled a few older maritime fugitives to find berths that they otherwise would not have been able to obtain. Disabled

³³ Captain John Fisk Logbook, *Tryannicide* (Privateer), 1776-1777, AAS Logbook Collection #3 Janet Schaw, *Journal of a Lady of Quality: Being the Narrative of a Journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina, Portugal in the years 1774-1776*, ed. Evangeline Walker Andrews and Charles McLean Andrews (Lincoln, NE, 2005), 66-73. For an illustration of naval seamen fishing see Qaurm, “Drawings of Gabriel Bray,” 43. In contrast to naval ships, crews on merchant ships were known to complain about their rations. *New-York Evening Post*, May 21, 1750 (Captain Green “committed for starving one of his Men to Death at Sea”). Slaving ships provided approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ pound of bread, $\frac{3}{4}$ pound of beef (before cooking), half a pint of peas and half a pound of flour a day. Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, 232. See Sidney G. Morse, “The Yankee Privateersman of 1776,” *NEQ* 17:1 (Mar. 1944), 76-77 for an example of the food provided on American privateers, Paul S. Taylor, “Spanish Seaman in the New World during the Colonial Period,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 5:4 (Nov. 1922), 634, 640-46, 656-68 for food provided seaman on Spanish colonial ships, and Earle, *English Merchant Seamen*, 88 for food on English colliers.

fugitives, even those like Caesar who “walk[ed] on his Knees,” were thought to have found berths as ship cooks.³⁴

The compensation paid mariners also served to entice fugitives to northern wharves. While employment on land often provided wages “so low” that colored mariners were not able to keep themselves in clothes, shipboard employment was appealing because it provided advance wages, opportunities for large prize bounties, and regular wages sufficient, in the best of times, for maritime fugitives to start new lives.³⁵ Naval captains and merchant masters on transatlantic voyages frequently advanced seamen one to two months’ wages. These advances were often spent in taverns as seamen blew off steam before their voyages began. Other times, the advances were used to pay

³⁴ Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 168-169; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 1, 1744; *New-York Gazette* (Weyman’s), June 6, 1763; Morgan, “Black Experiences in Britain’s Maritime World,” 129n17 citing Stephen D. Behrendt, “The British Slave Trade, 1785-1807: Volume, Profitability and Mortality” (Ph. D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1993), 340; *The Infortunate*, 124; Antony Benezet, *Case of the Oppressed Africans* (1784); *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 20, 1759. Elderly cooks were common on Atlantic vessels. For example, the average age of a Scarborough cook was 52 years of age. Scarborough Crew Lists, 1748-1759, TNA CUST 91/111-112.

After the Revolution, black men “were increasingly restricted to service-oriented berths such as stewards and cooks.” David Kazanjian, “To Ship as Cook:” Notes on the Gendering of Black Atlantic Maritime Labor, *Radical Philosophy Review* 5:1/2 (2002): 12. Even able bodied seamen could find themselves forced to work as cooks. Richard Zacks, *Pirate Coast: Thomas Jefferson, the First Marines, and the Secret Mission of 1805* (New York, 2005), 45-46. The pattern of employing elderly men as ship cooks was true both for nineteenth century New London and West Indies ships. Among the twenty elderly dark-skinned New-London mariners for whom crew lists indicate their positions, eleven were cooks. Among blacks on nineteenth-century West Indies ships, more than 32% were cooks and another 24% were stewards. Alan Cobley, “Black West Indian Seamen in the British Merchant Marine in the Mid-nineteenth century,” *History Workshop Journal* 58 (2004): 270-71.

Both the British and American navies often employed disabled or wounded men as cooks. May 30, 1743 letter from Francis Geary to the Commissioners of the Navy, NMM GC/4/31; April 16, 1776 Letter from James Gambier to Navy Board, NMM POR/F16; Robinson, *The British Tar in Fact and Fiction*, (“give the preference [as Cooks] to such cripples and maimed persons as are pensioners”), 92; Naval Board In-Letters, 6 May 1769, TNA ADM 106/1178/128 (ordinaries who lost limbs seen as suitable to serve as naval cooks); McDonald, *Feeding Nelson’s Navy*, 104, 142-143; *The Wooden World Dissected: In the Character of a Ship of War: As also, The Characters of all the Officers, From the Captain to the Common Sailor* (London, 1749), 59 (an “able fellow” who had one of his limbs “shot away” was thus deemed “cut out for a Sea-Cook”); Henry Dana, Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast* (New York, 1964), 33-35. The role of age in maritime employment is discussed at page 184-190 below.

³⁵ Boston King, “Memoirs of the Life of Boston King, a Black Preacher,” *The Methodist Magazine* (March 1798), 109. Like all seamen, maritime fugitives could have difficulty receiving wages from hostile Captains. Journal of Merchant Seaman on *Victory* and *Maggdalen*, 1719-1793, NMM MS91/026.

debts mariners owed. For maritime fugitives, these monies were sometimes used for similar purposes. But advanced wages were often employed for different means, including buying loved ones. Other colored sailors used these wages to trade on their own account, as did Equiano, who in a series of voyages between the West Indies and North America was able to earn enough money to buy his freedom.³⁶

During times of war, privateering or service on British naval vessels offered mariners opportunities to be awarded substantial prize monies. With privateer captains such as New York's Captain Brasier often stopping in several ports to find a full complement of hands, maritime fugitives frequently found berths among colonial cruisers.³⁷ These men were drawn to the cruisers due to the prize monies. When Equiano found himself sold by naval Lieutenant Pascal at the end of the Seven Years War, the slave mariner was disappointed not only by his being sold but also by Pascal's taking the prize monies Equiano believed he had earned.³⁸ Such monies could often be equal to months, if not years, of a seaman's wages. Colonial newspapers were filled with dispatches concerning the riches privateer crews were awarded. Handbills and advertisements broadcast the wealth to be gained by working on a cruiser. Theatrical productions discussed sailors bringing home "six hats full of money." Men throughout the Atlantic were drawn to privateers in ports such as Newport, Bridgetown, and Port

³⁶ *Life of Olaudah Equiano*, 179; Desrochers, "Not Fade Away," 40-48. The benefits of prizes were not limited to monies seamen received. As Admiral Bartholomew James noted, seamen were also known to plunder the goods on board captured ships, including drinking "the best Bordeaux claret." Robinson, *The British Tar in Fact and Fiction*, 116.

³⁷ *American Weekly Mercury*, July 23, 1741. John McCusker has estimated that 12% of all Philadelphia ship registers between 1717 and 1776 were for prizes of war. John J. McCusker, "The Pennsylvania Shipping Industry in the Eighteenth Century," unpublished study, HSP, 1973, Table 2-1.

Privateering also offered slave mariners an opportunity to purchase their freedom. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 366 (Mary Heskett's Tom, was freed using his share of the prize money).

³⁸ Equiano, *Equiano's Travels*, 58-59. Other colored mariners found themselves cheated of their prize monies. Ukasaw Gronniosaw, *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars* (Newport, 1774), 15.

Royal. With cruiser captains being “hardly choosy” about hiring colored seamen, privateers offered abundant opportunities for maritime fugitives to escape. Little wonder in a world chattering over the riches of the sea that fugitive mariners such as those on Captain McDougal’s *Tyger* were drawn to privateering by the possibility of a share in the rich prizes cruisers captured. Like many other men, slaves were “inclinable” to service on privateers and British war ships, seeking such berths both in the larger colonial cities, as well as smaller ports such as Lewes, Delaware.³⁹ Even those seamen who were not fortunate enough to have obtained berths on successful privateers could earn a decent living at sea. Mariners on merchant ships in the mid-eighteenth century earned an average of £4.1 per month. These earnings fluctuated in response to economic cycles. Many mariners in northern ports found themselves relying on public charity when berths were not available. While sailors’ wages were not sufficient to

³⁹ Quilley, “The image of the ordinary seaman in the 18th century”; Hodges, *Root & Branch*, 149n46; Liam Riordan, *Many Identities, One Nation* (Philadelphia, 2007), 60; Talty, *The Empire of Blue Water*, 136; *New-York Gazette*, Oct. 19, 1747. Among the hundreds of colonial newspaper dispatches regarding privateer prizes were *New-York Weekly Journal*, Feb. 1, 1742, Feb. 10, 1746; *New-York Mercury*, Dec. 13, 1756, Jan. 24, 1763; *New-Hampshire Gazette*, Jan. 3, 1757; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Oct. 6, 1757. Advertisements for privateer crews included *American Weekly Mercury*, July 9, 1741, *Newport Mercury*, Jan. 2, 1759, *American Journal and General Advertiser*, Nov. 13, 1780.

For an illustration of an eighteenth century black naval seamen, see Gabriel Bray, Bray’s Album of Drawings, 1775, NMM PR 1991-3, 1774/5. The seaman portrayed in Bray’s illustration may have been either John Thomas or Cosms Truppo, African-born able-bodied seamen on HMS *Pallas*. HMS *Pallas* Paybook, TNA ADM 34/565.

Although some colored men experienced unkind treatment on privateers, as did James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, most found greater equanimity on cruisers due to privateers’ articles spelling out with some specificity the limits of a captain’s disciplinary powers. Gronniosaw, *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars*, 15. With approximately one-half of New York’s privateer seamen ending up wounded, prisoners, or dead, maritime fugitives were literally gambling with their lives when they enlisted on a privateer. However, compensation, a better life and freedom led many slave fugitives to take the risk. Charles R. Foy, “Seeking Freedom in the Atlantic World, 1713-1783,” *EAS*, 4:1 (Spring 2006), 62-63. The two African-American mariners assaulted by Captain Morely Harrison and his First Officer Richard Jeffries, Jr. of the *Hawke* did not find the equality the ship’s articles promised. However, their unfortunate circumstances appear to be the exception, not the rule.

protect them from economic downturns, the compensation paid seamen would have enabled them to lead lives of independence when working regularly.⁴⁰

Cramped, often foul smelling and with little privacy; what possible attraction did ship forecastles hold for maritime fugitives? In moving onto ships, runaways traded the fluidity of urban life for forecastles' confined, limited worlds.⁴¹ This physically small world would have caused some fugitives, especially those lacking maritime experience, a moment of hesitation when they trudged aboard a ship. Yet despite Johnson's holding his nose at the rough and smelly life of the forecastle, the physical space below deck had real attractions for maritime fugitives. In northern urban environs slaves had little privacy. The garrets, attics and kitchens slaves lived in were small cramped spaces that masters felt free to enter as they pleased. When Captain Gibb's wife entered the garret in which the ship captain's slave lived, she encountered a man angry at the loss of his privacy.⁴² While forecastles may not have provided the privacy a gentleman such as Samuel Johnson desired, they did provide communal spaces in which seamen established messes and created communities. Swapping tales of other voyages, eating together, and sleeping literally cheek to jowl, eighteenth century seamen developed tightly bound societies in which their shared identities as Jack Tars were a source of emotional strength when facing harsh captains, unpredictable weather, the physical demands of maritime work, and warfare.⁴³ Whether white or colored, British or foreign, fugitive or free, seamen

⁴⁰ Smith, "The Material Lives of Laboring Philadelphians," 191, 201.

⁴¹ Margaret S. Creighton, "American Mariners and the Rites of Manhood, 1830-1870," in *Jack Tar in History*, 143-164.

⁴² Benjamin Douglas to the King, Recognizance Pursuant to the Condition of the Pardon of the Negroe Man Named Falmouth, Misc., Mss. B. Douglas, Nov. 28, 1770, N-YHS; *Rex v Falmouth*, New York County Supreme Court, July 31, Aug. 3, 1770, Parchment Rolls, G-334, K-314.

⁴³ Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront*, 81. Brian Lavery notes that little is known about mess organization. They were very likely important in building bonds of loyalty and cohesion. Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 201; and *Shipboard Life and Organisation, 1731-1815*, ed. by Lavery, pp. xiv-xv, 241-245. Mariners' sense of

shared tarred pants, rolling gaits, and a sense of special skills that set them apart from others. Unlike the multitude of single men in northern cities who often lived without another slave adult, seamen did not have to look outside their immediate physical space to find and create communal ties. The on-board work environment in which seamen's lives literally depended upon fellow mariners working cooperatively fostered strong bonds among sailors. Colored seamen often acted as mediators in multi-racial, multi-national crews, a role not open to many land-based slaves.⁴⁴

When coming aboard a ship, a fugitive could bring with him a sea chest. Although many fugitives fled with extra clothes, most had few other possessions. Sea chests in which mariners carried their worldly possessions were generally respected by other mariners and rarely violated. These small wooden worlds provided men with a place to store letters, rum, and mementos of their travels, as well as necessities, especially clothes. Sea chests enabled mariners to store goods to trade or pawn.⁴⁵ In contrast, living in their masters' garrets, northern slaves had no private space. Nineteenth-century authors may have longed for a "room of their own," but in the eighteenth century private rooms were only for the very fortunate. Having sea chests reinforced mariners' identities and served as symbols of their independence. Northern slaves may have been able to secrete items such as corncobs, beads, thread, and rum in hidden spaces such as under floor

shared identity was reinforced when working on privateers. Privateer ship articles often provided seamen with insurance benefits few other colonists had. For example, in 1779 the articles of the *American Revenue* provided that sailors who lost an arm or leg "in time of action" were to receive \$300. Such insurance spread the risk of maritime life and reinforced the sense that mariners' success was based on a shared work ethic. *American Revenge*, New-York Vice-Admiralty Court, 1779, TNA HCA 32/267/2/1-6.

⁴⁴ Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 205-53; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, chaps. 1, 3; Bolster, "Inner Diaspora," 421-27, 433, 437; Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, chap. 6; Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, 230-31; Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront*, 81.

⁴⁵ Wendy A. Wolfson, "In Hock: Pawning in Early America," *JER*, 27:1 (Spring 2007): 35-81; Earle, *English Merchant Seamen*, 56-57. A notable exception to the privacy of a seaman's chest being respected was the practice of some slave ship captains to smash and burn them at the beginning of a voyage to bully a crew. Rediker, *Slave Ship*, 204.

boards, but they had no such space, albeit small, that they could claim as their own and that was respected as such by whites.⁴⁶

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the very nature of maritime life offered something that runaway slaves could not find on land. As Sir John Fielding noted, seamen were “a generation differing from all the world.” Life at sea was filled with experiences and routines that landlubbers might know of but not fully comprehend. Whether it was the rituals of communal sharing of the day during the Dog’s Watch or visiting far away ports, maritime fugitives fortunate enough to obtain a berth on an ocean-going vessel would be seen as different from the large majority of their North American compatriots who rarely traveled more than several score miles from their residences. This very difference may have caused some maritime fugitives such as Derry and Dan to be “inclined to go to the sea.” The distinctive sailor’s rolling gait and tarred breeches bespoke an independence notably lacking in the lives of enslaved peoples. With mariners’ skills in high demand, flight onto a vessel also offered a maritime fugitive the opportunity to lead a life in which their labor was credited not only with wages but respect. Thus, for many runaways who sought to go to sea, ship board life held the promise of a life far richer than the darkness of their skin would normally have permitted them to lead in colonial North America.⁴⁷

He “Affects the Sailor” - Characteristics of Maritime Fugitives

With the northern maritime industry offering many opportunities for freedom that drew fugitives, which slaves were able to seek freedom via the sea? What were the attributes of maritime fugitives? Were fugitives slaves who sought berths like their white

⁴⁶ See *New York Conspiracy*, 22 for an example of a slave hiding goods under floor boards.

⁴⁷ *Providence Gazette & Country Journal*, Nov. 16, 1782.

seafaring messmates? Personal characteristics such as cleverness, intellect, and initiative all played significant roles in runaways finding berths at sea. Like the apprentices whom Samuel Richardson hoped would go to sea to benefit Britain's "maritime Kingdom," maritime fugitives often were "bold and daring Spirits" who thought "themselves above being confin'd." These men were willing to trade the absolute control of their slave masters for the tight discipline of life at sea. In addition to their boldness, factors such as maritime experience, linguistic abilities, age, health, family ties, and gender were often critical in determining which slaves fled via the sea.⁴⁸

To determine which slaves used maritime employment to escape slavery, a database has been created from the more than 2,400 fugitive slave advertisements placed in Philadelphia, New York City and Rhode Island newspapers between 1713 and 1783. While other historians have considered northern runaways, most have engaged in a partial review of fugitive advertisements for particular colonies, and none have engaged in a multi-city analysis. The benefit of doing so is that such a research methodology illustrates in great detail the defining characteristic of northern slavery - the mobility of slaves both within the northern colonies and the larger Atlantic. This methodology also avoids the problem of small data sets "warping historians' focus."⁴⁹

While not all enslaved individuals in northern colonies may, as was true for many

⁴⁸ Erin Skye Mackie, "Welcome the Outlaws: Pirates, Maroons, and Caribbean Countercultures," *Cultural Critique* 59 (2005), 24-62; Samuel Richardson, *Apprentice Vade Mecum; or, Young Man's Pocket-Companion* (1734, reprint, Los Angeles, 1975), 51-52. It has been said that "very little is known about the social origins of seamen." Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 13n6. By providing a picture of the fugitive slaves who sought berths, this dissertation intends to join Vickers, Bolster and Rediker in lifting the veil on the social lives of mariners.

⁴⁹ Philip D. Morgan, Review of "Slavery in North Carolina, 1748-1775," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 27:4 (Spring 1997), 710-712. With a port such as Newport, where there was not regular newspaper publication until the late 1750s, the need for a complete sample is especially important. In contrast to Witney who employed 141 fugitive advertisements, and Rommel-Ruiz who relied upon 77 fugitive slaves identified over a short time period from the *Newport Mercury*, I have identified 185 fugitive slave advertised in Rhode Island newspapers. While this sample is considerably smaller than that for either New York or Philadelphia, it is comprehensive.

of Salem's young men, have expected to go to sea, many enslaved individuals were, like other inhabitants of Atlantic port regions, "acquainted" with the water. The maritime skills of these hardy men were "well known." Being familiar with maritime life, "led to more pier-head jumps to freedom" by urban slaves than those on plantations or from rural areas.⁵⁰ Many slaves imported into northern ports came from regions – the West Indies, Senegambia, Madagascar – with strong maritime traditions. That the maritime skills slaves brought from those areas assisted them in fleeing North American slavery is evident from the large presence of these men among northern maritime fugitives.

Of the more than seven hundred maritime fugitives more than two hundred were described in advertisements as West Indies-born.⁵¹ Like many West Indian runaways, these maritime fugitives had been slave mariners from Bermuda, Jamaica, Barbados, and Antigua who found the fluidity of northern ports as ideal environments to seek berths as free seamen. Although Michael Jarvis has argued that strong family connections made Bermudian slave mariners very reluctant to run away, a number of such seamen did flee to freedom in Philadelphia and New York. Bermudian slave sailors such as the two "Negro sailors" who escaped in April 1740; Jack, a nineteen year old seaman who fled six years later; and Dick, who ran away in October 1779, were the subject of fugitive

⁵⁰ Vickers, *Young Men and the Sea*, 137-138; J. S. Bromley, "The British Navy and its Seamen: Notes for an Unwritten History," in *Seamen in Society*, ed. Paul Adan (Bucharest, 1980), Part 2:40; Bolster, "African-American Seamen," 125; *Lewis v Stapylton*, Granville Sharp Papers, N-YHS. J. S. Bromley and R. Pares have noted "'landsmen' were probably acquainted with water" and that American seamen less of a professional class than their colleagues in Great Britain. J. S. Bromley, "The British Navy and its Seamen: Notes for an Unwritten History," in *Seamen in Society*, ed. Paul Adan (Bucharest, 1980), Part 2: 40-41; Pares, "The Manning of the Royal Navy," 44-45. As Edward Barlow's journal demonstrates, 17th century seamen also frequently moved between land and sea employment and were required to work in a variety of jobs. Fumerton, *Unsettled*, 84, Appendix C.

⁵¹ Given that most fugitive slave advertisements did not indicate the birth place of runaway slaves (Table 14-10), such data should only be seen as indicative and not definitive regarding the relative percentages of the birthplaces of slaves in northern colonies.

slave advertisements in Philadelphia newspapers.⁵² In New York, not fewer than six Bermudian slave mariners – Jacob, Sam Black, Will, Pompey, David Breesdan and George – were advertised by their masters as having fled seeking berths.⁵³ Jamaican-born slave mariners such as York, Quam, and Billy also ran away seeking berths in New York and Philadelphia.⁵⁴ The Bermudian and Jamaican slave sailors were joined in their search for berths in northern ports by Barbadian and Antiguan slave seamen. Peter, John, and Sam each thought fleeing in a northern port offered better opportunities than continuing to labor as a slave seaman on a Barbadian ship.⁵⁵ Antiguan slave sailors who sought berths in Philadelphia and New York included Tom Lewes and thirty year old Tom.⁵⁶ Slave mariners whose place of birth was listed as the “West Indies” also fled ships in northern ports seeking berths as free men. Not all West Indies slave mariners who fled may have been as determined as Scipio, who “belonged to the Sloop *Margaret and*

⁵² Jarvis, “Maritime Masters and Seafaring Slaves in Bermuda, 608-612, 616-621; *American Weekly Mercury*, Apr. 9, 1740; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 7, 1746, Oct. 27, 1779. No Bermudian slave mariners were advertised in Rhode Island newspapers as having fled their ships. This may be a reflection there was considerably less trade between Newport and the Caribbean island than the trade Philadelphia and New York conducted with Bermuda.

West Indian slave fishermen were believed to be unlikely to flee, probably due to their receiving “more lenient” treatment than other West Indian slaves. Price, “Caribbean Fishing and Fishermen,” 1371.

Notable among West Indian slave leaders were those who worked in the maritime trades. Men such as Cudjoe who was a leader in a Jamaican slave uprising, and Apongo, who helped lead Tacky’s Revolt in 1760, had worked for the British Navy. Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, 222. ⁵³ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 7, 1746; *New-York Mercury*, Jan. 11, 1762; *New-York Gazette* (Weyman’s), Oct. 4, 1762; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Oct. 15, 1770, Aug. 9, 1773, May 4, 1778; *Royal Gazette* (New York), Nov. 20, 1779. Eighteenth century historian William Douglas characterized Bermuda’s slave seamen as “equal to white men in their navigation.” Douglas, *A Summary, Historical and Political of the First Planting*, I: 148.

⁵⁴ *New-York Mercury*, Dec. 7, 1761; *Royal Gazette* (New York), Mar. 17, 1781, Nov. 23, 1782. Lydon *Pirates, Privateers and Profits*, 194; *New-York Post-Boy*, Aug. 18, 1746; *New-York Weekly Journal*, May 25, 1747.

Some fugitives who I have not included among the maritime fugitives, because fugitive slave advertisements did not describe them as seeking to flee via the sea, were very likely to have done so. For example, in October 1761 the Jamaican-born slave Robert is described as having fled from his Newport master Andrew Hunter. Shipping records indicate that a Captain Hunter sailed from New York in early November 1761, making it likely that Robert was a slave mariner who fled in New York seeking a berth as a free sailor. *New-York Mercury*, Oct. 26, 1761, Nov. 9, 1761; *Newport Mercury*, Nov. 3, 1761.

⁵⁵ *Pennsylvania Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*, Oct. 23, 1769; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 20, 1745; *New-York Gazette or Weekly Post-Boy*, Aug. 14, 1769.

⁵⁶ *New-York Mercury*, Aug. 29, 1763; *Independent Gazetteer*, Sept. 21, 1783.

Mary” and fled with his “Hands pinioned behind him.”⁵⁷ Yet each of these slave sailors understood that fleeing their masters in northern ports offered them opportunities for berths to escape.

West Indian-born slave seamen’s presence in northern ports is illustrated by New York Captain Robert Gibb’s employment of such mariners. Gibb made regular voyages to the West Indies during the 1760s and 1770s. In 1770 Captain Gibb had already been employing at least one slave among his crew of five to seven sailors. His West Indian-born slave Falmouth was employed by the captain as a mariner on West Indies voyages. In 1779 the ship master placed an advertisement in the *Royal Gazette* stating that “three Negroe and one Mulatto sailors” had fled from the sloop *Adriana*. One of the mariners, thirty year old George, was described as a Negro Bermuda-born seaman. The *Adriana*’s four slave mariners were each of mixed-race ancestry; the ship’s three Negroes – George, Abraham and Lorain - were described as “Creole.” George, Abraham, Lorain and Peter, the Mulatto sailor, were all believed by Gibb to have sought berths on other ships, undoubtedly to sail away as free men.⁵⁸

Considerable numbers of other West Indies-born slaves joined Lorain and George in a search for berths in northern ports. They included Bermudian-born Jo and William Colson; Jamaican-born Caesar, Amaro, and Peter; Barbadian-born Caesar; and West-Indian-born Windsor, George, Joe, Frank and Jack. Some of these maritime fugitives ran from their northern masters seeking to return via ship to the island of their birth. Others, like the Jamaica-born Tom, who had been enslaved in both English and Spanish

⁵⁷ *New-York Gazette or Weekly Post-Boy*, Aug. 29, 1757.

⁵⁸ Benjamin Douglas to the King, Recognizance Pursuant to the Condition of the Pardon of the Negroe Man Named Falmouth, Misc., Mss. B. Douglas, Nov. 28, 1770, N-YHS; *Rex v Falmouth*, New York County Supreme Court, July 31, Aug. 3, 1770, Parchment Rolls, G-334, K-314; *Royal Gazette* (New York), Nov. 20, 1779.

American colonies, hoped to trade on their knowledge of the Atlantic world to obtain berths out of northern ports. All of these maritime fugitives, despite not being trained as seamen, believed a ship's forecastle promised them freedom.⁵⁹

The ethnically diverse and geographically varied nature of northern black maritime life is evidenced by runaways from regions other than the West Indies and Africa who sought berths on Atlantic vessels. Enslaved Native Americans and Mustees comprised more than one-sixth of the fugitives advertised in Rhode Island newspapers who fled via the sea. Men such as the Indians who fled from Edward Wing of Sandwich, Massachusetts, in 1762 seeking to go "whaling," were common on the docks of Newport, Nantucket, New Bedford, and Martha's Vineyard.⁶⁰ Other enslaved men who sought berths as free men in northern ports came from far more distant places. For example, in 1763 a sixteen-year-old boy was confined in the Perth Amboy jail. Described as "not resembling the African Negroes," this young man said "he was born in Bombay, in the East Indies; and that he came to New-York from Santa Croix, in the Snow Nancy."⁶¹ While Lascar seamen were not typically found in northern ports prior to the American Revolution, by the outbreak of the war, Bengal mariners could be found with some regularity on British men of war in the Atlantic.⁶² And although no maritime fugitives

⁵⁹ *New-York Mercury*, May 5, 1760, May 2, 1763; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Sept. 25, 1769; *Pennsylvania Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*, May 14, 1760; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 22, 1763.; *New-York Gazette or Weekly Post-Boy*, Aug. 18, 1763. Examples of West Indies-born maritime fugitives fled from northern colonies include *New-York Mercury*, May 5, 1760; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Sept. 25, 1769; *Royal Gazette* (New York), Oct. 25, 1783.

⁶⁰ *Newport Mercury*, Feb. 9, 1762. As Thelma Foote has noted, fugitive slave advertisements "rarely mention[ed] the fugitive's ethnicity." *Black & White Manhattan*, 192.

⁶¹ *New-York Gazette*, July 28, 1763. See also *Newport Mercury*, Oct. 12, 1772; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 15, 1755.

⁶² Examples of Lascar seamen in the Atlantic include Thomas Culpea, John Derasoil, Robert Cato, John Oxford, George Romeo Dorset, George Peters, John Wallis and Antonio Domingo. Paybook, Payroll, HMS *Asia*, 1773, TNA ADM 33/488; Paybook, HMS *Mercury*, 1774, TNA ADM 33/478; Muster Roll, HMS *Asia*, 1774, TNA ADM 36/8079; Paybook, HMS *Tortoise*, 1776, 34/761; Muster Roll, HMS *Minerva*, 1777, TNA ADM 36/8213; Muster Roll, HMS *Adamant*, 1782-83, TNA ADM 36/8817; *Royal Gazette*

from Surinam have been identified, it is clear that dark-skinned seamen such as Boston Vose from northern ports, sailed to and from that colony, and slaves such as Prime, a fourteen year old boy were brought to northern ports from Surinam. These fugitives demonstrate that the movement of mariners free and enslaved, into and out of northern ports, involved sailors from all corners of the Atlantic world.⁶³

While not all maritime fugitives had blue sea sailing experience, some brought other skills valued on Atlantic sailing ships. Fishing skills, for example, were appreciated and recognized by most mariners as beneficial to a ship's entire crew. As William Dampier noted, Mosquito men were often esteemed by English pirates as "one or two of them in a ship will [by their fishing abilities] maintain a hundred men." Navy regulations called for "all Ships of War, [to be] furnished with Fishing-Tackle, being in such Places where Fish is to be had, the Captain is to employ some of the Company in fishing." Fish that were caught were to be distributed daily to those who were sick. The ability of naval seamen to catch fish enabled naval crews to survive when short of provisions. These skills, which many northern slaves had, were also valued on Atlantic merchant ships. When in the Gulf Stream, with its rich fishing grounds, crews were known to hand cod "about the ship, mouth upwards, cleaned and salted so that they would keep well."⁶⁴

(New York), Mar. 26, 1783. There is evidence that some Lascars were, despite naval regulations to the contrary, on British naval ships in the Atlantic even earlier in the eighteenth century. Dec. 19, 1752 Letter to Navy Board, NMM ADM/B/143. By the nineteenth century, Lascars could be found in large numbers within British ships. Craig Spence, "Seeing Some Black in the Union Jack," *History Today* (Oct. 2002), 31.

⁶³ Rommel-Ruiz, "Atlantic Revolutions," 153; *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, June 10, 24, July 1, 1775; The dispersal of blacks from North America during and after the American Revolution around the globe is eloquently described in Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and their Global Quest for Freedom* (Boston, 2006).

⁶⁴ "The Penrose Journal," NMM REG 06/000413.5 (1797), 15; *Regulations and Instructions Relating to His Majesty's Service at Sea*, 9th edition. (London, 1757), 56; Nicholas Rogers, "Caribbean Borderland: Empire, Ethnicity, and the Exotic on the Mosquito Coast," *Eighteenth Century Life* 26:3 (Fall 2002), 120; Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African Written By Himself*, Chap. III, http://www.mith2.umd.edu/eada/html/display.php?docs=equiano_narrative.xml&action=show (accessed

Northern slaves such as Beverly merchant Thomas Davis's Cato were regularly employed on fishing vessels in obtaining this critical food source for West Indian slaves.⁶⁵ Fugitives had other skills, such as sewing, that were highly prized on board ships. Whether a fugitive like the Jamaican-born James was able to parlay his tailoring skills to obtain a berth is not known. However, if he was "as cleverly as any seamstress with her nedddle," it is likely he would have been welcomed on board some Atlantic ship needing a seaman.⁶⁶

Whether they had blue sea, fishing or coasting experience, African and West Indian slaves imported to Philadelphia, New York and Newport generally had very different experiences in British North America. This was due both to most Africans not speaking English and their unfamiliarity with Euro-American customs. For African-born slaves, many of whom spoke very little or no English, obtaining berths was difficult. Ship captains and slave masters both placed a premium on slaves who could speak English, as well as other European languages. When a slave was sold who could not speak a language that the seller had represented the bondsman could, purchasers sued for damages. Speaking only African dialects marked individuals as enslaved. Their lack of familiarity with Euro-American customs also greatly disadvantaged African-born slaves

August 15, 2008); Benjamin Gerrish, Salem, MA, Privateer Log & Note book, 1716-1725, AAS Logbook Coll. #1F; Journals of the Ship *Lloyd*, Nicholas Pocock, Master, Oct. 1767 – Aug. 1768 (numerous entries and drawings evidencing the key role fishing played for the ship's crew); Schaw, *Journal of a Lady of Quality*, 67; Smith, "A Traveler's View of Revolutionary America," 20 quoting Baroness von Riedesel (1777). See Naval Records Returns CO 5/1222, p. 136 (Nov. 15, 1717) (New York sloop *King George* took "fish of Negroos" to Virginia).

⁶⁵ Magro, "The New England Cod Fishing Industry and Maritime Dimensions in The American Revolution," iv, 82-3.

⁶⁶ *New-York Mercury*, Dec. 12, 1763; Schaw, *Journal of a Lady of Quality*, 66. It was said that a sailor "has every Thing made and dress'd to his Hand; and he that cannot be his Laundress is no Sailor." *The Wooden World Dissected*, 68. This skill helped shipwrecked seamen survive and provided monies for Negro boys who did "little Tayloring jobs." "Penrose's Journal," 68, 79; Aaron Thomas: the Carribean Journal of a Royal Navy Seaman, Feb. 28, 1799, <http://www.library.miami.edu/archives/thomas/journal2.html> (accessed June 6, 2006). During times of war and economic recessions, many colonists "learnt to turn their own coats," rather than hire tailors. *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, May 27, 1783.

in negotiating with ship captains. With many eighteenth century Anglo-American vessels having colored mariners who through their travels learned multiple languages, maritime life both encouraged and valued those who could communicate with a wide-variety of peoples. As a result, these dual barriers of language and unfamiliarity with Euro-American customs led far fewer African-born fugitives – less than ten percent of all runaways - to seek berths. Rare were the African-born slaves who, like Congamochu of New Castle, a man with “many large scars on his belly and arms in his country fashion,” or Billy, an African-born man who “didn’t speak good English” were believed to have sought “to get off by water.”⁶⁷ Slaves who were most likely to flee via the sea were those who spoke a European language. This remained true, even in the post-1760 period, when the numbers of fugitives who spoke poor English increased.⁶⁸

With large increases in African slave imports into northern colonies during the Seven Years War and a tremendous expansion in northern maritime labor markets during the conflict, it would not have been surprising to find significant numbers of African-born fugitives seeking berths. In fact, the numbers of such men was very small. In Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island only two African-born fugitives were advertised in each colony as seeking to flee via the sea; the two African-born maritime fugitives in the Philadelphia region were both sailors who fled from boats that had come into

⁶⁷ Foote, *Black & White Manhattan*, 192; *Hale v Franks*, Mayor’s Court Records, Aug. 7, 1750 – Dec. 17, 1751, 474-476; Riordan, *Many Identities, One Nation*, 18; *Royal Gazette* (New York), Nov. 23, 1782. Whites’ preference to employ “country-born” slaves is evidenced by the uncommonness of a seller noting his slave was “African-born.” Even when a seller did so, he would attempt to mitigate the perceived negative effect of African ancestry by noting the slave “was brought from thence 5 years ago.” *Independent Gazetteer*, Feb. 25, 1783.

⁶⁸ Table 14-11; Foote, *Black & White Manhattan*, 192; Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 184. Foote found that a majority of New York fugitives spoke English and that one-fifth spoke Dutch. Even greater numbers of maritime fugitives spoke English or other European languages. Table 14-11.

Philadelphia during the Revolution.⁶⁹ In contrast, West Indies-born maritime fugitives fled both during war and peace, from all three cities, and throughout the seventy-one years between the end of Queen Anne's War and the Treaty of Paris. Those fugitives who spoke multiple languages were particularly prone to flee via the sea. For example, Spanish Negroes who were enslaved after being captured by British and North American privateers, spoke multiple languages, were well versed in maritime labor and culture, and understood the legal and social norms of British North America, regularly fled their slave masters. These men acted in groups on several occasions to use their maritime skills to attempt to seize vessels. In 1743 a "great number" of Spanish Negroes and other prize Negroes attempted to steal a privateer ship in Newport harbor. Six years later, four Spanish Negroes murdered the crew of a sloop docked in New York to escape by the sea. With the large numbers of dark-skinned Spanish sailors condemned by colonial Admiralty Courts into slavery (Appendix C), it is likely that the four Spanish men who seized the New York sloop were mariners capable of steering the vessel to a safe foreign port, be it St. Augustine or Havana. A number of other Spanish Negroes used their linguistic skills to obtain the assistance of the Spanish government to win their freedom through court proceedings. Men like Juan De Dies De Soto, Anthony De Torres, Fernando Bernel, Anthony Aguilar, and Manuel Servantes who had been condemned as

⁶⁹ *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, Oct. 15, 1763; *Newport Mercury*, Oct. 31, 1763; *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, Mar. 6, 1779, Oct. 18, 1783. New York had only three African-born maritime fugitives. *New-York Mercury*, Aug. 24, 1761, Dec. 27, 1762; *Royal Gazette* (New York), Oct. 17, 1778. Both Ira Berlin and Thelma Foote have argued that in the post-1760 period a greater proportion of unacculturated African-born slaves could be found in New York. Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 184; Foote, *White and Black Manhattan*, 192. Thelma Foote in a smaller sampling of runaway advertisements found approximately 70% of New York fugitive slaves were proficient in at least one non-African language. Foote, *Black and White Manhattan*, 282n19.

“prize goods” were able to get the Spanish government and the New York attorney general petition New York courts for their freedom.⁷⁰

Even more than where a slave was born, age played a very significant role in which maritime fugitive obtained berths. Seafaring traditionally has been the work of young men. During the age of sail less than two percent of Salem’s mariners were forty or older, with middle-aged deck hands seen as marked by “exceptional poverty and social dependence.” As Daniel Vickers has noted, “the experience of one seaport will not answer for the rest,” raising the question of whether his findings on the age of Salem’s mariners holds true for mariners from other Atlantic ports and, more specifically, for northern maritime fugitives. An analysis of eighteenth century Plymouth and Scarborough crew lists, New York militia muster rolls, muster rolls for American sailors on eighteenth century British navy ships on the North America station, the *CMD*, crew lists and seamen certificates for nineteenth century New England mariners, and secondary works, demonstrates that this pattern of few deck hands forty or older on sailing ships to have been true throughout the British Atlantic.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Parish Transcripts, N-YHS; *New-York Weekly Post-Boy*, Jan. 29, 1749; Charles Merrill Hough, ed., *Reports of Cases in the Vice Admiralty of the Providence of New York and in the Court of Admiralty of the State of New York, 1715-1788* (New Haven, 1925), 29-31. West Indies maritime fugitives who understood British legal systems were able to obtain their freedom in England, as well as in North America. Carretta, “Black Sailors in the Royal Navy.” Thelma Foote found approximately 6% of New York slave runaways to be bi-lingual. Foote, *Black and White Manhattan*, 192.

⁷¹ Vickers, *Young Men and the Sea*, 5, 119; Brian J. Rouleau, “Dead Men Do Tell Tales: Folklore, Fraternity and Forecastles,” *EAS* 5:1 (Spring 2007): 31-2. Vickers and Lisa Norling each found that most Nantucket mariners in the age of sail were young, between fifteen and thirty. Vickers, “Nantucket Whalemens in the Deep-Sea Fishery,” 294; Norling, *Ahab Had a Wife*, 25-26. Paul Gilje similarly found that sailors were in their twenties. Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront*, 27. The records used in my analysis were among the few available that provide ages of eighteenth century mariners. For a discussion of the composition of other European ship crews see Paul Van Royen, Jaap Bruijn and Jan Lucassen, eds., “Through Emblems of Hell”? *European Sailors and the Maritime Market, 1570-1870*. (St. John’s, Newfoundland, 1997). HCA records indicate that the ages of French seamen were similar to that of their English counterparts. See e.g., *L’Avanture*, TNA HCA 32/275/5 (26.3 years of age).

Old men, whether disabled with peg legs or just tired out by their advancing years, not only could no longer climb ship rigging, but sometimes found themselves cuckolded as their wives took younger, more virile men as lovers. John Thurston, *Greenwich Pensioners*, 1800, NMM, PAH 3303; Thomas Rowlandson,

The age distribution among Anglo-American blue sea mariners, as evidenced by Marcus Rediker's review of High Court of Admiralty and American Vice-Admiralty records for 1700-1750, was similar to that among Salem's seamen. The 128 common seamen Rediker obtained records for had an average age of 27.6 years of age, with unskilled seamen on average a year older. Rediker concluded "high mortality rates and the rigors of maritime work made seafaring a young man's occupation and culture." Like Vickers, the British maritime historian Peter Earle believes "abject poverty and misery" were the primary reasons why, although most elderly seamen became less adventuresome, some older mariners continued to go to sea.⁷²

Plymouth's 1776 muster rolls support Rediker's, Earle's, and Vickers' conclusions. Twenty-nine of Plymouth's two hundred and twenty-eight mariners, or 12.7 percent, were forty years of age or older, close to the 11.2 percent Rediker found among eighteenth century blue sea mariners. The mean age of 30.6 years among Plymouth's 228 mariners, including officers, was slightly higher than among Salem's common seamen or the blue sea mariners Rediker considered, but still fairly young. The presence of officers in this sample, who tended to be older than common seamen, undoubtedly increased the average age by at least a year or two.⁷³

The Old Husband, c. 1800, in Sarah M.S. Pearsall, "'The late flagrant instance of depravity in my Family': The Story of an Anglo-Jamaican Cuckold," *WMQ* 60:3 (July 2003), 552.

⁷² Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 156-158; Peter Earle, *English Merchant Seamen* (London, 1998), 48-50. Vickers, Earle and Gilje each found that many seamen shifted to land-based maritime labor in their thirties and forties. Vickers, *Young Men*, Chap. 4; Earle, *Sailors*, 50; Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront*, 27-28. This pattern of movement between land and sea was also experienced by some female tars, such as Hannah Snell, who disguised themselves to serve both as soldiers and seamen. See p. 169-172. It also continued among New England seamen into the first quarter of the nineteenth century. David Chacko and Alexander Kulcsar, "Israel Potter: Genesis of a Legend," *WMQ* 41:3 (Jul., 1984), 365.

Earle's work implies that Atlantic seamen may have, on average, been slightly older earlier in the eighteenth century. In the period from 1665-1720 Earle found that 13.1% of English seamen were forty-five years of age or older. Peter Earle, "English Sailors, 1570-1775" in *Those Emblems of Hell*, 86.

⁷³ Plymouth Crew Lists, 1776, TNA CUST 66/227.

The crew lists for 1,638 mariners who sailed from Scarborough on England's northeast coast between 1747 and 1759 provides the most detailed picture of age distribution among eighteenth century British Atlantic sailors. Notwithstanding employing elderly cooks, Scarborough's mariners were mainly young men; common deck hands averaged 25.6 years of age. Thus, it appears fairly certain that the age distribution of eighteenth century British sailors hewed closely to that found by Vickers for Salem's seamen.

While the analysis of Plymouth and Scarborough crew lists supports Vickers's, Earle's and Rediker's findings, are such conclusions applicable to American ports other than Salem? A review of New York's muster rolls during 1758-1762, musters for British naval ships in North America, and the *CMD*, all indicate that there were relatively few elderly seamen, free or enslaved, in northern ports. Muster rolls for New York's militia during 1758-1763 provide both age and occupational information. The average age upon their enlistment of the three hundred and seventy-three mariners in New York's colonial militia was 26.8 years, and eleven percent of New York's mariners were forty years of age or older, an almost identical profile to that Rediker found among British deep-sea sailors.⁷⁴ Similarly, among the one hundred and seventy-eight American sailors on men of war on the North America station for whom ages were indicated on muster rolls, only fifteen, or 8.4 percent, were forty or older. The average age of American mariners on

⁷⁴ *New York Colonial Muster Rolls, 1664-1775*, 2 vols., Third Annual Report of the State Historian of the State of New York, Appendix "M," 439-1130, reprinted Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc. (Baltimore, 2000). With many laboring men beginning "to fail after age thirty" due to poor diets and harsh working conditions, it is little wonder that there were few elderly among New York's mariners. Smith, "The Material Lives of Working Philadelphians," 176. This youthfulness among North American mariners was also true for American soldiers when they enlisted. John Resch, *Suffering Soldiers: Revolutionary War Veterans, Moral Sentiment, and Political Cultures in the Early Republic* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 19 (pensioners averaged 22 years of age when they enlisted).

British naval ships was 27.7 years old, almost identical to that of British blue sea sailors.⁷⁵

The presence of a youthful dark-skinned maritime work force in northern ports is confirmed by an analysis of the average age of fugitive slaves believed to have sought ship berths.⁷⁶ The average age of these maritime fugitives, 23.1 years of age, was younger than any other group of Atlantic seamen studied. It is also five years younger than the average age of unskilled English seamen and considerably younger than the average age of a northern fugitive slave. The “rigorous life” of seafaring appealed to few older runaways, with less than four percent of maritime fugitives being forty or older. The youthfulness of northern maritime fugitives reflects the physical capabilities required of fugitives, some who had to travel long distances to get to ports, the desires of ship

⁷⁵ This analysis is based upon a sampling of American seamen listed on the Muster Rolls, Pay Rolls or Pay Tickets (TNA ADM 33, 34 and 36) of forty-nine randomly selected warships, as described in Table 17-1. The analysis included the review of two crews for each year from 1713 to 1783. Ira Dye’s review of records for prisoners of war in Chatham, Dartmoor, Plymouth Quebec, Portsmouth and the prison ship *Ganges* indicates an average age of 26.3 years for whites and 25.1 for blacks and mulattos, who comprised 7.36% of the prison population. Ira Dye Papers, USS *Constitution* Museum, Boston.

⁷⁶ Other historians who have considered the age of northern fugitives have also found that the majority of runaways were young men. Sixty-eight percent of Mid-Atlantic runaways were 29 years of age or younger and only 9% were forty or older. Graham Hodges and Allan Edwards Brown’s study of 662 New York and New Jersey fugitive advertisements found 61.45% of fugitive slaves to be 25 years old or younger, and 91.1% of the fugitives to be men. Richard Bond’s sample of 354 New York fugitives shows an overall older demographic for fugitives, but still finds that 70% of New York fugitives during 1726-1770 were younger than thirty, and 86% were men. Thelma Foote found that New York City fugitives averaged 23.5 years of age, and 90% were male. Vivienne L. Kruger, who conducted the smallest sampling of New York fugitives found 81.7% of them to be male. Billy G. Smith and Richard Wojtowicz found that 91% of the runaways advertised in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* were male. The average age of Narragansett fugitives from 1763-1785 was 20. Hodges and Brown, *Pretends to be Free*, Table 2; Smith and Wojtowicz, *Stole Themselves*, 13; Bond, “Ebb and Flow, 238-9; Kruger, “Born to Run,” 238; Smith and Wojtowicz, *Blacks Who Stole Themselves*, 13; Fitts, *Inventing New England’s Slave Paradise*, 118-119. Virginian and South Carolinian slave watermen were also youthful; 86% of South Carolina’s and 91% of Virginia’s fugitive watermen were between the ages of 15 and 39. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 213.

The youthfulness of maritime fugitives from northern ports continued into the nineteenth century. During 1803-1878 New London’s dark-skinned sailors averaged 24.9 years of age, with only 5.8% of the 1,308 colored seamen being forty years of age or older (Table 14-1). Similarly, the 524 New England colored mariners issued seamen protection certificates from 1796-1871 averaged 23.3 years of age (Table 14-2). Jeffrey Bolster likewise found small numbers of elderly black sailors shipping out of Philadelphia and Providence in 1803. Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 239.

captains for young men, and the general youthfulness of northern slaves.⁷⁷ Over the course of the eighteenth century maritime fugitives became increasingly younger. In the years prior to the Revolution, enslaved fugitives seeking to flee via the sea averaged between twenty-four and twenty-five years of age. During the Revolution the average age of maritime fugitives decreased to twenty. The relative youth of northern maritime fugitives during the Revolution can be ascribed to the influx of large numbers of British naval ships into American ports, the new American navy's need for men, the chaos of war, and the British military's offering freedom to those slaves who served in the King's forces. Scores of slave boys were employed as powder boys and servants on British and American naval vessels, with captains in the face of increasing demands for maritime labor becoming less selective in their hiring. Other young maritime fugitives found berths on the numerous privateers plying America's eastern coast. These young maritime fugitives included the twelve year mulatto boy Peter, whose owner believed him to "be decoyed on board the fleet" in New York harbor, and Jack, a "short thick full faced" boy, whose master supposed him to be seeking a berth on one of New York's many privateer ships. When they came aboard ships, the youthful runaways found young enslaved West Indians, such as Glasgow Black, serving as Captain's servants, and joined other fugitives,

⁷⁷ Van Buskirk, *Generous Enemies*, 141. The youthfulness of the northern maritime fugitives was due to several factors, including the lack of a market for older slaves, the harsh physical demands of slavery, poor diets, and high mortality rates. Blakey, "The New York African Burial Ground Project: An Examination of Enslaved Lives, A Construction of Ancestral Ties"; Foote, "Black Life in Colonial Manhattan," Chap. 4; Demos, "Families in Colonial Bristol," 48-49. The high mortality among slaves is reflected in the very few older slaves offered for sale. For example, only 1% of all slaves advertised in Rhode Island newspapers were characterized as being older than 35 years of age (Table 5-1). The 879 fugitive slaves advertised in New York newspapers for which an age is indicated averaged 27 years of age, in contrast to the 22.4 years of age for New York's maritime fugitives. In contrast to the youth of eighteenth century northern maritime fugitives, black mariners in the nineteenth-century had a greater tendency to continue working at sea after they were forty. Muster Roll 1797, HMS *Thames*, TNA ADM 36/13185; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 170. It is likely that maritime fugitives seeking berths in other northern ports were also young, as 61% of the slaves advertised for sale in Boston newspapers were twenty years old or younger. Derrochers, "Slave-for-Sale Advertisements," 629.

such as Antonio Black from Virginia, a Captain's servant on HMS *Robust*. The runaway boys, who almost always escaped by themselves, understood that ship captains were willing to employ twelve-year olds, whatever their skin color or presumed legal status.⁷⁸

Youthful maritime fugitives included those with and without prior maritime experience. Ship captains often took slave boys to sea as their servants, resulting in a considerable number of young slaves being exposed to maritime culture and learning skills that could later be used when these slaves sought to flee via the sea. Boys such as Richard Wright's fifteen year old slave Alex used their experiences on men of war to seek berths on other ships. Alex did so in 1778 despite having been branded with the initials "R.W." on his chest when captured running away the previous year.⁷⁹ The young runaways also included those with little or no maritime experience. Dressing themselves as sailors and fleeing in stolen boats, they believed berths on ships could be obtained. Throughout the northern colonies and over the seven decades between 1713 and the end of the Revolutionary War, scores of fugitives inexperienced in maritime work, both boys

⁷⁸ CMD; Table 12-4; Ship *Catherine* log, 1782-83. MSM, MC 60.43, Collection 64, Vol. 2; *New-York Mercury*, Jan. 13, 1755; *New-York Gazette* (Weyman's), May 11, 1761; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Apr. 6, 1772, May 4, 1772, Feb. 2, 1775, Apr. 12, 1779; *Royal Gazette* (New York), Oct. 10, 1778; HMS *Otter* Muster Roll, 1746-1747, TNA ADM 36/2334; HMS *Roebuck* Muster Roll, 1776, TNA ADM 36/644. Seamen on Newport slavers in 1805 averaged 25.5 years of age. *The Notorious Triangle*, 60.

Naval recruiting officers were "less in a position to pick and chose men than their counterparts in the army." Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (reprint, Chapel Hill, 1996), 83. Despite such lack of selectivity, it is highly unlikely, as Gary Nash has estimated, that 1,000 dark-skinned men served in the small American navy. Gary B. Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (New York, 2005), 227. Less than two hundred dark-skinned mariners from American naval and state naval ships are listed in the CMD. As the CMD includes records of colored mariners from a wide variety of sources, including secondary sources that have compiled lists of blacks based on military records, it appears the vast majority of colored mariners serving during the American Revolution found berths either on British men of war or privateers. Given that there were only 31 American naval vessels compared to almost 1,700 American privateers, the CMD's wide disparity between dark-skinned mariners in the American Navy and on privateers indicates Nash overstates the presence of African Americans on American naval vessels. American Merchant Marine at War, <http://www.usmm.org/revolution.html> (accessed Feb 7, 2008).

⁷⁹ *Rivington's New-York Loyal Gazette*, Oct. 13, 1777; *Royal Gazette* (New York), Feb. 7, 1778. Examples of slave boys who had been to sea or were said to be "fond of a marine life," include *Royal Gazette* (New York), Sept. 2, 1777; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Oct. 7, 1771; *New-York Journal or General Advertiser*, June 4, 1772.

and young men, sought berths (Tables 10-1). These youngsters, if strong, healthy and willing, were ideal to serve as members of privateer boarding parties. During the Revolution, seventeen-year-old Pompy, fifteen year olds Alex and Alicak, an unidentified fourteen years old Negro boy, and twelve year old Peter were among the inexperienced fugitives seeking berths. The opportunities for these landlubbers to obtain a berth at sea, whether as members of boarding parties or powder boys, were particularly good during such times.⁸⁰

Besides being youthful, mostly non-African natives, and having linguistic skills, what other attributes characterized northern maritime fugitives? Many of the maritime fugitives were taller, stronger, and in better health than the average northern slave.⁸¹ Like the “well built” six feet two inch Crispus Attucks, the physically imposing Venture Smith, and Smith’s large son Solomon, many maritime fugitives were “tall and stout.” In an era when the average American slave was 5 feet 8 inches tall, the average Philadelphia seaman an inch shorter, and mariners such as 5’ 4 ½” William Ray were commonly found among American crews, maritime fugitives were often five feet ten inches or taller. Michael Devoe’s slave Prince, an “above 6 Foot high” Madagascar colored man, and other maritime fugitives who “had been used to the sea,” were notable for their standing above the crowd. Tall maritime fugitives such as the 6’ 3” Jabey could be found on British men of war, as well as on merchant ships, privateers, and stolen boats.⁸² Disabled

⁸⁰ *American Weekly Mercury*, Nov. 10, 1737; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Apr. 10, 1740; *Newport Mercury*, Oct. 9, 1759; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, June 2, 1777; *Rivington’s New-York Gazetteer*, Oct. 13, 1777; *Royal Gazette* (New York), Jan. 2, Oct. 17, 1778; and *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Oct. 17, 1778.

⁸¹ Slaves in North America were, on average, an inch shorter than northern native-born whites. Robert A. Margo, Richard Steckel, “The Heights of American Slaves: New Evidence on Slave Nutrition and Health,” *Social Science History*, 6:4 (Autumn, 1982), 519.

⁸² Bolster, *Black Jacks*; 102-103; *Five Black Lives*, 8, 32; *The Bee*, Jan. 23, 1799 (Venture Smith “remarkable for size”); Smith, “The Material Lives of Laboring Philadelphians, 1750 to 1800,” 169n22; Bill Benton, “The Indian Heritage of Crispus Attucks,” *Negro History Bulletin*, 35:7 (Nov. 1972), 149-152;

and lame slaves sometimes fled their masters. However, few such runaways sought berths at sea. When windy conditions altered harbors from placid flat bodies of water to churned up white caps resembling snow-covered mountain tops, strength and maritime experience were necessary to safely steer stolen boats. Seafaring was “mainly the business of men in their physical prime.” Landsmen such as John Thorn who were blind in one eye, or “much afflicted” with rheumatism, found themselves discharged from maritime service. Fewer than five percent of all maritime fugitives were described as having a disability. Rare were disabled mariners such as Ned from Long Island, who in 1757 stole a barge that had lost part of its stern and several timbers, and, despite a “crooked Knee,” steered the boat to Westchester. The most common physical disability among maritime fugitives was limping. Whether men like Cambridge, a twenty-six year old Rhode Island slave, limped due to work at sea or on land is unknown. But Cambridge, Wan, Caesar, Duke, and Tom each shuffled to docks seeking berths. Limping would have made these men less than ideal sailors but did not automatically disqualify them from service at sea. Many seamen suffered from rheumatism and swollen ankles. During wartime and economic

John Komlos, “On the Biological Standard of Living Eighteenth Century Americans: Taller, Richer, Healthier,” *Research in Economic History*, 20 (2001), 223-248, Table 2 (Many of the newspapers used in Komlos’s analysis were the same used in this dissertation); Table 13-3; William Ray, *Horrors of Slavery, or the American Tars in Tripoli* (Troy, NY, 1808, *Magazine of History*, reprint, 1911); *Pennsylvania Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*, Feb. 24, 1772; *New-York Gazette* (Weyman’s), Oct. 4, 1762; *New-York Mercury*, Dec. 27, 1762; *Newport Mercury*, Mar. 9, 1767; *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, May 21, 1768; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 10, 1756. Given that 42.9% of all Rhode Island fugitive slaves were tall maritime fugitives, and some of the tall fugitives not described as maritime fugitives were owned by ship captains, it is likely that as many as one-half of all Rhode Island fugitives were tall. See e.g., *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, July 15, 1780 (Anthony, a 6’ slave owned by privateer Captain Silas Talbot, ran away without the advertisement indicating his destination). Examples of tall New York maritime fugitives include *New-York Gazette* (Weyman’s), July 19, 1762, Oct. 4, 1762; *New York Mercury*, Oct. 11, 1762, Dec. 27, 1762, Feb. 14, 1763, July 25, 1763, Nov. 22, 1763, Aug. 5, 1765, Dec. 23, 1765, June 30, 1766, May 25, 1767; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Feb. 8, 1773, Sept. 20, 1773, May 16, 1774, July 1, 1776, May 4, 1778, Aug. 24, 1778; *Royal Gazette* (New York), Oct. 22, 1783, Feb. 8, 1773, Sept. 20, 1773; *New-York Journal or General Advertiser*, Aug. 8, 1776. Whereas approximately one-fifth of New York fugitives sought to flee via the sea, one-third of all New York fugitives described by their owners as “tall” (Table 12-6) were maritime fugitives.

expansion, when the need for mariners was great, limping maritime fugitives often found captains less than choosy.⁸³

Despite some handicapped fugitives such as Duke and Cambridge believing they could obtain berths, a review of want advertisements confirms "healthy" slaves were considered ideal bondsmen. While most advertisements seeking slaves indicated few physical characteristics that owners sought in slaves to be purchased, "healthy" was the most frequently mentioned trait owners sought. Over half of the Pennsylvania advertisements seeking slaves indicating physical traits sought in slaves listed "healthy" as a required quality in the slave to be purchased. While New York and Newport owners were less insistent on needing "healthy" slaves, advertisements in newspapers from those cities also stressed slaves' health.⁸⁴ The same physical capabilities that owners valued – healthy, strong men free of disabilities - served fugitive slaves well in their attempted flights to freedom. Thus, while runaway slaves who sought to become mariners faced many obstacles, young and healthy slaves were those most likely to overcome such hurdles and obtain berths on ships. In northern ports, adult male and female slaves rarely lived together, making conception of a child difficult, and greatly hindering family life. This and the gender imbalance in these cities caused most colored mariners to not have the extensive family ties that rural slaves had.⁸⁵ Those colored seamen who had wives or

⁸³ Letter Admiral Davers to Hon. Thomas Corbett, 15 Aug. 1744. TNA ADM 1/233, Part 3, p. 149; *New-York Weekly Post-Boy*, June 6, Aug. 29, 1748, May 16, 1757; *New-York Gazette* (Weyman's), June 9, 1760, Sept. 29, 1760; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Feb. 14, 1780; *Newport Mercury*, Jan. 25, 1783. As the *Dolphin*'s Master noted in 1766, "discovering new worlds...depends on the men's health." Quoted in R. Cock, "Precursors of Cook: The Voyages of the *Dolphin*, 1764-8," *Mariner's Mirror* 85 (1999), 42.

⁸⁴ Similarly, slave sale advertisements stressed slaves' health. For example, among slaves advertised for sale in Rhode Island newspapers, 42% were described as "healthy." Table 5-4.

⁸⁵ Nash, "Slaves and Slaveowners in Colonial Philadelphia," *WMQ* 30:3 (Apr. 1973), 239; Foote, *Black and White Manhattan*, 85; Crane, *Dependent People*, 51; Mia Bay, "In Search of Sally Hemmings in the Post-DNA Era," *Reviews in American History* 34:4 (Dec. 2006), 417 ("a vast network of blood relatives"). Slave

long-term relationships often lived separately from their wives. Dick jumped ship in Philadelphia to see his wife in Dover, while Mark Stubbs, a Mulatto seaman who sailed from Baltimore, was believed to be lurking in Philadelphia where his wife “was believed to [be] hiding.” Unlike the seaman depicted in Hudson’s “The Sailor’s Farewell” and the sailor in R. Pollard’s “William and Mary” whose “heart, my soul, my mind, Are, Mary, moored with thee,” when slaves fled via the sea they usually did not have wives clinging to them as they set out. With such limited family ties, maritime fugitives were often willing to live in cramped forecastles and undertake the physical demands of shipboard work.⁸⁶

The nature of their labor may have enabled male slaves to escape by the sea, but for female slaves their work kept them largely tied to the land. Working mainly in homes as domestics, and often by themselves, slave women were conspicuous when on the street

masters often prohibited slaves from even visiting their spouses, causing many to sneak about in the middle of the night to see their spouses. Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 101, 182.

⁸⁶ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 5, 1765, May 16, 1781. A sense of colored mariners’ limited family ties can be gleaned from the lack of remittances to family members by colored seamen on British naval ships. Between December 1758 and 1783 few colored mariners were listed among the hundreds of men listed in Plymouth remittance registers who provided for wages to be paid to their family members. In contrast, scores of seamen from the mid-size port of Scarborough arranged for their wives to receive their pay from the Portsmouth paymaster. Remittance Book, Plymouth, Dec. 13, 1758 – Aug. 9, 1763, TNA ADM 174/291; Remittance Book, Plymouth, Aug. 9, 1763 – Dec. 31, 1783, TNA ADM 174/292. There probably were other colored mariners who also provided for their families to receive monies, but due to the lack of racial information in the remittance registers could not be identified.

Sailors like Dick frequently left behind lamenting wives. This was the subject of seamen’s ballads and numerous images, including Gillray’s 1800 portrayal of Emma Hamilton in *Dido, in Despair!* wailing “Ah where & ah where, is my gallant sailor gone?” Futterman, *Unsettled*, 135; Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth century London* (New York, 2006), 320. See also, J. Simon, “The Sailor’s Farewell,” 1787, NMM PW4031; Johann Heinrich Ramberg, “The Sailor’s Farewell,” 1785, NMM PY7359. While mariners such as Dick and Mark Stubbs may have sought their wives out of love, they may have also been motivated by the knowledge that seaman’s wives did not always patiently await the return of their men. Prints of sailors being betrayed by their lovers could be quite vivid. In *The Farewell*, Thomas Rowlandson shows a young wife leaning out a window waving to her departing sailor husband as she straddles her new lover. Gatrell, *City of Laughter*, 400.

New England servants with family or kinship connections were more likely to bring court proceedings or other actions to resolve their grievances than to run away. Lawrence Towner, “‘A Fondness for Freedom’: Servant Protest in Puritan Society,” *WMQ* 19:2 (Apr. 1962), 213. It is probable that as was true for many seamen and others who were “unsettled,” maritime fugitives’ lives were filled with casual relationships as they moved from place to place. Fumerton, *Unsettled*, 74.

and removed from their master's residence, making it difficult for them to pass as free. With social and family responsibilities such as childcare, escape of any sort was both emotionally and physically difficult to undertake for many women. Historians of northern slavery have noted the paucity of female fugitive slaves. With single women traveling alone being vulnerable and women with children being "virtually unemployable," flight during the eighteenth century was, as had been travel in the seventeenth century, "a man's affair." When women did runaway, they tended, as did Sarah Hammel of Cranston, Rhode Island, to visit "acquaintances." Males comprised more than ninety percent of the fugitives advertised in Pennsylvania, New York and Rhode Island newspapers. Only 10.43 percent of fugitive slaves advertised in Rhode Island newspapers were female, with all but one being under the age of thirty-five (Tables 9-1 and 9-2). Similarly, only 12.47 percent of New York fugitive slaves were women, with eighty-seven percent being under the age of thirty-five (Tables 8-1 & 8-2). Among fugitive slaves advertised in Pennsylvania newspapers, just six percent were women (Table 7-2).⁸⁷ Many of the adult women who did attempt to flee did so with young children. Maria, a thirty-four year old woman who ran with her four-year old daughter Jane, was typical of the women runaways. She was said to be hiding in Philadelphia and

⁸⁷ Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World*, 24; White, *Ar'n't I a Woman*, 72; Campbell, Miers and Miller, "Women in Western Systems of Slavery," 165; Sword, "Wayward Wives," 27. while Elaine Forman Crane found that "advertisements for [Newport] black female runaways are almost non-existent," and Joanne Pope Melish found that in the period between 1776 and 1783 5% of Rhode Island fugitives were women. of the more than 200 Rhode Island fugitive slave advertisements I reviewed, only 6% were for females. Crane, *Dependent People*, 79; Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 118. In her limited sampling of New York fugitive advertisements, Thelma Foote found that women comprised "only 6 percent of the documented fugitive slave population." Foote, *Black and White Manhattan*, 197. In the Pennsylvania area Billy G. Smith's and Richard Wojtowicz's review of the *Pennsylvania Gazette's* fugitive advertisements found 9% of the runaways to be women. Smith and Wojtowicz, *Blacks Who Stole Themselves*, 13. Jane Landers similarly found slave women tended not to run away due to responsibilities for children or elderly kin. Jane Landers, *Black Society*, 30.

was thought to be harboured by some free blacks.⁸⁸ The very few women who did flee seeking berths often did so in the company of men. Hannah, a Virginian slave thought to be headed for Pennsylvania, fled in a group that included a twenty-five year old male, Joe. While Joe may have had some luck finding a berth, it is unlikely Hannah, traveling with a young boy and lame in one foot, would have been hired by a ship captain.⁸⁹ Unlike young slave boys, who believed they could obtain berths as servants or cooks on ships, young slave girls did not have such maritime options. This is reflected by the complete lack of youthful female maritime fugitives among Rhode Island's slave population (Table 9-1). Women in New York and Philadelphia were only slightly more likely to flee via the sea (Tables 7-1 and 8-1). Those slave women who did flee and sought berths at sea almost always faced hostility from ship captains and crews. Women who worked at sea did so in disguise, as they would not have been accepted on board as women crewmembers. Of the hundreds of fugitive slaves whom vessels "carry[ied] off," only a handful were women, and none were known to have served at sea.⁹⁰

Slave women's lack of mobility reinforced the general perception that a dark-skinned woman was enslaved. Unlike some colored mariners who were able to persuade colonial officials of their free status, few women were able to do so. Sarah Berry's experience was not uncommon. Claiming to be a free woman wrongfully sold into

⁸⁸ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Dec. 30, 1780.

⁸⁹ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 2, 1782.

⁹⁰ *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, July 16, 1763, Oct. 15, 1763; *Newport Mercury*, Oct. 9, 1765; Stark, *Female Tars*, 82-102; Medford, "'A Constant Source of Irritation': Enslaved Women's Resistance in Colonial New York," www.huanarchivestnet.howard.edu/medford1.htm (accessed Oct. 12, 2000). Prior to the Revolution few women fled via the sea. For example, from 1770 to 1776, there were 77 fugitives advertised in Rhode Island newspapers, not one of which was for a female. Rommel-Ruiz, "Atlantic Revolutions," 215. Older women, such as David Reynolds' "woman named Binor," often did not flee due to physical limitations. 1761 Bill of Sale, Elisha Reynolds Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, RIHS Mss. 629, SG1. The few women who did flee in the pre-Revolutionary era were young. Fitts, *Inventing New England's Slave Paradise*, 118-9. During the chaos of the Revolution, older women were more likely to run away (Tables 13-1 & 13-2).

slavery in New York, Berry sought her liberty by presenting to New York's Attorney General a certificate of freedom. While colored men were known to circulate throughout the Atlantic and ship captains' illegally enslaving them was the subject of well-known imperial disputes, Sarah Berry and other colored women were viewed as "great liar(s)" whose claims of freedom could not be trusted.⁹¹

Although most slave women may have led lives that were "unrecorded and unremembered," some did leave traces of their lives that enable us to recreate the means by which a few were able to achieve freedom through life at sea.⁹² Women such as Phillis from Tappan, New York, understood that sailor's clothes could be a means to escape. Although living in rural Orange County, Phillis had previously been owned by Peter Rutgers, a New York City merchant, and was familiar with the port and the possibilities for maritime flight. Taking with her both a change of clothes and a pass indicating that she was free, Phillis possessed three of the key elements that fugitive slaves and their masters understood were most likely to facilitate escape; clothes to transform her status, a pass to give legitimacy to her claimed free status, and knowledge of the port to enable her to find ships soon to leave the harbor. As such, Phillis stood a far greater chance than most female fugitives of being successful in "endeavour[ing] to get on board some vessel" and thereby escape via the sea.⁹³

Another striking characteristic of northern maritime fugitives was that, unlike the "extraordinary instances of attachment to a particular locale" among South Carolina

⁹¹ Zabin, "Places of Exchange," 101.

⁹² Bay, "In Search of Sally Hemings in the Post-DNA Era," 407. Most women fugitives were likely to flee to see family or kin, or like Maria from Philadelphia, seek to join her lover. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 7, 1776.

⁹³ *South Carolina Gazette*, Dec. 22, 1768 (Molly, a runaway slave was described as "a sturdy Negro wench who will not scruple to disguise herself as a man in order to go on a vessel"); *New-York Mercury*, June 24, 1754.

runaways, they were willing to travel long distances to escape.⁹⁴ Unlike naval officials who described themselves “content in an easy chair, fortune in our pockets,” maritime fugitives were a restless group, assertive, willing to cross national, cultural and religious borders to find their freedom. More than half of the maritime fugitives advertised in Rhode Island’s newspapers, were fugitives from other colonies. The owners of maritime fugitives from throughout New England, as well as New York, Virginia and North Carolina, believed their slaves were in Rhode Island seeking berths. With maritime fugitives comprising almost forty percent of the fugitives advertised in Rhode Island’s newspapers, these long distance runaways constituted a significant presence among Newport’s black population. The slaves of Massachusetts resident Phillip Wheeler, New Yorker John De Peyster, and Judith Vincent of Monmouth, New Jersey, saw Newport as a place where they might flee via the sea. These slaves traveled long distances to reach Newport. When Jack Hammon of Queens Town, Maryland was captured in New Shoreham, Rhode Island, he had put almost four hundred miles between himself and his slave master. Similarly, Solomon of Woodbury, Connecticut and an unnamed “Negro Man” from Swanzey, New Hampshire, traveled one-hundred and sixteen miles and one hundred and thirty-five miles respectively before each was captured in Rhode Island.⁹⁵

Maritime fugitives seeking berths in Philadelphia and New York also came from considerable distances. Joe, a New-Castle County mulatto slave who “pretend[ed] to be

⁹⁴ Morgan, “Colonial South Carolina Runaways,” 71. Examples of runaways fleeing long distances include *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, Sept. 7, 1772 (Virginia to Pennsylvania); *Independent Gazetteer*, Aug. 3, 1782 (Baltimore to New York); *New-York Journal or General Advertiser*, Aug. 27, 1767 (Virginia to New York); *New-York Gazette or Weekly Post-Boy*, Jan. 8, 1770 (Newark, New Jersey to Albany) Many other such advertisements were also published in New York and Rhode Island papers.

⁹⁵ Colley, *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh*, 262; *Newport Mercury*, Dec. 27, 1762, July 31, 1769, Jan. 25, 1773; *Providence Gazette & Country Journal*, Nov. 3, 1770. New England maritime fugitives who walked close to 200 miles to reach a seaport can be found in *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, June 20, 1772; *New-York Gazette*, June 24, 1734; *Newport Mercury*, Oct. 16, 1729 and June 27, 1768.

[a] seaman,” the Maryland slave Dick, who took “the road to Philadelphia to get into some vessel,” or Caesar, a ten year old Gloucester County slave who stole a canoe to cross the Delaware River, were each part of a regular and continual movement of slaves from rural New Jersey, Bucks, and Chester Counties, and the Delmarva Peninsula to the City of Brotherly Love.⁹⁶ Slaves from the Chesapeake Bay area regularly fled north to Philadelphia and New York seeking berths. Jack, a “well known” Chesapeake waterman, fled north, was captured in Philadelphia and then escaped from the city’s Work House, passing himself off as a “Freeman and a Sailor.” He was joined by men such as Cato, who fled from Joseph Jacobs of Baltimore County, Maryland, to seek a berth on a New York privateer. Joe, a Maryland mulatto slave, also headed towards New York seeking a berth, and Richard, a Virginia-born slave, who having “followed the sea for a number of years,” fled to New York where he had a wife.⁹⁷ Slaves of rural Long Island, the Hudson Valley, and northern New Jersey similarly traveled long distances to New York City to seek berths. Many knew the city from regular trips bringing their masters’ produce to market. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century forty percent of the more than 1,200 advertised fugitives in New York newspapers were believed to have fled to New York City. In the years prior to the Revolution, more than thirty percent of northern fugitives fled to a northern port. During the Revolution, this increased to more than half. York, a Monmouth County slave, George, a Burlington County Spanish Negro, Andrew, an Ulster County slave, and eighteen year old Caesar from Salem County, were among the

⁹⁶ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Jan. 10, 1771, July 2, 1772; *American Weekly Mercury*, July 16, 1724.

⁹⁷ *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, June 20, 1772; *New-York Gazette*, June 24, 1734; *Newport Mercury*, Oct. 16, 1759 and June 27, 1768; *New-York Mercury*, Aug. 20, 1759, Aug. 5, 1765, July 7, 1766; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Jan. 23, 1769. Long-distance flight was not limited to maritime fugitives. Others were believed to have traveled hundreds of miles, despite the loss of toes to frost bite and being almost naked. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 23, 1742; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Nov. 5, 1770.

scores of maritime fugitives believed to have fled to New York seeking berths on privateers and merchant vessels.⁹⁸ Often having familiarity with North American ports and black mariner communities, these runaways perceived that opportunities to flee via the sea awaited them in northern ports.

*Sailor's Trowsers, Tarry Trowsers and Pea Jackets –
The Means By Which Maritime Fugitives Fled*

During the seventeenth century the British Atlantic shrank through the growth of transatlantic shipping, improved knowledge of currents and coastlines, and the development of newspapers and the post system. As a result, by 1713 many in the northern colonies were connected to the larger Atlantic and had access to information about trading, social, and political developments that they could use to their advantage. Unlike merchants who were able to use supercargos or family members as agents to obtain intelligence concerning far-away markets, fugitive slaves relied on information concerning available berths from more informal means. Through scoops obtained at port taverns, overhearing ship captains while working on docks, or reading newspaper shipping news, fugitives became aware of opportunities for flight by the sea. From the earliest days of European settlement of the Americas, bondsmen “stole themselves” by fleeing via the sea. Like James Forten, maritime fugitives’ familiarity with the maritime industry enabled them to quickly learn of privateers needing men.⁹⁹ Slave owners’ and colonial officials responded to maritime fugitives who sought berths in two ways: laws barring ship captains “harbouring or concealing” fugitive slaves and the publication of

⁹⁸ *New-York Gazette, Revived in the Weekly Post-Boy*, July 6, 1757, Oct. 2, 1748, Aug. 19 1751, June 18, 1753; White, *Somewhat More Independent*, 125-33; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Oct. 31, 1745; *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, Apr. 12, 1783.

⁹⁹ Steele, *The English Atlantic*, 213-219; Julius Sherrad Scott, III, “The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution,” Ph. D. diss., Duke University, 1986; Winch, *Gentleman of Color*, 39-40.

fugitive slave advertisements, many of which contained warnings to ship captains not to hire runaway slaves. Neither response proved successful in closing off opportunities for flight via the sea. Instead, ship captains' manning needs caused many to turn a blind eye to the probable enslaved status of colored men seeking berths. As a result, hundreds of former slaves who understood the dynamics of the maritime labor market found new lives at sea.¹⁰⁰

In the eighteenth century Benjamin Franklin and hundreds of other indentured and enslaved individuals escaped their masters by the sea. With many ship captains willing to hire men simply based on their having "callused hands and [speaking] sailor jargon," numerous individuals with limited maritime experience were able to obtain berths, especially during wartime.¹⁰¹ The considerable numbers of laborers taking flight by boats and vessels caused Northern slave masters and colonial officials to express concern as early as 1702 about the loss of bondsmen in this manner. To restrict the steady stream of fugitives leaving via the sea, New York City enacted legislation prohibiting ship captains from assisting runaways. This mandate did not succeed; hundreds of slave masters felt compelled to include in fugitive slave advertisements the refrain that "all masters of ships and others are strictly forewarned at their peril from harbouring or carrying [the slave] off."¹⁰² Colonial legislative concern about runaways fleeing via the sea continued

¹⁰⁰ Smith and Wojtowicz, *Blacks Who Stole Themselves*, Introduction; Towner, *A Good Master Well Served*, 201. Other examples of escape by stealing boats include *New-England Courant*, May 4-11, 1724. Servants also hid on vessels as a means to avoid capture. *New-England Courant*, July 13, 1724.

¹⁰¹ Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*, 25-26; Zacks, *Pirate Hunter*, 46; Sword, "Wayward Wives, Runaway Slaves and the Limits of Patriarchal Authority in Early America," Table 14-8.

¹⁰² Warnings to ship captains not to harbor slave fugitives appeared regularly in eighteenth century northern newspapers. Examples include *American Weekly Mercury*, Nov. 10, 1737 *New-York Weekly Journal*, May 27, 1745; *New-York Gazette*, July 11, 1748, Oct. 15, 1753; *Newport Mercury*, Oct. 9, 1759, Nov. 4, 1765; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 5, 1765; *New-York Gazette*, Jan. 4, 1773; *Royal Gazette* (New York), July 18, 1778; *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, Jan. 6, 1781. Whites' fear of slave flight dates to the

throughout the eighteenth century. The presence of numerous ships in northern harbors induced in whites a sense of dread that those vessels would serve as the means of escape for their bondsmen. This was no idle concern, as the pressing need for mariners to man vessels led many shipmasters to “encourage Negroes to run away to sea.” In 1714 Rhode Island first enacted a law to regulate slave movements. The statute barred ferrymen from “bringing any slave ...over their ferries, without a certificate under the hands of their masters or mistresses, or some person in authority.” In the same year, the Pennsylvania legislature passed a law outlawing the harboring of runaway slaves. With ship captains “frequently” carrying off slaves during the Seven Years’ War, the Rhode Island legislature enacted a law to “prevent the commanders of privateers, or masters of any other vessels, from carrying slaves out of this colony.” In addition to imposing a £500 fine, the law authorized slave owners to search ships for their bondsmen.¹⁰³ None of these legislative enactments halted maritime flight.

As King George II in his 1728 accession speech and many other observers noted, mariners were critical to the success of British empire. James Oglethorpe neatly summarized the attitudes of many colonists when he wrote, “It is not timber nor the iron of the ships of war which give the *domination* of the *seas*, but the *sailors* who man them, that are the strength of the NATION; it is their skill and courage on which the safety of the ships themselves depends.”¹⁰⁴ This dependence on seamen created conflicts between

early years of European settlement in the Americas. Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World*, 127 (1650 Barbados map shows fugitive slaves being chased by a man on horseback).

Small boats offered seamen and fugitive slaves, a means to escape coercive working conditions. Lavry, *Shipboard Organization*, 77; *New-York Post-Boy*, June 5, 1765.

¹⁰³ Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England*, 116; Fitts, *Inventing New England’s Slave Paradise*, 109-112; *RCRI*, Vol. VI, 65; Sword, “Wayward Wives,” 46. Slave running away is said to have been the most common slave crime. Marietta and Rowe, *Troubled Experiment*, 247. Many runaways stole clothes.

¹⁰⁴ *The Manning of the Royal Navy*, ed. J. S. Bromley (London: 1974), 82n1 (“I should look upon it as a great happiness, if at the beginning of my reign, I could see the foundations laid of so great and necessary

ship owners and slave masters which assisted fugitives in finding berths on ships.

Operating a vessel away from its home port involved the expense of paying crewmen and providing them with victuals. These costs caused merchants to constantly push their ship captains to clear outward as quickly as possible. For example, in 1770 New York merchant Henry Cruger, Jr., expressed great concern that his boat was being “obliged to go away in ballast....[since] the loss of time is what a Ship cannot nowadays support.” Cruger was hardly alone in his concern; newspapers regularly contained advertisements in which ship owners indicated the hope their vessels would “sail with all profitable expedition” only for the ship to remain in port for weeks thereafter. The need to beat competitors to markets led many ship captains to be less than choosy in whom they hired to man their ships. In doing so, ship captains offered opportunities for freedom to fugitive slaves.¹⁰⁵

Southern slaves had to contend with armed patrols and lacked the assistance of significant free black communities. As a result, they were recaptured with some frequency. In contrast, northern fugitives appear to have had better success escaping. Among the eight hundred and sixty fugitives advertised in New York newspapers prior to the American Revolution, only a handful of fugitives were described as having been previously captured.¹⁰⁶ Philadelphia and Newport fugitive advertisements similarly

work as the increase and encouragement of our seamen in general.”); James Edward Ogelthorpe, “The Sailors Advocate” (1738) in *The Manning of the Royal Navy: Selected Public Pamphlets, 1693-1873*, Records of the Navy Records Society, Vol. 119, ed., J.S. Bromley. (London, 1974), 74.

¹⁰⁵ Steele, *The English Atlantic*, 224; *American Weekly Mercury*, June 9, 1737; Kenneth Morgan, “Shipping Patterns and the Atlantic Trade of Bristol, 1749-1770,” *WMQ*, 46:3 (Jul. 1989), 520; *New-York Gazette*, July 11, 18, 25, Aug. 1, 1737 (Sloop *Mary & Margaret* remained in New York despite its owner’s desire to sail “with all expedition.”); Foy, “Seeking Freedom in the Atlantic World, 1713-1783,” 55.

¹⁰⁶ *New-York Gazette (Weyman’s)*, Apr. 30, July 16, 1759; *New-York Mercury*, Nov. 1, 1762, Sept. 26, 1763, Sept. 7, Nov. 2, 1767; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Apr. 30, Sept. 3, 1770. This analysis is supported by Greenberg’s finding there were few prosecutions of New York slaves for running away. Greenberg, *Crime and Law Enforcement in the Colony of New York*, 35.

indicated few captures of fugitive slaves. This low recapture rate came despite masters using other slaves to recapture runaways. Slaves assigned this task did not always carry out their masters' intentions, instead often fleeing themselves. This practice is evidenced by the flight of the Mulatto Indian slave named Galloway. In 1740 Galloway successfully fled his New York City master by asserting when challenged that he had been "sent in pursuit of a Cuba Man [who had] Run away."¹⁰⁷

Weather and the seasons dramatically affected when and how slaves could flee their masters. Narragansett fugitives did not run in September during the harvests. With corn husking festivals at the end of the harvest, fugitives who ran in September would have lost a precious opportunity to see family members and to enjoy a rare occasion for a carefree social gathering. This may have been why there was a more than forty-five percent increase in Rhode Island fugitives between September and October. Corn husking festivals would have also offered slaves opportunities to plan escapes.¹⁰⁸ Very few slaves ran during the winter months of January, February, and March; only twelve percent of all Rhode Island fugitives fled during these months (Table 9-6), while only 14.7 percent of all New York fugitives ran during the same time period (Table 8-6). In the years prior to the Revolution, no fugitive sought a berth in Philadelphia during January, a period when the Delaware regularly froze over.¹⁰⁹ Winter weather greatly limited shipping, making

¹⁰⁷ *New-York Weekly Journal*, Oct. 27, 1740. Although there is evidence of northern slaves being used to track fugitives, it does not appear as widespread a practice as in southern or Caribbean colonies. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 468, 475; "A Free Man of Color Tracks a Maroon Slave," <http://www.vancouver.wsu.edu/fac/peabody/maroon.htm> (Accessed Feb. 5, 2008).

¹⁰⁸ Fitts, *Inventing New England's Slave Paradise*, 119; Woodward, *Plantation in Yankeeland*, 104. Rhode Island owners also waited to sell their slaves until after the harvest, with October having more than twice the number of advertised slave sales than any other month (Table 5-7).

¹⁰⁹ In January 1777 there were two maritime fugitives who ran away in the Philadelphia region. However, both were sailors on boats who fled from their ships. *Pennsylvania Evening-Post*, Jan. 11, 1777, Feb. 4, 1777. The large privateer fleet in Philadelphia's port, as well as the presence of the Philadelphia state navy, probably drew the five maritime fugitives who fled in January during 1780, 1781 and 1782. *Pennsylvania*

maritime flight less likely. The bleak weather during these months made travel difficult, as roads often became muddy quagmires. With little food for runaways to forage, fugitives during the winter months were often reliant upon the assistance of others, making them vulnerable to recapture. The harsh weather also posed physical dangers for fugitives. Running away during the winter often resulted in slaves suffering frost bite and losing toes or sometimes their lower legs. Such obvious physical handicaps often disqualified runaways from maritime employment. While a few runaways like Ben, who fled his Dutchess County master at the end of the harvest, hobbled away from their masters with “frozen” toes, only a meager number of disabled fugitives sought berths.¹¹⁰

The young, strong, healthy, and linguistically skilled fugitives who escaped the clutches of whites and navigated the limits of weather to flock to the wharves of northern ports still faced a practical problem: how to convince ship captains that they were capable jack tars. Fugitives such as Newport slave Will, who prior to his escape, had just “arrived from whaling,” had the very characteristics ship captains desired – youth, health and maritime experience.¹¹¹ With their “independent, self-reliant existence” and access to maritime flight, these men were prominent among runaways.¹¹² Like the tall Jamaican-born colored mariner depicted by Nicholas Pocock on a 1771 transatlantic voyage

Packet or General Advertiser, Jan. 6, 1780, Jan. 6, 1781, Jan. 22, 1782; *Freeman's Journal*, Jan. 8, 1782; *Pennsylvania Advertiser*, Jan. 3, 1782. The lack of maritime employment during the winter months forced some mariners into the Alms House. Smith, “The Material Lives of Working Philadelphians,” 183.

¹¹⁰ *New-York Mercury*, Oct. 22, 1764. Other examples of runaways with frost-bitten limbs include *New-York Gazette*, Nov. 17, 1766; *New-York Journal or General Advertiser*, May 5, 1768; *Providence Gazette & Country Journal*, Apr. 14, 1770; *Newport Mercury*, Apr. 30, 1770; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, May 31, 1773; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 23, 1742. Some mariners, such as the mulatto slave seaman Peter, managed to work on board, despite having lame feet. Peter should, however, be seen as the exception, and not the rule. *Royal Gazette* (New York), Nov. 20, 1779. Slaves also were handicapped in seeking berths by masters who amputated the toes of recaptured runaways to make re-escape difficult. *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Sep. 30, 1771, July 27, 1778.

¹¹¹ *Newport Mercury*, May 22, 1775.

¹¹² In South Carolina, these men comprised one-quarter of skilled fugitives, although they were only one-tenth of the inventoried skilled slaves. Morgan, “Colonial South Carolina Runaways,” 63, 69.

(Illustration 3), colored mariners were often seen as unremarkable by others in the maritime industry, in large part due to their not inconsiderable numbers. By the eve of the American Revolution, slave mariners more frequently came to be “dress[ed] such as Sailors wear.” Pocock, an experienced ship captain and painter known for his attention to details of maritime life, reflected this development when he depicted the colored mariner in simple repose, sharing a meal with two white ship mates. What is noteworthy, at least to the modern viewer, is how unremarkable the colored mariner’s presence on board appeared to Pocock. What Pocock emphasized was the seaman’s humanity and sense of belonging, not an abstract heroic ideal as was commonly seen in maritime paintings of the era.¹¹³

¹¹³ CMD; *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie & Dixon), Mar. 7, 1771; Nicholas Pocock, “Figures on a Deck,” 1771, NMM. The sailor in Pocock’s illustration is most likely James Chilsom, a Jamaican mariner. Chilsom is the only seaman identified by Pocock as a “Negro” in the captain’s musters and is the only identifiable colored seaman in Pocock’s musters. Chilsom came aboard Captain Deake’s *Jamaica* in Jamaica in 1771 and subsequently sailed several other times with Nicolas Pocock. Bristol Muster Rolls, 1768-1783, BRO SMV 9/3/1/6-7. Pocock made numerous transatlantic voyages, as well as several to Africa. *Journals of the Ship Lloyd*, Nicholas Pocock, Master, Oct. 1767 – Aug. 1768; David Cordingly, *Nicholas Pocock, 1740-1821* (London, 1986), 15-33. His illustration should be contrasted with the paintings later in the century and in the first quarter of the nineteenth century that sought to glorify the black mariner. See, e.g., Dennis Dighton, *The Fall of Nelson, Battle of Trafalgar, 21 October 1805*, 1825, NMM BHC 0552 (Directly behind the fallen Lord Nelson is a colored seaman helping to load a gun). Such paintings should be understood within the context of growing British public opinion against slavery.

While visual images such as *Figures on a Deck* or *The Fall of Nelson* imply a fixity of racial classifications, in fact, maritime fugitives, such as Spanish Negroes captured by Anglo-American privateers, moved between racial categories, as they traveled about the Atlantic world. James D. Wallace, “The Black Sailor and *The Red Rover*,” <http://www.oneonta.edu/~cooper/articles/suny/1995suny-wallace.html> (accessed Aug. 6, 2006).



In contrast to maritime fugitives with experience at sea, inexperienced or female fugitives who sought to flee via the sea needed to “walk through the holes in the[ir Masters’] attention” and then sell themselves as credible mariners.¹¹⁴ For women and those lacking maritime skills, clothing provided a means by which to avoid the attention of their masters, take advantage of people’s preconceived notions of status, and obtain a berth that normally would have been off limits to them. In eighteenth century North America, clothes served as important markers of one’s status. Coarse striped ozenbrig cloth defined one as a bondsman, just as John Marrant, when released by his Cherokee captors, was initially perceived by his neighbors and friends as an Indian due to his

¹¹⁴ Verlyn Klinkenborg, *Timothy, or, Notes of an Abject Reptile* (New York, 2006), 18; Bullock, “A Mumper among the Gentle,” 233, 238. The extent of the maritime fugitives who became mariners is unclear due to the paucity of crew lists for colonial vessels, as well as the lack of references in existing records to the background or race of a crew member. For example, the “Negro [who] went to draw some Rum between Decks” on Captain John Malbone’s brigantine in August 1767 may have been a mariner. *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, Aug. 29, 1767. With many maritime fugitives having quickly entered and then fled from ships, the difficulty of tracing the lives of colored mariners is extremely challenging. Benjamin Franklin Papers, Vol. II, HSP, Brig *Lexington* Crew List.

“purely [sic] Indian stile”; the “skins of wild beasts” he wore, and his hair being “set out in the savage manner.”¹¹⁵ The demarcation of social status through clothing extended to charity cases, as Northern cities required those receiving assistance to wear symbols denoting their reliance on the public charity. In New York, this entailed wearing an “NY” sewed onto one’s clothing. Some slave masters used clothing to mark their slaves as runaways. When Andrew Saxon fled his master he was described as wearing a shirt “marked with a Cross on the left breast.” While the cross was a symbol of Saxon’s Roman Catholic faith, it also marked him as fugitive slave.¹¹⁶ Such markings on clothing may have signaled dependency, but they were not permanent; they could be altered or removed. For fugitives exchanging ozenbrig trousers for sailors’ tarred pants, the exchange represented more than just a simple switch of clothes; it represented the shedding of a marker of dependence. When fugitives such as York and Francisco put on “tarry trousers” and “sailor’s trousers,” they presented themselves, both to ship captains and the larger society, as free independent seamen.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Linda Baumgarten, “Plains, Plaid and Cotton: Woolens for Slave Clothing,” *Ars Textrina* 15 (1991), 204; John Sallient, “Dress, Power, and Crossing (the Atlantic): Figuring the Black Exodus to Sierra Leone in the Late Eighteenth Century” in *The Clothes that Wear Us*, 301-305. With the few examples of clothing worn by slaves in North America from after the colonial era, the best guides to what slaves wore is contained in fugitive slave advertisements and slave owners’ account books. Patrica K. Hunt, “Fabric Production in the 19th Century African American Slave Community,” *Ars Textrina* 15 (1991), 83.

The importance of clothing during the eighteenth century in determining the status of a stranger was not limited to colonists in North America. Clothing enabled some, such as imposters in London during the first quarter of the century, to convincingly pose as local law enforcement officials. The anonymity of urban spaces, assisted maritime fugitives and imposters such as Tom Bell, to pass as something other than what they had been previously perceived to be. Jennine Hurl-Eamon, “The Westminster Impostors: Impersonating Law Enforcement in Early Eighteenth century London,” *Eighteenth Century Studies* 38:3 (Spring, 2005): 461-483.

¹¹⁶ Billy G. Smith, “Poverty and Economic Marginality,” *Proceedings of American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 132 (1988), 92; *New-York Gazette*, Oct. 1, 1733.

¹¹⁷ *New-York Gazette*, Oct. 4, 1758; *Providence Gazette & Country Journal*, July 1, 1769. Considerable numbers of fugitive slaves fled with stolen clothes. Smith and Wojtowicz, *Blacks Who Stole Themselves*, 13 (twenty percent of those advertised in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*). A good illustration of a slave wearing ozenbrig is Peter F. Copeland’s drawing based on a 1732 *Pennsylvania Gazette* advertisement. Foy, “Seeking Freedom in the Atlantic,” 62.

Fugitive slaves had ready access to tarry trousers, pea coats, and other clothing regularly worn by mariners. Sailors' clothes were widely available in northern ports. Samuel Cotton, Thomas Payne, and other merchants regularly placed advertisements informing the public that their retail establishments had "Sailors Jackets" for sale.¹¹⁸ Seamen stole and then sold mariners' clothing in northern ports. The continual circulation of seamen's clothing permitted scores of fugitive slaves as well as large numbers of indentured servants to flee wearing "sailors jackets," "tarry trowsers," or "dressed as sailors."¹¹⁹ Some, such as Will Johnston, worked on northern docks. Others, including Will and William Colson, "pretended [to be] the Sailor" by putting on stolen clothes.¹²⁰

The prevalence of slaves stealing clothes is reflected in the hundreds of fugitive slave advertisements that refer to slaves fleeing with stolen clothes.¹²¹ Although dark skin color in British North America was "prima facie evidence of slave status," a change of clothes could create ambiguity as to a runaway's status and sometimes resulted in a fugitive being perceived as free. It was common knowledge that while clothes were "visible signs of social identity," they could also be used to hide or alter identities.¹²² This process of using clothes to transform oneself was something many, not just fugitive

¹¹⁸ *American Weekly Mercury*, Feb. 22, 1739. Other examples of such advertisements for sailors' clothes include *American Weekly Mercury*, July 28, 1720, Jan. 13, 1737; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 1754;

¹¹⁹ Zabin, "Places of Exchange," Chap. 4; Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking*, 133; *Colonial Laws*, II:651, Dec. 16, 1737. Examples of maritime fugitives wearing seamen's clothes include *New-York Weekly Journal*, Jan. 10, 1743; *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser*, Sept. 5, 1774; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 6, 1775, June 4, 1783; *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, Apr. 30, 1763, July 1, 1769, Dec. 28, 1771.

¹²⁰ *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, May 7, 1763 ("affects"), *Newport Mercury*, May 22, Oct. 9, 1775; *New-York Gazette* (Weyman's), Jan. 14, 1760 (put on sailor's jacket); *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 12, 1742, July 10, 1746 ("pretended").

¹²¹ South Carolina's Negro Act of 1735 legislatively attempted to limit slaves to wearing "negro cloth, duffelds, course kearsies, oznabrigs, blue linen, checked linen." Wood, *Black Majority*, 232.

¹²² Foote, *Black & White Manhattan*, 193; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York & London, 1995), 193. Certain signs of social identity, such as branding or country marks, clearly demarked one in British North America as enslaved, and limited the ability of fugitives to transform themselves. Very few fugitives with such physical markings perceived by whites as signs of dependency found berths on ships.

slaves, underwent in the eighteenth century. Whether through stealing or altering clothes, maritime fugitives understood that if they could present themselves as wearers of “tarry trowsers,” it was probable they would be perceived as fit for maritime service.

A change of clothes did not always provide a fugitive female slave with the same transforming qualities that a simple pea coat and tarred pants often provided a male runaway. The masculine culture of the forecastle, in which male identity was based, in part, on women’s presumed dependency, did not readily accept women. If discovered, a female slave might find herself ducked from the Yard-Arm and then “tarr ...all over,” as the crew of the *Castor* did to a woman found disguised as a man among the crew before the privateer left New York.¹²³ When a woman succeeded in entering military forces or ship crews through disguise and was then able to prove her bona fides as a sailor and/or warrior, the subsequent discovery of her gender may have caused her being discharged but did not generally result in the woman being disparaged. When a young woman was discovered in 1756 on board the *Intrepide* “dressed like a Sailor,” the ship’s captain sent her ashore. In doing so, the *Intrepide*’s captain thought the woman would “go to some other Ship, or enter herself for a Marine.”¹²⁴

Women who proved their military mettle before their gender was discovered could not only find themselves tolerated, but also admired. In the mid-eighteenth century, Hannah Snell served in both the British Army and Navy. After being impressed into the Army, she deserted and enlisted on the sloop *Swallow* under the name of her brother-in-law, James Gray. She was wounded in an assault upon Pondicherry and spent a year in a military hospital successfully hiding her gender. Subsequently evading naval regulations

¹²³ *New York Post-Boy*, July 25, 1743 and Aug. 8, 1743.

¹²⁴ *Boston Evening-Post*, Mar. 15, 1756.

directing ship captains “not to carry any Woman to Sea,” Snell served on both HMS *Tartar* and HMS *Eltham* before she left the sea. In England Snell used her notoriety as a female mariner to embark on a life as a public figure selling her life story on the stage.¹²⁵ In newspaper dispatches, Snell was referred to as an “Amazon” who had “served in the navy under the virile habit.” “Amazons” who were depicted as wearing, both literally and figuratively, breeches were a familiar trope by the mid-eighteenth century. For her service she was awarded a £50 annual pension from the Duke of Cumberland, larger than the pensions awarded to the vast majority of British naval seamen.¹²⁶

The few women who obtained berths were able to do so by cross-dressing. The rumors concerning New York Governor Lord Cornbury and the elites depicted in Carrington Bowles’ “A Morning Frolic, or the Transmutation of Sexes” provide evidence that cross-dressing was not a limited phenomenon in the eighteenth century.¹²⁷ Women disguising themselves as military men were the subjects of theatrical productions such as *The Recruiting Officer*, ballads, and commentaries. One mid-century ballad described some women’s attitudes, “When our gallant lads are obliged to roam/Why should women idly stay at home?”¹²⁸ While dressed as a man a woman could more safely move about

¹²⁵ *Regulations and Instructions Relating to His Majesty’s Service at Sea*, 32. Snell who served not less than 2 ½ years in the Navy before she revealed herself to be a woman, traded on her fame by both performing on stage and operating a pub in Wapping called the “Female Warrior.” Jessica Munns and Penny Richards, ed., *The Clothes that Wear Us: Essays in Dressing and Transgressing in Eighteenth century Culture* (Newark, Delaware, 1999), 15, 30n19; Stark, *Female Tars*, 104-106, 188n41.

¹²⁶ Dror Wahrman, “Percy’s Prologue: From Gender Play to Gender Panic in Eighteenth century England,” *Past and Present* 159 (May 1998), 119; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Mar. 25, 1771 (“Amazon”); Unknown publication, September 14, 1791, in Add. Man. 5723 Biographical Adversaria, BL. Parson Woodforde, who met Snell in May 1778, believed her to have a £18.5 pension. Munns and Richards, *The Clothes that Wear Us*, 15, 30n19. Whether Snell’s pension, it was far in excess of the £4 to £6 pension typically granted British seamen. Royal Greenwich Hospital, Chatham Chest Records, 1778-1779, TNA ADM 82-100.

¹²⁷ Patricia U. Bonomi, *The Lord Cornbury Scandal: The Politics of Reputation in British America* (Chapel Hill, 1998); Gattell, *City of Laughter*, 352-354. While few female slaves obtained berths on ships, some dressed as men so as to more freely travel when running away. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 11, 1742.

¹²⁸ Beth H. Friedman-Romell, “Breaking the Code: Toward a Reception Theory of Theatrical Cross-

and receive compensation for her labors.¹²⁹ Women who cross-dressed were able to do so because clothing in eighteenth century colonial North America acted as a signifier of status. A person wearing tarred pants was presumed to be a sailor, just as one wearing ozenbrig was presumed to be a bondsman. With colored men common in northern ports, it was possible for a dark-skinned woman dressed as a man, depending on her physical attributes and acting skills, to pass as a colored mariner.¹³⁰

Some women were noticeably stubborn in working as mariners, despite strong opposition to women being on board. In the 1740s, Jenny Hubbard was convicted in Boston for “wearing Men’s Apparel,” something she had apparently done for five years and on several transatlantic voyages. She had done so notwithstanding having been previously fined for such conduct.¹³¹ For female fugitive slaves, the benefits of cross-dressing loomed large, holding the promise of movement typically absent from their lives. These women were constrained from publicly declaring, as had Hannah Snell, that they “would be” a sailor.”¹³² Instead female fugitives seeking berths needed to be “very artful” and secretive in exchanging their “striped or dark blue waistcoat[s]” for loose

Dressing in Eighteenth century London,” *Theatre Journal*, 47:4 (Dec. 1995), 459 (1713 comedy, *The Humors of the Army; or, The Female Officer*); *The Female Soldier; Or, the Surprising Life and Adventures of Hannah Snell* (Los Angeles, 1989); Dugaw, *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry, 1650-1850* (Cambridge & New York, 1989), 52, 55, 182. Advertisements for *The Recruiting Officer* include *New-York Mercury*, July 22, 1765; *New-York Gazette and Weekly Post-Boy*, Feb. 15, 1768.

¹²⁹ Dianne Dugaw, *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry*, 130.

¹³⁰ *South Carolina Gazette*, Dec. 22, 1768. In British ports, where colored mariners were regularly found, women such as “John Brown,” were “without the least suspicion,” able to enlist among the “400 seamen” the Royal Africa Company officials recruited and sent on a ship to Africa. Steve Murdoch, “John Brown: A Black Female Soldier in the Royal African Company,” <http://worldhistoryconnected.press.uiuc.edu/1.2/murdoch.html> (accessed Feb. 2, 2008). Women continued to disguise themselves and enter onto British ships into the nineteenth century. Muster, HMS *Queen Charlotte*, May-August, 1815, TNA ADM 37/5039 (William Brown, discharged for “being a female”). Occasionally, male maritime fugitives would attempt to pass as women. Whether, men like Polly, who was said would “endeavour to pass for a woman,” did so because he believed doing so would be an effective disguise to flee to a port, or because of his desire to be seen and act as a woman, cannot be ascertained from the advertisement detailing his escape. *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Mar. 16, 1778.

¹³¹ *American Weekly Mercury*, Aug. 11, 1743.

¹³² Wahrman, “Percy’s Prologue, 130.

blouses and tarred pants. Diana and the Orange County slave Phillis, who also sought to “endeavour to get on board some vessel,” were two of the few female fugitives seeking to flee via the sea, and in doing so, emulated Hannah Snell and Anne Bonny, the famous pirate executed in 1721.¹³³ If Diana or Phillis had been successful in obtaining berths, they would have joined the few female mariners on Atlantic ships; no cross-dressing female maritime fugitives were revealed to be among the fugitives advertised in Rhode Island or Pennsylvania newspapers.

Maritime fugitives’ success was constricted not only by their gender. With Anglo-American captains and Vice-Admiralty Courts equating dark skin with enslavement, maritime fugitives were vulnerable to finding themselves transported back to enslavement in Philadelphia, New York, or Newport. To protect themselves during an era when national authorities were not issuing Seamen’s Certificates of Protection, colored mariners often carried certificates from court officials or former masters indicating their status as free men. These certificates, which were carried by young and old mariners alike, were likely to have helped some colored mariners. However, many others found the certificates not worth the paper they were written on. Equiano described how his friend Joseph Clipson, a free St. Kitts seaman, who always carried with him a “certificate of his being born free in St. Kitt’s,” was claimed by Bermudian ship captain as a runaway. Although the captain said he would take Clipson “before the secretary or magistrate” to have the matter of his status determined, he was kidnapped, by what Equiano referred to as “these infernal invaders of human rights.” Such illegal seizures of free colored mariners were not limited to the slave societies of the West Indies. Dark-skinned

¹³³*New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, May 4, 1778; *South Carolina Gazette*, Dec. 22, 1768; *New-York Mercury*, June 24, 1754.

mariners were also “villainously trepanned and held in bondage” in ports of northern British North America. Equiano observed he had “heard of similar practices even in Philadelphia: and were it not for the benevolence of the Quakers in that city, many of the sable race, who now breathe the air of liberty, would, I believe, be groaning under some planter’s hains.”¹³⁴

Those fugitives who found freedom as seamen found that their lives as free mariners were subject to considerable limitations. Although over the course of the eighteenth century increasing numbers of colored mariners worked as able bodied seamen, many fugitives found themselves working in racially identified jobs such as cooks. In addition, colored mariners had almost no chance to become officers. It was the very rare colored man, be it Paul Cuffe or Venture Smith, who became masters of their own ship, or became an officer on a merchant or naval ship. Notwithstanding these very significant limits on escaping enslavement and in their new lives as free seamen, maritime fugitives were able to find havens of freedom in the Atlantic.

¹³⁴ Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 121-122. Because of the practice of equating dark-skin with enslaved status, slave mariners promised their freedom, were also at risk of being re-enslaved. The story of Ben, a slave mariner from Newport, described in Chapter Five, illustrates well these risks.

CHAPTER FOUR

Risks And Fortune: Warfare, Privateering And Expanded Opportunities for Freedom

From the end of Queen Anne's War in 1713 to the conclusion of the American Revolution, the northern maritime industry served as a significant portal to freedom for runaway slaves. The importance of northern ports as doors to freedom was due to the size and strength of the maritime industry, slaves' maritime skills, and Philadelphia's, New York's and Newport's large transient and multicultural population. These urban communities provided refuge for fugitive slaves while the runaways sought berths on the numerous ships docked at the wharves cluttering the Delaware River, the East River, and Narragansett Bay.¹ In the eighteenth century, the growth of northern ports "was interrupted by periods of stagnation and decline." These cycles of economic booms and recessions caused an accordion-like effect of expansions and contractions in opportunities for freedom through northern ports. Along with imperial trade policies that greatly shaped the colonial maritime industry and maritime fugitives' opportunities for freedom, such economic cycles were forces beyond the control of slaves and their masters.² During warfare between Great Britain and its enemies, captains of privateers, merchant ships, and naval frigates frequently turned to slave labor. In doing so, they demonstrated both the self-contradictory nature of granting slaves access to arms, and the tensions between slave owners and groups of whites who provided runaway slaves with opportunities for freedom via the sea. As many fugitive slaves recognized, maritime labor shortages during

¹ Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*, 19, 28; McManus, *A History of Negro Slavery in New York*, 105; Crane, *A Dependent People*, 49-50; *The Infortunate*, 10. Refuge could be found with free blacks and supportive whites. Ship captains were thought to have assisted maritime fugitives hide. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 5, 1753.

² Nash, "New York Census of 1737," 435; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 82.

wartime resulted in “greater opportunit[ies]” at sea than did service in the army or militia. These shortages were often due to the high mortality of seamen during wartime. British, Spanish, and French naval and merchant captains were all eager to find experienced mariners to man their ships.³ Thus, while the two decades after Queen Anne’s War saw a relatively small number of maritime fugitives, during the wars of the mid- and late-eighteenth century (the War of Jenkins’s Ear, King George’s War, the Seven Years War and the American Revolution), the number of runaway slaves who obtained, or at least attempted to find, freedom by employment on the numerous vessels berthed in northern harbors increased substantially. During wartime, fugitives had a plethora of options for maritime employment – warships, privateers, merchant ships, fishing vessels, and whaling ships.⁴

The percentage of fugitive slaves who sought to flee via the sea rose and fell in almost direct correlation with the manning levels of the British navy on the North American station.⁵ As Graphs 1 and 2 illustrate, manning levels and the percentage of fugitives fleeing by the sea rose dramatically and in similar ways during the periods

³ David Brion Davis, “Introduction,” in *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age*, ed. Christopher Leslie Brown and Philip D. Morgan, (New Haven, 2006), 1; Morgan and O’Shaughnessy, “Arming Slaves in the American Revolution,” 200; Crane, *A Dependent People*, 70; Landers, *Black Society*, 44-45.

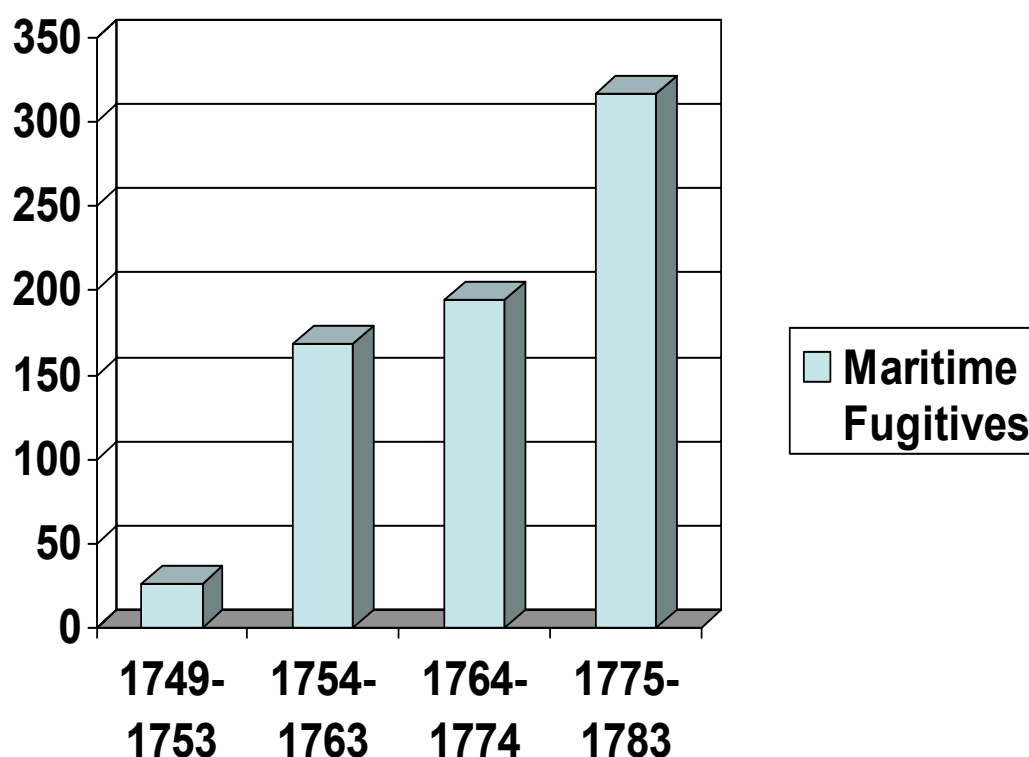
⁴ John Brewer’s observation that “Dockyard towns... thrived in wartime and were no friends of peace,” holds equally true for northern port cities in the eighteenth century. John Brewer, *Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (New York, 1986), 196; Daniel DeFoe, *A Tour Through the Eastern Counties of England, 1722*, <http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/d/defoe/daniel/eastern> (accessed Feb. 7, 2008). As Daniel Vickers has demonstrated, war could also have dramatic effects upon smaller ports’ maritime economies. *Young Men and the Sea*, 68-69.

⁵ There are very few surviving crew lists for ships out of Philadelphia, New York, and Newport. Naval musters are excellent sources regarding the level of naval manning in North America and the backgrounds of mariners on men-of-war, making them useful in determining levels of maritime employment.

Opportunities for maritime flight also increased during wars of the nineteenth century. For example, during the Civil War, “the trickle of slaves who used the [Mississippi River] to escape became a flood.” Thomas Buchanan, *Black Life on the Mississippi: Slaves, Free Blacks and the Western Steamboat World* (Chapel Hill, 2004), 149; Joseph P. Reidy, “Black Men in Navy Blue During the Civil War,” *Quarterly of the National Archives and Records Administration* 33:3 (Fall 2001).

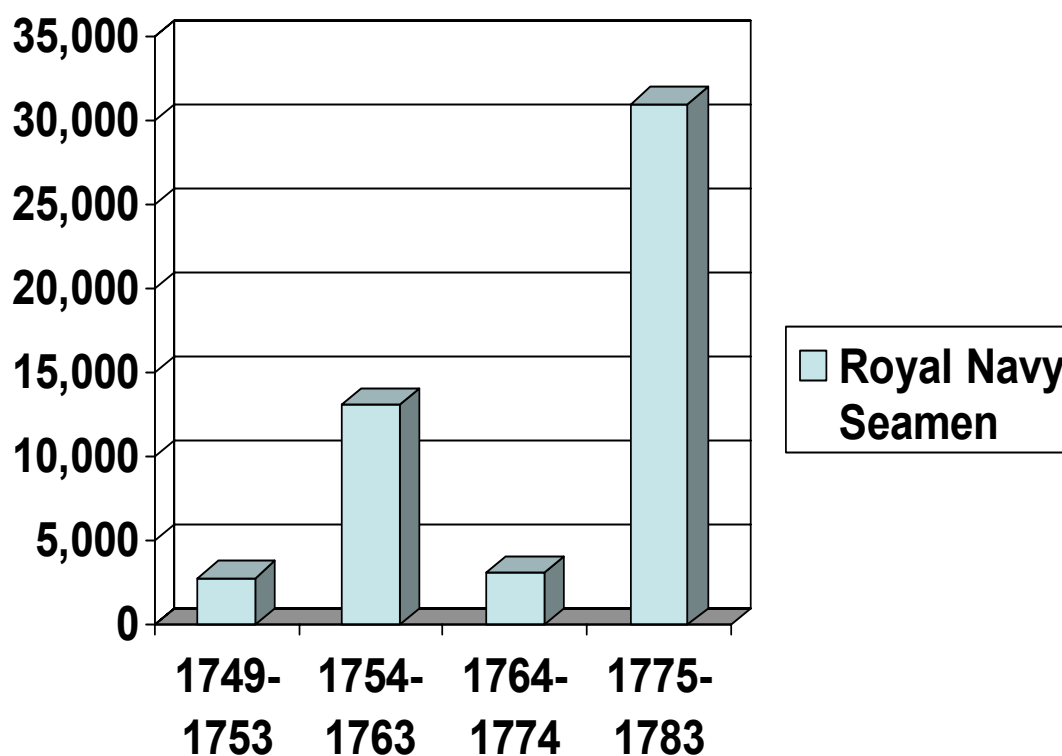
(1754-1763 and 1775-1783) when Britain was at war. Expanding maritime labor markets which required tens of thousands of additional seamen, increased wages for sailors. Likewise the attraction of privateer riches, the establishment of the American and state navies, and high levels of desertion by naval seamen combined to create substantial

GRAPH 1
**Maritime Fugitives Pennsylvania, New York &
 Rhode Island, 1749-1783⁶**



⁶ Numbers for maritime fugitives between 1713 and 1748 are not provided due to the limited newspaper coverage during this period. The increase in the number of maritime fugitives from 1764 to 1774 is probably due to the substantial increase in slave imports during the Seven Years War.

GRAPH 2
Royal Naval Seamen, North American
Station, 1749-1783⁷



opportunities for slaves' maritime flight.⁸ When wars ended or when there were economic recessions opportunities for maritime flight collapsed. The lack of maritime

⁷ TNA ADM 8.

⁸ J. D. Davies, *Gentlemen and Tarpaulins: The Officers and Men of the Restoration Navy* (Oxford, 1991), 84. It has been estimated that between 1738-1748 an average of an additional 25,000 men were needed annually, and during the Seven Years War that figure doubled. Earle, *English Merchant Seamen*, 187. British officials often looked to the Americans to provide needed manpower. Richard Harding, "America, the War of 1739-48 and the Development of British Global Power," *Journal of Maritime Research* 6, April 2004, www.nmm.ac.uk (accessed Feb. 5, 2008). In contrast, manning in the Anglo-American merchant fleet stayed relatively constant. Larry Neal, "Interpreting Power and Profit in Economic History: A Case Study of the Seven Years War," *Journal of Economic History* 37:1 (Mar. 1977), 22. Naval pressing activities resulted in not less than twenty riots by North American seamen during the colonial period. Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets," 374-407. Between 1713 and 1783 80% of British men-of-war on the North American station had colored mariners. Appendix D.

flight directly resulted from seamen being discharged in large numbers by naval and privateer captains, and the contraction of the northern maritime industry. Although, as described below, the accordion effect of war and economic downturns continued throughout the eighteenth century, the presence of colored mariners steadily increased so that by the end of the American Revolution, these men were a significant portion of most North American crews (Appendix D).

They “Daily Suffer,” 1713-1738

Between the end of Queen Anne’s War and the commencement of the War of Jenkins’ Ear, colored men were employed in boats plying northern waters.⁹ In the early decades of the eighteenth century, fish they caught were shipped to the West Indies and southern colonies. John Cannon, “commander” of New York’s oyster fleet, and other captains on both the New York and New Jersey sides of New York Bay, used numerous slaves on their oyster boats throughout the 1720s and 1730s to harvest the boatloads of oysters. Other colored men, free and enslaved, like the twenty-eight year old Moses, a sailor on the sloop *Albany*, were employed, or sought employment, on New York’s ocean-going vessels. In the quarter-century after the Treaty of Utrecht, some of these slaves recognized that “seafaring rank[ed] among the best prospects [for] a quick getaway.” For example, several of Cannon’s Negro slaves, along with eight Spanish Indians, stole his sloop in 1721 and were believed headed to St. Augustine. The next year, David Lyell’s Indian slave Nim was believed headed to New London to “get on board some Vessel,” and Dick fled his master by “go[ing] to sea.” In 1724, Captain John

⁹ Slave mariners could be found, although not in large numbers, on northern ships in the years before Queen Anne’s War. Examples include Samuel Lynde’s Negro slave being hired in 1702 by John Haley, master of the brigantine, *Adventure*, to be a cook on the ship. Lynde was guaranteed a full share of the prize money and 55 shillings a month for his slave’s labors. Towner, *A Good Master Well Served*, 112.

Moffat of Boston, who made numerous trans-Atlantic voyages, was fined £50 for taking a Negro to Portugal in violation of legislation prohibiting harboring fugitives. Captain Moffat's prosecution is noteworthy as it is one of the few cases where a ship captain was punished for hiring a runaway slave. Eight years later George Goldin took advantage of his mariner master's death to flee from New York.¹⁰ New York's oyster commander again suffered the indignity of having a group of his slaves escape when in 1732 three slaves headed south in a sloop stolen from him. Fleeing in the middle of January, a time of year when most ships were berthed at dock due to fierce Atlantic winter storms, these slaves managed to seize a vessel, set sail, and leave New York harbor without being challenged or setting off a hue and cry. A boat leaving New York without a white crewmember did not necessarily arouse suspicion because such crews were not uncommon. While there are no records of where these three men ended up, it would not be unreasonable to speculate that they, like the group of Havana-born slaves who seized a schooner and sailed from South Carolina back to Cuba, were able to reach their desired destination.¹¹ Other colored mariners were not as fortunate in finding freedom in the Atlantic. For example, in the summer of 1725 Peter Van Trump, a free Negro mariner left St. Thomas on what he believed to be a voyage to Europe only to find that the ship captain steered the vessel to North Carolina where Peter was sold into slavery.¹² Like other colored sailors throughout the eighteenth century, Van Trump found himself a

¹⁰ "A List of the Names, Ages, and Description of the men bel. to the Sloop Albany," Nov. 26, 1729, Sedgwick Coll. II, Box, 2 fol. 2.2, MHS (I want to thank Wayne Bodle for this reference); *American Weekly Mercury*, February 7 and 14, 1721; TNA CO 5/1222, p. 156; *American Weekly Mercury*, April 8, 1736; *American Weekly Mercury*, October 12, 1732, April 8, 1736; *New-York Gazette*, January 30, 1732; *Boston News-Letter*, July 11, 1720, May 27, 1723; *New-England Weekly Journal*, Nov. 25, 1728; *Boston Gazette*, Jan. 6, 1729; *New-York Weekly Journal*, Jan. 19, 1736.

¹¹ *New-York Gazette*, January 30, 1732; Daniel E. Meaders, "South Carolina Fugitives as Viewed Through Local Colonial Newspapers with Emphasis on Runaway Notices, 1732-1801," *Journal of Negro History* 60:2 (Apr. 1975), 304.

¹² Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 31; *American Weekly Mercury*, Oct. 15, 1741.

victim of English willingness to equate dark skin with enslaved status and to put the burden on the colored seaman to prove his free status.

These maritime fugitives were more the exception than the rule in the years between Queen Anne's War and the War of Jenkins' Ear. Although the end of Queen Anne's War may have been celebrated with the firing of cannons and naval guns, for many northern colonists, the difficult economic conditions in the ensuing two decades were hardly cause for joy. Initially, the war's end saw an increase in colonial maritime activity as British goods were imported to fill shelves that had become bare during the war. But this economic upsurge was short-lived, ending by 1715. With numerous mariners out of work in the post-war years, only the most experienced seamen were able to obtain work. During the 1720s and 1730s New York was said to have suffered an economic recession in which "many Beggardly people daily suffer to wander the street."¹³ Economic stagnation continued until almost 1737. During this time New York's shipbuilding industry largely came to a standstill, with considerable unemployment among maritime construction tradesmen. Governor William Cosby sought remedies to "give life to the expiring hopes of ship carpenters and other tradesmen."¹⁴ Conditions were so dire that at the city's "industrious Poor" left by the score, and by 1737 the *New-York Weekly Journal* noted that "Our Navigation is in a Manner gone, and

¹³ Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston, 2004), 258; Smith, "Poverty and Economic Marginality," 93. The winter of 1713 left many New Yorkers "in Want & in Terrible Condition." HMS *Reserve* Captain's Logs, 1713, TNA ADM 51/780. The end of Queen Anne's War saw privateering activities that required men-of-war ships accompanying merchant ships drop off. May 20, 1713 Letter from Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to Portsmouth Mayor, PCRO X/11/A/D/46.

¹⁴ Nash, "New York Census of 1737," *WMQ* 36:3 (Jul., 1979), 433.

Foreigners are become our Carrier, who have been continually draining us of that Money, which formerly was paid to our Seamen."¹⁵

Those runaways who were able to flee via the sea in the period from 1713 to 1739 were able to do so through two main areas of the maritime economy: the British Navy and pirate vessels. Although neither of these sectors provided the scope of opportunities available to runaway slaves later in the eighteenth century, they did provide openings out of the controlled environment of slavery in British North America. In doing so, these opportunities enabled maritime fugitives to join the “hundreds” of colored sailors on Atlantic ships in the first quarter of the eighteenth century.¹⁶

The British imperial blue-water policy that called for the navy to protect American shipping led to naval vessels accompanying convoys of merchant ships to shelter them from pirates, privateers and enemy naval vessels. This system enlarged the number of English-controlled vessels and seamen throughout the empire, not simply in the British Isles. By the 1730s it was the practice to station naval ships on the North American coast, typically in Boston and New York.¹⁷ The captains of station vessels had

¹⁵ *New-York Weekly Journal*, Apr. 8, 1734, Mar. 28, 1737; *New-England Weekly Journal*, July 21, 1735.

¹⁶ Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 53. My random sampling of the muster rolls for two British naval ships stationed in North American ports from 1713-1783 (Table 17-1), supports N.A.M. Rodger's assessment that in America there were “many black seamen, slave and free” in the Navy. In the period between 1713 and 1739, just slightly more than 53% of the naval ships on the North American station had a colored seaman among their crews. These men, including Caesar Swift on HMS *Seahorse*, John Prince and John Boy on HMS *Squirrel*, and Charles Moor on HMS *Lyme*, tended to be clustered among the officers' servants. I have identified 387 colored mariners on British men-of-war on the North American station. See Appendix D. The bulk of these colored seamen served in the period between 1763 and 1783. During the American Revolution they comprised as high as 4% of Royal Navy crews in North America. It would appear that there were more colored mariners on men-of-war in North American waters than John D. Byrn, Jr. found on the Leeward Islands later in the century, but not the 25% believed by some historians. John D. Byrn, Jr., *Crime and Punishment in the Royal Navy: Discipline on the Leeward Islands, 1784-1812* (Aldershot, 1989), 76; Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many Headed Hydra*, 311.

¹⁷ Daniel A. Baugh, “Maritime Strengths and Atlantic Commerce,” in *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815*, ed. Lawrence Stone (London & New York, 1994), 187-188, 195; Gerald S. Graham, “The Naval Defence of British North America, 1739-1763,” *Royal Historical Society Transactions*, 4th ser., 30 (1948), 96-7. See May 20, 1713 Letter from Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to Mayor of Portsmouth, PCRO X/11/A/D/46 for an example of how the Admiralty worked with local officials

difficulty keeping their vessels fully manned as merchant ship captains “entice[d] the sailors from the King’s ships.” In the first quarter of the eighteenth century, crews on these vessels often included colored seamen, although not nearly to the extent as in the second half of the century (Appendix D). The limited numbers of colored men on naval ships was largely due to the navy’s diminished in size after Queen Anne’s War. Going from almost 50,000 total seamen at the end of the war fewer than 14,000 mariners less than two years later, by 1716 there were only 1,450 naval seamen on ships in North American and West Indies waters and the number of men never exceeded 3,000 until just before the outbreak of the War of Jenkins’ Ear (Graph 2).¹⁸ Among the naval sailors were colored men such as Pompey Gold, who enlisted on HMS *Blandford* in 1731-1732. Most of Gold’s dark-skinned compatriots, such as John Baptist, Caesar Swift, John Prince, John Boy, and Charles Moor, tended to be officer’s servants. Naval ships stationed in Boston and New York carried some colored men inexperienced in maritime matters, individuals like William Nigro and Oliver Moor on HMS *Lyme*, and Antony Quarter on HMS *Greyhound*, all of whom served as ordinaries. Other colored men, including Africans such as Caesar, who had country marks on each of his cheeks, served as able bodied seamen on British warships.¹⁹ The Admiralty’s policy was not to permit

coordinating conveyances. American colonists considered naval station ships to be of “the utmost importance,” and undertook to have Parliament enact legislation requiring station ships to stay at their stations unless or until directed by the Lord High Admiral or a naval Commander-in-Chief. Herbert W. Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739-1748* (Cambridge, 1920), Vol. III, 270-271.

¹⁸ Apr. 9, 1737 Letter Lt. Gov. Clarke to Duke of Newcastle, TNA CO 5/1094, ff. 18-29d. Christopher Lloyd calculates the numbers as 49,860 in 1713 and 13,475 in 1715. *British Seamen, 1200-1860: A Social Survey* (East Rutherford, NJ, 1970), 287, Table 3.

¹⁹ HMS *Blandford* Pay Roll, 1730-1732, TNA ADM 33/334; HMS *Chatham* Muster Roll, 1739, TNA ADM 36/526; HMS *Sherness* Lts. Logbook, 1714, TNA ADM/L/S/194; Desrochers, “Slaves for Sale in Massachusetts,” 647; HMS *Seahorse*, Pay Roll, 1719 - Mar. 1725, TNA ADM 33/316; HMS *Greyhound*, Pay Rolls, 1723, TNA ADM 33/316; HMS *Squirrel* Pay Book, 1739, TNA ADM 33/409. It was not until 1762 that ADM 8 records provided separate numbers for the North American station. Prior to that year, numbers of ships and seamen on the North American station are included among those for the “Plantations.”

employment of slaves on its ships except as officers' servants. While that policy was ignored during times of war, in years of peace, when manning needs were limited, the policy was generally enforced. Thus, in the twenty-five years prior to the start of the War of Jenkins' Ear, the door for freedom onto British naval ships on the North American station was generally open only for those maritime fugitives able to pass as free, typically the most skillful and clever of runaways.

In the decade before the War of Jenkins' Ear, peacetime was no friend of northern ports as they experienced a sharp drop-off in economic activities. For example, between 1729 and 1737, New York suffered serious difficulties, with the city's "shipbuilding industry stagnat[ing] badly."²⁰ From a high point in 1700, when the city had one hundred twenty-four ships, New York's merchant fleet shrunk to only fifty vessels by 1734. During this time period, unemployment was widespread in the maritime industry. As a result, there were few opportunities for those lacking maritime experience to obtain a berth on a ship out of northern ports. One suspects that John Cannon's slaves and the Spanish Negroes stole the oyster commander's sloops, notwithstanding the difficulties of using such small vessels to reach Florida, in part, because the lack of available berths on

While the Royal Navy provided opportunities for colored sailors, service in the navy also operated as the launching pad for the careers of men who enslaved others. New York's Jasper Farmer is an example of such men. In the 1720s Farmer served as an able-bodied seaman and a midshipman in the navy. He was discharged from HMS *Shoreham* in New York in 1729. Two years later Farmer became the captain of the ship *Catherine*, owned by Arnot Schuyler, one of New York's most active slave traders. Between 1731 and 1732, Farmer twice went to Africa for Schuyler to purchase slaves. In 1732 Farmer brought 130 African slaves, and in the following year 100 African slaves to New York. After this second African voyage, Farmer made yearly New York to London voyages as master of the *Catherine*, becoming a wealthy man in the process. HMS *Shoreham* Muster Roll, TNA ADM 36/3917; *TASD* #s 25368 and 25318; *New-York Weekly Journal*, Nov. 10, 1735, Oct. 11, 1736, Nov. 7, 1737, May 15, 1738, May 28, 1739, Nov. 12, 1739 and Sept. 15, 1740. In 1741 Farmer's slave Jack was mentioned as being part of an alleged conspiring to burn New York City. Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 331. Eleven years later, Farmer advertised the sale of "a choice parcel of Negroes" from Africa. *New-York Gazette*, June 1, 1752.

²⁰ Nash, "New York Census of 1737," 433-434.

vessels, even for slaves like Cannon's, who had maritime experience. Not until 1737 did northern ports experience an economic recovery.²¹

War of Jenkins' Ear and King George's War

The War of Jenkins' Ear (1739-1743) and the War of the Austrian Succession (known in America as King George's War) (1744-48) resulted in a significant expansion of the northern maritime industry. With passions stirred by continual conflicts with the Spanish *Guarda Costa* and Captain Jenkins of the *Rebecca* waving his severed ear as a symbol of Spanish depravity, England went to war with Spain in 1739. Coming on the heels of the economic recession of the 1730s, the imperial conflicts with Spain between 1739 and 1748 produced an economic boom. For both northern merchants holding reduced assets and slaves seeking opportunities for freedom, the imperial conflicts resulted in complete reversals of fortune.²²

²¹ The recession in the 1730s led whites to leave New York and resulted in greater reliance upon slave labor. This caused a significant increase in both slave imports into New York and in the city's slave population. Despite a significant gender imbalance among the city's slaves in the first quarter of the century, New York City's slave population almost tripled from 620 in 1703 to 1,719 in 1737. This increase was due to annual slave imports into New York rising by almost 60% from approximately 125 a year in the first half of the 1720s to annual rate of 201 slaves between 1726 and 1735. Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 150; *American Population before the Federal Census of 1790*, 95, 98. Newport and Philadelphia also experienced significant increases in their slave population in the 1730s. From 1730 to 1748 Newport's slave population increased from 649 to 1,105, and reached almost seventeen percent of the total population. During the 1730s Philadelphian Ralph Saniford, a Quaker abolitionist, remarked that "negroes are flocking in on us" due to the reduction in the slave import tariff in 1729. The result was that although exact numbers of slaves in Philadelphia are unavailable for the period before 1767, from burial records, it is clear that in the early 1730s the city's slave population increased about the same magnitude as Newport's. Crane, *Dependent People*, 76; Nash, *Slaves and Slaveowners*, 226-227; Nash, "The New York Census of 1737," 430-432, Tables I-III. Thus, in the same period that the slave populations in these ports were increasing significantly, a major avenue for slave resistance, flight via the sea, was largely closed off to them. Whether this played any role in the fires slaves set in New York City in 1741 is unknown. However, it would not be unreasonable to speculate that difficult economic conditions, combined with whites' fear of Spanish intentions, ever increasing numbers of restless enslaved peoples in a compact city, and it becoming very difficult to escape permanently, combined to be the spark that led to the fires being set.

²² Captain Jenkins was one of a number of British mariners known to have been carrying on "illicit trade." Eliga H. Gould, "Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery," *AHR* 112:3 (June 2007), 773.

In the war years between 1739 and 1748, colonial trade and defense of the British North American colonies became inextricably intertwined. Whereas prior to 1737, the Admiralty was satisfied to limit defense of the American coastline to the twenty gun *Tartar* in New York and the twenty gun *Squirrel* in New England, the conflict with Spain resulted in a considerable increase in Britain's naval presence on the North American coast. From only 15 ships with 2,660 men assigned to North America and the West Indies in 1737, the Navy's presence in the western Atlantic ballooned to 35 ships with 8,720 men in 1746. Although this increase was largely due to military needs, colonists' calls for continual protection of their merchant ships also pushed the Admiralty to station more ships in North America.²³

With the outbreak of warfare in 1739, the British navy faced significant manning shortages. The lack of experienced mariners resulted in the average merchant seaman's monthly wages increasing from £1.5 in 1737 to £4 in 1747. These higher wages and the Navy's slow payment of wages enticed many a naval seaman to desert.²⁴ Naval captains responded by using press gangs. Seamen in northern ports responded with violence and

²³ ADM 8/19, 25; Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739-1748*, Vol. III, 268-271; Daniel A. Baugh, "Maritime Strengths and Atlantic Commerce," in *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815*, ed. Lawrence Stone (London, 1994): 187-88.

²⁴ *New-York Weekly Journal*, Oct. 18, 1742; Rediker, "Society and Culture Among Anglo-American Deep Sea Sailors, 1700-1750," 327, Table 10. It was estimated by George Lee, a Lord of the Admiralty, that as of 1741 £1,600,000 was owed to naval seamen and officers. Memorandum and Notes by George Lee on Court Maritals, NMM HAR/3. Unpaid seamen were a long-standing problem in the Royal Navy. Lloyd, *The British Seaman*, 93 (In 1667 the crew of HMS *Harp* was not paid for 52 months). See Letter, Nov. 21 [nd] from Richard Cuck to his wife, PCRO 11A/G/1/1, for an example of naval sailors' concern over unpaid wages. Other naval employees were similarly often not paid for long periods. June 22, 1733 Letter from Victualling Commissioners, TNA ADM 110/11, p. 87. As Granville Sharp observed, many British naval seamen considered their wages "shamefully low." Granville Sharp Commonplace Book C, p. 98, GRO, D3549/13/4/1. The delay in receiving such meager wages was believed by Naval officials to be a major factor in the high desertion rate among naval seamen and caused "an immense discount on seamen's pay-tickets." R. Pares, "The Manning of the Navy in the West Indies, 1702-1763," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 20 (1937), 39-40.

riots. This vicious cycle of bare-knuckled contestation over seamen's labor made northern ports combustible arenas. It also opened opportunities for freedom for maritime fugitives. In 1744 New York colonial authorities and Commodore Peter Warren agreed that press gangs would not take men from privateers so long as they did not harbor deserters. This policy enabled privateers like the *Tyger's* Captain McDougall to hire considerable numbers of colored mariners, some of whom were fugitive slaves.²⁵

King George's War saw scores of privateers sail from Rhode Island's ports. The French complained of "the small petty Colony of Rhode Island" wreaking havoc on the commerce of France's West Indies sugar islands.²⁶ In spring of 1744 a third of Newport's adult males, including slaves, enlisted on privateers. At that time "approximately one-sixth of all Newport-owned vessels went privateering" and Newport's merchants talked of little other than "privateering and ship building."²⁷ Colored mariners were numerous on these Rhode Island privateers. In 1741 the Newport privateer *Revenge* had four Negroes among its crew of thirty-seven seamen: the cook's mate Daniel Waller, the first mate's servant Samuel Kerby, the "Captain's Negro and Drummer" Richard Notton, and a free seaman, James Jennings. During its cruise, the *Revenge* captured several Spanish Negro mariners. These Spanish Negroes included Captain Francisco Menéndez, the Captain of the Negroes, Mulattoes and Indians at Fort Mose, near St. Augustine. Other Rhode Island privateers that had colored sailors included the *Virgin Queen*, the *Invincible*

²⁵ Peter Warren to the Admiralty, New York, September 8, 1744, TNA ADM 1/2654; McDougall Papers, N-YHS, Reel 1, "List of Men Belonging to the Privateer *Tyger*." Not even seamen released from Spanish prisons returning on ships under a flag of truce were immune from being impressed. *New-York Weekly Journal*, June 16, 1746.

²⁶ Most of North American privateering activities during King George's War took place in the West Indies. They were joined in their attacks on French and Spanish vessels by large numbers of British privateers operating out of the West Indies. Swanson, "American Privateering and Imperial Warfare," 365-375; July 12, 1744 Letter Charles Bolton to William Yeates, John Yeates Coll., HSP Coll. 740.

²⁷ Deutsch, "The Elusive Guineamen," 243; Bridenbaugh, ed., *Gentleman's Progress*, 136-141.

Shepard, the *Providence* and the *George*. Rhode Island ship captains' need for crew members was said to lead many of them to "encourage Negroes to run away to sea."²⁸

Philadelphia experienced its own privateering craze, having more than 4,600 berths on privateers. When Philadelphians heard that war had been declared, a procession "led by about 30 flags and ensigns taken from privateer vessels and others in the harbour, [sic] were carried by a parcel of roaring sailors." A Negro fiddler, along with eight or ten drummers, provided music for the parade, as four thousand people filled the streets. In response to a proclamation encouraging the fitting out of privateers large numbers of men enlisted. At the same time the city was experiencing its privateering craze, approximately ten percent of Philadelphia County's servant population, enlisted in the British military.²⁹ Philadelphia's experienced enslaved mariners included numerous colored men captured by the city's privateers. Sale advertisements for these men often noted they were "stout able bodied Seamen," implying that some of Philadelphia's slave owners had been willing to purchase these men for the purpose of sending them back to sea.³⁰ The scope of maritime fugitives' presence among Philadelphia's privateers is made apparent by fugitive and slave sale advertisements that indicated maritime fugitives including unnamed Indians, Spanish Negroes, French Mulattos, and runaways like Gloucester, who "lurk[ed]" in Philadelphia waiting for available berths. In addition, there were numerous advertisements for colored seamen who had served on privateers and for Spanish seamen

²⁸ Caroline Hazard, *Thomas Hazard son of Rhode Island call'd College Tom* (Boston & New York, 1983), 237, 241; Howard Chapin, *Rhode Island Privateers, 1739-1748* (Boston and New York, 1926), 23, 34, 49; Green, *The Negro in Colonial New England*, 116; Peter Vezian, "Journal of a Privateersman, Begun June the 5th, 1741," *Atlantic Monthly*, Sept.-Oct. 1861, 358-359; J. Franklin Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period* (1923; repr. New York, 1970), 410-411.

²⁹ Hamilton, *Gentleman's Progress*, 25; Salinger, *To Serve Well*, 105-6; Swanson, "Privateering and Imperial Warfare," 362.

³⁰ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Dec. 6, 10, 1745.

prisoners in the city's Work House. Privateer berths were readily available, as privateers from other ports stopped in Philadelphia to recruit seamen.³¹

With privateer captains often being able to "buil[d] fortunes for their owners," as well as earn compensation for themselves far in excess of the usual wages paid a merchant vessel master, New York became infected with what Dr. Alexander Hamilton described as "almost a kind of [privateering] madness." This "madness" led to an almost 400% increase in the number of ships clearing New York harbor between 1739 and 1748. In this period, the city's cruisers had more than 10,300 berths, making New York North America's premier privateering port.³² During King George's War, New York had thirty-five privateers, more than twice the number of privateers sailing from Massachusetts and almost three times the size of Philadelphia's privateer fleet. Only Rhode Island had a larger number of privateers. During King George's War alone, New York's privateers had seventy-nine prize ships condemned resulting in prizes totaling £615,000.³³ Owners of privateer ships and privateer captains seeking riches enticed landlubbers with newspaper advertisements and posters nailed at seamen's haunts such as the Long-Room, the Bunch of Grapes, Ebenezer Grant's Sign of the Dog's Head in the Porridge Pot, and John Mackleman's Blue Anchor on the Dock. The posters called for "Gentlemen Sailors and

³¹ TNA ADM 13817; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Apr. 19, 1744, Aug. 22, Dec. 6, 1745, May 22, July 3, 31, Sept. 4, 1746, July 23, 1747, Mar. 28, Nov. 17, 1748; *American Weekly Mercury*, July 23, 1741, June 27, 1745; *New-York Weekly Journal*, Feb. 10, 1746.

³² Lydon, *Pirates, Privateers and Profits*, 266, Table 7; Swanson, "Privateering and Imperial Warfare," 362. The dramatic expansion in the maritime economy during the early years of the War of Jenkin's Ear occurred on both sides of the Atlantic. *American Weekly Mercury*, June 26, 1740 ("there is a great Scarcity of Sailors in England").

³³ David J. Starkey, E. S. van Eyck van Heslinga and J.A. de Moor, eds., *Pirates and Privateers: New Perspectives on the War on Trade in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Exeter, 1997), 5; Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt: Urban Life in America, 1743-76* (New York, 1965), 61; Stuyvesant Fish, *The New York Privateers, 1756-65* (New York, 1945); James Lydon, "The Role of Privateering Down to 1763" (Ph. D. diss., Columbia University, 1956), 14-15; *New-York Mercury*, Oct. 4, 1756; and *New-York Post-Boy*, Oct. 4, 1756.

others” to seek their fortune by signing up for a berth on a privateer.³⁴ In an era when seamen typically made between £13 and £15 per voyage, Jack Tars among Captain Thomas Bevan’s crew received £110 in 1746 for capturing a French prize, a small fortune on a single cruise. Privateers shared in captured ship’s effects, sometimes resulting in seamen transforming themselves from wearers of torn tarred pants, to men in laced and silk clothes.³⁵

The riches that privateers offered enticed many naval seamen to desert. Whether they received an £8 pound bribe, as did John Lynch to enlist on a privateer, or merely saw a better life on a privateer, desertion among naval mariners for privateers was a continual problem for British captains stationed in North America. In two months alone, while undergoing repairs in New York, HMS *Coventry* saw forty-eight mariners run. HMS *Flamborough* had over one hundred men desert while it was stationed in New York from August 1738 to May 1741. Other naval vessels suffered similar desertion rates when they docked in northern ports. These desertions in naval captains to impress seamen from merchant ships and colonial officials to bring inexperienced men onto the naval ships and enlist colored sailors such as Casar Honderson, despite their subsequently being found to be “unservicable.”³⁶ Naval crews during King George’s War included a considerable

³⁴ Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* (Cambridge, 1987), 67.

³⁵ Smith, “The Material Lives of Laboring Philadelphians, 1750 to 1800,” 163; *New-York Evening-Post*, July 7, 1746; *New-York Gazette*, Apr. 7, 1740; *American Weekly Mercury*, May 1, 1740.

³⁶ *New-York Weekly Journal*, April 26, 1740, October 18, 1742. Elphinstone Papers, November 16, 1778, Letter from Admiral Elphinstone to an unknown individual in New York, NMM KEI/2/1; HMS *Coventry*, Muster Rolls, 1763-1765, TNA ADM 36/7568; HMS *Gosport* Muster Rolls, 1742, TNA ADM 36/1375 (more than 100 desertions in a six month period); HMS *Otter* Ticket Book, 1747-1748, NMM ADM L/R/245 (impressed score of seamen on Delaware River); HMS *Flamborough* Payroll, 1739-1741, TNA ADM 33/360; HMS *Flamborough* Captain’s Logbook, 1740-1741, TNA ADM 51/4190; HMS *Otter* Ticket Paybooks, July 1747 – January 1748, NMM ADM L/R/245; HMS *Ludlow Castle* Lts. Logbook, 1740, NMM ADM L/L/234. Desertions of seamen led captains to advertise rewards for the return of the missing mariners. *Boston Evening-Post*, Oct. 24, 1743. The extent of the desertions were said to be why the Navy used the death penalty sparingly in comparison to the Army (7.1% v 22.5% of all convictions). Arthur N. Gilbert, “Crime as Disorder: Criminality and the Symbolic Universe of the 18th Century British Naval

number of colored seamen. For example, in 1744 HMS *Serpent* had two colored Captain's servants, James Boy and Plume Forrest, with a third, John Jago, joining them two years later. HMS *Squirrel*, while off the New England coast, had among its crew Midshipman's Servant John Boston, Francis Cuff, an able bodied seaman, and John Boston, an able bodied seaman who came on board from the schooner *Province*.³⁷ On HMS *Eltham*, as on many British warships, young colored boys worked as powder boys, servants and stewards. Among the *Eltham*'s nineteenth gun crew was "Boy Wm. Negroe." As a member of the gun crew, William would have shared in prize monies from capturing enemy privateers. HMS *Ludlow Castle* similarly had colored men: Dan Quaco and Moses Grant, employed as Captain's Servants, and Anthony Caesar, as a Boatswain's Servant.³⁸

The pervasiveness of colored seamen on naval ships is illustrated by HMS *Ludlow Castle*'s capture of the French sloop *Coulers*. In June 1741 the *Coulers* claimed to "be in search of some Negroes which had been carried from [it] by some English." The Negroes in question were probably among the many men of "broken colour" on French ships. With English privateers and naval ships having enemy colored mariners condemned as

Officer," in *Changing Interpretations and New Sources in Naval History*, ed. Robert William Love, Jr. (New York & London, 1980), 113, 121n23. Naval commanders and admiralty regulations recognized the deterrent effect of crews witnessing executions. *Regulations and Instructions Relating to His Majesty's Service at Sea*, Section IX; Marcus Edeker, *Crime and Punishment in the Royal Navy of the Seven Years' War, 1755-1763* (Aldershot, 2004), 145. Admiral Knowles described the problem of desertion becoming "so frequent....I found myself under a Necessity of Executing [seamen] for Example sake." Admiral Knowles to Admiralty, Aug. 1, 1748 from Port Royal, Jamaica, TNA ADM 1/234/158.

³⁷ HMS *Squirrel* Pay Book, 1739, TNA ADM 33/409; HMS *Launceston* Pay Book, 1742, TNA ADM 33/402.

³⁸ HMS *Elton* Lt.'s Logbook, 1739-1746, NMM ADM/L/E/94; HMS *Ludlow Castle* Muster Roll, 1740-1741, TNA ADM 36/1856; HMS *Ludlow Castle* Pay Rolls, 1744-1747, TNA ADM 33/395; HMS *Gosport* Lt.'s Logbook, 1741-1743, NMM ADM/L/G/72. A good illustration of a colored naval servant is "Captain Sir Robert Lawrie's servant Tom," c. 1745, Ann., NMM PAH 4949; Morgan, "Black Experiences in Britain's Maritime World," Plate 7.

slaves, it is likely the *Coulers* had its colored seamen seized by an English privateer.³⁹ That colored seamen served on naval ships in North America during this time is evident from HMS *Vigilant*'s muster roll when it partook in the attack upon Louisbourg in 1745. Among its crew were not fewer than ten identifiable colored men, including the Captain's servant John York, Richard Bacchus, an able bodied seaman, and Newport Tipson, an Ordinary.⁴⁰

Merchant families found wealth and fame in privateering.⁴¹ Requiring large crews that averaged eighty-eight men per ship so as to be able to board and seize enemy ships, privateers put "severe pressures on the maritime labor market."⁴² In order to recruit the large numbers of men they needed, privateer captains placed numerous advertisements calling for "Gentlemen, Sailors and others" to sign onto privateers. The "others" frequently turned out to be strong, inexperienced colored men. Privateer captains' willingness to hire such men was often spurred by complaints by merchants, such as Gerard Beekman, that "had [his captain] had [sufficient] officers and men," additional prizes could have been captured. Hiring fugitive slaves enabled masters to use limited numbers of experienced seamen in boarding parties, a strategy consistent with privateer captains' practice of protecting their best sailors, whether from naval press gangs or the weapons of Spanish sailors. Captains often left port quickly so as not to be found harboring fugitive slaves or deserters from naval or merchant ships.⁴³ Fugitive slaves

³⁹ HMS *Ludlow Castle* Lts. Logbook, 1740, NMM ADM/L/L/234.

⁴⁰ HMS *Vigilant* Pay Rolls, 1746, TNA ADM 33/4420.

⁴¹ Lydon, "The Role in Privateering Down to 1763," 247-48; Bromley, "The British Navy and its Seamen, 36-47; Carl E. Swanson, "American Privateering and Imperial Warfare, 1739-1748," *WMQ* 42:2 (July 1985), 378; Hamilton, *Gentleman's Progress*, 85.

⁴² Many ship captains used slaves sold as "fit for sea service." *New-York Gazette, Revived in the Weekly Post-Boy*, Feb. 29, 1748. The third quarter of the eighteenth century saw a significant increase in such sale advertisements.

⁴³ Beekman to John Channing, Sept. 1, 1746, in White, *The Beekman Mercantile Papers*, I, 7. Privateers

such as Mingo, who in 1745 it was believed would “make some seaport, in order to enter on board a privateer,” despite his wearing an ozenbrig waistcoat that marked him as a bondsman, were found on privateers. In August 1746, Quam, a Jamaican born “young Negro Man” fled his master, Captain George Hall, the master of the privateer *Pollux*. The *Pollux* regularly employed slave crewmembers, and Quam was not the only black mariner to flee the ship. A year later Strode fled the *Pollux*, shaving his head so as to pass as a white. Given the explosion of privateering in New York between 1739 and 1748, these fugitive slaves were likely to have obtained berths on another privateer.⁴⁴

With naval and privateering captains grabbing every available mariner they could get their hands on, masters of merchant vessels were often left with insufficient numbers of seamen. Ship owners and captains responded by employing “Negroes, Mulettos and Indians.” The prevalence of colored seamen on North American vessels was made apparent by Jamaican Governor Trelawny’s December 1743 informal survey of American ships at Port Royal. This survey revealed that five ships employed more Negro and Mulatto seamen than white sailors, one vessel had a majority of Indians, and that three others had “an equal number of white Men and the other colours.” Trelawny believed that this substantial use of colored seamen portended “Shipping and the Race of Seamen will be soon reduc’d in North America.” In fact, colored seamen enabled North American merchants to maintain a vigorous trade with the West Indies during the 1740s, despite the large drain of mariners onto naval and merchant ships. Even small local

routinely hid their best sailors when they saw a British man-of war to avoid losing needed crew to press gangs. Starkey, “War and the Market for Seafarers in Britain, 1736-92,” 37-38. Between 1713 and 1783 80% of British men-of-war on the North American station had colored mariners.

⁴⁴ Lydon, *Pirates, Privateers and Profits*, 194; *New-York Post-Boy*, Aug. 18, 1746; *New-York Weekly Journal*, May 25, 1747.

vessels with crews of three or four men contained two or more colored seamen.⁴⁵ While Parliament in easing Navigation Act restrictions on foreign seamen in English ships during wartime may not have intended it, in North America, “foreign” seamen came to mean free and enslaved “Negroes, Mullettos and Indians.”

English privateer captains saw colored mariners on Spanish ships as a means to enrich themselves and their crews. In the first year of the War of Jenkins’ Ear, Captain John Lush quickly commenced plundering Spanish ships. After seizing several vessels with his twenty-two gun privateer, the *Stephen and Elizabeth*, which he had condemned in the West Indies, Lush captured, “two extraordinary Rich Prizes” that he brought back to New York. When he arrived on April 26, with the *Nuestra Señora de la Vittoria* and the *Solidad*, Lush brought with him “Nineteen Negroes and Molattoes” among one hundred captured Spanish sailors. As Henry Morgan did on his return from a raid on Villahermosa in 1665, Lush came ashore in “rich Laced and Embroider’d Cloaths taken from the Spaniards.” He and his crew received a salute from all the ships in the harbor and the city’s docks were “crowded with the Populace” cheering the men. Lush quickly had the nineteen colored sailors condemned by the Vice Admiralty Court as prize goods, kept one for himself, and had the other eighteen seamen sold at auction. For the *Stephen and Elizabeth*’s lucky crew, Lush’s condemning of the Spanish dark-skinned seamen would enrich them far beyond the wages they would have received as naval or merchant crewmembers.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Trelawny to the Admiralty, December 21, 1743, TNA ADM 1/3817; *New-York Evening Post*, Mar. 30, 1747.

⁴⁶ *New-York Gazette*, Mar. 11, 1740, Apr. 7, 1740; *American Weekly Mercury*, Dec. 6, 1739, May 1, 1740; Chapin, *Privateering in King George’s War*, 131-132; Talty, *Empire of Blue Water*, 68. From the beginning of the eighteenth century Spanish mariners were condemned into slavery in northern ports “by reason of their colour which is swarthy.” Gov. Hunter to the Council of Trade and Plantations, June 23, 1712, CO 5/1123, p. 30-48. Ironically, Lush’s crew members who shared in these rich spoils were sixty

Some of the ever-increasing numbers of slaves, who during the 1740s sought to use northern port cities to permanently flee, were seen by many whites as not merely depriving masters of their labors, but also being part of a Spanish plot to overturn British rule. As one New York newspaper dispatch noted, “there are many [Spanish Negroes] in this place,” who if the Spanish or French invaded the colony, would “rise and join” Britain’s enemies. This fear reflected the considerable number of colored mariners who were “used to war,” having crewed on privateers or naval ships, and the practice in British North America of assuming dark-skinned mariners were “by reason of their colour ...said to be slaves.”⁴⁷ Even before the formal declaration of war with Spain in 1739, privateers operating out of British North American ports were attacking Spanish ships in the Atlantic and the Caribbean. Privateer masters such as Captain Rouse of Boston brought in parcels of dark-skinned Spanish sailors to be condemned as part of their prize goods.⁴⁸ While colored Spanish mariners had been condemned in British North American courts as slaves for decades, had partaken in the 1712 slave insurrection, and been the subject of advertisements seeking their return when they fled, in the 1730s

former British naval seamen. These mariners had been compelled by an admiral in Jamaica to switch places when Captain Lush’s crew proved mutinous. Naval seamen were often lent to merchant and privateer ships. Rodgers, *Wooden World*, 152 (Between 1757-1759 idle naval ships in home ports lent between 7% and 9% of their crews to ships leaving port); Edward Barlow Journal, 546.

⁴⁷ *New-York Weekly Journal*, June 15, 1741; *DRHNY* 5:342. The British policy of enslaving captured people of color regardless if they were free subjects of the king of Spain dates to at least 1688 when Jamaican privateer Robert Searle plundered St. Augustine. Amy Turner Bushnell, *Situado and Sabana: Spain’s Support System for the Presido and Mission Provinces of Florida* (Athens, GA, 1994), 136. Escaped slaves and Spanish mulattos served on English West Indies privateers. Talty, *Empire of Blue Water*, 86-87.

⁴⁸ *New-York Weekly Journal*, May 5, 1740; *American Weekly Mercury*, September 17, 1741; Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 128. As early as 1704 Spanish Negroes were condemned in New York as prize slaves. Several such Spanish men took part in the 1712 Slave Insurrection. Foote, ““Some Hard Usage,” 147-159. Captain Rouse, while perhaps not as well known as Captain Lush, also made considerable monies having colored Spanish seamen condemned. *American Weekly Mercury*, Sept. 16, 1742. He subsequently came to be viewed positively by British naval officials due to assisting HMS *Mermaid* in capturing the 64 gun French *Vigilant* with supplies for the French garrison at Louisborough. This directly led to the surrender of the French garrison. Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739-1748*, II, 214-216.

and 1740s there was a significant increase in dark-skinned Spanish sailors being condemned. They began to regularly appear in ports from Philadelphia to Boston, as well as in rural areas of Virginia, Carolina, and Maryland. These men were characterized in public records as “Negroes,” no longer being seen as the “Spanish Indians” New York Governor Hunter referred to in 1712.⁴⁹ Instead, the imperial struggle between Great Britain and Spain took on a racialized perspective whereby any dark-skinned Spaniard was treated by British ship captains as a slave. While Vice Admiralty Courts had the power to condemn as prize slaves only those on a captured ship who had been slaves elsewhere, the courts typically ignored this limit on their jurisdiction. Instead, courts generally ruled that the mere darkness of a Spaniard’s skin was sufficient proof of his enslaved status.

At the same time these unfortunate men found themselves enslaved in British North America, Spain and England were engaged in a struggle over control of the Florida-Georgia region. When in 1741 a series of fires broke out in New York, concerns over Spanish intentions, as well combined with anti-Catholic bias, led to New York’s whites to suspect the city’s Spanish slaves. Georgia Governor James Oglethorpe, who had been involved in a series of armed conflicts with Spanish Florida, sent a warning to New York Lieutenant Governor Clarke that “a villainous Design of a very extraordinary Nature, and, if true, very important, viz., That the Spaniards had imployed Emissaries to

⁴⁹ Zabin, “Places of Exchange,” 90, 101-102; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, January 4, 1742, October 6, 1743, January 6, 1742, June 2, 23, 1748, March 14, April 15, 1749, and June 29, 1749; Howard M. Chapin, *Privateer Ships and Sailors: The First Century of American Privateering, 1625-1725* (Toulon, 1926), 271; Scott, “Slave Insurrection of 1712,” 61. Vice Admiralty Courts in the West Indies also regularly condemned dark-skinned mariners as slaves. Letter from Admiral Thomas Cotes to Commissioner of Prizes, October 13, 1756, TNA T1/367/76. The large presence of Spanish Negro mariners on Spanish ships in the Atlantic and the Caribbean can be seen in the newspaper dispatches and Vice Admiralty Court records describing Spanish crews that captured English ships. See, e.g., *New-York Gazette*, May 30, 1748 (“many Mulattoes and some Negroes” on Spanish ship); *Rex v Joseph Portia* in Hough, *Vice Admiralty Court Records*, 8 (Spanish Mulattos claimed to have killed ship captain); Appendix C.

burn all the Magazines and considerable Towns in the English North America, thereby to prevent the Subsisting of the great Expedition and Fleet in the West-Indies.” The same year, slaves in a South Carolina pilot boat were captured by a Spanish privateer and taken to St. Augustine, causing great alarm in Charleston. With Britain fighting a sea war against Spain and having many vessels devoted to operations in the Caribbean, Ogelthorpe’s warning was treated seriously. Six Spanish Negroes were prosecuted for allegedly taking part in a conspiracy to overthrow New York’s government. The first, Francis was quickly tried, convicted, and burned at the stake. The remaining five men, Antonio de la Cruz, Augustine Gutierrez, Antonio de St. Bendito, Juan de la Silva, and Pablo Ventura Angel, offered a strong defense and caused the prosecution to proceed more diligently and creatively in indicting the men for conspiracy and instructing “the Negro Quack, to burn the fort.” An irony of the five Spaniards’ trial was that they were indicted twice, once as enslaved individuals and a second time as free men. On the first indictment, “Negro Evidence,” i.e., slave confessions, was admissible against them, while on the second it was not.⁵⁰ The evidence against the men included testimony of Sandy, a slave who had confessed to partaking in the conspiracy to set fires, some of the Spaniard Negroes had pointed at Lush’s house and pledged, “D--- m that Son of a B----h, if he did not carry them to their own Country, *they would ruin the City*.” Given the anger that four of the Spaniards undoubtedly felt towards John Lush for their enslavement (the fifth Spaniard, Pablo Ventura Angel, had been captured by Captain Benjamin Kiersted), this evidence was very damaging. The Spanish Negroes asserted their status as free men. In

⁵⁰ Wood, *Black Majority*, 205. In contrast to New York’s excluding “Negro Evidence” and British justices also generally excluding slave testimony, the British Navy permitted the use of black mariner’s testimony to convict white seamen of sodomy, a capital crime. *The Case of Lewis, a Negro, v Stapleton, His Master, 1771*, Granville Sharp Papers, N-YHS (Justice Mansfield being in “great doubt” whether a “black could be a proper witness for his freedom”); Court Martial of G. Newton and T. Finlay, TNA ADM 1/1530.

response, the prosecution presented the testimony of the Admiralty's Deputy Register that the five men had been properly condemned as prize goods by the Vice Admiralty Court. Neither the Deputy Register's testimony nor the prosecution's closing statements addressed that Captain Lush's failure to establish before the Vice Admiralty Court that the Spanish Negroes had been slaves when he captured them. The defendants testified as to the physical impossibility of having been involved in the conspiracy; De St. Bendito and De La Cruz were lame with frostbite, Angel had been in bed sick, and De la Cruz presented the testimony of doctors that he was unable to walk. De la Silva, while physically fit, presented evidence from his slave master, ship captain and slave trader Jacob Sarly, that the captain had "heard that his negro was free." In a city filled with fear of Spaniards, anti-Catholic hate and stirred to hysteria by months of trials and executions, it is little wonder that despite such strong exculpatory evidence, it took but a half-an-hour for the jury to convict the men on both counts.⁵¹

⁵¹ George Clarke to the Lords of Trade, June 20, 1741, *Docs. Col. NY*, 6:198; Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 154-162. Each of these convicted Spanish Negroes were sentenced to be hanged, but with the exception of Juan de Silva, were transported from New York. Justice Horsmanden never recorded why of the Spanish Negroes only de Silva was executed. His execution may have been due to the belief de Silva was directly involved in setting fires near his master's home and at the Fly Market. Horsmanden, *New-York Conspiracy*, 154-162, 223, 320.

The alleged conspiracy came to the authorities' attention after a robbery by Christopher Wilson, a sailor on HMS *Flamborough* and several slaves was discovered. Although many commentators have commented on the multiracial makeup of the criminals involved, none has noted two factors concerning Wilson that may have shaped the events of 1741. (Walter Rucker claims Christopher Wilson was "a free black mate," but provides no documentation for this assertion. As Jill Lepore has noted, Wilson was English and his nickname was "Yorkshire." The *Flamborough*'s muster contains no reference that would lead one to believe Wilson was black and Justice Horsmanden's in his *Journal* does not refer to the seaman as a Negro. Rucker, *The River Flows On*, 68-9; Lepore, *New York Burning*, 181; Zabin, *The New York City Conspiracy Trials of 1741*, 47-50). Wilson was an able bodied seaman in 1740 when the *Flamborough* supported Governor Oglethorpe's attack on St. Augustine. The *Flamborough* captured and carried a number of Spanish prisoners. It is thus reasonable to speculate that Wilson may have been the source of some of the anti-Spanish rumors swirling about the city. Wilson also had a strong monetary motive to engage in the robbery. Wilson was entitled to almost £45 wages in January 1741 when the vessel arrived in New York. The naval seaman did not receive his wages; the ship's muster rolls are silent as to why. Instead, Wilson's wages were paid to a non-family third party. This is likely due to Wilson, like many sailors, owing monies lent him. The day after the theft the seaman decided to cooperate with authorities, enabling them to recover the stolen goods. Whether Wilson thought he would receive some monetary

The Spanish Negroes convicted of conspiracy in 1741 and the other dark-skinned Spanish seamen Captain Lush had sold into slavery were hardly the only men whose bad fortune in being captured caused them to lose their freedom. Almost four hundred Spanish Negroes are known to have been enslaved in northern colonies, while at least two hundred and ninety-three colored sailors, including a considerable number of Spanish Negroes, were condemned as prize goods (Appendices C and D). Most of these Spanish Negroes were multilingual and had experience in the wider Atlantic world. These backgrounds enabled many Spanish Negroes to use the British maritime industry, in both New York and elsewhere, to escape. Not only had John Cannon's eight Spanish Negroes fled via the sea, but so did Captain Rouse's six Spanish Negroes, who in 1741, less than a month after being brought into Boston, stole a boat and sailed for St. Augustine. Two years later, in January 1743, a "great number of Spanish and other Prize Negroes" rioted at Newport after having been brought there to be condemned and sold.⁵² Three years later, the streets of Newport again were the scene of struggle over Spanish Negroes. This time the conflict took the form of an imperial tussle between two European powers. When Captain William Dennis had twenty-two Spanish prisoners sold as slaves based on their dark skin color, the Governor of Havana protested. His protest was not limited to an exchange of acerbic letters, but rather a forcible measure to which English ship captains and governmental authorities were compelled to respond. The Governor had nineteen of Captain Dennis's men taken hostage. British officials scrambled to recover the Spanish

reward for assisting the authorities, as had Mary Burton, cannot be determined. But it is clear that Wilson was an individual who had serious monetary problems while in New York, and was likely broke when the *Flamborough* left New York on May 23, 1741. HMS *Flamborough* Captain's Logbook, 1740-1741, TNA ADM 51/4190; HMS *Flamborough* Payroll, 1739-1741, TNA ADM 33/360.

⁵² *Pennsylvania Gazette*, March 3, 1743 ("great number). Their linguistic and seafaring experiences also enabled some Spanish Negroes to be successful in legal actions in New York to regain their freedom. Zabin, "Places of Exchange," 102; Richard Bond, "Spanish Negroes and Their Fight for Freedom," *New York Archives* 3 (Summer 2003), 13-15; *Boston Gazette*, Oct. 5, 1741; *Boston News-Letter*, Oct. 1, 1741.

colored sailors so that Dennis's sailors could be freed. Nine of the Spanish mariners had been condemned by an Admiralty Judge in Rhode Island and sold. When the Rhode Island General Assembly ordered the nine men freed, the Rhode Islanders who had purchased the men sued Deputy Sheriff Job Bennet for the loss of their slaves. The unfortunate Deputy Sheriff had to petition the General Assembly to be compensated for the expensive litigation that resulted from his taking back the Spanish Negroes. The same year the nine Spanish Negroes in Rhode Island were freed through the intercession of the Spanish Governor of Havana, Santiago, a free Spaniard, had no such luck. He was captured by a British vessel, and condemned and sold in Rhode Island. Sent by his purchaser, a Mr. Freebody, as a mariner on a voyage to the West Indies, Santiago attempted to escape in Havana. Unfortunately for Santiago, Freebody appears to have had better connections in Havana than his Spanish bondsman. A business associate of Freebody's had Santiago recaptured and sold for £100, despite the Spaniard's having "made it plainly appear that he is a Free Man." Although large numbers of Spanish mariners were captured by British privateers and naval ships, only those who were dark-skinned were condemned. Hundreds of others, including Pedro Silvias, Francisco Drosio, Juan Ferrara and twenty-one other Spanish mariners captured by HMS *Norwich* in 1748 off the coast of North America, were not condemned as prize goods, but rather treated as prisoners of war. Similarly, Spanish mariners on privateers captured by HMS *Otter* in 1748 were sent into Hampton Roads and Cape Henry without the men being condemned as prize goods.⁵³ Thus, for Santiago, as for many captured Spanish sailors sold into

⁵³ *RCRI*, Vol. V, 176; Deed of Sale, 3 July 1744, RIHS MSS 9003; HMS *Norwich* Muster Rolls, 1748, TNA ADM 36/2284; HMS *Otter* Ticketbook, 1747-1748, NMM ADM L/R/245. Anglo-American merchants and ship captains were commonly found in Havana. See, e.g., *The Case of Lewis, a Negro, v Stapleton, His Master, 1771*, Granville Sharp Papers, N-YHS.

slavery on the basis of their dark skin, fortune and access to governmental officials were critical to their regaining freedom.⁵⁴

Throughout the 1740s enslaved Spanish Negroes continued to escape by the sea. For example, in 1749 George, a twenty-six year-old slave from Burlington County, New Jersey, who spoke “indifferent English,” was described as having “been a privateering” and “likely may endeavour to get on board some Vessel.” As a “Spanish Mulatto Fellow,” George very likely had been captured from a Spanish vessel and, like many dark-skinned Spanish captives, was condemned into slavery simply on the basis of the color of his skin.⁵⁵ In the same year, four Spanish Negroes designed “to cut a vessel out” of New York’s harbor. When the plot was discovered, one of the Spanish Negroes was found to have four cutlasses under his cloak. George and the other Spanish Negroes who fled by the sea were often seen both as individual slaves stealing themselves from their masters and as possible agents of Spain’s imperial ambitions. Three or four other Spanish Negroes being carried from New York to the West Indies, rose up and murdered the crew of the ship transporting them. The Spaniards claimed “they were born Freemen, and made Slaves by the English during the War, and had no other Way left of getting their Liberty.” The desperation and violence of these men’s actions gives ample evidence to the frequency with which English ship captains enslaved Spanish colored seamen. It was

⁵⁴ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, August 24, 1749; and *New-York Gazette*, October 2, 1749. For other examples of Spanish Negroes in New York see *New-York Post-Boy*, June 27, 1748 and Bond, “Spanish Negroes and Their Fight for Freedom,” 13-15; *RCRI*, Vol. V, 176. After the enactment of gradual abolition laws, some Spanish Negroes were able to assert status as free men. *Freeman’s Journal or North-American Intelligencer*, Feb. 13, 1782.

⁵⁵ *New-York Gazette Revived in the Weekly Post-Boy*, Oct. 2, 1749. Some Spanish Negroes may have been captured from Spanish privateers that raided English North American plantations and farms. Examples of such raids include a raid on two Delaware plantations in 1747. Gould, “Entangled Histories,” 776.

the rare case that a Vice-Admiralty Court had “some doubt” as to whether captured Spanish mariners with dark-skin were “free or Slaves.”⁵⁶

In the swirl of wars with Spain, the movement of fugitive slaves, both Spanish Negroes and others, was often not simply from one master’s home to a boat and then to freedom in another port city. Colored mariners seized by enemy privateers were often sold as slaves. When William Beekman’s privateer *Dolphin* in 1745 captured the *Anna Florentina* it had on board, cargo, cash, and Negroes. The prize and cargo, including Negroes, were sold in Providence, providing William Beekman with £225 for his one-eighth share in the privateer.⁵⁷ Similarly, English vessels with colored seamen were frequently seized by Spanish privateers. Foreign privateer captains, such as the master of the Spanish privateer captured during the War of Jenkins’ Ear that had ten colored Spaniards among its crew of nineteen, were also not averse to hiring colored sailors, whether free or enslaved. English, Spanish, and French privateers all saw colored seamen on board enemy ships as valuable prizes to be sold or to be used as crew. Thus, while northern fugitive slaves may have sought to obtain freedom by signing on as a crew member of an English merchant or privateer, it also was common for them to have been re-enslaved or compelled to work as seamen on enemy ships.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 13, 1749; *New-York Gazette or Weekly Post-Boy*, Jan. 23, 1749; *Boston Gazetteer or Weekly Journal*, Aug. 1, 1749; *American Weekly Mercury*, Aug. 25, 1743.

⁵⁷ White, *The Beekmans of New York in Politics and Commerce, 1647-1877*, 323.

⁵⁸ Chapin, *Rhode Island Privateers in King George’s War*, 35. In 1745 the French had 14,790 privateer seamen and an additional 6,000 seamen working on American-bound merchant vessels. James Pritchard, “The Sailors of the French Expeditionary Force in Arcadia, 1746,” in Howell and Towney, *Jack Tar in History*, 208. See *New-York Weekly Journal*, May 26, 1740 and Dec. 1, 1740 for examples of French and Spanish privateers capturing Negroes on New York ships. Naval officers clearly distinguished among Spanish mariners, so that those captured seamen who were light-skinned were treated as prisoners of war rather than being condemned into slavery. HMS *Norwich*, Muster Rolls, 1748, TNA ADM 36/2284. The problem of captured colored mariners being sold as “prize Negroes” was recognized by slave masters throughout the Atlantic. In Bermuda, where many boats were manned with slave mariners, it was said to be “very customary” to provide slave mariners with passes showing them to be free “in Case they should be taken by the Enemy.” Morgan, “Encounters with Africans and African-Americans,” 195.

"In their Ballast," 1749-1753

While seamen celebrated the capture of a large prize by roasting an ox and drinking punch, they did not similarly celebrate the end of King George's War in 1748.⁵⁹ Although northern ports did not suffer the same deep economic depression during the five years prior to the Seven Years War that took place in the 1730s, seamen were of work and ships sat idle. In Philadelphia, almost one hundred ships could not get freight. Of these ships, "15 Bermuda Vessels" and many others were sent to England "in their Ballast."⁶⁰ The economic downturn in the six-year period between the end of King George's War and the commencement of the Seven Years' War also adversely affected slaves seeking to flee via the sea. In this time period, masters used the slow-down in maritime activity to sell slaves with maritime experience. The advertisements emphasized the slaves' maritime experience: "young Negro M[e]n" that had "been on several Voyages to Sea," and "good Sailor[s]."⁶¹ In this same period, few slaves fled via the sea. There was the occasional advertisement warning of a slave such as Stephen who "want[ed] to get away" in some vessel," but it was the exception, not the rule. Most slaves who ran either sought to hide with acquaintances or used stolen clothes to "pretend to be free." In this time of limited maritime flight, evidence can still be found of slaves seeing the Atlantic as a highway to freedom. In 1749, when the twenty-one year old James ran away, he claimed his uncle kept a coffee-house in London. While perhaps not the most believable of stories, it does reflect that even rural slaves understood the

⁵⁹ *American Weekly Mercury*, Sept. 25, 1745.

⁶⁰ *New-York Weekly Journal*, Sept. 19, 1748. A desire to provide employment for sailors was one factor leading to the establishment of the Free British Fishing Society at mid-century, Bob Harris, "Patriotic Commerce and National Revival: The Free British Fishery Society and British Politics, c. 1749-1758," *The English Historical Review* 111:456 (Apr. 1999), 285-313.

⁶¹ *New-York Evening Post*, Aug. 5, 1751; *New-York Weekly Post-Boy*, Feb. 20, 1749, Oct. 28, 1751; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 23, 1749, May 28, 1752.

Atlantic world, had connections in that world, or at least an understanding of what was “beyond the Sea,” and believed that such a story of transatlantic familial and commercial connections was plausible.⁶² Although James was one of the few maritime fugitives in this time period, the ensuing Seven Years War would provide opportunities for freedom that surpassed those available during 1739-1748.⁶³

The Seven Years War, 1754-1763

At beginning of the Seven Years War the Royal Navy was woefully undermanned for the coming global conflict during which the number of naval seamen would increase nine-fold. This need for large numbers of mariners and the constant desertion of considerable numbers of naval crewmembers – one historian estimates as many as 40,000 naval seamen deserted, many in North America - often left ships short-handed.⁶⁴ Not atypically, on September 9, 1763, its first day in New York, HMS *Deal Castle* had ten seamen flee the ship. Many other naval captains on the North American station faced similar personnel nightmares. To deal with this loss of men in a time of expanding labor needs, naval ships during the Seven Years War regularly resorted to impressing American seamen. In 1757 the Navy impressed eight hundred men, one-quarter of New

⁶² *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 20, 1749; *New-York Gazette*, June 18, 1752; *New-York Gazette*, Nov. 5, 1753; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 31, 1749; Eve Tannor Bannet, *Empire of Letters: Letter Manuals and Transatlantic Correspondence, 1680-1820* (Cambridge, 2005), 41.

⁶³ *New-York Evening Post*, Jun. 24, July 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, Aug. 5, 12, 19, 26, 1751; *New-York Mercury*, Jan. 3, 1757. Similar advertisements can be found in the *New-York Gazette*, Mar. 14, 21, 28, Apr. 4, 11, 1747; *New-York Post-Boy*, Mar. 26, 1762 and Apr. 18, 1763.

⁶⁴ Butel, *The Atlantic*, 196-97. The British merchant marine was not large enough to supply the Royal Navy. By the height of the Seven Years War “nearly one-half of the Navy’s intake of men [during the war] most likely came from the two categories of felons and foreigners.” Neal, “Interpreting Power and Profit in Economic History,” 21, 27; HMS *Deal Castle*, Muster Rolls, 1768-1772, TNA ADM 36/7591. At the same time the Admiralty was searching for additional mariners, northern shipbuilding expanded significantly to meet increasing demands for privateering vessels. McKee, *Labor in Colonial New York*, 46; John Cruger Waste Account Book, June 28, 1762 – Jan. 15, 1768, N-YHS. The widespread desertion of British sailors and soldiers led military officials to bar shore leaves. Thomas Agostini, “Deserted His Majesty’s Service’: Military Runaways, the British-American Press, and the Problem of Desertion During the Seven Years’ War,” *Journal of Social History*, 40 (Summer 2007), 966.

York City's adult male population, and individual naval ships frequently impressed merchant sailors. When the British fleet left New York in February 1759 to attack Canada, it had a significant shortage of seamen. Young colored men, thought to be "ideal recruit[s,]" were likely to have been impressed as Rear Admiral Holmes searched for sailors. Merchant vessels such as the *Minehead*, entering New York harbor in 1760, found themselves subject to attack by naval ships when they resisted their seamen being impressed. These impressments occurred notwithstanding prior informal understandings with colonial officials that press gangs would not press out of privateers except for naval deserters.⁶⁵ The result was that during the war naval ships impressed considerable numbers of Americans; HMS *Kennington* impressed eighty-two seamen in little over four months.⁶⁶

Besides the use of press gangs, naval captains had another ready source of labor available, maritime fugitives. Although the large majority of sale advertisements contained no occupational information regarding the slaves offered for sale, throughout the Seven Years War advertisements of slaves with maritime experience were regularly published (Tables 3-5 and 4-5).⁶⁷ It is therefore fairly certain that considerable numbers of fugitives with skills that naval captains sought were to be found in the major ports – Philadelphia, New York, Newport, and Boston – that naval ships frequented. Colored

⁶⁵ *New-York Mercury*, Aug. 11, 1760; Peter Warren to the Admiralty, New York, September 8, 1744, TNA ADM 1/2654; Cassandra Pybus, "Billy Blue: An African American Journey through Empire in the Long Eighteenth Century," *EAS* 5:2 (Fall 2007), 260-62. The Navy's need for mariners was the subject of regular Parliamentary consideration. See, e.g., "An Act for the Encouragement of Seamen, and the more speedy and effectual manning His Majesty's Navy," HL/PO/PU/1/1756/29G2n115, 1756 and HL/PO/PU/1/1757/31G2n36, 1757.

⁶⁶ HMS *Kennington* Lts. Logbook, 1756-1757, NMM ADM/L/K/B4. Frequent desertions from naval vessels also occurred in European ports. See, e.g., Captain J. Watson Letter, 18 Apr. 1765, Reynolds Family Papers, GRO, D340a/C30/3.

⁶⁷ There were 26 such advertisements in New York newspapers between 1757 and 1764. Examples include *New-York Mercury*, Jan. 3, 1757, June 20, 1757, Dec. 11, 1758, Oct. 1, 1759, Sept. 28, 1760, Dec. 14, 1761, Aug. 16, 1762, Jan. 3, 1763, Sept. 10, 1764. Of the 1,491 fugitives advertised in New York City newspapers, 1,374 made no reference to the slave's occupation (Table 12-8).

men, many of them listed on muster rolls with only their first name – a strong indication that they were enslaved or recently enslaved – appeared on naval vessels in North America with regularity during the Seven Years War. Every one of the naval ships on the North American station whose muster rolls were reviewed had colored seamen as part of their crew (Appendix D). Ships such as HMS *Chesterfield*, and HMS *Northumberland* had large groups of dark-skinned mariners, making it likely that there were messes made up entirely of such seamen. Mongo Moore, William London, Peter Servant, Moses Whing, Joseph Britannia, Joseph London, and Peter Josea all would have shared meals and stories together while serving on the *Northumberland*.⁶⁸

Confronting a war that spanned Europe to India to the West Indies and North America, the Royal Navy underwent a tremendous expansion during the Seven Years War. The Navy went from 73 ships with 9,135 seamen in 1753 to 305 ships with 85,620 mariners in 1762. The Navy's West Atlantic fleets experienced similar expansions going from 20 ships with 2,550 men in 1753 to 52 ships with 14,385 men (Graph 1). Found among these naval seamen were fugitive slaves. The saga of John Incobs is perhaps most telling of the opportunities and risks maritime fugitives found in the British Navy during the Seven Years War.

Prior to 1763 John Incobs had been enslaved in New York. The only known historical record of his life is that kept by the Royal Navy. On May 12, 1763 Incobs boarded the HMS *Garlands* in Sheerness, England as a twenty-eight year old able bodied seaman. In order to have been classified as an able bodied seaman, Incobs would have

⁶⁸ HMS *Chesterfield* Muster Rolls, 1761, TNA ADM 36/5274; HMS *Northumberland*, Pay Roll, 1761-1762, TNA ADM 33/616. An illustration of a multi-racial naval mess such men would have been part of can be seen in G. Humphrey, *Midshipmen's Berth*, 1821, NMM PW3730.

needed to convince some naval officer that he had “served three years at least at sea.”⁶⁹ Receiving two months advance wages upon enlisting, this former slave traveled on the *Garlands* from Sheerness to Nore, Spithead, Guernsey, Cork, Louisbourg, Halifax, St. John’s, and Quebec before arriving back in New York on October 3, 1764. Although Incobs’ knowledge of New York may have assisted HMS *Garlands* in its mission to limit smuggling into New York, only sixteen days after he arrived in New York, Incobs found himself discharged from the *Garlands* for “being a slave.” The muster roll notation, while not indicating Incobs was discharged to his master, suggests that his owner had reclaimed the poor fugitive. Thus, despite having successfully fled his owner, crossed the Atlantic and established himself as a naval seaman, on a rainy overcast day in the city where he had been escaped slavery, Incobs found himself re-enslaved.⁷⁰

Just who was John Incobs and how did he find his way to England? In the six years prior to John Incobs being recaptured, only four New York fugitive advertisements were published for slaves named John or Jack. Once the advertisements for men who were either too old, too young or clearly too inexperienced to have been deemed able bodied seamen are eliminated, there are only two possible fugitives who could have been John Incobs. The first was Widow Van Ranst’s John, who fled in 1756. Trained as a sail maker, his mistress believed John had fled by sea. Having been away for eight years it is

⁶⁹ Lavry, *Shipboard Life and Organization*, 12-13. If Incobs had less than three years maritime experience, he would have been rated an ordinary. Carretta, “Naval Research and Eighteenth Century Black Biography.”

⁷⁰ Nov. 10, 1764 letter from Lt. Gov. Golden to Earl of Halifax, TNA T 1/430/116; HMS *Garlands* Muster Roll, 1766-1767, TNA ADM 36/7390. Although the *Garlands* captain, H. St. John, sent the Admiralty a number of letters regarding the death and discharge of seamen while in New York from Oct. 1764 to the end of 1767 he never mentioned the discharge of Incobs. Navy Board In-Letters, TNA ADM 106/11160/53, 60, 82, 122, 153, 176, 421. Whether Incobs slave master kept the unfortunate seaman, advertised his sale or arranged his sale through a broker who regularly advertised in New York newspapers is unknown. *New-York Mercury*, 1764 (For the “trivial Expence of Two Shillings” the broker John Knapp supplied slaves to “Gentleman, &c, who are in Want”); *New-York Mercury*, Jan. 14, 1765 (28 year old Negro man advertised for sale). Had his master sold Incobs he would have received up to one hundred pounds for his experienced mariner. *New-York Mercury*, Sept. 10, 1764.

possible that this sail maker had obtained the blue sea experience shipping out on privateers before finding his way to England and a berth on HMS *Garlands*. More likely, John Incobs was Captain John Taylor's slave Jack. Jack fled in 1760 dressed in sailor's clothes. Speaking both English and Dutch, he was believed by his ship captain master to have escaped via the sea. As it is likely that Jack had been employed by Captain Taylor as a member of his ship crew, this runaway would have been able to demonstrate the maritime experience necessary to obtain able-bodied seaman status when he reached England.⁷¹

Although Incobs appears to have been taken up by his former slave master upon his return to New York, the Royal Navy often protected dark-skinned seamen from slave masters. Earlier in the Seven Years War on at least two occasions the Admiralty took affirmative steps to stop slave owners from taking back their former slaves. In 1758 the black naval seaman William Stephens was the subject of a struggle between his former slave master and naval officials. Having volunteered for service in the navy, Stephens was viewed by the navy as a valuable seaman at a time when such men were hard to obtain and keep in the service. The Admiralty therefore refused to return the mariner to his former master. That same year, the Admiralty once again asserted that a former slave employed as a naval seaman would not be returned to his former slave master. William Castillo had been employed by his owner, a Boston ship captain, as a seaman before he fled and joined the navy. When his former owner encountered Castillo on the streets of London, he had the mariner arrested, secured with an iron collar aboard ship, and

⁷¹ HMS *Garlands* Muster Roll, 1766-1767, TNA ADM 36/7390; *New-York Gazette, or Weekly Post-Boy*, July 24, 1758; *New-York Gazette* [Weyman's], Mar. 10, 1760. Incobs may have obtained a berth to the West Indies and jumped ship to take advantage of the need in that market for seaman on voyages to England. It is also possible that Incobs' master never placed a fugitive advertisement that his slave had fled.

threatened with sale to Barbados. In response to Castillo's written plea for their intercession, the Admiralty directed Admiral Holburne that "whenever he discover any attempt of this kind, he should prevent it." The Admiralty further directed that Castillo was to be listed on his naval ship's muster rolls as an able bodied seaman, a sign both of Castillo's maritime abilities, and his free status. The Admiralty's protection of these men seems to be predicated upon a belief that as British sailors they were entitled to the equal treatment that might not be available to other colored mariners within the British Empire or to colored seamen on enemy ships.⁷²

At the same time that the Admiralty was protecting William Stephens and William Castillo, naval officers were using slave mariners as seamen for their private profits. During the Seven Years War, Admiral James Douglas was the Commander of the Navy's West Indies fleet. Douglas, who subsequently became commander of Portsmouth and a Member of Parliament, felt no hesitation in using enslaved mariners to man his privately owned privateers. Admiral Douglas' willingness to do so illustrates the contradiction of the Navy's attempting to be an island of liberty within an Atlantic world in which enslavement of colored men was generally the norm. When in England, colored mariners tended to be protected by the Navy as English subjects, while naval officials in North America, treated these men in conformity with the legal and social mores of the slave-based colonies, meaning that their location, as well as their skin color could determine these men's fate.⁷³

Whites who sought to enrich themselves by using colored sailors on privateers

⁷² Rodgers, *Wooden World*, 113-137, 160-162.

⁷³ Douglas Papers, NMM; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), Sir James Douglas (1703-1787), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7901> (accessed April 21, 2007); Eliga H. Gould, "Zones of Law, Zones of Violence: The Legal Geography of the Atlantic, 1772," *WMQ* 60:3 (July 2003), 503-505.

during the Seven Years War were hardly limited to naval officers such as Admiral Douglas. During the Seven Years War privateering became an important economic sector in northern ports. As Cornelius Cuyler remarked to his son in 1756, like many North American colonists, he “hope[d] these Privateers maybe fortunate & make us a Good Voyage & that we may get something for risqing our Money.” By the end of the war, New York privateers had more than twenty thousand seamen. These privateers seized prizes worth approximately £1,500,000, an enormous boost to New York’s economy. Rhode Island, the most active privateering North American port, and Philadelphia, each also saw similar significant expansion in their maritime sector. Men such as Charles Nicolls, a New York wine importer who owed only small shares in vessels before the Seven Years War, made considerable money on his privateering investments during the war while employing maritime fugitives. In the three months between November 1758 and January 1759, Nicolls and his partner William Waddell received almost £4200 when three prizes captured by their privateer *Oliver Cromwell* were sold at public auction. Newport merchants such as the Waltons, Redwoods, and Malbones took up “their favorite alternative gamble, privateering,” when they found that French privateers off the coast of Africa made slaving too risky.⁷⁴ Other investors, such as Philadelphia Captain Macpherson used the proceeds from privateer prizes to build large estates. Even Governmental officials involved in securing the return of privateer seamen relied upon colored mariners. When in 1759 William Denny, Pennsylvania’s Lieutenant Governor, sent several ships to Hispaniola as part of a prisoner exchange, the “Negro Mariners” Charles, Joe London, Esor Thiau, Jack David, Thomas Dewar, and Caesar Pennrose

⁷⁴ Cornelius Cuyler Letterbooks, AAS, Vol. 3, 21 Sept. 1756 Letter to son Philip; Deutsch, “Elusive Guineamen,” 245.

comprised half of the non-officers among the crews.⁷⁵

Northern privateer owners and captains, all seeking riches by capturing prizes, were willing to accept maritime fugitives as crewmembers, leading to “large numbers” of colored men working on privateers. The whites hiring these runaways included privateer owners who during peacetime had limited prior involvement in the maritime industry. Just like New York ship master Captain McDougall, these merchants found maritime fugitives useful. In 1757, when Captain McDougall steered the privateer *Tyger* out of New York harbor, the vessel had a crew of sixty-two men. Among them were twenty-three men identified as “black” and twenty-four identified as “brown.” The sizable African-American presence on Captain McDougall’s privateer is indicative of the large number of colored sailors on privateers and the opportunities available to fugitive slaves during the Seven Years War.⁷⁶ Typical of the fugitives who might have found a berth on a privateer was Dennis Hicks’ fourteen-year-old slave. In a May 31, 1756, advertisement, shipwright Hicks sought the return of his slave. Wearing a “blue sailors jacket, pair of Breeches, an old Hat and Cap,” this young man had left his dockside enslavement and proceeded to try to convince a sea captain that his maritime knowledge qualified him for a berth on a vessel out of New York.⁷⁷ Similarly, in 1758 a slave named Ralph was “expected” to “be on board” a New York privateer.⁷⁸ Even slaves unfamiliar with

⁷⁵ “Ship Registers for the Port of Philadelphia, 1726-1775,” *PMHB* 26:4 (1902), 470-471.

⁷⁶ Swanson, “American Privateering and Imperial Warfare,” 368; Lydon, “The Role of New York in Privateering Down to 1763,” 14-15, 244; Pybus, “Billy Blue,” 259; “List of Men Belonging to the Privateer *Tyger*,” McDougall Papers, N-YHS, Reel 1. Excluding from a calculation of African-American crewmembers those described as “brown,” due to the fact that some whites who had been tanned by years of outdoor work were sometimes described as “brown,” results in an undercounting of the African-American sailors. Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 234; James Farr, “A Slow Boat to Nowhere: The Multi-racial Crews of the American Whaling Industry,” *Journal of Negro History* 68:2 (Spring 1983), 164.

⁷⁷ *New-York Gazette*, May 31, 1756.

⁷⁸ *New-York Gazette*, July 24, 1758; and *New-York Gazette*, Dec. 18, 1758. Fugitives from North America also served as pilots aboard French privateers that plundered plantations near Port Royal. *Boston Evening-*

northern ports and with limited understanding of English were able to elude their masters for weeks until they could obtain berths on vessels. For example, in 1762 a nineteen-year-old slave named Pero escaped from New York's hospital. A native of Martinico, he wore no shoes and spoke only a "little English." Despite these obvious handicaps Pero was able to hide himself in the city for "a Fort'night" while seeking a berth. If a slave who had recently come to New York from the French West Indies was able to obtain a berth, how much easier it must have been for acculturated slaves who had some real maritime experience.⁷⁹

Masters and slaves used this "privateer craze" to enrich themselves, and sometimes to renegotiate their relationship. For example, in 1758 Cornelius Wykoop's slave Fortune returned from a cruise having earned a prize share of £100. Wykoop then sought to get the slave, who "follow'd the Seas some time formerly," to take another privateer voyage. There is no record of whether Wykoop was able to obtain Fortune's agreement to take "another cruise," but both he and Wykoop understood that "some inducement" for him to ship again would be required. Clearly, war and his master's desire to make quick money provided Fortune with an opportunity to possibly negotiate for his freedom.⁸⁰

American born slaves working in agriculture also believed they could use the northern maritime industry to obtain freedom. In 1764 an unnamed slave from Morris County, New Jersey, was described as one who "understands all Sorts of Farmer's Work"

Post, Aug. 28, 1758.

⁷⁹ *New-York Gazette*, Sept. 30, 1762.

⁸⁰ Cornelius Wynkoop to Evert Bancker, Jr., Bancker Papers, N-YHS. The privatereering craze was not limited to New York's gentlemen merchants. Purchases of privateer shares could, as it did for Mrs. Anne Bancker, prove quite profitable for a merchant's wife. Van Buskirk, *Generous Enemies*, 117-118.

and as having “been a little to Sea.”⁸¹ His owner believed this slave, like many other rural slaves, would use his limited maritime experience to escape enslavement. Even African-born slaves with no maritime experience and country marks were believed to have fled via the sea. In October 1763 two such Rhode Island men, Jack and London, each fled their owners seeking ship berths.⁸²

The life of Pompey, a twenty-five year-old New York City slave who fled his master Robert Benson illustrates the scope of the maritime labor market for fugitive slaves during the Seven Years War. Pompey spoke “both Dutch and English” and was “exceedingly well known” for driving Benson’s beer wagon about the city. Despite being an easily identified figure, Pompey believed he could evade capture by “sculking about the Docks” and finding a berth on one of the many vessels in New York’s busy harbor. Apparently, he was successful. A fugitive slave advertisement indicated his master’s widow believed Pompey “to have been carried off some days ago to Stamford in New-England, having been seen on board the Sloop of Abraham Demeld.”⁸³ Pompey’s life demonstrates a number of important factors concerning fugitive slaves’ use of the northern maritime industry during the Seven Years War. The fugitive slave advertisement seeking Pompey’s return evidences the central role that war and privateering played for fugitive slaves in northern ports, the advantages that multilingual slaves had in removing the shackles of slavery, the freedom of movement in urban areas that enabled slaves to recognize those whites who would assist them, and the excellent opportunities for runaways to permanently escape enslavement that port cities such as Philadelphia, New York and Newport provided. During the Seven Years War, scores of other northern

⁸¹ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 9, and Sept. 13, 1764.

⁸² *Newport Mercury*, Oct. 15, 1763, Oct. 31, 1763.

⁸³ *New-York Gazette*, July 26, 1756.

masters whose slaves fled enslavement placed advertisements seeking assistance in capturing their slaves (Tables 7-7, 8-7 and 9-7).⁸⁴ Fugitive slave advertisements also illustrate slaves' knowledge of the maritime industry served as an essential tool in their obtaining freedom, even for slaves such as Pompey, who lacked maritime experience.⁸⁵

As military operations shifted to the West Indies at the end of 1760 and the beginning of 1761, northern ports' privateering declined significantly. At the same time, increased British naval enforcement against smuggling activities constricted shipping activities. Notwithstanding these developments, numerous slaves continued to flee via the sea. Slaves like Prince still believed that the shipping sector provided opportunities to change their lives. Working for noted privateer Captain Samuel Bayard in 1761, Prince shopped himself on the city's docks. Others with less maritime experience were still able in the 1760-1764 period to find berths. Sam, a "well-known" cook in a tavern, was believed to have fled by sea, while the owners of Jack, and two Negro men who spoke no English, believed each had sought berths on northern ships.⁸⁶ It is not known whether these slaves were successful in their attempts to flee. What is apparent is that their chances of success were considerably less than that of slaves who had the good fortune to flee earlier during the height of the city's privateering craze.

⁸⁴ Examples of the numerous fugitive slave advertisements include *New-York Gazette*, Mar. 3, 1755, Jan. 12, 1756, July 26, 1756, Nov. 8, 1756, May 30, 1757, Nov. 21, 1757, May 8, 1758, Sept. 13, 1758, Aug. 13, 1759, Feb. 18, 1760, June 18, 1761, April 29, 1762, Mar. 5, 1763, February 20, 1764; *Newport Mercury*, Apr. 22, 1760, Feb. 9, 1762, June 20, 1763; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Dec. 15, 1757, Aug. 28, 1760, Aug. 26, 1762.

⁸⁵ Due to the frequency of privateer captains "carry[ing] off slaves" the Rhode Island General Assembly fined captains £500 for doing so. The law also authorized slave owners to search vessels for fugitives and to bring action against offending captains. *RCRI* 7:65.

⁸⁶ Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 191; *New-York Gazette*, September 29, 1763, February 20, 1764, and November 18, 1764.

Economic Recession and Liberty, 1764-1774

The Treaty of Paris signed in February, 1763, ushered in a period of reduced opportunities for maritime flight. In the years leading to the Revolution, while liberty was the central focus of street demonstrations and commentaries in newspapers, maritime fugitives' opportunities for freedom at sea were limited due to an economic slowdown and import bans. At the same time, some opportunities were created for maritime fugitives due to changing imperial policies that resulted in an increased naval presence on the North American station. Legal developments during this period also caused maritime fugitives to attempt to reach English ports.

In 1765 the *New-York Post Boy* declared that "trade in this part of the world is come to so wretched a pass that you would imagine the plague had been here," and the following year the city's poor were observed to be in "starving condition." In the same period, Benjamin Rush noted that Philadelphia was "full of sailors who cannot procure berths," There was almost no growth in Philadelphia shipping, and officials complained of the "want of Employment, which was reducing the large number of residents to great Straits." In Newport the economy was so bad that the Town Council noted, "There are sundry men, women and children, who have been chargeable to the Town, and many more are likely to do so." Sailors' wages in northern ports underwent a precipitous decline.⁸⁷ Merchants fretted over unpaid bills and were compelled to bring legal suits to recover debts, while seamen sat in taverns unemployed, longing for the days when warfare gave them steady work. Colonial ports were said to have experienced the

⁸⁷ Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 192; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 29, 1776; McCusker, *The Pennsylvania Shipping Industry in the Eighteenth Century*, 317-332; Crane, *Dependent People*, 64; Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront*, 20; *Whereas the Number of Poor*, Evans no. 9870. Contrary to Thelma Foote's claim that the economic slump of 1764-1769 resulted in "few enslaved human cargoes" arriving in New York, more than 650 slaves were imported into New York between 1764-1769. *TASD*; Table 2-2.

“greatest economic stagnation ever known.” With British officials and soldiers often the scapegoats for colonial frustration towards new imperial taxation and trading mandates, colonial ports were cauldrons of frustration and anxiety. In face of such dire conditions, some slave owners released their elderly slaves from bondage to avoid the costs of feeding them, while others sold their bondsmen to raise needed cash. Slaves seeking to flee found maritime flight not the effective means to permanent escape it had been just a few years earlier.⁸⁸

With shipping slowing down, there were few maritime fugitives in the first years after the 1763 Treaty of Paris. For example, only two fugitive slaves were advertised in New York newspapers as having attempted to flee via the sea in the years between 1765 and 1768. One of the two, a twenty-two year-old man named Bill, appears to have been a particularly determined and capable runaway; speaking good English and fluent Dutch, Bill escaped with an iron collar around his neck. The second runaway, Charles, also spoke two languages. Living on Dock Street across from the city’s many wharves, Charles was likely to have been familiar with New York’s maritime industry, a helpful tool in negotiating his way to freedom.⁸⁹ While Bill and Charles are notable for their abilities to find opportunities in the maritime industry, their experiences were the exception in a period that saw few maritime fugitives escaping. Slaves in the Newport and Philadelphia region also did not flee via the sea in the five years after the end of the Seven Years War.

Non-importation agreements were implemented in the various northern ports

⁸⁸ Nash, *First City*, 68; Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront*, 104; *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, June 17, 1768.

⁸⁹ *New-York Gazette*, May 1, 1766 and June 26, 1766. Maritime fugitives seeking berths in New York during the winter of 1765-6 were hampered by frigates blocking the harbor delaying ships sailing south to Florida and the West Indies. Feb. 7, 1766 Letter from Messrs. Bayard & Co., TNA T 1/452/23-26.

between 1768 and 1770. Philadelphia's economy was damaged by the non-importation agreement of 1769-1770 and the English credit crisis in 1772, resulting in significant increases in the number of people receiving public assistance.⁹⁰ With a lagging economy, only four maritime fugitives - Stephen, Eben, Jack and Ben – were advertised in Philadelphia newspapers during the ban. New York's experience with its importation ban was quite different. Although a non-importation agreement was in effect in New York from the summer of 1768 to mid-1770, a regular stream of maritime fugitives sought berths in New York. Peter, Shier, Dido, Dick, Sam, Frank, George, Waverage, Tom, Jim, Peter, Cato, Dick, and Charles, all fled via the sea during the importation ban. These fugitives serve as a stark reminder that the non-importation bans affected different ports in different ways. New York's merchants appear to have been able to adjust to the ban. The larger number of maritime fugitives in New York also reflects the city's growing slave population. By 1770, slave imports into New York brought its slave population to over 3,100, while Philadelphia's was only just over seven hundred.⁹¹

In the post-Seven Years War period, although the British Navy expended vast resources on John Byron's and Samuel Wallis's circumnavigation voyages, slaves seeking berths on naval ships encountered a markedly smaller fleet than during the war.

⁹⁰ Nash, et. al., "Labor in the Era of the American Revolution: An Exchange," 423; Smith, "Poverty and Marginality," 96.

⁹¹ Despite large numbers of African slaves imported into New York during the Seven Years War, there is little evidence of these men attempting to escape via the sea. Only one of the maritime fugitives during the non-importation ban had an African name. None of these maritime fugitives were described as African-born, having country marks or having filed teeth. *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, June 1, 1768, 20, 1768, Mar. 6, 1769, Apr. 10, 1769, Aug. 14, 1769, Sept. 25, 1769, Jan. 29, 1770, Feb. 26, 1770, Mar. 26, 1770, Apr. 30, 1770, May 7, 1770, June 11, 1770, June 23, 1770, July 15, 1770.

Rhode Island was noticeably reluctant to abide with non-importation agreements, continuing to trade after other ports stop importing British goods. Frederick Dalzell, "Prudence and the Golden Egg: Establishing the Federal Government in Providence, Rhode Island," *NEQ* 65:3 (Sept. 1992), 356. During non-importation bans, some slaves were regularly employed as mariners on coasters. For example, Ben worked as a seaman on the schooner *Lovely Lass* in 1769-1770 before he fled in July 1770. *Pennsylvania Chronicle and General Advertiser*, May 15, Nov. 13, 1769, May 25, July 2, 1770.

Between December 1762 and December 1763, the number of naval seamen was reduced by more than two-thirds, from 85,260 to 26,008 (Graph 17-1). Despite the significant contraction in its manning needs, the British Navy remained a viable option for maritime fugitives in the period between the end of the Seven Years War and beginning of the American Revolution for two reasons. First, widespread desertion decimated many naval ships' complements. Captains of ships such as HMS *Swan*, which suffered a loss of 57 men out of its complement of 100 seamen in the course of one year in New York, were prone to turn a blind eye to where a mariner with dark skin had come from.⁹² In addition to the continuing problem of desertion, the British Navy on the North American station in the years before the American Revolution was of a remarkably different character than it had been in earlier peacetime eras. With the Grenville administration seeking greater revenue through more vigorous enforcement of measures such as the Sugar Act of 1764, the navy increased in size in the years after 1765. In stark contrast to the several ships the navy stationed on the North American coast in the early decades of the century, during the 1760s the Admiralty assigned between eighteen and twenty-seven ships to the colonies. The large size of the fleet led to increased manning needs and additional opportunities for maritime fugitives. This swelling in naval crews was what might have drawn the slave Joe from Philadelphian to New York in 1762 to parlay his experience as a sea cook into a berth on a warship.⁹³

In 1764-1765 press gang activities led to conflicts between naval crews and merchant seamen in New York and Newport. A seven week hot press crippled New

⁹² HMS *Swan* Muster Roll, 1774, TNA ADM 36/7965. See *New-York Mercury*, May 4, 1778, March 1, September 13, 1779, October 1, 1781, June 10, December 30, 1782, and *New-York Weekly Post-Boy*, November 4, 1775 for other examples of captains hiring deserters.

⁹³ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 26, 1762.

York's merchant shipping during 1764. That spring HMS *Conventry* impressed forty-three men in New York in just over a month, more than a third of the ship's crew.⁹⁴ HMS *Maidstone's* impressments in Newport resulted in a mob of fifty residents shooting at HMS *St. John*. The following year on June 10, the *Newport Mercury* reported that fishing and coasting vessels were reluctant to come into Newport, and wood supplies were drying up because of impressment fears. After another impressment roundup in Newport in 1765, a mob "chiefly of sailors, Boys and Negroes to the number of above Five Hundred" burned a boat from the *Maidstone*. With impressment depriving colonial sailors of the opportunity for high wages on merchant ships, British press gangs were deeply resented by the mariners of North America.⁹⁵ While press gangs made many ship captains and seamen reluctant to venture out of northern ports and led some Negroes to riot against impressment, the Navy's desperate need for mariners led runaways to find berths on naval vessels. Maritime fugitives who obtained berths would have had as messmates Negroes, Mulattos, and Indians. Some of their messmates would have been impressed colored seamen. Other messmates may have included colored mariners, such as John Cato, William Thomas and John Cuff, who each voluntarily enlisted onto naval ships during this period.⁹⁶

With the lifting of importation bans, slaves began to view the sea again as a means to obtain freedom. In the next four years, a number of fugitive slaves used

⁹⁴ HMS *Coventry* Lt. Logbook, 1763-1764, NMM ADM/L/C/213; HMS *Coventry* Muster Roll, 1763-1765, TNA ADM 36/7568; Lemisch, "Jack Tars in the Streets," 388.

⁹⁵ Nicholas Rogers, "Liberty Road: Opposition to Impressment in Britain during the American War of Independence," in *Jack Tar: Essays in Maritime Life and Labour* (Fredericton, 1991); 54. A number of American seamen, from Boston, Nantucket and Long Island, were impressed in 1772 onto the *Lively*. HMS *Lively* Muster Roll, 1772-1773, TNA ADM 36/7624. Even lenient merchant ship captains, such as Nicholas Pocock, suffered significant desertion by their crews when in North American ports due to seamen's fear of being impressed. Cordingly, *Nicholas Pocock, 1740-1821* (London, 1986), 26.

⁹⁶ HMS *Coventry* Muster Roll, 1763-1765, HMS *Lively* Muster Roll, 1772-1773, TNA ADM 36/7624.

shipping to escape their bondage. This increase in slaves fleeing by the sea can be partly attributed to a rebound in the maritime industry. With ships again crossing to England and the West Indies trade picking up, opportunities for crew berths increased. Probably just as important a factor in the growing presence of fugitive slaves on northern wharves was the rhetoric of liberty that filled the streets of northern ports. The shouts of “Liberty, Liberty” that rang out in the streets of northern ports as the Sons of Liberty and other Patriots demonstrated against British legislation surely were heard by slaves. While many of the Patriots had no desire to see northern slaves freed, Patriot rhetoric of individual liberty surely caused some slaves to consider why they could not experience such liberty. Recent legal developments had made England a far more hospitable place for slaves than northern ports as many Americans came to see England as a “Territory where slavery is forbidden perch.”⁹⁷ This led slaves like Frank Brittan, a dark Mustee, and Bacchus, an African-born slave, to “attempt to get on board some vessel bound for Great Britain,” believing arrival there would ensure their freedom. Slaves, both in remote rural regions and major port cities, had “knowledge of” Justice Mansfield’s *Somerset* decision. Urban slaves undoubtedly heard of it from the twenty-two reports in colonial newspapers and the buzz the case created in taverns and coffee houses. Slaves living in rural areas found out about Justice Mansfield’s decision through a web of communication in which information flowed from the markets and streets of cities and market towns to literate rural slaves who in turn told African-born slaves with limited knowledge of English. The result was many slaves throughout North America believed, as did many of their masters, that *Somerset* ended slavery in England. Despite many colonial printers downplaying of

⁹⁷ *New-York Gazette*, Oct. 15, 1770, September 2, 1771, November 5, 1771, January 5, 1773, October 13, 1774, and November 7, 1774; Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 201; Hodges, *Root & Branch*, 136.

the case's significance, word of the decision circulated throughout the colonies.⁹⁸

While some fugitive slaves on the eve of the American Revolution set out for England, others sought closer havens. When twenty-six year-old Constant, gentleman's servant, fled his master in 1774, his lack of sea experience would not have made him an ideal candidate to be a mariner. Still, his master was convinced he was headed for New York "with a view of procuring a passage to the West Indies." With an ability to play the fiddle, Constant had a skill that was often highly valued among mariners and that he perhaps was able to leverage into a ticket to the West Indies. Constant and the maritime fugitives seeking to go to England demonstrate that for fugitive slaves, havens of freedom could be found in a variety of locales throughout the Atlantic world.⁹⁹

The "Black Revolution," 1775-1783

Prior to independence few whites followed the example of Joseph Coe, Captain David Coe, Captain Isaac Miller, and Elisha Stone of Middletown, Connecticut, who manumitted five "healthy, able bodied, faithful persons" in 1775. Freedom for enslaved northern bondsmen was far more likely to be found through maritime flight. The military roles slaves could play in the war were critical considerations for British and American military leaders. Both sides needed to man armies and naval units in a war fought over an extended geographical area. American ships alone were estimated to have required more than 200,000 sailors. Royal Naval captains valued the local knowledge of black pilots, the seamanship of maritime fugitives, and the sheer muscle of many a landlubber slave

⁹⁸ *Newport Mercury*, Oct. 12, 1772; Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 246, 460-61; Bradley, *Propaganda and the American Revolution*, 101 (Rebel papers such as the *Boston Gazette* excluded antislavery essays and limited mention of slavery to Great Britain's enslavement of its American colonies).

⁹⁹ *Rivington's New-York Gazette*, November 3, 1774; Letter from Lt. Gov. Cadwallader Colden to Earl of Dartmouth, Nov. 2, 1774, TNA T 1/517/152-154. Slaves who ran away or were arrested for criminal offenses were frequently described as fiddlers. Hormanen, *New York Conspiracy*, 117, 126, 154.

runaway. As Henry Clinton noted, the loss of slave enlistments in the British cause would have deprived the King's forces of a "principal Support."¹⁰⁰ The two sides' military leaders arming of slaves resulted in doors to freedom opening that many slaves were only too willing to take advantage of. Fleeing slaves declared their independence by pledging allegiance to whoever offered the best opportunity for permanent freedom.¹⁰¹

Britain's struggles both to put down the rebellion and have sufficient manpower to do so led the Earl of Dunmore in 1775 to proclaim, "I do hereby declare all indentured servants, negroes, or others, (appertaining to Rebels,) free that are able and willing to bear arms, they joining His Majesty's troops." This decree, and the "great Confusion" resulting from the British invasion, enticed slaves throughout the colonies to flee their masters to join British army and naval forces. The President of the Fourth Virginia Conference glumly acknowledged that "slaves flock to [Dunmore] in abundance," many of them pilots and other maritime workers.¹⁰² Dunmore's Proclamation established that

¹⁰⁰ *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, Feb. 28, 1775; Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront*, 106. The "ignorance of [some naval] pilots" delayed the movement of the British Army. Feb. 4, 1781 Letter of Major James Henry Craig, TNA PRO 30/11/5/67. Despite Rhode Island and other colonial governments subsequently accepting black recruits in order to make their enlistment quotas, many American officers, declared, "Negroes will not be received." *Providence Gazette & Country Journal*, Jan. 10, 1781.

The British arming runaways in North America was part of a larger trend by military officials to enlist dark-skinned peoples as allies throughout the British empire. Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, 2006), 310. Quarles's *The Negro in the American Revolution* remains the most comprehensive analysis of black military participation in the Revolution, and American and British approaches to black military enlistment.

¹⁰¹ A contemporary description of some of the factors that caused slaves to choose one side or another during the American Revolution is "A Dialogue between TONEY and CUFFEE on State Affairs," *American Journal and General Advertiser*, Mar. 14, 1781.

¹⁰² Marcus Rediker, "A Motley Crew of Rebels," in *The Transforming Hand of Revolution: Reconsidering the American Revolution as a Social Movement*, ed. Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1995), 157; *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, June 2, 1780; Pybus, *Black Founders*, 15. Britain's difficulties in finding sufficient manpower for forces often led the British military to employ both impressed slaves and runaways. Letter Mar. 4, 1781 James Robinson to Earl Cornwallis, TNA PRO 30/11/69/5; May 3, 1781 letter from Lt. Colonel Clarke at St. Augustine to Earl Cornwallis, TNA PRO 30/11/6/31; Pybus, "Jefferson's Faulty Math", 253n19.

Whites feared armed slave uprisings too much to have agreed with the anonymous Pennsylvanian who urged the colonists to undermine the British "by arming our trusty slaves ourselves." Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, 20-26; *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, July 25, 1775. The problem was that

the military conflict over the Americans' desire for independence would also become, as Benjamin Quarles observed, "a Black Declaration of Independence." As one Pennsylvania slave master complained, "Negroes in general think that Lord Dunmore [is] contending for their liberty." In this struggle, the aspirations of enslaved Americans were, as Herbert Aptheker aptly summarized, of "one common origin, one set purpose --- the achievement of liberty."¹⁰³ The Proclamation led northern slaves to be more assertive in their behavior and seek freedom in numbers greater than previously. Benedict Arnold's slave Punch in June 1780 made his way to British lines, seeking a berth in New York, while a Philadelphia slave told a white woman, "stay you d---d white bitch, till Lord Dunmore and his black regiment come and then we will see who is to take the wall." Women and children, who previously rarely fled, ran in large numbers, seeking safety

Americans did not believe their slaves to be "trusty." *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, Oct. 17, 1780; *New-York Journal or General Advertiser*, Aug. 1, 1776. Whites generally believed that slaves thought that "the war has come to help the poor Negroes," i.e., to free them. Antonio T. Bly, "American Plebian: Ordinary People in the Age of Revolution," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 35:3 (Winter 2002), 322.

¹⁰³ Aptheker, *Negro Slave Revolts*, 5-6; Benjamin Quarles, "The Revolutionary War as a Black Declaration of Independence," in *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution*, ed. Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman (Charlottesville, VA, 1983), 292-293; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 17, 1776. Slaves fled to Dunmore before his Proclamation, although their number was probably less than one hundred. Benjamin Quarles, "Lord Dunmore as Liberator," *WMQ* 15:3 (Oct. 1958), 497n18. There has been a considerable divergence in the estimates of the number of slaves who escaped during the Revolution. Richard Morris calculated that between 80,000 and 100,000 blacks left with the British, although that number would include a considerable number of enslaved individuals belonging to loyalist slave owners. Richard Morris, *The American Revolution Reconsidered* (New York, 1967), 76. Melvin Drimmer estimated that southern slave owners alone lost 65,000. Melvin Drimmer in introduction to Benjamin Quarles, "The Negro Response: Evacuation with the British," in *Black History: A Reappraisal*, ed. Melvin Drimmer (New York, 1968), 133. Sylvia Frey believes a total of 80,000-100,000 escaped. Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 211n22. Alan Kulikoff has estimated that "approximately twenty-five thousand [slaves] had emancipated themselves by fleeing to the British." Alan Kulikoff, "Uprooted Peoples," in *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution*, ed. Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman (Charlottesville, VA, 1983), 144. Simon Schama has estimated that 30,000 runaway slaves fled to the British. Schama, *Rough Crossings*, Chap. IV. The lack of documentation for this estimate has led one reviewer to call the estimate "a little shift." Alan Atkin, "An American Paradox," *The New Criterion*, 25:1 (Sept. 2006), 131. More recently, Cassandra Pybus has taken issue with these estimates. Pybus has masterfully shown how earlier estimates were inflated and that "no less than eight thousand and no more than ten thousand" African Americans evacuated with British forces is a well-crafted estimate. Cassandra Pybus, "Jefferson's Faulty Math: The Question of Slave Defections in the American Revolution," *WMQ* 62:2 (Apr. 2005), 243-264. Ira Berlin has observed, in addition to those runaways who left with the British, at least several thousand fugitive slaves simply disappeared and became part of the growing free black population of the new American nation. Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 263.

behind British lines. In these circumstances, maritime flight became increasingly possible, as the presence of military forces made large-scale insurrections nearly impossible.¹⁰⁴

With the door open to slaves gaining freedom through military service, maritime fugitives found themselves with not less than six possible methods to escape enslavement by service at sea: British naval vessels, merchant ships, British privateers, American privateers, American naval ships, and American state navies. Each of these types of shipping had benefits and drawbacks that shifted over time, depending upon the course of the war and the location of a fugitive slave. And at the same time that warfare brought increased opportunities for maritime flight, certain sectors of North America's maritime industry, such as whaling, that previously provided berths to maritime fugitives, "ground to a halt."¹⁰⁵

During the Revolution, the British Navy's need for seamen increased exponentially, from 17,731 men in 1774 to 98,199 men in 1782, 11,176 of whom served

¹⁰⁴ Pybus, "Jefferson's Faulty Math," 249; White, *Somewhat More Independent*, 141; *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, Dec. 4, 1775; Graham Russell Hodges, "Black Revolt in the Neutral Zone, 1775-1783," in *New York in the Age of Revolution, 1775-1800*, ed. Paul Gilje and William Pencack (Cranbury, 1992), 20-47; Sylvia Frey, "Between Slavery and Freedom: Virginia Blacks in the American Revolution," *Journal of Southern History* 49:3 (Aug., 1985): 376; Ray Thompson, *Benedict Arnold in Philadelphia* (Fort Washington, 1975), 135. For some Virginian slaves flight resulted in their recapture and being sold to work in iron mines or transported to the West Indies. Pybus, *Black Founders*, 17. Others who reached British forces found themselves the unfortunate victims of small-pox. Elizabeth Fenn, *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82* (New York, 2001), 55-62.

Whether some maritime fugitives may have become part of a "proto-proletariat," or were would-be patriots, most acted out of self-interest. Maritime fugitives' concepts of liberty were varied and diverse, and resulted in some joining the American Navy while many other runaways fled to the Royal Navy. Rediker and Linebaugh, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 214-227; Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront*, Chap. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Dolan, *Leviathan*, 149-163; *Speedwell*, TNA HCA 32/454/72 (NY Vice-Admiralty Ct., 1777); Nov. 30, 1779 Letter of Admiral James Douglas to Admiralty, NMM DOU/9. Even when Nantucket whalers were able to sail, many were harassed by privateers.

American slave owners' fear that the British would employ slave soldiers against them is illustrated by the unfounded rumors that the British army had brought West Indies slaves to Virginia to assist the British army in putting down the rebellion. *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie) Williamsburg, July 12, 1776; email Philip D. Morgan, February 8, 2007. The British did, however, consider using "people of colour" from the West Indies in their North American military operations. Secretary of State correspondence regarding Jamaica, July 2-20, 1780, TNA CO 137/78/25-26.

on seventy-three ships in North America.¹⁰⁶ As the Royal Navy faced skyrocketing manning requirements, its ships also experienced widespread turnover among their crews due to low pay, difficult working conditions, and sometimes harsh discipline.

Approximately one in five naval seamen on the North American squadron during the Revolution deserted. Rare was the British naval muster for a ship on the North American station that did not show seamen deserting. By 1779, Admiral Arbuthnot, commander of the North American fleet, noted “that no boat can come to shore,” as privateers were “likely to prevail” in enticing naval seamen. He therefore issued a public declaration that “for every seaman, or sea faring man, that may desert from the King’s ships or transports ...I will press four men, out of the privateers and merchants vessels.” Admiral Arbuthnot’s decree failed to halt the tide of desertions.¹⁰⁷ Two years later, facing a severe shortage of seamen as 1,400 sailors languished in sick bays, Admiral Arbuthnot ordered a “hot press.” Scores of New Yorkers, including thirty-six men on HMS *Adamant*, found themselves coercively employed by the Royal Navy.¹⁰⁸

The Royal Navy’s manning difficulties resulted in scores of colored mariners

¹⁰⁶ TNA ADM 8/50 and TNA ADM 8/58.

¹⁰⁷ Martin Hubley, “The lower kind of People...are not very well inclined to his Majs. Govt.’ Desertion, Identity, and the North American Squadron of the Royal Navy, 1774-1776,” paper presented at the 2007 Naval History Symposium, Annapolis, MD, Sept. 21, 2007; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Sept. 20, 1779; HMS *Mars* Pay Roll, 1776, TNA ADM 33/478; HMS *Mercury* Payrolls, 1774, TNA ADM 33/478. Men were not infrequently flogged for “attempting to desert,” as was Charles Bruce. HMS *Phoenix* Lts. Logbook, 1776-1779, NMM ADM/L/P/266. Desertion was a particularly difficult problem in the Caribbean due to the weather there being considered “rather warmer than America.” 24 Nov. 1778 Letter from Lady Morington to Admiral Cornwallis, NMM COR/57.

While desertion by naval seamen provided opportunities for maritime fugitives to find berths, deserters also provided information to American authorities that led to the arrest of a black who had been assisting the British. Pybus, *Epic Voyages*, 25. The presence of escaping slaves on British naval vessels in the West Indies during the Revolution compelled Admiral Young to order limiting each warship to four black sailors. This order proved of limited value as the dockyard at English Harbor, Antigua was said to be the site of “more frequent” escapes “than ever known heretofore.” Andrew O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia, 2000), 179-80.

¹⁰⁸ TNA ADM 36/8816, HMS *Adamant* Muster Roll, 1781. Arbuthnot’s hot press halted privateering and caused sailors “to fly and man the rebel ships of war.” May 6, 1781 Letter of James Robertson to Lord Germain, TNA CO 5/175/126.

becoming officers' servants, powder boys and able bodied seamen, earning wages and sharing in prize monies. American rebels capturing British naval vessels found large numbers of colored men among the British crews, although not nearly the "roughly a quarter of the Royal Navy," that Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker believed.¹⁰⁹ Some of these colored sailors had enlisted. Others, such as London Lincoln, a Purser's Servant on HMS *St. Albans*, were impressed as the British Navy was willing to impress "a few negroes to help out," as did the *Galatea*, *Iris* and *Delight* in the Spring of 1780.

Newspapers carried reports of British naval ships being "chiefly manned with runaway Negroes," an indication of the stream of maritime fugitives making their way to British warships. During 1781 at least two British barges with large groups of Negroes aboard undertook raids in Maryland. In April 1781, a British barge with a largely Negro crew plundered the town of Lower Marlboro. Four months later, a barge with a crew of thirty-five, described by a British deserter as having not more than eight whites aboard, used Courtney's Island as a base for raiding operations. They took at least four slaves from rebel owners.¹¹⁰

Those maritime fugitives who found berths on naval ships during the Revolution sometimes found riches through prize monies. High Court of Admiralty records list

¹⁰⁹ Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 311; Appendix C. My random review of Royal Navy muster rolls for the North American station indicates that 2.57% of the crews during the American Revolution were colored mariners. Given that muster rolls do not identify seamen by race, and many colored sailors often had names commonly associated with English or Scottish mariners, my tabulations clearly understate the presence of colored mariners. However, even if one were to assume that twice as many colored sailors were on navy vessels in 1777-8 and 1782, the years with the highest rates of colored mariners, their presence on men-of-war would never have exceed 8.2%.

¹¹⁰ Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, 153-155 (between 13 percent and 30 percent of captured British crews were black men); Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets," 384; *Pennsylvania Packet*, May 13, 1780; HMS *St. Albans* Pay Books, 1776-1777, TNA ADM 34/12; Prize Agent Assignments, TNA HCA 49/96/14, 32, 88, 90-1, 95, 97, 100, 116, 122, 126, 128; *Pennsylvania Ledger*, Sept. 30, 1775. There were reports "Negroes gone aboard" British men of war ships at Lewes, Delaware. Riordan, *Many Identities, One Nation*, 60. While Arbuthnot's actions may have permitted maritime fugitives to find berths on naval ships, it "puts a stop to privateering" for a period of months in 1781. May 6, 1781 Letter of James Robertson to Lord Germain, TNA CO 5/175/126.

scores of colored seamen on whose behalf agents were appointed to receive prize monies. In 1779 alone, HMS *Diligent*, HMS *Raleigh*, HMS *Galatea*, HMS *Thames*, HMS *Avenger*, HMS *Iris*, HMS *Virginia*, HMS *Guadeloupe*, HMS *Cyclops*, HMS *America*, HMS *Swift*, HMS *Assurance*, and HMS *Halifax* each had prize agents appointed for their colored mariners.¹¹¹

HMS *Brune* vividly demonstrates the variety of ways that maritime fugitives used the British Navy to their personal benefit during the American Revolution. While stationed off Virginia in January and February 1777, this man-of-war carried individuals of dark skin and diverse backgrounds. The *Brune*'s muster roll included colored mariners who voluntarily enlisted, were impressed and imprisoned as well as runaways carried as supernumeraries.¹¹² The fugitives were classified as "Refugees Negroes and Prisoners Victualled at Two Thirds Allowance of all Species." Each of these runaways used the *Brune* as a taxi service to travel to New York, avoid dangerous overland flight, and have the King's navy protect them on their flight north. Landing in New York, they were discharged into a burgeoning community of fugitives. A number of the fugitives on the *Brune*, like George, a seventeen year old boy from Virginia, were among the three thousand Black Loyalists who went to Nova Scotia in 1783.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Prize Agent Appointments, 1779, TNA HCA 49/96.

¹¹² HMS *Brune* Muster Rolls, 1776-77, TNA ADM 36/7673 & 7756; HMS *Brune* Lts. Logbook, 1776-80, NMM ADM/L/B/185. Among the impressed colored mariners on the *Brune* were John (1) and John (2). The enlisted colored seamen on the *Brune* included John Wilson, a 24 year old African-born able bodied seaman. It appears Wilson may have reached London and received a bounty as a member of London's Black Poor. Although two John Wilsons received bounties as part of the London Black Poor, it cannot be said with certainty whether one of these men was a seaman on the *Brune*. Graham Russell Hodges, ed., *The Black Loyalists Directory: African Americans in Exile After the American Revolution* (New York, 1996), Appendix 2, 235-236; Pybus, "Jefferson's Faulty Math," 263-264.

¹¹³ HMS *Brune* Muster Roll, 1777, TNA ADM 36/7756; Hodges, *The Black Loyalist Directory*, 134. Other "Refugee Negroes" were the subject of advertisements in which their masters futilely sought their return. *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie) Williamsburgh, Jan. 24, Dec. 13, 1777; *Virginia Gazette* (Pinkey), Jan. 6, 1776.

The *Brune* also took on a number of colored prisoners from prize ships including George, Guillome, John and Francisco from the *La Timpête*. In November, 1777 the *Brune* added Thomas,

Whether they came aboard as a captured Prize Negro, or as a maritime fugitive, the Royal Navy provided these men with opportunities to establish maritime careers. An example of a fugitive doing so was New Yorker Peter Creighton's slave boy, York. On May 10, 1783 Creighton placed an advertisement claiming that the diminutive 4' 5" York had fled from the prize schooner *Swan*. A prize of the *Prince William Henry*, the *Swan* had only recently been brought into New York. Creighton described York as having "had been on board of several of his Majesty's ships, viz, the *Adamant*, *Thames* and *Bellisarius*." Creighton was apparently unaware that York served on HMS *Europe* both before and after his short stint on the *Adamant*. Three years after having evaded his master, this young slave mariner was believed by his former master to have once again escaped onto a man-of-war.¹¹⁴

Not every maritime fugitive seeking refuge on Royal Navy vessels in North America found a welcoming environment. Some naval captains placed advertisements notifying masters their bondsmen could be recovered from particular ships. Other naval captains saw dark-skinned men as a means to enrich themselves. In April 1776 the captain of HMS *Scarborough* placed an advertisement claiming that Caesar Cabbott of Salem, Massachusetts, had been captured by the warship. The advertisement, placed just before the *Scarborough* left Rhode Island, would have led one to believe Cabbott had been a mariner on one of the several enemy ships the *Scarborough* captured sailing north from Savannah in March, 1776. A review of HMS *Scarborough's* muster rolls indicates the advertisement to be misleading. Cabbott was involuntarily on the *Scarborough* not because he had been captured from an enemy ship, but rather because he had been one of

Bornardo, Pedro, Augustine and Fransisco as prisoners from the *Friendship*. The *Brune's* muster does not provide surnames for these men, a strong indication that the navy classified them as enslaved individuals.

¹¹⁴ *Royal Gazette* (New York), May 10, 1783; HMS *Adamant* Muster Roll, 1781, TNA ADM 36/8816.

a number of American seamen impressed onto the *Scarborough* at Boston in July, 1775. Having been impressed into involuntarily serving the King, this 29 year old able bodied seaman found his service rewarded by the *Scarborough's* captain requesting Cabbott's former owner to come and "receive him."¹¹⁵

Colored seamen who found employment in the Royal Navy were, with skill, good fortune and appropriate tenure, able to attain able-bodied seaman status. However, while the Royal Navy may have been "open to talent," sailors with dark skin rarely became naval officers. John Perkins, a Jamaican-born mixed race seaman, illustrates this well. Like many other colored mariners, Perkins joined the Royal Navy as a pilot. Within three years he was commanding the schooner *Punch*. He was commissioned a lieutenant in 1781 and near the end of the century became a post captain. While he was able to rise into the officer ranks, his career also illustrates the limits of opportunities for coloured mariners in the Royal Navy. Perkins is notable for being one of the only mariners of African heritage who was a naval officer prior to the end of the American Revolution. And despite capturing a number of prizes, and having a sterling battle and command record, Perkins was never promoted.¹¹⁶

If the Navy did not promote upward mobility for colored mariners during the American Revolution, it did provide a vehicle for some to create lives as British seamen and transform their very identities. The example of Anthony Mingus is particularly noteworthy. In 1777 the Spanish Negro Mingus was aboard the Spanish ship *Friendship*

¹¹⁵ *Newport Mercury*, Mar. 22, 1773; *Providence Gazette* April 27 and May 4, 1776; HMS *Scarborough*, Master's Log, TNA ADM 52/1988; HMS *Scarborough*, Captain's Log, TNA ADM 51/867; HMS *Scarborough* Musters, 1775-76, TNA ADM 36/7815-16. Impresses took place in the summer of 1775 along the entire North American coast. Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets," 393. Cabbott's case was not exceptional. Pemberton Family Papers, HSP, Account Book, 1750-1781, Thomas Hazard III Papers, RIHS Mss. 483, p. 3.

¹¹⁶ Rodger, *Wooden World*, 272; Morgan, "Black Experiences in Britain's Maritime World," 118-19

when HMS *Brune* captured it. One of scores of colored Spanish mariners captured by HMS *Brune*, Mingus found himself impressed by a ship experiencing significant manning difficulties.¹¹⁷ Taken to New York, this Spanish Negro was two weeks later one of ten men discharged from the *Brune* onto HMS *Lizard*. Mingus then found himself sailing across the Atlantic and commenced an extended stint in the Navy. His naval service took him onto five Royal Naval vessels within nineteen months, serving under numerous officers, and transformed from being a captured seaman, whose dark skin made him liable to be sold as a prize good, to a full-fledged member of the Royal Navy and a British subject.¹¹⁸

When Mingus boarded the *Brune*, he was described as an African-born seaman. Unlike many dark-skinned mariners in the Atlantic, Mingus did not “become more self-consciously ‘African.’”¹¹⁹ During a six-year stretch in the Royal Navy’s Channel Fleet, Mingus served on the *Lizard*, *London*, and *Courageux*. In 1779, when he entered HMS *Courageux*, Mingus was no longer described as “African,” but rather as having been born in the West Indies. This change of identity had no impact on the wages Mingus received or his status in the Navy. What it did do was paper over his prior status as a captured dark-skinned seaman subject to condemnation by his dark skin and service on an enemy vessel. We do not know if Mingus thereafter held himself out as a British subject. What

¹¹⁷ HMS *Brune* Muster Roll, 1777, TNA ADM 36/7756; *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Mar. 17 & Jul. 21, 1777. In 1775-1776, HMS *Brune* had 21% of its men run. Hubley, “The lower kind of People”. At least one other Prize Negro on HMS *Brune* found freedom. Jonas Negroes, a prize prisoner on HMS *Brune* from the *Lebienheroreux*, was discharged in New York.

¹¹⁸ Mingus’s naval career can be followed in HMS *Brune* Muster, 1777, TNA ADM 36/7756; HMS *Brune* Paybook, 1778, TNA ADM 34/93; HMS *Brune* Captain’s Log, TNA ADM 51/1838; HMS *Lizard* Muster, 1778-1779, TNA ADM 36/8576; HMS *Lizard* Master’s Log, 1778, TNA ADM 52/1838; HMS *Courageux* Captain’s Log, 1779-1781, TNA ADM 51/169; HMS *Courageux* Muster Rolls, 1779-1780, TNA ADM 36/8309-8310; HMS *Courageux* Pay Book, 1780, TNA ADM 34/189-190; HMS *Courageux* Muster Roll, 1781-1783, TNA ADM 36/8727.

¹¹⁹ Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 39.

we do know is that like many a white British seaman, Mingus, while serving in the Navy, was involved in the capture of colored sailors. It is most likely that after serving several years in the Royal Navy, Mingus had grown accustomed to his status as a British able-bodied seaman and was at home in the forecastle of naval vessels. Whether he saw connections between himself and French colored seamen cannot be determined. In any event, being required to capture such men did not cause Mingus to attempt to desert the Navy.

As the movement of Mingus and colored mariners through the Atlantic created possibilities for new identities, so too did the movement of military forces create many problems for slave masters. Slaves throughout the colonies, not just in port cities, frequently took advantage of the movement of the armies to flee their owners. In New York alone, masters advertised the flight of more than two hundred maritime fugitives between 1775 and 1783. Many communities felt the need to take new and often drastic measures to try and limit their slaves' movements, including curfews and the removal of small craft from areas near British forces.¹²⁰ One of the more significant effects the movement of military forces had on slaves was that it opened and closed doors to freedom via the sea for maritime fugitives. Although the Royal Navy attempted to blockade the North American coast for almost the entire Revolution, they were not successful in completely cutting off shipping into and out of most North American

¹²⁰ Frey, "Between Slavery and Freedom," 383. Numerous rural slaves sought to reach British lines in New York City, and wherever else the King's army might be. Thus, in 1775, Newburgh's town council imposed a curfew on slaves and decreed a punishment of thirty-five lashes for any slave who violated the curfew. Similarly, New York state law permitted whites during a time of invasion to shoot any slave found more than one mile from his master's residence without a pass. Michael Groth, "Forging Freedom in the Mid-Hudson Valley: The End of Slavery and the Formation of a Free African-American Community in Dutchess County, New York, 1770-1850," Ph. D. diss., SUNY Binghamton, 1993, 83-84.

ports.¹²¹ Instead, it was when the British military occupied northern ports that slaves' opportunities for freedom via the sea were most affected. For example, few colonial vessels entered Boston in 1775-76 while the British army occupied the town, as Colonial Committees directed vessels to be laid up. The movement of slaves was similarly affected by military forces' activities in Newport, Philadelphia, and New York.

Commencing in June 1775, when one hundred British seamen under Captain James Wallace came ashore, Newport's maritime economy came to a "shuddering halt." Other ports, such as Salem, whose economies were largely dependent upon waters now infested with British naval ships responded by converting fishing sloops into privateers.¹²² For Newport this was not feasible as by January 1776 British occupation had left the town in "a deplorable state." Wallace seized many vessels coming into the harbor, stripped them of their rigging and "turn[ed them] adrift." Leading Newport merchants, such as Aaron Lopez fled the town never to financially recover. Wallace's squadron blockaded Narragansett Bay until March 1776 when ordered to withdraw from the area. When Wallace retreated, he took thirty Negroes with him. They thereafter assisted HMS *Rose* in plundering raids near Haverstraw, New York.¹²³ Eight months later

¹²¹ David Syrett, *The Royal Navy in American Waters, 1775-1783* (Brookfield, VT, 1989), provides an analysis of the blockade's failure. Although some Nantucket vessels continued to hunt whales near the Falkland Islands, the Royal Navy did halt most North American whaling ventures. Dolan, *Leviathan*, Chap. Ten. The sizable presence of the Royal Navy in the Atlantic also resulted in very few North American seamen being found working on English merchant ships in Europe during the war. See, e.g., Liverpool Crew Lists, 1776-77, TNA BT 98/36-37. The war also caused few North American ships to visit the British West Indies. Richard B. Sheridan, "The Crisis of Slave Subsistence in the British West Indies during and after the American Revolution," *WMQ* 33:4 (Oct. 1976), 621.

¹²² Vickers, *Young Men and the Sea*, 164-165. With much of its shipping drawn to privateering, of which most was captured or lost, Portsmouth went from 12,000 tons of shipping in 1775 to only 500 tons in 1780. William Greenough Wendell, *Jonathan Warner (1726-1814): Merchant & Trader, King's Councillor, Mariner Jurist* (New York, 1950). English ports also suffered dramatic losses of maritime activity due to the war. David Richardson, "Slavery and Bristol's 'golden age'," *Slavery and Abolition* 26:1 (Apr. 2005), 36-37.

¹²³ *NDAR*, Vol. I: 615, Vol. II: 452, III:278, 865, 902; Vol. IV: 230; Aaron Lopez Papers, RIHS Mss 541; *Newport Mercury*, Aug. 7, 1776; Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, 153.

the British came back, this time with 9,000 troops who landed unopposed. The presence of this large British force and accompanying naval squadron compelled Esek Hopkin's small American fleet to retreat to Providence.¹²⁴ For the next three years, until General Clinton ordered Newport evacuated by British troops in October 1779, a limited number of ships left Narragansett Bay ports.¹²⁵ Throughout the British occupation of Newport, both during Wallace's initial takeover of the port, and General Clinton's subsequent more substantial insertion of forces, very few fugitives found berths on ships out of Newport. Between November 1775 and October 1779 only five advertisements were published for Rhode Island fugitives believed to have fled via the sea.¹²⁶ Primus Watt and Primus sought berths on privateers, most likely out of New London or a Massachusetts port. Three other dark-skinned fugitives fled from Rhode Island army units seeking berths. Benjamin Wicket went to New Bedford to seek a berth on a whaling ship there, while James Allen and Bristol Prime were thought to have fled on the British frigate *Warren*.¹²⁷ As Wicket, Allen, and Prime each understood, in the absence of opportunities aboard Rhode Island ships, fugitives from the Newport region seeking berths needed either to set

¹²⁴ TNA ADM 1/487, ff. 113, 149-150, 155-6; CO 5/235, 23-4. The British continued throughout the war to employ slave runaways on barges and galleys. *Independent Gazetteer*, Aug. 2, 1783.

¹²⁵ TNA CO 5/98, ff. 278, 280, 320, 324, 326-332, 336; HMS *Glasgow* Lts. Logbook, 1776, NMM ADM/L/G/39. The lack of merchant shipping or privateering activity out of Narragansett ports between November, 1775 and October, 1779 was also due to significant military activity by both sides to the conflict. For example, in 1778 Lord Howe had twenty-six ships engaged in blockading the Rhode Island coast, and during July of the same year, the French fleet under Admiral d'Estaing attempted to evict the British from Newport. TNA ADM 1/488, ff. 118, 123, 128-129, 323-331; Letter from Gen. William Heath to William Greene, July 11, 1780, Folder 7, William Greene Papers, RIHS, MSS 468.

¹²⁶ In contrast, in the nine months prior to British occupation, six Rhode Island fugitives were described as having fled via the sea. *Newport Mercury*, Mar. 20, May 13, Oct. 2, 9, 1775. In addition, several others, including John Dennis's slave Moses, fled to neighboring ports such as New Bedford, although their owners did not identify the sea as these men's means of escape. *Newport Mercury*, Mar. 27, Aug. 7, 1775.

¹²⁷ *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, July 5, 1777, Mar. 28, 1778, Sept. 4, 1779. During the British occupation of Newport several Massachusetts and Connecticut fugitives appear to have sought berths in ports such as Dartmouth and New London, where American merchant and privateers ships continued to operate. *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, Oct. 4, Nov. 22, 1777; *American Journal and General Advertiser*, April 8, July 15, 1779.

out for another port or to look to the navy as a refuge from slavery.

The story of Newport slave Ben Freebody illustrates well the significant impact the presence or absence of British troops had for colored mariners. Just before Wallace's men captured Newport, Ben was shipped out on a slaving voyage with Captain James Brattle by Samuel Freebody. Ben was to be paid "Sailors Wages" to be divided between himself and Freebody. Ben intended to use his share to purchase his freedom.¹²⁸ Upon coming aboard Captain Brattle's ship, Ben was severely whipped and denied his wages. Instead, he was compelled to serve on several slaving voyages between Grenada and Africa.¹²⁹ Thereafter he suffered the loss of an eye due to small-pox, was left to "shift [sic] for myself" was "near [sic] sold for payment" of his room rent in New York. In August 1784 Ben was "returned [him] to Rhode Island by [Samuel Freebody's] order," where he found himself a witness in a proceeding brought by Freebody against Captain Brattle for having improperly detained the slave for nine years and for Ben's back wages. During the proceedings neither the slave owner nor the ship captain ever acknowledged that Ben had any right to part of his wages. The result was that his wealthy master kept Ben until 1790, at which time Freebody deigned to allow Ben to "look out in the Country for a Person to buy him, as he is discontented with living with me." Discontented! If Commander Wallace had arrived at Newport a week earlier, Ben might have had the opportunity to flee to British lines, possibly avoiding fourteen years of abusive

¹²⁸ Letter from Ben, dated 1774 [1784?], RIHS Mss 9003, Vol. 16, p. 99; June 16, 1774 [1784?] Letter from Ben to "Dear Master," RIHS Mss 9003, Vol. 16, p. 97. Morgan, "Black Experiences in Britain's Maritime World,"¹²⁹ⁿ¹³ (Ben was either a crew member on the *Happy Return* or the *Hawke* when Captain Battle made slaving voyages to the Gold Coast in 1776 and 1777. *TASD* #25017 and 27302).

¹²⁹ Deposition of George Irish, July 1, 1786, RIHS, Mss 9003, Vol. 16, p. 102. The brutality of public whipping in Grenada is described in some detail in the Deposition of James Duncan, July 1, 1786, RIHS, Mss 9003, Vol. 16, p. 103.

treatment.¹³⁰

After the British left Newport and the focus of military activities moved southward, Newport's economy suffered from the physical destruction of the town. However, opportunities for maritime flight in Rhode Island expanded. In the aftermath of the British evacuation of Newport, Rhode Islanders such as Captain Silas Talbot, a prominent privateer and naval captain who subsequently would be commander of the USS *Constitution*, advertised that their slaves had fled seeking berths at sea. Such advertisements illustrate the risk many northern slave owners undertook; that is, by profiting from their slaves' maritime employment, slave owners provided slaves with the opportunity to develop skills that enabled many of them to flee via the sea. Jericho, Jack, Pero, and a number of other Rhode Island slaves joined Captain Talbot's Anthony in once again seeing Rhode Island's maritime industry as a portal to freedom.¹³¹

When the British occupied Philadelphia in 1777, the sea was closed as an avenue to freedom. With the British fleet off the Delaware capes in July, Elizabeth Drinker noted that "all the boats...are put away... and the shipping all ordered up the River, the next tide, on pain of being burnt, should G. Howes Vesels approach."¹³² Despite Drinker's concerns, Lord Howe and the British troops did not arrive in Philadelphia until September 25, 1777, coming up the Chesapeake Bay and landing at the head of Elk River

¹³⁰ June 16, 1774 [1784] Letter to "Dear Master," RIHS, Mss 9003, Vol. 16, p. 97. The ultimate outcome of the dispute between Samuel Freebody and Captain Brattle is unknown. Deposition of George Irish, July 1, 1786, RIHS, Mss 9003, Vol. 16, p. 102.

¹³¹ Anderson, "Bringing The War Home," 576; *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, July 15, 1780, Oct. 19, 1782; *American Journal and General Advertiser*, Jan. 13, June 9, 1781. Opportunities for freedom also were closed off when trade embargos were in place. For example, after Philadelphian merchants commenced a ban on trade with Great Britain in September 1775 "hardly a vessel [was left] in port." In the ensuing months, few fugitive slaves sought berths in Philadelphia. Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*, 55.

¹³² *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker*, 1:232; George Washington to Pennsylvania Navy Board, 2 March 1778, Sol. Fienstone Coll., Microfilm 1578, DLAR.

before proceeding northward.¹³³ Not only did Lord Howe's case of the slows enable the Continental Congress to flee safely, it created a chaotic environment that many slaves took advantage of. During July, August, and September 1777, while the whole city buzzed with news of the approaching British army, fifteen slaves were advertised as having fled the city and nearby towns. Ben, Dick, Charles Brash, Pompey, Romeo, Jack, Nell, Jesse, Caesar, Harry Caesar, Romeo, Jack, Tom, and Hero each displayed what Howe lacked, moxie and fast feet.¹³⁴ Hero showed particular spunk, fleeing the city at the last possible moment, four days after Congress abandoned Philadelphia.¹³⁵

The occupation of Philadelphia by the British created avenues for slaves to flee their masters. And many did. Thirty-three slaves were advertised as having fled their masters, with others disappearing without their masters publicly announcing their flight. As one state legislator complained, a "great part of the slaves hereabout were enticed away by the British army." The British organized a "Company of Black Pioneers" of almost two hundred, many slaves of whites who had fled the city, to clean the streets and do other essential maintenance tasks. What Philadelphia's slaves did not find available were opportunities to flee via the sea. The chaos of the British occupation did not lend itself to shipping going up or down the Delaware. With the Delaware icing over on December 30, the city became largely dependent on overland transport for its provisions.

¹³³ John M. Coleman, "Joseph Galloway and the British Occupation of Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania History* 30:3 (July 1963), 287-288.

¹³⁴ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 9, 30, Aug. 13, 1777, *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, July 10, 17, 22, 24, Aug. 9, 1777; *Pennsylvania Packet*, July 29, Aug. 16, 19, 1777.

¹³⁵ *Pennsylvania Packet*, Jan. 28, 1778; Wayne Bodle, *The Valley Forge Winter: Civilians and Soldiers in War* (University Park, PA, 2002), 36-39; Lisa W. Strick, *The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution, 1770-1800*, 33. Resourceful slaves in the area where the British forces landed were able to escape via the sea, either by entering onto naval ships or stealing boats to flee. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 24, 1779; Feb. 6, 1782. Some of these fugitives used the Royal Navy as a taxi service to take them from the Eastern Shore to Philadelphia. *Pennsylvania Packet*, Oct. 3, 1778. At the same time, British privateers "plunder[ed] the inhabitants. Negroes are their chief object." *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie), Sept. 26, 1777.

As a result, although some ship captains advertised for seamen, only one slave, Farmer, was advertised as seeking a berth during the British nine month occupation. With the influx of large numbers of British officers, slaves who sought freedom were more likely to find it as servants for the commanders of the redcoats than aboard ships.¹³⁶

One of the slaves who did find freedom on board a British ship was Richard Weaver. Getting aboard HMS *Roebuck*, Weaver was issued a pass by the ship's captain that certified that "Dick a free Negro is able to pass by water unmolested." Like many other fugitive slaves, Weaver may have run away due to his owner seeking to sell him. The presence of the Royal Navy also appears to have been a motivating factor in his flight. When Weaver escaped his owner characterized him as a New England-born house servant who had been on a "voyage or two" to sea. Clearly, his maritime experience put Weaver in good stead with the *Roebuck*'s captain. One of the more fortune runaways, Weaver not only found safety on board a British man-of-war, but eventually he and his family survived the war and made their way to England and subsequently Africa, where Weaver became governor Granville Town.¹³⁷

Unlike Philadelphia slaves fleeing their masters, who often had little to eat during their flight to freedom, Howe and Clinton left town on a full stomach. Having been feted and grandly entertained at a lavish party at loyalist merchant Joseph Wharton's estate, described by one observer as "a shameful scene of dissipation," Howe and Clinton pulled their forces out of the city in mid-June 1778. The Americans, as well as the city's slaves,

¹³⁶ Bodle, *The Valley Forge Winter*, 101; Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*, 231 Nash; *Forging Freedom*, 49; *Royal Pennsylvania Gazette*, Apr. 17, 1778; *Pennsylvania Ledger*, Oct. 25, 1777, May 2, 1778; William O. Mishoff, "Business in Philadelphia During British Occupation," *PMHB* 61:2 (Apr. 1937), 174. Some New York slaves were believed to have escaped by obtaining berths with the British Navy when it transported the army to Philadelphia. *Royal Gazette* (New York), May 23, 1778.

¹³⁷ Pybus, *Epic Voyages*, 30, 139-40, 218, *Pennsylvania Ledger*, Oct. 15, 1777, Jan. 7, 1778. Simon Schama characterizes Weaver as a "free-born Philadelphian," but provides no documentation for the man's North American background. Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 189.

were happy to see the British leave. For the Americans, it gave back to them their largest city, one that would become the Americans' leading privateer port for the remainder of the war. For the city's slaves, Clinton's evacuation created another opportunity, albeit not by the sea, to seize their freedom. With Clinton's rear guard leaving Philadelphia by the eighteenth of June, a large number of fugitives, including Tony, left the city with British troops. Some fugitives such as Moses were believed to have "been endeavouring to prevail upon [o]the[r] Negroes...to go with him and join the ministerial army." With or without Moses' efforts, many Philadelphia slaves saw the evacuation of Clinton's army as the parting of the waters and their chance to reach British lines in New York.¹³⁸ Those who did included Milford, owned by the widow Mrs. Margaret Childe. Milford had been hired out to another Philadelphian when the British entered the city. Upon General Clinton's retreat, Milford fled Philadelphia for New York where he changed his name to Milford Smith. Smith fled notwithstanding that a document of manumission for him had been drafted by Anthony Benezet. The slave proved to be prescient as Mrs. Childe destroyed the document when he ran away. The bulk of those who fled with the British were young men. Upon the rebels retaking the city they found a black community that was largely composed of children, the elderly, and women.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Bodle, *The Valley Forge Winter*, 241-242; *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, Aug. 1, 1778; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 2, 1776, Sept. 25, 1776; *Pennsylvania Packet*, Dec. 12, 1779; Nash, *First City*, 99; Mishoff, "Business in Philadelphia During the British Occupation, 1777-1778," 178. Pregnant women fled with the British army, seizing the moment to obtain freedom for both themselves and their unborn children. *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, July 16, 1778. The relatively low number of fugitive slave advertisements published as the British retreated was due to few masters being able to recover their runaways once the fugitive reached New York City. This is evidenced by the actions of masters, such as James Morgan of Bucks County, who did not advertise the disappearance of slaves who were believed to have fled with the British army. Morgan registered six slaves under the 1780 Gradual Abolition Act in absentia, with the notation "supposed to be in New York with the Enemy." Afrolumens Project, <http://www.afrolumens.org/slavery/resist.html#Running%20Away> (accessed Aug. 21, 2006).

¹³⁹ Van Bruns Kirk, *Generous Enemies*, 151; Milford Smith to Robert Jones, Aug. 5, 1778, and Margaret Childe to the Members of the Congress for the State of New York, Aug. 18, 1778, in *Public Papers of George Clinton* (New York & Albany, 1899-1914), v. 3, 610, 662; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 58.

The presence of British forces in New York similarly shaped opportunities for maritime flight. The moment Lord Howe's fleet sailed through the Verazzano Narrows on June 29, 1776, the nature of opportunities for freedom, via the sea and otherwise, changed dramatically for slaves in the New York City region. In the fourteen months between the first shots fired at Concord and British occupation of New York, the port had attracted a number of maritime fugitives such as Daniel Kent of Hackensack Ferry who "made themselves scarce" and obtained berths.¹⁴⁰ In the seven years the British occupied New York, the city was "a magnet for runaways." With its "porous border" between the British and American forces, hundreds of slaves were attracted to the city, and it became the center of the largest slave uprising in North American history.¹⁴¹ Despite Virginia's slave population being more than nine times larger than New York's, in the Revolutionary era the number of fugitive slave advertisements for New York slaves was almost twice of Virginia. Many of the slaves seeking freedom in New York came to the city via the sea or were "supposed" to have entered onto privateers or other ships in the harbor to escape their former masters.¹⁴² Some runaways like Cato, Caesar, and Prince,

Among the slaves who fled Philadelphia with the British was Adam. Upon reaching New York, Adam signed onto the British brig *Brixton*. Unfortunately for Adam, the *Brixton* was captured and brought to Philadelphia. Like John Incobs during the Seven Years War, Adam found himself re-enslaved when his former master discovered him back in his former home town. Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 48.

¹⁴⁰ *Rivington's New-York Gazette*, Jan. 5, July 6, 1775; *New-York Gazette*, Apr. 3, 24, 1775; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, June 19, 1775, Mar. 11, Apr. 15, 1776; *Pennsylvania Mercury*, Sept. 8, 1775; Van Brunswick, *Generous Enemies*, 20; Foote, *Black and White Manhattan*, 76.

¹⁴¹ Pybus, "Jefferson's Faulty Math," 259; Charles Francis Adams, "The Battle of Long Island," *American Historical Review* 1:4 (July 1896), 652; Van Bruns Kirk, *Generous Enemies*, 4-5; Herbert G. Gutman, *Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York, 1976), Table 29 (Between 18% and 19% of New York's 1783 Negro population had last resided in the Mid-Atlantic). Few of the fugitives advertised in New York newspapers were listed in the Book of Negroes, suggesting a considerable underreporting of fugitives in the New York region during the Revolution. Hodges, *Root and Branch*, 155.

¹⁴² White, *Somewhat More Independent*, 140-141; Wells, *The Population of the British Colonies in America before 1776*, 112, Table 4-1; Greene and Harrington, *American Population Before the Federal Census of 1790*, 102, 141 (Virginia's slave population in 1770 was 188,000, while New York's slave population in 1771 was 19,833); *Royal Gazette* (New York), Oct. 10, 1778. Runaways coming to New York may have sought work at sea due to the limited employment opportunities in a city described as "one-third of the Town [sic] in Ruins." Jan. 18, 1781 letter of Andrew Elliot, TNA CO 5/175/92. The presence of

took advantage of this situation to seek berths on British navy or privateer vessels. Privateer ships were critical to the city's economic viability, as it "depend[ed] chiefly upon [privateers'] captures" for sugar and coffee. In such circumstances, Cato, Caesar, and Prince were but three of the scores of slaves who served on New York's privateers. Men such as the sailor named Felix, who jumped ship from the Brig *Neptune* in 1783, saw New York privateers as ideal places to start new and more profitable and independent lives. Other maritime fugitives such as Fork, James, Alicak, Jem, Sam, Robert Kupperth, Tom, Jack, Toney, and Charles Macaulay joined black mariners like Patrick Dennis, Lewis Montie, and Peter Bush on naval ships.¹⁴³

Freedom was not limited to those fugitives who reached British lines and found berths on British privateers and naval vessels. The small American navy employed colored seamen including Hampshire Dodge, Scippio Brown, Cuff Wood, Cato Wood, Nero Freeman, Cuff Freeman, Caesar Lee, and Prince Gilbert on the USS *Continental*. In the very first naval engagement of the Revolution, three British ships – the *Unity*, the sloop *Peggy*, and the British armed cutter *Margaretta*, were captured on the Maine coast by colonial supporters who included Richard Earle, the black servant of the Americans' leader, Captain Jeremiah O'Brien. In addition to Earle, Reverend William Lyons' slave, London Atis, also participated in this first naval engagement of the Revolution.¹⁴⁴

British forces did not end New Yorkers' use of slaves as mariners or colored mariners being sold. *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Nov. 18, 1776, July 27, 1778.

¹⁴³ Letter from Andrew Elliot, Jan. 19, 1781, TNA CO 5/175/92-98; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, May 19, 1777, May 4, 1779, Aug. 6, 1781; *New York Gazette*, July 29, 1776; *New-York Mercury-Gazette*, Aug. 19, 1776, Jan. 6, and 13, 1777; *Royal Gazette* (New York), Jan. 2, 1778, May 16, 1778, July 18, 1778, Aug. 2 and 18, 1779, March 29, 1780, April 11, 1780, May 13, 1780, June 17, 1780, Aug. 16, 1780, May 5, 1781, October 3, 1781, July 17, 1782; Oct. 15, 1783; and HMS *Launceston* Muster Roll, 1780, TNA ADM 36/7910. See *New-York Mercury*, July 13, 1761, May 31 and Sept. 27, 1762, May 16, 1774, May 4, 1778, March 1 and Sept. 13, 1779, Oct. 1, 1781, June 10, 17 and Dec. 30, 1782; and *New-York Post-Boy*, May 25, 1747, June 18, 1752 and Nov. 4, 1755 for other examples of captains hiring deserters.

¹⁴⁴ *Minority Military Service, 1776-1783* (Washington, DC, 1988).

However, the numbers of maritime fugitives who found berths on Continental ships appears to have been fairly small. Among the less than two hundred colored mariners identified as being on a Continental or state navy ships, the overwhelming majority were on state vessels. This is due to several factors. Although the Continental navy had launched thirteen ships by November 1776, most had very short fighting lives. Some, like the *Delaware*, were captured almost immediately after being launched. By 1779 most of the American Navy had been put out of commission by British ships. Thus, while the USS *Andrea Doria* with the colored sailor Dragon Wanton on board captured some British ships, the Continental Navy as a whole was not a very successful unit.¹⁴⁵

Those fugitives who wished to serve with the rebels found that if they reached northern ports, they were welcomed into those state navies. These men included Thomas Freeman, Joshua Sambo, John Moore, and Joshua Tiffany, who served on the Massachusetts state brig, and George Negroe, Gist Negro, Ham Negro, Livy Negro, and Peter Negro, seamen with Connecticut forces. A number of slaves also served in the Pennsylvania Navy. In the first years of the Revolution, the Pennsylvania Navy suffered “a perennial problem of undermanned boats and ships,” with desertions resulting in an approximately twenty-five percent shortfall in naval crews.¹⁴⁶ Most slaves who served in southern state navies, such as Backus, David Backer, Boston, Cuffee, Emanuel, George, and Jack, crew members on Virginia naval vessels, were not freed for their service. Nor

¹⁴⁵ CMD; Glenn A. Knoblock, *Strong and Brave Fellows: New Hampshire's Black Soldiers and Sailors of the American Revolution* (Jefferson, NC & London, 2003), 263; Farley, “Joshua Humphreys and the Construction of the U.S. United States,” 294-297; Muster Roll 1777, HMS *Racehorse*, TNA ADM 36/7910.

¹⁴⁶ John W. Jackson, *The Pennsylvania Navy: The Defense of the Delaware* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1974), 91 (nine to eleven Negroes on the state's vessels, and believes that “others were listed in the muster rolls without identification of race”); *Minority Military Service, Connecticut, 1775-1783* (Washington, DC, 1988), 6; Louis F. Middlebrook, *History of Maritime Connecticut, 1775-1783* (Salem, MA, 1925), 56-7, 70; Dennis D. Nelson, *The Integration of the Negro into the U.S. Navy* (New York, 1982), 9.

were Stephen Bond or John Weatherston, who each served on the South Carolina schooner *Defence*. In contrast, some of the slaves who enlisted in northern state navies were subsequently freed by their masters. These slaves, like Prince from Lyme, Connecticut, who purchased his freedom in 1779 with the proceeds of a privateering venture, profited from their maritime experiences. More maritime fugitives did not enlist with the eleven state navies because these ships offered little excitement, few opportunities for prizes, and no chance for putting great distance between themselves and their former masters. State naval vessels were often restricted to inland waterways defensive duties, and ferrying supplies to troops. The riches that captured prizes could bring were a significant motivation for many seamen as to which ship to enlist on. While some privateer captains may not have reported all their captured prizes to the Admiralty Court, Navy captains could not enrich their crews in this irregular manner. Drudgery, little glory and few riches were not an enticing recipe to attract men who had managed to evade their masters and now sought to establish new lives for themselves.¹⁴⁷

When in 1775 Lord Dunmore issued his proclamation it is unlikely he could have foreseen the full impact the decree would have on North American slaves. The proclamation served to not only free slaves who fled their owners to serve on British vessels, but also slave mariners serving aboard American ships. Some British officers

¹⁴⁷ *Black Soldiers, Black Sailors*, 282-283; Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, 198-199; Thomas S. Collier, "The Revolutionary Privateers of Connecticut," in *Records and Papers of the New London County Historical Society* (New London, 1893), part 4, Vol. 1, 44; Brown and Rose, *Black Roots in Southeastern Connecticut, 1650-1900*, 47; William S. Dudley, "Maryland at War on the Chesapeake, 1776-1783," in *New Aspects of Naval History: Selected Papers Presented at the Fourth Naval History Symposium, United States Naval Academy, 25-26 October 1979*, ed. by Craig L. Symonds, Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1981, 108-111. Enlistment bonuses for landsmen were sufficient for some maritime fugitives to enlist in northern state navies. Concerns over fugitive slaves escaping by enlisting in Virginian military forces led the General Assembly to bar recruitment officers from enlisting "any Negro or Mulatto until such Negro shall produce a certificate from a justice of the peace that he is a free man." Jackson, "Virginia Negro Soldiers and Seamen in the American Revolution," 251.

interpreted Dunmore's decree to require them to free any slave on captured rebel vessels. When the American privateer *Mercury* sailed from Connecticut in 1781, among its crew was Romeo, a slave cook. Captain Lathrop's privateer had little luck, being quickly captured by the British and brought into New York harbor. Lathrop and the entire crew were imprisoned in the infamous prison ship the *Jersey*. There the American prisoners found "intolerable" odors and "so many melancholy sights and dismal countenances." Romeo avoided such miserable conditions when he was initially impressed onto HMS *Monk*. However, he soon was "Set at Liberty being a Slave." Within a week of Romeo being set free, four slave mariners from the captured American privateer *Liberty* were similarly set free by the Royal Navy, due to "being [sic] slave[s]." Thus, for some American slave mariners, being sent to sea by their masters could result in freedom not through dint of service, but rather by their ship being captured.¹⁴⁸

Other colored mariners on American privateers had experiences very different from Romeo's. Whenever scholars discuss colored seamen on privateers during the American Revolution, James Forten plays an understandably central role. His service as a young boy on an American privateer has been frequently held up as an example of patriotic fervor during the Revolution. Leading historians have noted that when faced with the choice to serve on Captain Bazley's HMS *Amphion* after being captured, Forten replied, "I am here a prisoner for the liberties of my country; I never, NEVER, shall prove a traitor to her interests." His refusal to join the navy resulted in Forten joining his ship mates in the infamous prison ship *Jersey*, a "rotten old hulk." Such action evidences

¹⁴⁸ Louis F. Middlebrook, Undated biographical sketch of Elisha Lathrop, MSM, VFM 405; and HMS *Monk*, Muster Rolls 1781-1782, TNA ADM 36/1999. Other colored mariners on American ships found themselves, as did Anthony Gilman, sold as a "man of colour." Fortunately, for Gilman, he escaped his British master in Nova Scotia to rejoin the American army. *Minority Military Service, New Hampshire & Vermont, 1775-1783* (Washington, DC, 1991), 4.

strong patriotic zeal. However, many other imprisoned American seamen, estimated by some historians to be as many as one out of eight, switched sides when faced with extended confinements. None of HMS *Amphion*'s crew can be identified by name as a colored mariner. It is thus possible that Forten did not switch sides because he was more comfortable staying with his Philadelphia and colored compatriots from the *Royal Louis*. This story of service and devotion to the young American nation is illustrative of a topic often ignored in the history of the Revolution and one that directly limited liberty for colored mariners: the role some colored sailors' played in the enslavement of other colored men.¹⁴⁹

In 1781, at the age of fifteen, Forten signed onto Captain Stephen Decatur's one hundred ton privateer *Royal Louis* as a powder boy and one of twenty colored mariners on the ship.¹⁵⁰ Prior to taking command of the *Royal Louis* Decatur was said to have already captured a dozen prizes. In the year prior to Forten's enlisting, Decatur had brought into Philadelphia several prizes that he had condemned as prize goods, including no fewer than seven colored mariners who were sold into slavery. The selling of captured colored sailors into slavery was commonplace among American privateers.

Advertisements for the sale of these unfortunate mariners regularly appeared in Philadelphia newspapers and the sale of the seamen took place in local shipyards, on Mr.

¹⁴⁹ Winch, *Gentleman of Color*, 8, 12, 46, 51n102; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 51-52; Sidney Kaplan and Emma Norgard Kaplan, *The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution* (Amherst, MA, 1989); Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront*, 121.

None of the leading historians of African-American military service during the American Revolution have considered the role colored mariners played in enslaving other dark-skinned seamen. For example, Sylvia Frey discussed how "Negroes [were] the [sic] chief object" for privateers during the Revolution, but did not consider colored mariners' role in the re-enslavement of the captured Negroes. Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 148, 160. See also, Quarles, *Negro in the American Revolution*, 92-93, 155-156.

¹⁵⁰ Winch, *Gentleman of Color*, 39n39; *Royal Louis*, TNA HCA 32/443/28/1-8. Stephen Decatur, the captain of the *Royal Louis* was the father of Stephen Decatur, Jr. the naval hero Tripoli and the youngest ship captain in American naval history. Spencer Tucker, *Stephen Decatur: A Life Bold and Daring* (Annapolis, 2005); Carroll Storrs Alden, Ralph Earle, *Makers of Naval Tradition* (1972), 37-38; Edgar S. Maclay, *History of American Privateers* (1899, reprint, New York, 1968), 88.

Hamilton's Wharf, at the Coffee House, and near Forten's residence. In his walks about the Dock Ward Forten could scarcely have avoided seeing such sales. Living near the sites of many slave sales, having read newspapers, and familiar with Philadelphia's maritime culture, it is very likely Forten knew of Decatur's profiting from the sale of colored mariners.¹⁵¹

If a colored sailor on a slave ship could be said "to be seen by his colleagues as entirely separate to the alien, naked, incomprehensible mass of humanity locked in the hold," could the same separateness be said to have existed between a colored American privateer and captured colored enemy sailors? In fact, colored seamen could be both "heroes and villains," as national identity often trumped racial and cultural ties between mariners on opposing sides of the war.¹⁵² Thus, while Forten and his nineteen colored shipmates may have been fortunate when they were imprisoned, such was not the fate of many captured American colored seamen.¹⁵³ Rather, the very act of enlisting in the American military, army or navy, put dark-skinned individuals at risk of being enslaved. British military officials regularly sold captured colored men, both slaves working for rebels and individuals in American military units. Some British officers even "converted

¹⁵¹ Winch, *Gentleman of Color*, 17-23, 25, 36, 38n33. Forten's residence at Third and Walnuts Streets in the Dock Ward was only several blocks from slave sales conducted in local shipyards and at the Coffee House. Examples of slave sales Forten may have observed include those advertised in the *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, Jan. 29, 1776, August 27, 1778, Feb. 17, 1780, Mar. 28, 1780. Having a father who made his living as a sail maker, Forten was exposed to the ways of Philadelphia's maritime community from an early age. Forten received schooling at the Friends' African School and was literate when he signed onto the *Royal Louis*. While his biographer believed Forten to have been too poor to have purchased newspapers, she believed him to have had access to discarded papers.

If Forten's recollection of his youth is to be believed, he may have served with a second ship captain, John Kemp of the *Hyder Ally*, who also was not adverse to selling captured dark-skinned mariners into slavery. Nicholas B. Wainwright, ed., "The Diary of Samuel Breck," *PMHB* 103 (1979), 249-250; *Independent Gazetteer*, Jan. 11, 1783.

¹⁵² Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and Their Captive Cargoes*, 16-17, 28.

¹⁵³ Winch, *Gentleman of Color*, 386n76. None of the *Royal Louis*' nineteen black mariners can be identified by their names. HMS *Amphion*, Muster Roll, 1781, ADM 36/9561. It was the rare case, such as when Africans were not executed for piracy, as were white seamen, that being defined as property rather than as "independent moral agent(s)," benefited them. Peterson, "The Selling of Joseph," 5.

to their own private use and benefit” captured colored individuals.¹⁵⁴

During the American Revolution, inhabitants of British North America demonstrated a fierce interest in privateering, both for the rebel Americans and on behalf of the King. This desire to go privateering was encouraged by Lord Germain, Secretary of State for the colonies, who saw it as a means to cause wavering Americans to support the King and foster desertion from the Continental army through the lure of riches from service on privateers operating under British letters of marque.¹⁵⁵ With Parliament in November 1777 barring bringing prizes into many North American ports, New York City became the primary privateering port for British loyalists during the conflict. Approximately six thousand New Yorkers crewed on British privateers out of New York City. Included in loyalist privateer crews were slaves such as Caesar, who was trained as a sail maker and had previously hired himself out for voyages at sea, and the young boy York. Slaves worked regularly on some privateers throughout the war as many slaves’ prior maritime experience made them attractive to privateer captains.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 54; Frey, *Water From the Rock*, 94, 106, 131-132; Nash, *Forgotten Fifth*, 43.

¹⁵⁵ *New York Colonial Documents*, 8:737. George Robert Twelve Hewes and many other soldiers were enticed to leave the army to serve on privateers. Alfred F. Young, "George Robert Twelves Hewes (1742-1840): A Boston Shoemaker and the Memory of the American Revolution," *WMQ* 38:4 (Oct. 1981), 601-602; *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, July 5, 1777, Mar. 28, 1778, Sept. 4, 1779.

Like the British, the Americans were willing to employ foreign nationals to man their privateers. Many rebel privateers operating in the West Indies were said to have largely French crews. Lord Somerset Apr. 16, 1777 letter to Lord Weymouth, TNA SP 78/302; Gov. Morris Aug. 18, 1777 Letter to Lord Germain, TNA SP 78/305.

¹⁵⁶ *Royal Gazette* (New York), May 20, 1780, and August 25, 1781; Jan. 18, 1781 letter of Andrew Elliot, TNA CO 5/175/94. North American privateers with colored mariners who cruised against rebel vessels sailed from New York and southern ports such as Charleston. *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, Sept. 25, 1778,

Dr. Donald M'Lean's slave Tom illustrates the northern maritime industry's attraction for fugitive slaves during the Revolution. Between 1777 and 1781 Tom fled from Dr. M'Lean four times. Initially, Dr. M'Lean placed an advertisement in which he "earnestly requested and presumed no gentlemen will harbour the said run away Negro." Thereafter, Dr. M'Lean advertised his hope that "none of his friends in the navy or army will countenance the above Negro and all masters of vessels are strictly forbid to harbour him upon any pretense." *New-York Gazette*, September 22, 1777; *Royal Gazette* (New York), April 15, Aug. 5, 1780. When in the summer of 1776, Tom ran away a third time, "all masters of vessels" were "strictly forbid[den from] harbouring this Negro..." The following spring Tom ran away for the forth time. After four years, Tom and Dr. M'Lean had developed skills in how best to escape, and how best to recover a fugitive slave.

Rebels were no less vigorous in their rush to man and invest in privateers. In May 1777 a British officer prisoner of war in Boston observed, "The privateersmen come on shore here full of money and enjoy themselves much after the same manner the English seamen at Portsmouth and Plymouth did in the late war."¹⁵⁷ Similarly, Rhode Island residents were characterized as "running mad after Privateering." Lower-class Philadelphians fancied themselves "swashbuckling pirates and joined the crews of privateers operating off the Delaware Capes in pursuit of French privateers." These colonial privateers roamed the waters off the North American coast, as well in the Caribbean, where vessels that "were small, poorly armed, and poorly manned. They were therefore, an easy prey" for American privateers. Because of the enthusiasm many mariners and landlubbers had for privateering, captains had difficulty in obtaining sufficient men for the Continental Navy and the State Navies, causing Massachusetts to place several embargos on the sailing of privateers with men from towns that had not met their quotas for the Continental Army. Such embargos were imposed in 1777 and 1778. After the British evacuation of Philadelphia in June 1778, the city emerged as a major privateering port. Many who had the capital to do so bought stakes in privateers. In the ensuing five years, ship captains such as Stephen Decatur, Sr., and merchants such as Robert Bridges, obtained considerable wealth from their privateering activities. Maritime fugitives and free blacks saw privateering on American ships as a means to obtaining

By 1781 Dr. M'Lean was certain that "Transports, Privateers, and Merchantmen" were those most likely to harbor his persistent fugitive. *Royal Gazette* (New York), May 2, 1781. Whether Tom finally succeeded in obtaining the desired berth at sea is unknown. M'Lean may have recaptured the persistent runaway and losing patience with his bondsmen, had Tom sold at auction. Given that few New York owners identified themselves in slave sale advertisements there is no means to determine if M'Lean did recapture and sell the young man.

¹⁵⁷ Gardner Weld Allen, *Massachusetts Privateers of the Revolution* (Boston, 1927), 17. King George's desire that American privateers be treated as pirates clearly did not deter Americans from seeking riches aboard privateers. Jeremy Black, *George III: America's Last King* (New Haven & London, 2006), 230.

possible riches. The dark-skinned mariners on American privateers included John Tantaquigeon, a crewmember on the *General Putnam* out of New London, and a Mulatto who deserted from the Continental Army at Providence “to go a privateering.”¹⁵⁸ Many of the crew members of these privateers were slave fugitives, as “ship captains were hardly choosy about hiring black sailors,” with race “seldom an issue with privateering captains.” The pull of privateering was so strong that some masters felt helpless to counter it. Some slave owners felt compelled, as did one Portsmouth, New Hampshire master, to sell his slave, as the Negro was “extremely desirous” of joining a privateer crew. Other slave owners permitted privateer captains to keep their slaves, provided the slaves’ wages were paid to the slave owners. Not all colored mariners found such good fortune on privateers. Some, like John Quamine, a former slave who purchased his freedom largely with lottery winnings, had hoped captured British prizes would provide him with the monies to purchase his wife’s freedom. Sadly, the former slave and Princeton student’s luck ran out and he died at sea.¹⁵⁹

Service on American privateers could provide maritime fugitives with the prize monies James Forten received from his first privateering voyage or the £231 New Yorker Joshua Gott was given for one cruise. Seamen could also receive up to one hundred dollars in advance monies. Just as likely, privateering service would have compelled

¹⁵⁸ Brown and Rose, *Black Roots in Southeastern Connecticut*, 401; Gary Nash, “Poverty and Poor Relief in Pre-Revolutionary Philadelphia,” *WM&Q*, 33:1 (Jan. 1976), 10; Arthur Pierce Middleton, “The Chesapeake Convoy System, 1662-1763,” *W&MQ*, 3:2 (Apr. 1946), 196; *New London Gazette*, Oct. 13, 1779.

¹⁵⁹ Lydon, “The Role of New York in Privateering Down to 1763,” 356-357; Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*, 35-37; Appendix C; Van Bruns Kirk, *Generous Enemies*, 141n27; *New Hampshire Gazette*, Oct. 22, 1776; Brown and Rose, *Black Roots in Southeastern Connecticut*, 47; *Princetonians: A Biographical Dictionary* (Princeton, 1976), Volume IV, 1-11. Judith Van Bruns Kirk believes that “most” slaves who escaped to New York “found work on privateers or as teamsters.” *Generous Enemies*, 142. A wide variety of men found work on privateers, including school masters and others lacking blue water experience. *New-York Gazette*, July 27, 1748.

these men to make the difficult choice when captured, whether to serve in the British Navy or be put into prisons that were squalid and frequently resulted in men “perishing with hunger.”¹⁶⁰ Some men, after experiencing the insides of a British prison or prison ship, where they were confined in dark spaces and fed short rations, were willing to change their minds and enter the King’s Service. Such conditions caused Moses Lord, Prince Hall, Moses Cross, Jetabod Shaw, and William Cuff, among others, to be released from Forston and Mill prisons to serve in the Royal Navy. The number of men to have done so was fairly limited, as most dark-skinned mariners, once they entered American service, placed patriotic loyalty above personal comfort and safety. Of the six hundred and seventy-four American prisoners that the Sick and Hurt Board records indicate joined the Royal Navy, only thirteen were identifiable colored seamen.¹⁶¹

By the end of the Revolution, considerable numbers of colored mariners were serving on British naval vessels on the North American station. HMS *Chatham* illustrates well the diversity of naval crews fighting the American rebels. In 1783, although its official complement was for three hundred and fifty men, the crew of the *Chatham* fluctuated between 235 and 247 men.¹⁶² The ship’s February 1783 muster rolls reflect twenty-one identifiable colored mariners among its crew. Some of these men, such as John Suck and John Jack, served as servants, roles in which men of African ancestry traditionally were found on naval vessels. Others came on as ordinaries, men inexperienced in maritime employment. John Mingo, Daniel, Peter, and James each

¹⁶⁰ Winch, *Gentleman of Color*, 39-40; Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront*, 114; *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, Aug. 30, 1781; *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Sept. 3, 1781.

¹⁶¹ Sick and Hurt Board Reports, NMM ADM/M. A number of other northern slaves served as seamen on both sides of the conflict. Pemberton Family Papers, HSP.

¹⁶² Such disparity between a naval ship’s complement and the crew that it carried was common. During war, men-of-war on both the North American and West Indies stations were often not fully manned due to desertion, illness, casualties and better working conditions offered by merchant and privateer ships.

served on the *Chatham* as ordinaries and subsequently continued in naval service on other vessels. Some colored men came aboard the *Chatham* with no status noted for them. Men such as John Johns received wages and were charged for clothes and tobacco, the same as any crew member. In contrast, when several other colored men came aboard the vessel, the officer completing the muster roll was perplexed as to their role. When James entered onto the *Chatham* the officer “not knowing what is become of him” did not note any status for the man. Similarly, no status was indicated for Peter Francisco, Benjamin, or Fortune. It is likely that these men were maritime fugitives using the *Chatham* as a vehicle to escape beyond the control of their masters. Also among the *Chatham*’s crew were three dark-skinned American seamen who having been captured at sea, chose to join the British navy. Leison and George, seamen on the ship *Diana* entered onto the ship in February 1783, joining Cato from the American privateer *Hyder Ally*, who entered the *Chatham*’s muster rolls in October 1781. Like hundreds of American maritime prisoners, when captured, Leison, George and Cato each faced the choice of joining the British navy, being imprisoned or possibly condemned as slaves and sold to the West Indies. Having chosen to join the British navy, these men entered onto a vessel whose crew included not less than three colored able bodied seamen. Fortune, Cato, and a second man named Fortune each came aboard the *Chatham* in 1781-1782, and all were rated as experienced seamen. It is likely these weathered Jack Tars would have helped initiate the colored landlubbers coming aboard the ship. While one needs to be careful not to idealize solidarity among colored mariners, their shared backgrounds as “others” in a largely white world makes it likely that they would have welcomed the opportunity not to be the sole individual of African ancestry sharing a mess table.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ HMS *Chatham* Muster Roll, 1782-1783, TNA ADM 36/9229. Often Americans who enlisted in the

At the end of the Revolution there was a confluence of mariners coming and leaving New York City. With the British navy no longer requiring large numbers of seamen, many naval seamen were discharged. Few of these men were colored mariners, as most such men sought to leave with British forces. For example, when the sixty-man HMS *Berwick*, discharged thirty-one men in New York before the naval ship headed back to England, not one was a colored seaman.¹⁶⁴ In contrast, during October and November 1783 alone, not fewer than sixteen slaves were known to have sought berths on ships in New York harbor. From the young boy Jess to the forty-five year-old Flora, men, women, and adolescents each saw ships in the harbor as the means to flee and obtain the freedom they desired.¹⁶⁵ Many of these former slaves had “inexpressible anguish and terror” that they would be re-enslaved when British forces left the city. And they had good cause for such fears. During the confusing final days of the war, large numbers of whites came to New York seeking to re-enslave runaway slaves. For example, in July 1783 when Jacob Duyrea’s slave waterman Francis Griffin refused to go onto his master’s sloop to return to Dutchess County, Duyrea used “force and violence” to carry Griffin off. Similarly, Thomas Willis, a local Magistrate was found to have compelled a Negro named Ceasar onto a vessel and taken him to Elizabeth Town, New Jersey. While the British commander took strong measures to protect runaways under his protection, including prosecuting Duyrea and Willis, blacks understood that with British forces preparing to

British Navy under duress deserted at the first opportunity. For example, in 1777 as HMS *Roebuck* sailed north from Virginia among its crew were five colored mariners John Bapitsa Ribbo, Pedro Musquaro, Pedro Ferraro, Domingo Alberti, and Pedro who came on board from the Prison List. All but Ribbo deserted when the *Roebuck* reached Philadelphia. The navy also had a hard time keeping many maritime fugitives who enlisted. Kit, Joseph, Natt, Valentine, Michael and Solomon, all enlisted onto HMS *Roebuck* in Virginia or the Chesapeake Bay and then deserted the ship when it reached Philadelphia. HMS *Roebuck*, Pay Rolls, 1776, ADM 34/644.

¹⁶⁴ HMS *Berwick* Pay Book, 1783, TNA ADM 34/142.

¹⁶⁵ *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, October 20, 1783; and *Royal Gazette* (New York), November 8, 1783.

leave the city at the end of November, they could be returned to lives of coerced labor. This fear, as well as strong anti-American feelings among many of the former slaves, served as strong forces pushing many blacks to board British vessels for foreign lands.¹⁶⁶ For these men and women, British ships were the one sure means to freedom. And fortunately for these former slaves, the British commander Sir Guy Carleton did not interpret the Treaty of Paris as requiring the automatic return of fugitive slaves to their former owners. As a result, very few slaves in New York found themselves re-enslaved. It has been estimated that at the end of the war approximately 9,000 former slaves left North America. This was truly a remarkable and unique occurrence in an era when most Anglo-Americans equated dark-skin with enslaved status.¹⁶⁷

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The sailing of the British fleet out of the Narrows in November of 1783 would mark a significant change in the fortune of enslaved individuals in northern colonies.¹⁶⁸ No longer could slaves anticipate lives of permanent freedom if they reached British lines. For the large majority of enslaved individuals, the evacuation of the British military ended their best hope for lives as freed people. Not only would flight via the sea be far more limited than it had been during the Revolution, but in the post-war years, slaves such as the one hundred and sixty owned by the Nottingham Company found themselves

¹⁶⁶ *Independent Gazetteer*, July 19, 1783; New York Headquarters' Orders dated May 3 and 10, 1783, TNA WO 28/9/409-410. Some Americans believed the British had treated Duryee "with great insolence" and viewed the case with "great speculation and emotion." *Pennsylvania Packet*, July 22, 1783. In October 1783, the month before many of them left the city for Nova Scotia, a "chosen band-itti of negroes," accompanied the crew of the *Canaille* in parading the colours of Captain Stewart's American vessel that they had torn down through New York's streets. *Pennsylvania Packet*, Oct. 28, 1783.

¹⁶⁷ Pybus, *Black Founders*, 38.

¹⁶⁸ The story of those slaves who evacuated with British forces at the end of the war is detailed in Cassandra Pybus's *Epic Voyages of freedom* and Simon Schama's *Rough Crossings*.

sold off as the confiscated property of Loyalists. Slave resistance would focus on negotiations with slave masters regarding manumission, and slaves would seek protection under gradual emancipation statutes such as those enacted in Pennsylvania and Rhode Island during the war.¹⁶⁹ Slaves' petitions for freedom were couched in the revolutionary language of liberty; "the divine spirit of *freedom*, seems to fire every human breast in this continent," read one. Within the context of revolutionary republicanism, these slaves sought the immediate freedom that they characterized as "an inherent right of the human species." While the "Black Revolution" served to free thousands of enslaved individuals, for the large majority of enslaved men and women, the conclusion of the war did not end their enslavement. As one black orator celebrating the end of slavery in New York in 1827 observed after singing the praises of American liberty, many North American slaves only "obtained their liberty, by leaving the country [with the British] at the close of the war."¹⁷⁰ For those unfortunate souls unable to obtain a berth on Sir Carleton's fleet

¹⁶⁹ *Freeman's Journal or North-American Intelligencer*, Oct. 3, 1781. By the end of the Revolution, the numbers of slaves in northern cities had fallen dramatically. In Philadelphia, there were only 450 slaves in the city at the time of the 1780 Gradual Emancipation Law. Smith, "Black Family Life in Philadelphia," 79. Abolitionist societies were established during the post-war era in all three colonies, but slave owners were slow to manumit their bondsmen. Not until September 2, 1778, were the first New York Quakers, John Way and Samuel Doughty, disowned for owning slaves. Minutes of Monthly Meeting at New York, Flushing and Newtown, Feb. 2, 1775, Haviland Record Room, Society of Friends, New York. Even some of those active in the abolitionist movement societies engaged in slave trading in the post-war period. Jacob Ernest Cooke, *Tench Coxe and the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill, 1978), 93-94 (Tench Coxe, a Secretary of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society purchased slaves for a business associate as late as 1781, and facilitated the return of fugitive slaves to correspondents in the West Indies in 1784, 1786, 1787 and 1788).

¹⁷⁰ Aptheker, *A Documentary History of the Negro*, Vol. 1, 7-8.; Sidney Kaplan, *The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution, 1770-1800* (Greenwich, CT, 1973), 27; *Freedom's Journal* (New York), Oct. 12, 1827, reprinted in Paul A. Gilje and Howard B. Rock, eds., *Keepers of the Revolution: New York Workers in the Early Republic* (Ithaca, 1992). Sweet, *Bodies Politic*; Manisha Sinha, "To 'cast just obliquy' on Oppressors: Black Radicalism in the Age of Revolution," *WMQ* 64:1 (Jan. 2007), 149-160 and Emily Blanck, "Seventeen Eighty-Three: The Turning Point in the Law of Slavery and Freedom in Massachusetts," *NEQ* 75:1 (Mar. 2002): 24-51 each considers the role of slave petitions in bondsmen's battles to seek freedom. In the 1770s some Massachusetts slaves successfully sued their masters both for their freedom and compensation for services rendered. Roy E. Finkenbine, "Belinda's Petition: Reparations for Slavery in Revolutionary Massachusetts," *WMQ* 64:1 (Jan. 2007), 100. In contrast to the use of the language of liberty in petitions for freedom, black sailors impressed into the British Navy "wrote only of their 'wish to be releas'd.'" W. Jeffrey Bolster, "Letters by African American Sailors, 1799-1814" *WMQ*

heading out of New York, Americans' lofty language of liberty would prove to be empty rhetoric.

CHAPTER FIVE

“To Get Any Place From Their Masters”: Possibilities And Limits for New Lives in the Atlantic

The unhurried and often ambiguous nature of northern gradual emancipation statutes ensured that thousands of individuals remained enslaved in New England and the Mid-Atlantic region into the early nineteenth century.¹ A “turning point” when enslaved peoples in North America could begin to truly feel that governmental authorities were supportive of their obtaining freedom did not occur until 1783. In that year the Massachusetts Supreme Court decreed Quock Walker free, holding that “slavery is ...as effectively abolished as it can be by the granting of rights and privileges wholly incompatible and repugnant to its existence.” Whether this decision transformed Massachusetts into a state that denied “its citizenry the right to hold human property,” or did not fully extinguish slavery in the Commonwealth, the ruling clearly placed the state’s courts on the side of liberty, at least in the minds of enslaved peoples.² Until 1783, finding freedom in the northern colonies was difficult for dark-skinned individuals as many patriots asserted their natural right to liberty at the same time they urged enslaved peoples to find liberty elsewhere, “perhaps in Africa.” Hundreds of maritime fugitives did not wait for whites to create new centers of liberty or to see through the slow legal process of gradual emancipation. Instead, they sought liberty in havens of freedom distant

¹ Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 1, 7; Hodges, *Root & Branch*, 162-68; Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 60-65.

² Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 64-5; Emily Blanck, “Seventeen Eighty-Three: The Turning Point in the Law of Slavery and Freedom in Massachusetts,” *NEQ* 75:1 (Mar. 2002), 24-51. See also, Higginbotham, *In the Matter of Color*, 91-96; William O’Brien, “Did the Jennison Case Outlaw Slavery in Massachusetts?” *WMQ* 17:2 (Apr. 1960), 219-41; Arthur Zilversmit, *The First Emancipation: The Abolition of Slavery in the North* (Chicago, 1967), and “Quok Walker, Mumbet, and the Abolition of Slavery in Massachusetts,” *WMQ* 25:4 (Oct. 1968), 614-24.

from North American shores.³

Where did maritime fugitives flee to? Many owners had no idea. Few runaways were so foolhardy as to leave evidence indicating their exact intended destination. Many maritime fugitives simply grabbed a berth on the first available ship that would carry them away from their masters. Fugitive slave advertisements and muster rolls demonstrate that maritime fugitives headed to havens throughout the Atlantic, some at considerable distances from their former masters. For example, in July 1768, seven fugitives from New Orleans were rescued off the coast of Pennsylvania, having been at sea for nine days and “not know[ing] which way they were going, but [sic] willing to get to any place from their masters.” Other slaves stole sloops and sailed from northern colonies for southern locales, as did Venture Smith when in 1751 he “designed to go [to] the Mississippi [River].”⁴ Some found shelter on slave and whaling ships. Although such vessels often held little appeal for many mariners, due to the arduous labor involved, long voyages on slaving and whaling voyages provided advantages for maritime fugitives. With whaling voyages taking maritime fugitives to distant regions such as the coast of Brazil, former owners were highly unlikely to recover their former slaves. Similarly, African slaving voyages could also provide similar refuge from former masters. Newport slave ships such as the *Adventure* had colored mariners among their crews. Duggon Onions, Prince Miller, Currentee, Silione Jepson, Cape, Ceasar Hammond, and Ephraim Meves, a “Mulatto seaman,” all served on the *Adventure*. And although conditions on slavers could be brutal, they offered mariners wages considerably higher than on other

³ Robin Blackburn, “Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of Revolution,” *WMQ* 63:4 (Oct. 2006), 649 citing to Richard Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories: Their Origins and Developments* (Cambridge, 1979), 18, 34-35, 37, 42.

⁴ *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, July 25, 1768; *Boston New-Letter*, Feb. 13, 1721; *Five Black Lives*, 13.

ships. Working on slavers would have also, ironically, brought these men back in contact with their African ancestral maritime heritage at the same time they helped enslave other Africans. Upon reaching the African coast, maritime fugitive sailors would often have found themselves working alongside African *grumetes*.⁵ The circumstance of escaped slaves working alongside free African watermen to enslave Africans for transport to the Americas illustrates well the diverse and complex nature of maritime experiences in the Atlantic for colored men.

The one notable exception to northern slave fugitives finding freedom beyond the boundaries of northern colonies was New York City during the American Revolution. The lines between American and British forces in the New York region were porous. New York City offered separation from slave masters, opportunities to hire one's self out, and the possibility of obtaining a berth on the scores of British privateers and naval vessels docked in the city's harbor. The usual trickle of fugitives heading to New York during the Revolution became a steady stream of runaways (Table 8-7). With the British commander issuing an order in 1779 that declared "all Negroes that fly from the enemy's country are free - No person whatever can claim a right to them," New York truly was a sanctuary for fugitive slaves. As a Hackensack resident implied in 1783, the reason there were "few or no negro slaves are given up" for sale in northern New Jersey was due to many slaves fleeing to the British lines. When masters went to New York to retrieve their slaves they often discovered the slave "had formed such connections" with a British soldier, officer, or official that the former master "could no longer look upon [the slave]

⁵ Rommel-Ruiz, "Atlantic Revolutions," 148, 215; Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, 228; Morgan, "Black Maritime Experiences," 108-110. An good example of the difficult conditions crews on slave ships faced is Captain Joseph Miller's sloop. In 1764 Miller and all his crew "except Two" died on the coast of Africa. The two surviving seamen were killed when Africans "came off from the Shore." *New-York Gazette*, Sept. 10, 1764.

as [their] own.”⁶ Many slave owners “supposed” their slaves would “enter on board any privateer or other vessel that is going out of the port,” knowing that their bondsmen’s maritime experience often enabled them to obtain positions as seamen.⁷

Notwithstanding New York serving as a haven during the American Revolution, throughout the eighteenth century, maritime fugitives understood that liberty was more likely to be obtained outside, rather than in North America. Although the desire of some abolitionists for free colonies of blacks would not become a reality before the end of the Revolution, havens of freedom already existed through out the Atlantic.⁸ Maritime fugitives took advantage of the “stateless, freelancing dynamic” that existed in border regions such as between Florida and the West Indies to reach these places of refuge. Comprising a “Negroid Littoral,” these havens of freedom included state sanctioned towns in Spanish Florida and Puerto Rico, maroon communities, and colonial societies where slaves from nations’ enemies were granted freedom so as to undermine those opponents.⁹ The factors that opened or closed certain ports and regions to maritime fugitives, including imperial considerations, manning needs, and religious concerns, changed over time. Ports that that once had cohesive colored communities could prove to be less than welcoming. For example, from the 1750s into the mid-nineteenth century,

⁶ *Royal Gazette*, Oct. 10, 1778; Smith, “Mid-Atlantic Regions,” 225; Rivington’s *Royal Gazette*, Nov. 4, 1780; in northern ports. Van Buskirk, *Generous Enemies*, 4-5, 131, 135-6, 141n27, 172. New York was referred to by slave owners as “a receptacle, under British administration, for all CANAILLE and EXCRESCENCES of America.” *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, Jan. 21, 1783.

⁷ Van Buskirk, *Generous Enemies*, 173.

⁸ Anthony Benezet, *Some Historical Account of Guinea, In Situation, Produce, and the General Disposition of Its Inhabitants with an Inquiry into the Rise and Progress of the Slave-Trade, Its Nature and Lamentable Effects...* (Philadelphia, 1771), 139-41 cited in Christopher Leslie Brown, “Empire without Slaves: British Concepts of Emancipation in the Age of the American Revolution,” *WMQ* 56:2 (Apr. 1999), 288-289n37.

⁹ For examples of places of refuge see Landers, “Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose, 593-619; Richard Price, ed. *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (Baltimore, 1979); Hall, “Maritime Maroons,” 484; Scott, “Afro-American Sailors and the International Communication Network,” 97, 105; Klooster, “Subordinate but Proud,” 287.

Salem, Massachusetts, had a vibrant colored community in which one-quarter of the town's dark-skinned men worked as mariners. However, by the end of the Civil War only eighteen black mariners from Salem were listed on the port's crew lists, and, by 1880, only three black mariners, all elderly, remained on the port's vessels. While ports like Salem may have become less welcoming to colored mariners, others, particularly in England, opened their doors as abolitionism took hold of the public consciousness in the world's largest slave empire.¹⁰

Unlike young boys, who in their wanderlust professed "perfect indifference" as to where a ship might go, maritime fugitives were concerned with a ship's destination. As it was difficult in the eighteenth century for sailors to become ship's officers, the opportunities for black mariners to create long careers at sea were limited. Thus, maritime fugitives hoped to land a berth taking them to ports where dark-skinned individuals were treated better than in British colonies. Privateer vessels or merchant ships sailing to England were generally favored by maritime fugitives over coastal voyages to ports in the southern colonies of British North America, although the benefits of particular vessels and voyages changed over time.¹¹ Unfortunately, maritime fugitives could not always be picky, as they often needed quickly to put time and space between themselves and their former masters. Thus, for some maritime fugitives, berths as sailors served as a taxi service to transport them to ports away from former masters and where they could establish new lives, often not as mariners. With the career path of "sailors often chopped and changed, from ship to ship, trade to trade, or even from country to

¹⁰ Wills, *Negro President*, 19; Gould, "Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds," 773; Brian S. Kirby, "The Loss and Recovery of the Schooner *Amity*: An Episode in Salem Maritime History," *NEQ* 62 (1989), 553-60; Brown, *Moral Capital*, 5.

¹¹ Samuel Richardson, *A Sailor Boy's Experience Aboard a Slave Ship in the Beginning of the Present Century* (orig. publ. Hamilton, Scotland, 1867; rpt. Wigtown, Scotland, 1996).

country,” those maritime fugitives who worked regularly as sailors moved from port to port until they found a place where they could be at home. Many never did. Like an inexperienced hurdler who has to clear high barriers quickly, but finds, despite his best efforts, that rainy conditions or his own missteps cause him to fall, many maritime fugitives were thwarted from reaching havens of freedom by war, disease, recapture and kidnappings. Many slave owners had extensive Atlantic connections that enabled them to recapture their bondsmen, as happened to Samuel Freebody and John Incobs. For maritime fugitives, the hurdles were high, the race never ending, and the mental and physical strength required enormous.¹²

To describe every possibility for freedom in the Atlantic is beyond the scope of this project (and the endurance of this writer).¹³ The four short case studies of havens of freedom that follow – pirate ships, Spanish Florida and West Indies isles, Scarborough, England during the Seven Years War, and England in the post-*Somerset* era – are intended to provide a sense of the choices maritime fugitives had when considering where to flee, changes over time, and some of the factors that affected which doors were open and which were closed to these runaways.

Piracy

North American colonial officials in the first quarter of the eighteenth century often closed their eyes to smuggling and piracy. They did so to ease currency problems

¹² Earle, “English Sailors, 1570-1775,” 87. In small North American ports seamen were more likely to become officers. Vickers, *Young Men and the Sea*, App. B. Some maritime fugitives were known to return to northern ports after having fled to the West Indies. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 24, 1776. Even four or five years after they escaped and had established careers as seamen, maritime fugitives were often the subject of their former masters continuing to searching for them. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 1, 1773.

¹³ These havens could also be in the distant South Atlantic. Atkins, “The ‘Black Atlantic Communication Network’,” 23-24.

and enrich themselves. As a result, pirate plunderings in waters off North America became “exceptional in both volume and value.” New Yorker William Kidd’s attacks on merchant ships may have resulted in his being strung up in chains at Tilbury Point on the Thames in 1701. His plight, however was exceptional, as most other North American ship captains who similarly plundered with the knowledge of colonial officials were not executed. In the years after the conclusion of Queen Anne’s War the British government attempted to rid the North American coast of pirate ships through sporadic enforcement efforts and the issuance of pardons. While some men accepted royal pardons and returned to more acceptable maritime endeavors, many pirates either accepted the pardons and returned to their illicit ways or refused the pardons in the first instance.¹⁴ HMS *Phoenix*’s experience in 1718 off Rhode Island was not uncommon. When naval officers read the royal proclamation offering pardons to a group of pirates, the pirates “accepted the same with a great deal of Joy.” Over the next three months, pirates came aboard HMS *Phoenix*, took certificates of pardon and went away. However, a number of them left “with a design to go a pirating again.” Among the seamen believed to have gone “pirating” was Thomas Kingston of the *Phoenix*. Soon pirate ships were capturing vessels not far from where the naval ship was anchored. When the *Phoenix*’s officers sought the assistance of Rhode Island residents “in suppressing these pirates,” Rhode Islanders “seemed more inclined to assist” the pirates then have them brought to heel. Later the same year, the *Phoenix* had little better luck persuading pirates in Bermuda to cease their operations. As the *Phoenix*’s experience illustrates, notwithstanding the Admiralty’s desire for American

¹⁴ Mark Hanna, “The Pirate Nests: The Impact of Piracy on Newport and Charles Town, 1670-1730,” Ph. D., Harvard University, 2006; Richard Zacks, *The Pirate Hunter* (New York., 2002), 392; C.S. Williams, *Jan Cornelius Van Horne and his Descendents*, (New York, 1912), 7; Penrose’s Journal, 39 (“had come in by the Queens Act of Grace”); Oyer and Terminer Records, 1600-1715, Pardons, TNA HCA 1/63.

seamen to stop engaging in piracy, piracy flourished in the western Atlantic in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. And ships engaged in piracy would provide havens for maritime fugitives.¹⁵

With limited enforcement and pardons proving ineffective, between 1716 and 1726 there were one to two thousand pirates on the North American coast. Not until after pirates had created serious diplomatic difficulties for the English government and threatened the African slave trade in the 1720s did the Royal Navy undertake a well-coordinated effort to rid the trading lanes of pirates. During piracy's "Golden Era," which ended after the Royal Navy's vigorous campaign resulted in the hangings of Bartholomew Roberts and other pirates throughout the Atlantic between 1722 and 1726, there was a divergence of perspectives concerning piracy's benefits. While New England, New York, and South Carolina officials viewed piracy as a means to ease currency problems in their respective colonies, and officials in London perceived it as an impediment to imperial efforts, some maritime fugitives saw piracy as providing escape from enslavement. Piracy's riches, freedom from the harshness of slavery, and the voice pirate crews had in the choice of officers and establishment of ship rules drew former slaves "degraded by extortion and race" to pirate ships.¹⁶ With runaways known to seek

¹⁵ HMS *Phoenix*, Logbook 1714-1719, Feb.-May, 1718 entries, TNA ADM 51/690; Lt. Gov. Bennett to the Council of Trade and Plantation, May 31, 1718, *CSPC*, item 551, vol. 30 (1717-18), 260 ("many are willing to joyn with them").

¹⁶ Rediker, *Villains*, 29. In the same time period, another five to six hundred pirates operated off the West African coast. Bialuschewski, "Black People under the Black Flag," 2; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 14. Pirate ships in the sixteenth century often had colored mariners. Talty, *Empire of Blue Water*, 86-7, 104, 106-7.

Despite the Navy's campaign, pirates continue to appear on America's coast through the 1720s. For example, in July 1726 HMS *Sheerness* felt compelled to fire upon a ship in Boston's harbor, "suspect[ing] he was going a Pyrating." Among the crew on Captain Shipson's pirate ship, that captured the Boston Ship *John & Mary* in the Bay of Honduras, were three or four Negroes. Three years later HMS *Shoreham* captured a small sloop "supposed to be a pirate" off New York's Verazzano Narrows. When on May 26, 1729 HMS *Shoreham* sent a boat with an officer and ten men into the Narrows and captured the suspected pirate boat it found among the sloop's crew a Mulatto man. Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 281-285; HMS *Sheerness*, Lt. 's Log, 1724-1728, NMM ADM/L/L/262; *American Weekly*

out pirate ships, Virginia officials expressed concerns concerning the “Ravage of Pyrates” and possible “Insurrection of the Negroes,” while Bermuda’s governor believed slaves would join pirates if they invaded the island.¹⁷ These concerns would prove well-founded as resourceful maritime fugitives found their way aboard pirate ships.

For those maritime fugitives who chose to become pirates, prizes could make them rich. However, simple material wealth is insufficient to explain why all or even most maritime fugitives choose to become outlaws. What very likely drew most maritime fugitives aboard pirate vessels was the egalitarianism among pirates, especially when contrasted to the harshness of life aboard merchant and naval vessels. Pirate ships were seen as places in which a runaway could be reborn as a free sailor. Colored mariners such as those who had served in Black Bart’s crew grew mutinous over the difficult conditions in the Royal Navy, having experienced far less harsh conditions during lengthy tenures on pirate ships. With captains being the sole and often arbitrary determiner of discipline on naval and merchant vessels, a maritime fugitive on these ships could find himself unjustifiably lashed. To those fugitives who were so whipped, it must have felt as if they had never left enslavement in North America. In contrast, pirate ships had articles of agreement in which how the crew was to be disciplined were clearly and with great specificity spelled out. Election of pirate captains and the use of ship councils limited captains’ authority. Once a maritime fugitive stepped across the line and became a pirate, he may have been a criminal in the eyes of colonial officials, but to his shipmates he was entitled to equal treatment and respect under the articles of agreement. This made pirate ships islands of relative liberty in an Atlantic world in which “freedom, not slavery, was

Mercury, Mar. 18, 1725; HMS *Shoreham*, Lt.’s Log, 1728-1730, NMM ADM/L/S/272.

¹⁷ *History of Pyrates*, 273; Rediker, *Villains*, 169-176.

the peculiar institution.”¹⁸

Despite its attractive attributes, the nature of piracy limited access to it for elderly, married, or inexperienced maritime fugitives. While Admiralty records and newspaper dispatches make clear that men of color joined pirate ships, these documents are noticeably lacking in references to men forty years of age or older. As warships, pirate vessels needed seamen who were capable of hand-to-hand combat and relished the idea of a good fight. Although some men older than forty years of age joined pirate ships, most elderly mariners chose not to.¹⁹ Even more than old salts landlubbers were not welcome aboard pirate vessels. Pirates were “contemptible [of] a Notion of Landmen” and saw little appeal in taking on green hands found on some privateers or merchant ships. Pirates’ attitude was borne from a fierce pride in being seamen and a disdain of those lacking in maritime skills. The nomadic and criminal nature of pirate life also meant very few pirates were married or had strong family connections on land. Maritime fugitives, like the Antiguan slaves who in 1717 “went off ...to join pirates,” and actually found their way onto a pirate ship, were overwhelmingly single men. Given the youthfulness and unmarried state of most northern maritime fugitives, these men were

¹⁸ Rediker, *Villains*, 55; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 263, 286-87; Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*, x. The “rebirth” of dark-skinned men sometimes was due to pirates freeing captured slaves. In one noteworthy example, a French pirate aboard a captured slaver declared “he desired they might be treated like Free men for he would banish even the name of Slavery from among them.” Daniel Defoe, *Of Captain Mission*, EBook #7779 <http://etext.teamnesbitt.com/books/etext/etext05/8cmis10.txt.html> (accessed Sept. 4, 2007). Although pirate ships might provide haven to runaways and free captured slaves, pirates also were known to treat them poorly or resell the captured Africans. Bialuschewski, “Black People under the Black Flag.”

¹⁹ Marcus Rediker, “‘Under the Banner of King Death’: The Social World of Anglo-American Pirates,” *WMQ* 38:2 (Apr. 1981), 208; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 260; Gov. N. Lawes Sept. 1, 1718 letter, *CSPC* 30:345 (complaint that pirates had “inveglid and encouraged severall negroes to desart from their masters and go to the Spaniards in Cuba”); Rediker, *Villains*, 55 (Antiguan slaves fled to pirate ships). Although Rediker initially believed pirates were older than the general mariner population, he subsequently asserted that pirates’ age distribution was almost identical to that of merchant sailors.

ideal candidates to be pirates.²⁰

North American maritime fugitives could not easily find work aboard a pirate vessel. In contrast to the West Indies, where pirate vessels often anchored close to shore, pirate ships rarely came into North American ports. Thus, northern slaves often lacked ready access to pirate ships. Maritime fugitives became pirates when the crews of ships they had found their way onto turned pirate, or, having fled via the sea and been captured by a pirate ship, they agreed or were “forc’d” to become pirates. Unusual was the fugitive such as the mulatto Samuel Routh who “piratically” stole a sloop for the purpose of fleeing slavery and joining pirates in New Orleans.²¹ Although scores of maritime fugitives fled by stealing small boats, those like Routh who turned pirate, risked not merely being whipped if captured but executed. Having heard of or witnessed pirates such as William Blads and John Bright in Newport and five black seamen in Blackbeard’s crew in Virginia being executed, most maritime fugitives were spurred by self-preservation to seek berths on merchant ships or privateers rather than on pirate vessels.²²

The majority of sailors on pirate ships came aboard when their merchant vessel was captured. Men such as the two Negro sailors pirate Paul Williams’ crew seized from

²⁰ Hanna, “The Pirate Nests”; DeFoe, *A General History of Pyrates*, 228; Rediker, *Villains*, 55. In a sampling of 521 pirates, Rediker found that only twenty-three were known to have been married. Rediker, “Society and Culture Among Anglo-American Deep Sea Sailors, 1700-1750,” 265n16. A sampling of Anglo-American pirates from 1716 to 1724 found only four percent had been married. David Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and Realities of Life Among the Pirates* (San Diego, 1997), 69. The multi-national pirate crews did, on occasion, include Africans liberated from slave ships. Rediker, *Villains*, 53; Bialuschewski, “Black People under the Black Flag.”

²¹ Letter May 15, 1772, Gov. Thomas Shirley to Earl of Hillsborough, TNA CO 23/21/47. For a description of life Routh may have lead as a free black if he reached New Orleans, see, Thomas N. Ingersoll, “Free Blacks in a Slave Society: New Orleans, 1718-1812,” *WMQ* 48:2 (Apr. 1991): 173-200.

²² Philip Gosse, *The Pirates’ Who’s Who Giving Particulars of the Lives and Deaths of the Pirates and Buccaneers*, <http://infomotions.com/etexts/gutenberg/dirs/1/9/5/6/19564/19564.htm> (accessed Feb. 5, 2008) (Blads and Bright were hanged in Newport in July, 1723); Robert Earl Lee, *Blackbeard the Pirate: A Reappraisal of His Life and Times* (Winston Salem, 1974) 136. Maritime fugitives who commandeered vessels and then were captured could find themselves hung. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Oct. 2, 1729.

a Bermuda sloop off of Sandy Hook, the eight Negroes who having been taken to serve as “divers at [a] wreck,” the four Indians taken from Captain Peter King’s ship off of Nantucket, Philadelphia merchant Isaac Norton’s “two valuable Negroes,” and Pedro, Francisco, and Piesso were all forced to join a pirate crew.²³ When captured, those such as Francisco, Pedro and Piesso who were able to establish they had been “forced” to serve as pirates, escaped the gallows. Unfortunately, those colored men “forced” aboard pirate ships, once again found themselves coerced to perform labor that they had not chosen.

Those coerced to serve as pirates did not always take kindly to this fate. Some were able to reverse the tables and “sho[o]t the Pirate down” or recapture the ship, kill the pirate captain, and bring “the Captain’s head in a Tarr Bucket” back to port. Others such as the Negro on Captain Phillips’ sloop *Samuel and Sarah* were able to regain control of the ship and bring the pirates into a northern port. For free Negroes or maritime fugitives, being compelled to be pirates and thereby finding themselves at risk of execution if officials did not believe they had been coerced to act as pirates, must have been exasperating. Not only were they once again being coerced to do labor not of their choosing, but by doing so they risked death. For some maritime fugitives, possible riches must have seemed like a pale reward for their efforts to escape.²⁴

Some colored mariners appear to have been more than comfortable with their decision to sail under the Skull and Bones. Their contentment may have been due to being able to attain positions of authority on pirate ships, positions they rarely attained on

²³ Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 260; *Boston News-Letter*, June 17, 1717, Aug. 11, 1718; *New-England Courant*, June 18, 1722, May 4, 1724; *Boston Gazette*, May 18, 1724.

²⁴ *American Weekly Mercury*, May 30, June 6, 1723; *American Weekly Mercury*, May 5, 1720; Barry Clifford, *Expedition Whydah: The Story of the World’s First Excavation of a Pirate Treasure Ship* (New York, 1999), 165.

other vessels. An unnamed “Negro Man,” who had previously lived in Rhode-Island, used his knowledge of local waters to pilot a Spanish pirate schooner when it attacked Gardiner’s Island in New York.²⁵ With Captain Kidd at ease with dark-skinned men in positions of authority - at one time his quartermaster was a black man named Hendrick van der Heul – his crew frequently included colored mariners such as the Negro John Patrick. As Captain Kidd’s quartermaster, van der Heul was in charge of distributing necessities equally among the crew and served as the magistrate upon the ship. Some colored mariners such as the Spanish mulatto Josephus were chosen by their fellow pirates to command a pirate ship. Such roles of authority for men of color were exceedingly rare on North American merchant vessels or naval ships.²⁶

Just how extensive was colored mariners’ participation in piracy between 1713 and the mid-1730s? Common enough that *Polly*, the sequel to *Beggar’s Opera*, portrays black pirates in the West Indies, and that some historians believe “‘Negroes and Molattoes’ were present on almost every pirate ship.” This may overstate colored sailors’ presence on pirate ships, but if so, not greatly. As the crew of HMS *Launceston* could attest, some Spanish pirate ships were made up almost entirely of Mulattos. The presence of colored pirates was not limited to Spanish ships. HMS *Greyhound*, while patrolling off the Rhode Island coast in 1723, captured a pirate ship with “six blacks” and an Indian, Tom Mumfort from Martha’s Vineyard. Of Blackbeard’s one hundred seamen, sixty were said to be colored mariners. And among those who paid with their lives for engaging in

²⁵ *Boston News-Letter*, July 22, 1717. Typically, pirates did not like to keep captured slave ships as they had difficulty quickly and profitably selling parcels of enslaved individuals. *Boston News-Letter*, Jan. 28, 1725. There were, however, occasions in which slave ship crews “turned pirate” and subsequently sold the enslaved individuals. *Boston News-Letter*, Nov. 8, 1734.

²⁶ Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period*, 222; Robert C. Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War against the Pirates* (Cambridge, MA, 1986), 84; Zacks, *The Pirate Hunter*, 18, 208, 236, 387; Taylor, 1718. When transported to Newgate Prison in England, Kidd was accompanied by a young Magadagscar boy, whom he gave to the keeper at Newgate before his execution.

piracy were North American colored mariners.²⁷

While colored mariners may have been found on most pirate vessels, the number of maritime fugitives on pirate ships was not large. As was true for Sanuel Bellamy's crew when it captured *Angis* in 1717, pirate crews in North American waters were primarily inhabitants of the British Isles. Only one-quarter of pirates were Americans, with most of coming from the Bahamas and Jamaica. Thus, it is probable that the large majority of colored pirates were West Indian or African, and not North American maritime fugitives.²⁸

Those maritime fugitives who came aboard pirate ships did not encounter environments free of racism. A "substantial minority" of pirate seamen, including the infamous Bartholomew Roberts, had previously worked on slave ships. These men had been part of a system in which individuals of color were exploited by white merchants, ship captains, traders and slave masters. If they had served on either privateers or naval vessels, pirates would have been familiar with the benefits of prize monies to be gotten from capturing and selling dark-skinned individuals. The cruelty of white sailors towards people of color aboard slave ships also extended to colored mariners. The daily beating of a "black boy" on a Bristol slaver that caused him to jump overboard was not an isolated episode. On slavers, white seamen gained access to the "soft African wench," a license that John Newton described as "almost unlimited" on many slave ships. On some pirate

²⁷ Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 54; Barry Clifford, *Expedition Whydah: The Story of the World's First Excavation of a Pirate Treasure Ship* (New York, 1999), p. 165; Bialuschewski, "Black People under the Black Flag," 1; Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 51; *American Weekly Mercury*, June 21, 1722; *American Weekly Mercury*, June 27, July 4, 25, 1723. References to colored pirates after the "Golden Age of Piracy" include the *New-England Weekly Journal*, Dec. 22, 1729; *American Weekly Mercury*, Oct. 21, 1731; *Boston News-Letter*, Mar. 17, 1734. The 1781 Philadelphia census refers to one Southwark resident listing his occupation as "pirate." Margaret B. Tinkcom, "Southwark, a River Community: Its Shape and Substance," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 114:4 (Aug. 1970), 339-340.

²⁸ Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 51-2; "Pirate Activity, New York, 1717, 1718 in the State Papers, Colonial, *NYG&BR* 139:2 (Apr. 2008), 148.

vessels, slavers' exploitation of enslaved women was also practiced. For example, a pirate crew traded a ship for sixty enslaved women that they brought aboard the *Batchelor's Delight* and raped. Buccaneers encamped in Jamaica raided nearby plantations to take slave women as their servants and lovers. Pirates' harsh treatment of people of color was not limited to those enslaved. On some pirate ships, colored mariners found themselves manning the pumps for long hours while white seamen were aloft in the ship's rigging. Pirate captains could also be duplicitous in their dealings with colored seamen. Captain Edward Low enticed them to come aboard only to then sell them as slaves.²⁹ In short, although in the first quarter of the eighteenth century pirate ships provided freedom for some maritime fugitives, the freedom these men found aboard the Jolly Roger was often limited, both in scope and time.

Spanish West Indies and Florida

Pirates may have welcomed maritime fugitives, but colonial officials in the Atlantic typically viewed slave runaways as criminals who had stolen themselves from their masters. A notable exception was the response of the Spanish governments in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Florida. To undercut their English enemies, bolster often weak and under-populated Spanish regions, and convert non-believers to Catholicism, Spanish officials were willing to overlook the criminal status of runaways. Their doing so opened a portal to freedom for some northern maritime fugitives. Unfortunately, for most

²⁹ Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, 22, 241-42; Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 189n31; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 15-6; Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors*, 104-61; Anton Gil, *Devil's Mariner: A Life of William Dampier, Pirate and Explorer, 1651-1715* (London, 1997), 41. Abuse of enslaved women was not limited to white pirate seamen in the forecandle having their way with captured African women. Ship captains regularly satisfied their "brutish lusts" by raping slave women. William E. Phipps, *Amazing Grace in John Newton: Slave-Ship Captain, Hymnwriter, and Abolitionist* (Macon, GA, 2001), 29. Elizabeth Dido, one of the more prominent blacks in late eighteenth century England, was the product of Rear Admiral John Lindsay's liaison with a slave in a Spanish vessel captured by Sir Lindsay's man-of-war. James Walvin, *Black Ivory: Slavery in the British Empire* (Oxford, 2001), 11.

northern runaways, this doorway to freedom would prove to be very difficult to reach.

The large presence of Spanish colored mariners in northern ports, northern slaves' knowledge of Spanish colonies, war between Britain and Spain, and religious concerns all caused fugitive slaves to seek refuge in the Spanish colonies. Spain's struggles with Britain resulted in scores of dark-skinned Spanish mariners being condemned as Prize Negroes in North America (Appendix C). These captured mariners possessed both maritime skills and knowledge of the Atlantic. In northern ports, Spanish Prize Negroes encountered Spanish colored mariners who jumped ship in North American ports, including Francisco, who fled his ship in Providence.³⁰ Enslaved Spanish colored mariners did not accept their fates in North America peacefully, often leading or playing central roles in slave resistance. Juan, Jose, and Ambrose, Spanish dark-skinned mariners captured by English privateers and sold into slavery, were convicted of participating in the New York 1712 Slave Insurrection in which they were believed to have played prominent roles.³¹ Twenty-nine years later, Spanish Negroes were again believed to have been the instigators of slave resistance. When a series of fires broke out in New York City in 1741, frightened New Yorkers cried out: "The Spanish Negroes; Take up the Spanish Negroes." In trials of five Spanish Negroes, slaves and whites each testified that the Spanish men, all of whom were Prize Negroes, had plotted to set fire to the city and kill Captain Lush, their captor.³² The resistance of Spanish Negroes was not limited to

³⁰ *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, July 1, 1769. Spanish mariners jumping ship were advertised in colonial newspapers throughout the eighteenth century. *Royal Gazette* (New York), June 8, 1782. As N.A.M. Rogers has noted, slaves on enemy vessels were seen as engaging in conduct "dangerously near to encouraging ...a slave rebellion..." In contrast, slaves on British naval ships seen as engaged in fighting under civilized rules of war and so to be treated equally. *The Wooden World*, 160. Some of the colored mariners captured on Spanish privateers were English or North American born who found themselves enslaved for their service to the Spanish King. *New York Mercury*, June 6, 1763.

³¹ Foote, "Some Hard Usage," 147; Scott, "The Slave Insurrection in New York, 1712," 64-6.

³² Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 154-160 Lepore, *New York Burning*, 160-169; Zabin, "Places of

New York or to such prominent moments. These men rioted on Newport's docks in 1743 and sued their masters for freedom in the 1740s and 1750s. Widely known through colonial newspaper dispatches, these acts of resistance were the subject of conversations among slaves on northern streets and discussions during late night gatherings, at burial grounds, during clandestine meals in warehouses and in taverns. Northern slaves not only observed Spanish Negroes' resistance, they also assisted them in evading capture, and in turn received information concerning opportunities for runaways in Spanish colonies... how best to get to Florida, Puerto Rico, or Cuba; what conditions runaways could expect to encounter in Spanish colonies, and what steps maritime fugitives were required to take before being given their freedom. This exchange of information spurred some northern slaves to undertake the long voyages to Spanish colonies.³³

The information northern slaves obtained from Spanish mariners concerning Spanish colonies would have supplemented that which many northern slaves gathered from working on docks or being owned by merchants and ship captains involved in trade with Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Spanish Florida. Navigation Act regulations may have limited commerce between northern ports and foreign islands in the West Indies, but nevertheless northern colonies had contacts with the Spanish colonies. Some northern slaves appear to have been part of colonial military expeditions against Spanish ports. For example, in 1741, London, a New York slave was hired out to work on Captain Bayard's

Exchange," Chap. 2 Whether the Spanish Negroes engaged in their own separate conspiracy (*New York Burning*, 160-64) or "were unwittingly drawn into the slave conspiracy," ("Places of Exchange," 81), it is clear that white New Yorkers believed these men to have been involved in planning and carrying out a plot to burn the city.

³³ Zabin, "Places of Exchange," 73-102; Bond, "Spanish Negroes," 14; Horsmanden, *The New-York Conspiracy*, 154-160; *Boston Evening-Post*, Jan. 16, 1738. For an example of a colored Spanish mariner captured at sea for whom there is no record of his being condemned as a Prize Negro, see *American Weekly Mercury*, Oct. 3, 1743. Slaves also fled to Madeira and the Spanish wine islands. Sept. 20, 1774 Letter from Mr. Magra to Lord Grantham, Bedfordshire and Luton Archives, United Kingdom, L30/14/269/1.

vessel scheduled to go with forces attacking Cuba. London's involvement in the conspiracy trials then occupying much of New York's attention kept him from leaving the city.³⁴ However, London's owner's apparent willingness to have him go to Cuba is indicative of one means by which northern slaves learned of life in the Spanish colonies. Slaves who did not serve on expeditions against the Spanish could also be familiar with life in Spanish colonies. When he confessed to setting a fire in New York in 1741 and yelled "Fire, Fire, Scorch, Scorch" after he did so, Quack indicated the phrase referred to "admiral Vernon's taking of Port Bello" in 1739.³⁵ Yet another way in which northern slaves were connected to Spanish colonies was through their owners' illicit smuggling of foreign products such as molasses into northern ports. Whether the merchants Mr. Lawrence, or William Walton, who "had the monopoly of trade with the Spaniards at St. Augustine," used their Spanish-speaking slaves in this trade cannot be ascertained. However, the number of Spanish-speaking slaves whose masters had commercial connections to Spanish colonies makes it likely that many northern slaves knew that Spain treated its dark-skinned peoples differently.³⁶

Slaves working on northern docks and even those completely inexperienced in maritime matters would have been exposed to or overheard conversations regarding slavery in the Spanish colonies. Caesar, Providence slave anchor-maker Toby, John

³⁴ Horsmanden, *The New-York Conspiracy*, 181. A Spanish Negro such as Domingo, who when he fled his master was unsure of his destination, is likely to have attempted to flee to Spanish Florida or the Spanish West Indies. *New-York Weekly Post-Boy*, June 27, 1748. For those Spanish-speaking fugitives who could not speak English, fleeing to a Spanish colony would have been particularly attractive as not speaking English sometimes led a fugitive to be captured before getting very far. *New-York Mercury*, Oct. 11, 1762.

³⁵ Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 27, 30.

³⁶ C. S. Williams, *Jan Cornelius Van Horne and his Descendants* (New York, 1912), 20; Chase, "New York Slave Trade," (Walton imported slaves from Africa and throughout the West Indies). Concerns about Spanish intentions to attack British colonies, whether it Georgia, the Carolinas or New York, caused British officials in 1738 to retrain North American ships from trading with St. Augustine. Despite such attempts, New Yorkers and Philadelphians regularly enjoyed oranges from Spanish Florida. June 2, 1738 Letter from Lt. Gov. Clarke to Duke of Newcastle, TNA CO 5/1094, ff. 50-67d.

Bayard's twenty-four year old slave, and a twenty-five year old fiddle player from Stonington, Connecticut, were all owned by families with extensive West Indies trading connections. When each fled, they had the advantage of knowing something about the West Indies if they chose to flee there. Such connections are why slave masters thought it likely fugitives fled to West Indies islands.³⁷

Part of what northern maritime fugitives would have understood was the opportunities that arose from Spanish and British conflicts in the West Indies and Florida. The territorial claims of these two European empires in the western Atlantic resulted in competing colonies often being cheek to jowl. Whether it was Jamaica just south of Cuba and west of Puerto Rico, or Spanish Florida directly to the south of British-settled Georgia and Carolina, these two Atlantic empires were like two school boys daily rubbing elbows and testing each other. Spain and Britain's imperial struggles in the Carolina-Florida region would significantly affect the lives of British fugitive slaves.

The English colonization of the Carolinas and Georgia threatened Spanish Florida, making the region between Savannah and St. Augustine what David Weber has termed a "strategic frontier." Located on the "maritime periphery" of the Atlantic world and laced with rivers, the northern Florida border region was impossible to police and easy for fugitives to transverse. In such a borderland, blacks, free and enslaved, came to enjoy "enhanced mobility and elevated status."³⁸ With the English enslaving considerable numbers of Native Americans and Spanish Florida lacking a sizable military force, Spain responded by offering sanctuary to English slaves. The first eleven fugitive slaves from

³⁷ *New-York Mercury*, Apr. 2, 1765; *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, June 27, 1767; *Newport Mercury*, Apr. 22, 1760, Oct. 19, 1767, Nov. 28, 1769 and Dec. 5, 1769.

³⁸ Jane Landers, "Black Community and Culture in the Southeastern Borderlands," *JER* 18:1 (1998): 119; Nathaniel Millet, "Defining Freedom in the Atlantic Borderlands of the Revolutionary Southeast," *EAS* 5:2 (Fall 2007), 370.

South Carolina, who arrived by boat in October 1687, were granted refuge. In 1693 the Spanish crown issued an order (*cedula*) that offered freedom to any slaves from the Carolinas who reached St. Augustine if they converted to Catholicism. In the 1720s and 1730s, increasing numbers of English slaves fled to Florida. Spanish Florida came to be seen by the British as a place to which their slaves would escape and "have Arms put into their hands, and become part of [Spain's] Army to fight against us." English fears were evident both in the language they used to describe their Spanish enemies and how they viewed those among themselves who practiced Catholicism. When Juan de Silva, a Spanish Negro, was executed in 1741 for his alleged part in conspiring to burn New York, Justice Horsmanden noted the prisoner "prayed in Spanish, kissed a crucifix," a visual reminder to Catholic-fearing New Yorkers of Catholic bondsmen in their midst.³⁹

British fears that fugitive slaves would assist the Spanish in attacks against British colonies were particularly inflamed by the 1739 Stono Rebellion. Literally the weekend that news of Britain's being at war with Spain reached Charleston, a large group of slaves from the Stono region of South Carolina murdered a number of whites in an unsuccessful attempt to reach Florida. With the slave uprising following closely on the heels of a Spanish ship being believed to have traveled along the Carolinian coast fermenting slave unrest, British officials and colonists were greatly concerned about Spanish assistance for British fugitive slaves. The participants in the Stono Rebellion were hardly the last fugitives, either from nearby Carolina or further away, who sought to flee to St.

Augustine. Northern newspapers regularly carried reports of slaves "designed for St.

³⁹ Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 283; William Stephens to Benjamin Martyn, Dec. 1, 1742, Donnan, *Documents*, 4:604; Stark, "Rescued from their Invisibility," 554; Horsmanden, *The New-York Conspiracy*, 320. Spain issued *cedulas* in 1704 and 1771 pursuant to which enslaved Afro-Curacaoans who reached Tierra Firme received freedom and land. Robert J. Ferry, *The Colonial Elite of Early Caracas. Formation and Crisis, 1567-1767* (Berkeley, 1989), 110-13.

Augustine.”⁴⁰ British fears concerning Spanish assisting and collaborating with British slaves reached a fevered pitch in 1741. When a series of suspicious fires broke in New York City, not only were Spanish Negroes suspected of planning the fires and intending to kill whites to avenge their enslavement, but colonial officials in both New York and Georgia believed the enslaved Spaniards had, as one slave testified, “Designs of taking this Country” and were prepared to “come and take” away all the slaves who might rebel against their English masters. The presence of a convoy of five Spanish privateers off the New York coast during the conspiracy trials of 1741 reinforced for many New Yorkers Spanish involvement in the alleged plot to burn the city. The following year Spanish forces invaded Georgia. Spanish military plans, which included seeking to incite a slave revolt throughout South Carolina, served to heighten the fears that slaves and Spanish forces would work together against British interests.⁴¹

The Spanish interest in securing the border with Georgia and maintaining its Florida colony ensured that English slaves were important players in the imperial contest over control over the southeastern region of North America.⁴² Those runaways who fled to Spanish Florida were organized into a militia company that pledged to “spill their last drop of blood in defense of the Great Crown of Spain and the Holy Faith, and to be the most cruel enemies of the English.” Several hundred English slaves fled by foot, horse, and boat to the “polyglot, multiethnic, and multiracial” sanctuary of Spanish Florida.

⁴⁰ Examples of maritime flight to Spanish Florida include *New-York Weekly Journal*, Feb. 21, 28, 1743.

⁴¹ Wood, *Black Majority*, 205; Hormanden, *The New-York Conspiracy*, 181; *New-York Daily Gazette*, July 7, 1741; Larry E. Ivers, *British Drums on the Southern Frontier: The Military Colonization of Georgia, 1733-1749* (Chapel Hill, 1974), 151-161.

⁴² David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, 1992), 11-13; Jane Landers, “The Central African Presence in Spanish Maroon Societies”, in *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, ed. Linda M. Heywood (New York, 2002), 227-41. New York newspapers carried dispatches from South Carolina evidencing concern that the Spanish would invade Georgia or attack Charleston. *New-York Weekly Journal*, July 12, 1736, Jan. 2, 1738. Concerns about Spanish intentions were also reflected in plays presented in northern cities. *New-York Weekly Journal*, Feb. 5, 1739.

They joined a community in which one-fifth of the colony's African-born peoples were free. These formerly enslaved men helped defend St. Augustine, which lacked sufficient regular soldiers. Twice during English and Native American raids, the black militia distinguished itself. A number of slaves who fled to Florida served as seamen on Spanish privateers that attacked British shipping in the Atlantic. Reliable military servicemen, these former slaves were hardly the "ruffians" South Carolinians thought them to be.⁴³

For many northern slaves, but particularly for Spanish Negroes, flight to St. Augustine, the nearest Spanish outpost, was an attractive proposition. With scores of Spanish Negroes having been condemned as Prize Negroes, many enslaved men, both experienced in maritime matters and knowledgeable of the Spanish Atlantic populated northern ports (Appendix C). Some of these men used their skills to flee south. In 1721 and 1732, Captain John Cannon, New York's oyster commander, suffered having Spanish Negroes he purchased steal his sloops, assist other slaves to flee, and sail towards St. Augustine. These men sought flight via the sea as a means for reestablishing familial and kin ties that had been severed through their being sold as Prize Negroes. Other Spanish Negroes, including Joseph from Albany and Anthony from New York, sought to flee on ships sailing south. Whether they made it to St. Augustine cannot be ascertained. What can be said is that they and British colonists believed flight to the oldest European settlement on the eastern seaboard was feasible.⁴⁴

The 1741 case of six Spanish Negroes enslaved in the Boston area illustrates that

⁴³ Jane Landers, "Female Conflict and Its Resolution in Eighteenth-Century St. Augustine," *The Americas* 54:4 (Apr. 1998), 558; Millet, "Defining Freedom in the Atlantic Borderlands of the Revolutionary Southeast," 370-71; Robert Anderson, "The Quilombo of Palmares: A New Overview of a Maroon State in Seventeenth-Century Brazil," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 29:3 (Oct. 1997), 545-566.

⁴⁴ Stark, "Rescued from their Invisibility," 585; *Boston News-Letter*, Feb. 13, 1721; *American Weekly Mercury*, Jan. 30, 1732. English colonists referred to Prize Negroes as "cargo" long after they had been captured, reflecting that they were perceived as commodities of trade, rather than as prisoners of war. Horsmanden, *New York Conspiracy*, 28.

while flight to St. Augustine may have been feasible, it was quite difficult. In September, 1741, privateer Captain Rouse set out from Cape Fear, North Carolina intending to “go as far as St. Augustine” to capture a Spanish privateer and prizes seen off the coast. Rouse and his crew were successful in capturing the Spanish privateer. The Spanish vessel was described as “a poor despicable Thing, not bigger than some of our fishing Boats” with a crew of nineteen seamen, nine of whom were “Negroes and Molattoes.” Brought to Boston, they were sold into slavery. Discontented with their lot, five of these colored mariners, along with another Spanish Negro belonging to a Mr. Salmon, stole a boat from Clark’s Wharf. Although new to Boston, the Spanish Negroes received the assistance of several other enslaved individuals in making their escape. Captain Rouse and Mr. Salmon “suppos’d” the men intended “to get to St. Augustine, tho’ they were poorly equipt for such a Voyage, the Boat having neither Sails nor Ships Sail.” The Spanish Negroes may have started ill-equipped, but they quickly stole a schooner in the bay and headed out to sea. Unfortunately for the runaways, their maritime expertise proved insufficient to successfully escape to St. Augustine. In response to their fleeing, a considerable search party, including Captain Rouse in his Spanish prize vessel and several boats, pursued the Spanish Negroes. Within several days the runaways were captured by fishermen in Barnstable Bay. The men’s lack of knowledge of Massachusetts waters probably caused them to stay close to shore before they could point their schooner south towards Florida. Doing so made them more vulnerable to capture than if they had stayed further out at sea. Even had the Spanish Negroes been able to evade capture and sail around Cape Cod, they still would have faced the possibility that Captain Rouse, with his commercial and maritime connections in ports along the American coast, would have been able to get

others to assist him in tracking the Spanish Negroes down. This case demonstrates that although Captain Cannon's Spanish Negroes and other enslaved Spanish mariners may have been able to flee south to St. Augustine, reaching the Spanish northernmost outpost on the western Atlantic was far from an easy task.⁴⁵

The changes in fortune of the various warring European powers directly affected whether Spanish Florida remained as a haven of freedom for northern maritime fugitives. During the siege of Havana, the English announcement that free blacks and mulattoes who fought against them would be re-enslaved, along with their spouses and children, caused many free blacks and mulattoes to flee the city. The Spanish evacuation of Savannah in 1782, similarly caused a reversal of fortune for maritime fugitives who had found haven in that port. Spain's abandonment of the Georgia city caused many whites to flee to St. Augustine with their slaves.⁴⁶ A year later, when the English left Florida at end of American Revolution, Florida again, for a short period of time, became a haven. More than two hundred and fifty individuals formerly enslaved by the English came forward after the English decamped, were registered with Spanish authorities, and freed. At the same time, maroons from Lord Dunmore's Ethiopians formed communities on the Savannah River.⁴⁷

While English occupation of Florida from 1764 to 1783 closed Florida off as a haven for maritime fugitives, the Spanish West Indies remained a viable option for flight via the sea through the end of the American Revolution. In the eighteenth century, the West Indies was a region of slave societies. British, French, Spanish, Dutch and Danish colonies all relied upon slave labor, and most of the region's residents were enslaved.

⁴⁵ *American Weekly Mercury*, July 21, Oct. 15, 1741; *Boston News-Letter*, Sept. 17, 1741.

⁴⁶ Klooster, "Subordinate but Proud," 291; Carelton to Lord Shelborne, Aug. 15, 1782, TNA FO 95/10.

⁴⁷ Landers, "Black Community and Culture in the Southeastern Borderlands," 126.

With dark-skinned individuals in the region often vulnerable to being re-enslaved, what caused northern fugitives to flee to the West Indies? The benefits of life there, particularly in Spanish colonies, included re-establishing family ties, finding berths on ships to England and foreign colonies, and being provided with sanctuary by Spanish authorities.

Many northern maritime fugitives were drawn then to the West Indies by the simple availability of a berth on one of the numerous merchant ships plying the trade routes south to the Caribbean. To get to the West Indies involved risk. Ship captains and sailors understood, and sometimes took advantage of, the vulnerability of maritime fugitives. White sailors who “boasted they would make their Fortunes” by selling fugitives who flocked to Chesapeake merchant ships in response to Dunmore’s Proclamation may not have followed up on their bravado, but the fear such statements engendered for maritime fugitives did not easily dissipate.⁴⁸ The attractiveness of berths on ships traveling from the West Indies to England or foreign colonies proved sufficiently inviting that maritime fugitives were often willing to endure temporary harassment and possible re-enslavement. Service in the West Indies often proved fatal for European and North American seamen. Ship captains of merchant vessels, privateers, and warships all were willing to employ dark-skinned men, some of whom were maritime fugitives.⁴⁹ Maritime fugitives, whether runaways from other West Indies islands, or northern maritime fugitives were able to take advantage of the significant demand for

⁴⁸ *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, v. 9, 899. From the beginning of European exploration of the Americas, military commanders betrayed colored men who assisted them. Morgan, “Virginia’s Other Prototype,” 375.

⁴⁹ Logbook of *Direct*, 1703-1707, NMM LOG/M/45. As one merchant noted, “it was & is usuall for Mariners of Ship who were & are hired at monthly wages to leave & desert their respective services at Jamaica & other parts in ye west Indies & to ship and enter themselves into ye Service of Ships at much greater wages by the Run.” *Mathew v Lawton*, TNA HCA 32/31 (1717).

seamen to man ships returning to Europe. Maritime fugitives believed that, like the Tortola colored mariners Tom and George, they too would be able to find berths on ships leaving for England.⁵⁰ Among the northern maritime fugitives who fled to the West Indies was twenty-six year old Constant. When he escaped from his Princeton master in November, 1774, it was “imagined he may have a forged pass, and go towards New-York or Philadelphia, with a view of procuring a passage to the West-Indies.”⁵¹

Although few North American ships traveled directly to the Spanish West Indies, the close proximity of islands controlled by Spain offered the possibilities of freedom via a two-legged voyage. Fleeing from a British West Indies island to a Spanish colony was not uncommon during the eighteenth century. The regularity with which slaves escaped via the sea in the Caribbean basin can be seen in the continual demands national governments made upon each other for the return of runaway slaves. From the beginning of the eighteenth century, the British Navy had to contend with runaways seeking shelter on board its ships in the West Indies. In 1707 the Royal Navy felt compelled to send ships with “diserted Negroes” to foreign islands. The British government was required to send a “Preventive Officer” to the Turks Island to help stem the tide of slaves who “consistently escaped” to towns on Hispaniola. A British naval vessel was also sent to Puerto Rico in a fruitless attempt to recover the scores of fugitive slaves having fled St. Kitts. The St. Kitts fugitives joined slaves from a number of British, Dutch and French West Indies islands who escaped to Puerto Rico.⁵²

⁵⁰ Liverpool Crew Lists, 1776-1778 (*Molly*), TNA BT 98/39, 10.

⁵¹ *Rivington's New-York Gazette*, Nov. 3, 1774.

⁵² Jorge L. China, “Race, Colonial Exploitation, and West Indian Immigration in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico, 1800-1850,” *The Americas* 52:4 (Apr. 1996), 501; David M. Stark, “Rescued from their Invisibility: The Afro-Puerto Ricans of Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century,” *The Americas* 63:4 (Apr. 2007), 558-62. Flight to Spanish West Indies colonies also included slaves escaping from Curacao. Dutch West India Company officials recorded the escape of 585 bondsmen to the Spanish island of Coro.

Slaves fleeing to Spanish colonies included fugitives from Jamaica escaping to Cuba, slaves fleeing Dutch Guyana into Venezuela, Afro-Curacaoans to *Tierra Firme* (present-day Venezuela and part of Columbia), and runaways from St. Maarten and St. Eustatius who had escaped to Puerto Rico. Many of these fugitives had maritime experience. The Danish and the French each sought the return of hundreds of fugitive slaves who fled to Puerto Rico. Although in 1767 Spain and Denmark signed a treaty providing for the reciprocal return of fugitives in Puerto Rico and the Dutch Virgin Islands, prior to the Treaty of Paris most nations' complaints about their slaves running away to another nation's West Indies colony were ignored.⁵³

While a maritime fugitive who reached a Spanish colony would have been eligible to become free if he or she converted to Catholicism, he still could find himself compelled to work for others. For example, if fugitives found themselves in Cartagena after naval arsenals were erected there in the 1750s and 1760s, the runaways could be forced to work in the arsenals as vagrants. Vagrants were made part of a yearly chain gang, *cadena*s, who had to trek to the arsenals in a public display of humiliation and subservience, hardly the fate maritime fugitives would have hoped for when they slipped out of their slave masters' garrets in northern colonies. Similarly, Puerto Rico enacted

Klooster, "Subordinate but Proud," 285.

⁵³ HMS *Otter* Ticket Book, TNA, ADM 33/415, 1747-1748; Alan I. Karras, "Caribbean Contraband, Slave Property, and the State, 1767-1792," *Pennsylvania History* 94 (Summer 1997), 250, 254, 266n2; Julius Scott, "Crisscrossing Empires: Ships, Sailors, and Resistance in the Lesser Antilles in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Lesser Antilles in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Robert Paquette and Stanley L. Engerman (Gainesville, 1998), 134-35; Berta E. Pérez, "Maroon Forebears in Southern Venezuela," *Ethnohistory* 47:3-4 (Summer-Fall 2000): 615; Chinaea, "Immigration in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico, 1800-1850," 500-501; Stark, "Rescued from their invisibility," 560-63, 571; Ferry, *The Colonial Elite of Early Caracas*, 110-13. While Jorge Chinaea claims that by 1790 "some thousands" of fugitives and their descendants from British colonies had settled in Puerto Rico David Stark's review of baptismal records indicates far fewer such refugees.

anti-vagrancy laws that penalized unemployment with forced labor.⁵⁴

Spain's willingness to assist maritime fugitives from British colonies was always framed and constrained by larger imperial concerns. While prior to the Treaty of Paris it had been in Spain's interest to undermine British colonies by offering sanctuary to British fugitive slaves, not long after peace was agreed to this was no longer true. With Spain's military resources battered, its finances strained and facing an ever more powerful British navy, Spain acceded to Britain's demand not to shelter British slave runaways. In 1789, Spanish issued a *cedulla* that provided "such run away negroes as there are, notwithstanding they may have received the protection of the Church, shall be forthwith returned to the owners who may claim them." Moreover, the Spanish crown also reversed early practices by declaring that foreign-born blacks in Spanish colonies would not be afforded protection.⁵⁵ Thus, in the post-Revolution era, some maritime fugitives who had found freedom in Spanish colonies were required to be returned to their former slave owners and the welcome mat that maritime fugitives previously found awaiting them in Spanish colonies was rudely taken up.

A Door Closed: Scarborough, 1748-1759

Scarborough's maritime industry at mid-century provides a notable contrast to piracy in the first quarter of the eighteenth century and Spanish colonies in the first half of the century. A "homely place" on England's northeast coast, Scarborough was noted for its "chalybeate spring." Far from the cosmopolitan ports through which most colored

⁵⁴ Kevin Santiago-Valles, "Bloody Legislations, Entombment and Race Making in the Spanish Atlantic: Differentiated Spaces of General(ized) Confinement in Spain and Puerto Rico, 1750-1840," *Radical History Review* 96 (Fall 2006), 33-57. Cartenga can be contrasted with the Mosquito Coast, where a maritime fugitive would have found an egalitarian society in which mixed-race *Zambos* often were leaders and English speaking fugitives would have been valued for their ability to help cement Miskitos-Zambos alliances with the English against the Spanish. Rogers, "Caribbean Borderland," 121-126..

⁵⁵ *Bahamas Gazette*, Aug. 1, 1789; Karas, "Caribbean Contraband," 260.

mariners entered England, Scarborough would appear to have little relevance to North American maritime fugitives. However, an analysis of Scarborough's maritime community in the period between 1748 and 1759, for which complete muster roll records are available, demonstrates the role that economics, war, aging, charity, family, and place had in limiting opportunities for maritime fugitives in the Atlantic.⁵⁶

As the only port on England's east coast between Humber and Tynemouth-haven that vessels of a moderate draught could safely enter in storms, Scarborough was a vibrant maritime community. It had an active shipbuilding industry and a large populace of seamen. The port's ships mainly transported coal to other English ports, although its vessels also traveled to other European cities, and occasionally to North America. During the Seven Years War, the British Navy's manning needs resulted in one out of every ten British adult men being in the navy. For those mariners who sought to avoid the press gangs active in larger southern and western ports and obtain protection generally afforded seamen in the coal-transporting sector, berths in Scarborough would have been very appealing. Many ships provided regular employment, with up to eight coaling voyages yearly. While active ports with the promise of continual employment typically attracted maritime fugitives, Scarborough did not. This was despite wartime naval manning needs and casualties resulting in a more than twenty percent increase in the average age of Scarborough's seamen between 1748 and 1759. Out of the more than 3,000 berths for

⁵⁶ Earle, *English Seamen*, 11-12n16; *The Oxford Book of the Sea*, Introduction, 9. I do not utilize James Buckley's "The Outport of Scarborough, 1650-1853" (1973), NMM PBC 6985; 627.71(427.4) for data on Scarborough's mariners. Buckley provides a list of 96 ships that in 1748 paid Scarborough muster roll levies, but provides no citations to indicate what records he reviewed. It appears Buckley utilized records kept at Scarborough, and not the muster rolls at the National Archives, which provide crew sizes. My analysis of Scarborough's mariners' is based upon a review of TNA CUST 91/111-112 for all ships that sailed from Scarborough in a particular year, not just those that paid the muster roll levy. Unlike the HCA records used by Rediker and Earle, CUST records note all crew members, not merely mariners who were litigants.

which crew records exist for the period between 1748 and 1759, only seven were for colored mariners. What factors kept more black mariners from joining Cato Bay, Caspur Suck, and Robert Slaves on Scarborough's ships?⁵⁷

Many Atlantic ports drew mariners from nearby coastal communities. Yet even when compared to a port such as Salem noted for its large number of local seamen, Scarborough stands out for the small number of non-local sailors, few foreigners and virtually complete absence of mariners of color on its ships. Although some mariners on Scarborough vessels came from southern English ports, residents of Scarborough and nearby communities comprised more than eighty percent of the port's crews in 1748. With the Yorkshire North Riding region having few residents of African ancestry, maritime fugitives would not have found a vibrant community of color, such as existed in Liverpool or London. Ships like Captain John Maling's *Amity's Friendship*, that in 1749 had nineteen Scarborough residents among its twenty man crew, were common.⁵⁸

The size of crews, nature of the work, opportunities on land, and the length of voyages were factors in why many of Scarborough's ships had largely local crews. Most voyages by Scarborough's fleet were short in duration, few being more than two months.

⁵⁷ *Theakston's Guide To Scarborough* (Scarborough, 1843), 98; James Buckley, "Ships Built in Scarborough Shipyards, 1764-1869," NMM THS/14/5; Scarborough Crew Lists, 1748-1759, TNA CUST 91/111-112; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Dec. 16, 1729 and *Newport Mercury*, Dec. 14, 1767; W. J. Hausman, "The Size and Profitability of English Colliers in the Eighteenth Century," *Business History Review*, 51 (1977), 464-5; Rogers, "Liberty Road," 57; G. E. Fussell, "English Countryside and Population in the Eighteenth Century (Concluded – Second Installment)," *Economic Geography*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Oct. 1936): 411-430.

Some seamen and watermen were impressed notwithstanding having certificates of protection. See, e.g., Navy Board Out-Letters, Nov. 3, 1744, TNA ADM 354/127/127; Navy Board In-Letters, Oct. 3, 1770, TNA ADM 106/1188/253; TNA ADM 106/925/127; TNA ADM 106/942/107; TNA ADM 106/985/58.

The average age of common seamen on Scarborough's ships increased 22.7% between 1748 and 1759, going from 25.8 years of age to 31.7 years of age (Tables 18-2 and 19-2).

⁵⁸ Vickers, *Young Men and the Sea*, 175; Scarborough Crew Lists, 1748-1749, TNA CUST 91/111; D. J. Rowe, "A Trade Union of the North-East Coast Seamen in 1825," *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Feb., 1972), 85 (Preference for local seamen continued into the 19th century). The nearby port of Whitby also had few non-local seamen among its crews. Whitby Muster Rolls as transcribed by Yvonne Leck, <http://www.angelfire.com/de/BobSanders/WHITIND.htm> (accessed Sept. 24, 2005).

The ships were not large, generally being 100 tons or smaller. Scarborough's coastal collier voyages were typically less physically demanding than trans-Atlantic voyages, permitting the hiring of young and elderly family members among the crews. Fathers, sons, and brothers frequently worked together. Men like Henry and George Kirby, shared family connections, and as the master and mate of the *Mary and Alice*, had lives that were economically intertwined. With physically demanding agriculture being the other primary industry in the region, work at sea with relatives and friends was not an unpleasant alternative to working as a wage laborer on a farm.⁵⁹

The communal ties on Scarborough's ships were particularly striking in terms of the hiring of elderly seamen. The large number of elderly seamen on Scarborough's ships was undoubtedly due in part to the Navy's demand for young men during the Seven Years War. Over the course of the Seven Years War, the percentage of elderly mariners on Scarborough's ships increased from 18% in 1748-1749 to 28.9% in 1759. These men not only worked at the relatively physically undemanding job of cook, but could be found in significant numbers among the port's common seamen and officers (Tables 12-3, 12-4, 12-7 and 12-8). The overwhelming majority of these elderly men were Scarborough residents or from adjoining towns. But a closer look at the port's maritime industry discloses that the causes for an aged mariner population were more complicated than just the Navy taking Scarborough's young men.⁶⁰ A lack of institutional charitable assistance caused the employment of elderly men, often relatives of the ship's captain or officers.

⁵⁹ Scarborough Crew Lists, 1748-1759, TNA CUST 91/111-112; Buckley, "Ships Built in Scarborough Shipyards, 1764-1869." Scarborough family ties also extended from the sea back to kin at home. Many Scarborough area naval mariners arranged for the remittance of their pay to family members back in the Northeast. Remittance Registers, Plymouth, 1758 - 1783, TNA ADM 174/291-292.

⁶⁰ Evidence of Scarborough's young mariners' participation in the Navy's war efforts can be found in a variety of naval records. Examples include Remittance Book, Plymouth, Dec. 13, 1758 – Aug. 9, 1763, TNA ADM 174/291; Remittance Book, Aug. 9, 1763 – Dec. 31, 1783, TNA ADM 174/292.

This preference for family crew members severely limited opportunities for non-resident seamen, colored or white, from obtaining berths on Scarborough vessels.

Although most of Scarborough's vessels engaged in short coastal voyages, almost one-quarter of the ships had a cook. In contrast, in 1776 Plymouth had only three cooks on the thirty-eight voyages for which there are existing muster rolls. In lacking cooks, Plymouth crews were like most English ship crews, with responsibility for food preparation rotated among crew members. It appears that the Scarborough maritime community emulated the British Navy and provided jobs for the disabled and elderly seamen as cooks. In the period between 1748 and 1759, elderly seamen were regularly hired by Scarborough's captains as cooks. In 1748-1749, men forty years of age or older comprised 87.5% of the cooks on ships, while in 1759 not a single man under the age of forty served as a cook on Scarborough's ships (Tables 12-3, 12-7 and 12-9). Fifty-eight year old David Tristram and numerous other elderly cooks served on ships of which their sons were masters, sometimes the same vessel they had captained only the year before.⁶¹

The employment of elderly mariners as cooks was due, in part, to the lack of effective charitable support for mariners in the Scarborough area. Great Britain's wealth and power depended upon its mariners, who were the focus of national social welfare efforts not directed to other workers. The Chatham Chest was established in 1588 to provide pensions to disabled seamen using "seamen's sixpence" that each mariner paid to support the Greenwich Hospital. The requirement that mariners pay the seamen's

⁶¹ McDonald, *Feeding Nelson's Navy*, 104, 142-3. Muster rolls for eighteenth century English merchant ships, while existing in greater numbers than for North American ships of the era, are rare, with there being no systematic records of English merchant crews prior to 1747. Besides those for Scarborough during the period 1748-1759 and Plymouth's for 1775-1776, the National Archives has only Colchester Seamen's Indentures, 1704-1757, TNA BT 167/103; Plymouth Crew Lists, 1761-1783, TNA BT 98/106-107; and Liverpool Crew Lists, 1772-1783, TNA BT 98/33-43.

sixpence was applicable to all mariners on English ships, but the practice in administering the program was to require some service in the navy.⁶² With mariners and widows often required “to travel miles to pursue a claim at the Navy Office or employ a solicitor,” very few merchant seamen received the benefits for which they paid the seamen’s sixpence.⁶³ Scarborough’s town elders recognized this problem. In 1638 the town established its own Trinity House, and using the seamen’s sixpence built a hospital with twenty-seven apartments. Although the Trinity House Society’s efforts were admirable, by 1735 the Society faced a shortage of funds as many “vessels and crews were not paying the [required] dues.” In the ensuing fifteen years the Society’s coffers swelled with more than £1000, as legislation enacted in 1747 to address the needs of Scarborough’s mariners resulted in a more efficient collection of the seamen’s sixpence. These efforts were however almost exclusively focused on mariners’ families providing relief few benefits for elderly or disabled seamen.⁶⁴

The Trinity House Society’s focus on mariners’ families appears to have caused Scarborough’s elderly mariners to work at sea longer than most Atlantic seamen; Scarborough’s cooks in the period from 1748 to 1759 averaged 52.9 years of age (Table 12-9). Extended work lives at sea by Scarborough’s seamen meant room for few new mariners. In a community that clearly placed a high priority on family and local

⁶² “Seamen’s Sixpence,” *Mariner’s Mirror*, 70 (1984), 433-434.

⁶³ *The Manning of the Royal Navy: Selected Public Pamphlets, 1693-1873*, ed. J.S. Bromley, Records of the Navy Records Society, Vol. 119 (London, 1974), xxxii, note 2. Whether the program was, as Conrad Dixon characterizes it, “a most successful confidence trick whereby the state used compulsory deductions from the scanty wages of naval and merchant seamen chiefly for the benefit of the former,” or not, the program clearly provided very limited benefits to merchant seamen. The large majority of seamen listed in Pension Registers as receiving benefits under the Seamen’s Sixpence Program were naval mariners. TNA ADM 82/71-100. As *The Life and Adventures of John Nicol, Mariner*, ed. Tim Flannery (New York, 2000) so aptly depicts, disabled mariners were often shuttled from one office to another without receiving benefits. Very few of those receiving Seamen’s Sixpence benefits were North American seamen.

⁶⁴ Records of Scarborough Trinity House, North Yorkshire Record Office, ZOX 10/1; Buckley, “The Outport of Scarborough, 1650-1853,” 22-23.

connections, there were limited opportunities for non-local mariners, white or colored, to find berths on Scarborough's ships. Scarborough stands as an example of an Atlantic port in which opportunities for maritime fugitives were closed off due to localized conditions.

"Land of Liberty": England in the Post-Somerset Era

During the eighteenth century, legal scholars, politicians and others debated the legality of slavery in England. Although a sixteenth-century justice believed "England was too pure an air for Slaves to breathe," and Lord Chief Justice Holt ruled in 1679 that "as soon as a Negro comes into England he becomes free," these views were not accepted by the majority of the public or by most English lawyers.⁶⁵ More in line with the beliefs of the English public and bar prior to the end of the Seven Years War was the informal joint opinion that Attorney-General Philip Yorke and Solicitor-General Charles Talbot issued in 1729. Yorke and Talbot asserted that the mere act of coming to Great Britain from the West Indies did not make a slave free. Twenty years later, Lord Chancellor Hardwicke extended the Yorke-Talbot opinion to hold that trover would be available to masters to reclaim their runaway slaves.⁶⁶ Thus, despite Chief Justice Holt's noble sentiments and the desires of many English slaves, in the pre-Revolutionary era white Englishmen continued to own dark-skinned individuals, sell them on English streets and advertise that their slaves had fled.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Affidavit of James List and Robert Parnell, 18 May 1776, TNA CO 5/148, folio 78-79; Granville Sharp Commonplace Book C, 1768, p. 106, GRO D3549/13/41 (referring to Baron Thompson having determined that "Negroes were free as soon as they set foot on English Ground").

⁶⁶ Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 38. Eden, report., *Shanley v Harvey*, (1762), ER, vol. 28, 2:215. Reports of these various cases were not printed until the end of the eighteenth century, limiting their impact in shaping public opinion. William M. Wiecek, "Somerset: Lord Mansfield and the Legitimacy of Slavery in the Anglo-American World," *University of Chicago Law Review* 42 (1974), 94-95.

⁶⁷ James Walvin, *Making the Black Atlantic: Britain and the African Diaspora* (London, 2000), 108. As Admiralty Judge Lord Stowell noted in 1837, "The personal traffic in slaves resident in *England* had been as public and authorized in *London* as in any of our *West India* islands." Walvin, *Making the Black Atlantic*, 110.

The lack of an unambiguous ruling that slavery was illegal in England caused scores of West Indian and continental North Americans, including Benjamin Franklin, to feel comfortable bringing their slaves to England.⁶⁸ At the same time West Indian and American slaves were being brought to England, colored seamen, free and enslaved, regularly entered England. Colored mariners such as Captain Gallway's "Negro Boy" could be found in large English ports. London drew many of these men, with an estimated 5,000-10,000 blacks, most free men, living in the city by the late eighteenth century. These men clustered in the mariner enclaves of Wapping, Limehouse, Shadwell, Poplar and Blackwall. By the last quarter of the eighteenth century approximately one-quarter to one-third of London's black adult men were mariners. With dock workers included, almost forty percent of the city's black population was employed in the maritime industry. One London guide in 1761 listed Blackboy's Alley, Blackmoor's Alley, Black Boy Court, and Blackmoor Street, among the seventeen "black" places in the city. In the Bristol region, there had been men of color since as early as the late sixteenth century. Some of these men had been brought into England by privateers such as Woodes Rogers. John Quaco or Quaqua was able in 1761 to claim a pension from the Bristol Society of Merchant Venturers due to his having "been a free man above one & twenty years & never out of employ but Constantly paid his shilling per month towards this Charity." By 1772 Bristol ships regularly had colored mariners among their crews. Black slavers, runaways and other dark-skinned men were also common on Liverpool's streets. Most of these men were believed to have been seamen, frequently as replacements for European seamen who died or became ill in the West Indies, West

⁶⁸Walderstricher, "Capitalism, Slavery, and Benjamin Franklin's American Revolution," 186n9.

Africa or North America.⁶⁹ Whether career sailors or maritime novices like Thomas Richmond and George Dalton, Joseph Banks' two servants who sailed on the *Endeavour* during Captain Cook's initial voyage in 1768 to the Pacific, these colored seamen often were world travelers. Frequently, they had been in the Royal Navy, finding naval service preferable to other employment. The prevalence of these men is evidenced by one-third of fugitive advertisements in eighteenth century English newspapers being for the slaves of ship captains.⁷⁰ The considerable presence of colored mariners reflects the widespread employment of these men throughout the Atlantic, the greater comfort colored men felt in England than in slave societies in the Americas, and the willingness of slave owners to bring their colored seamen to England.

Many Englishmen, particularly the scores of Members of Parliament with interests in West Indies plantations, were aware of the regularity with which slaves from the islands were brought to England. Slave ship captains, West Indies planters, and North American merchants did not believe that when they brought a slave to England the bondsman's stepping onto an English dock transformed him into a free English subject.

⁶⁹ Inventory of John Gallway, 24 Nov. 1735, TNA PROB3/34/133; Winch, *Gentleman of Color*, 55-60; Dyrhum Parish Register, 1575, BRO P/Dy/R/1a (Baptism of the "Negro" Gylman Ivie, at age thirty); William Renwick Riddell, "Observations on Slavery and Privateering," *Journal of Negro History* 15:3 (Jul. 1930), 348n1a; Particulars in respect to future accounts, TNA CO 104/36 Part 1 (1 April 1713); Bristol Crew Lists, 1772-1783, BRO SMV/9/3/1/708; Morgan, "Black Experiences in Britain's Maritime World," 120; Pybus, *Epic Voyages*, 238n12-13; Gerzina, *Black London*, 22-23; Tony Lane, *Liverpool: Gateway of Empire* (London, 1987), 117; Ian Duffield, "Skilled Workers or Marginalized Poor? The African Population of the United Kingdom 1812-1852" in David Killingray, ed., *Africans in Britain* (Ilford, 1994), 49-87; Ian Duffield, "'I Asked How the Vessel Could Go': The Contradictory Experiences of African and African Diaspora Mariners and Port Workers in Britain, c. 1750-1850," in Anne J. Kershen, ed., *Language, Labor and Migration* (Aldershot, 2000), 121-54. Cf. Mary Beth Norton, "Fate of Some Black Loyalists of the American Revolution," *Journal of Negro History* 58 (1973), 406n11 which suggests a black population in London at the end of the American Revolution of approximately 1,200. Kathy Chater's review of London baptismal records indicates that the large majority of black men in London during the 1770s-1790s were young, with the largest group being those between 10 and 19 years of age. Charter, "Black People in England, 1660-1807," 66-83.

⁷⁰ Patrick O'Brien, *Joseph Banks: A Life* (London, 1988), 62, 82, as cited in Duffield, "'I Asked How the Vessel Could Go,'" in Kershen, ed., *Languages, Labour and Migration*, 144; Meyers, *Reconstructing the Black Past: Blacks in Britain, 1780-1830* (London, 1996), 8, 22, 35; Walvin, *Making the Black Atlantic*, 108-11; Gad Heyuman, ed., *Out of the House of Bondage* (London, 1986).

Each understood that in the pre-*Somerset* era, although England might not have the strict slave codes found in American colonies, the legal geography dividing England from her American colonies was not wide enough to make bringing bondsmen to England a risky proposition.⁷¹ When slaves were brought to England, some experienced harsh treatment similar to that they received across the Atlantic. English slave masters had their slaves imprisoned although they were “not guilty of any offense.” Men of color found themselves separated from their wives. Others were sold by merchant ship captains sailing for the West Indies. They also were kidnapped for the purpose of selling them in the West Indies, an “atrocious” practice that deprived the victim of “the friendly assistance of the laws to redeem him.” Only the timely intercession of friends and supporters kept some men of color from being sent to their death in West Indian sugar fields. In short, individuals of color in England faced some of the same vulnerabilities to arbitrary re-enslavement or loss of kin that their colleagues in the Americas and on Atlantic ships encountered.⁷²

Notwithstanding the lack of an unambiguous legal decision outlawing slavery in England, the island nation still was perceived as providing greater liberty to dark-skinned individuals than in Britain’s American colonies. This was both due to the lack of widespread physical abuse of slaves common in the West Indies and the Royal Navy’s

⁷¹ Gould, “Zones of Law, Zones of Violence”; Lauren Benton; *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400-1900* (Cambridge, 2002); S.I. Martin, *Britain’s Slave Trade* (London, 1999), 57. While I accept the pluralism of legal regimes that Benton and Gould describe, I do not see the British Atlantic divided, as Gould asserts, into western and southern “zones of war, chaos and brutality,” and eastern and northern zones of law. Mary Sarah Blinder’s view that “a colony’s laws could not be repugnant to the laws of England but could differ according to the people and place,” is a more accurate statement of the legal system at play in the British Atlantic of the early 1770s. Mary Sarah Blinder, *The Transatlantic Constitution: Colonial Legal Cultures and Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), 1.

⁷² Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 18th ed. (1832), 4:*218; Carl Watner, “*In Favorem Libertatis*: The Life and Work of Granville Sharp,” *Journal of Libertarian Studies* IV:2 (Spring 1980), 216; Carretta, *Equiano*, 120. Even slaves promised to be manumitted by their owners could find themselves detained by heirs asserting that the manumission was not properly executed. Wise, *Though the Heavens May Fall* (Cambridge, MA, 2005), 45-46.

handling of colored men in its ranks. With the Royal Navy often “regard[ing] a man-of-war as a little piece of British territory in which slavery was improper,” slaves coming to England before 1772 sometimes found naval officers allies in their attempts to become free. William Castillo and other colored mariners found protection from naval officials who believed that “the laws of this country admit no badges of slavery.” Most dark-skinned individuals living in England prior to the *Somerset* case were not accorded the same protection that Castillo received from the Admiralty. This began to change in the 1760s as a series of legal challenges were filed against masters attempting to sell their bondsmen or former bondsmen in the West Indies. The first of these involved Jonathan Strong.⁷³

In 1765 Strong staggered to the Mincing Lane doorway of Dr. William Sharp. Brought to England by his Barbados master, David Lisle, Strong had been badly beaten by Lisle. Seeming “ready to die,” Strong encountered Granville Sharp, who was visiting his brother. The Sharps clothed and fed the unfortunate young man and assisted him in being admitted into St. Bartholomew’s Hospital. After an extended hospital stay, Strong began work at a pharmacy near Dr. Sharp’s office. Strong had the unfortunate luck of having David Lisle see him two years later riding in London’s streets. Angry that his former slave had recovered and was working, Lisle arranged for two men to seize him, sold Strong to James Kerr, a Jamaican planter, and had him jailed in preparation for being shipped to the West Indies. Strong wisely sent a note to Granville Sharp who quickly convinced London’s Lord Mayor to have a hearing. An attorney representing Kerr, and

⁷³ In addition to the Strong, Lewis and Somerset cases, the other noteworthy challenge to the sale into West Indian slavery of an English dark-skinned individual during the 1760s was the case of John and Mary Hylas who in the late 1760s prevailed against the sale and transportation of Mary to the West Indies. Most unusual, the court ordered Mary to be returned to London within six months. Wise, *Though the Heavens May Fall*, 46-48.

the captain of the ship appeared, vigorously contesting Sharp's request that Strong be freed. Despite this opposition, Strong was released. This personal victory for Strong and Granville Sharp did not result in a determination that slavery was illegal in England, leaving that matter to be decided another day.⁷⁴

The Strong case did not end attempts to forcibly transport dark-skinned men to the West Indies. In 1770, Thomas Lewis found himself mugged, bound, and gagged with sticks in his mouth on the Chelsea waterfront by his former master and three watermen. Alerted to the situation by Sir John Banks' mother, Granville Sharp was able to have a writ of *habeas corpus* served on the captain of the ship carrying the unfortunate Lewis while the vessel awaited a fresh wind at the Downs off Portsmouth. When rescued, Lewis was "chained at the mainmast, bathed in tears, and casting a last mournful look on the land of freedom" before the ship was to leave for Jamaica.⁷⁵ In subsequent criminal proceedings, Lewis's attorney attempted to obtain a ruling that slavery was not legal in England, contending his client "being human, has natural title to his own person." In an ironic twist of fate, Lewis's having been captured by the Spanish during the Seven Years War permitted Justice Mansfield to sidestep the question of slavery's legality in England, while providing a basis for a legal ruling that Lewis was a free man. While traveling with Stapylton in the early 1760s, Lewis had been captured by a Spanish privateer and then recaptured before coming to England. Mansfield believed the Spanish "capture ...changed the property," such that Captain Stapylton no longer could claim ownership of Lewis. After the justice directed the jury to issue a special verdict on whether Lewis was

⁷⁴ F.O. Shyllon, *Black Slaves in Britain: 1555-1833* (Oxford, 1974), 17-23; Gerzina, *Black London*, 97-101. Although Strong received his freedom, he did not live long, dying in 1773 at the age of 24 or 25. Extracts from Diary of Granville Sharp, Granville Sharp Papers, GRO, D3549/13/4/2.

⁷⁵ Clarkson, *History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the Slave Trade by the British Parliament*, 75, <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/10633> (accessed Aug. 31, 2005).

or was not Stapylton's property, the jury decreed, "No property, No property!"⁷⁶

The *Lewis v Stapylton* case did not unmoor the legal underpinnings of slavery in England. It did, however, reaffirm the importance of the English judicial system for providing remedies to dark-skinned men seeking to escape forcible transpositions to the West Indies. The case also illustrates the shifting nature of freedom in the Atlantic in the decade prior to the Treaty of Paris. Where one was enslaved remained important. Whether one could obtain legal review of his status was critical. And the role of war in enslaving and freeing men of color would continue to be a defining force in the lives of thousands. Granville Sharp may have thought Justice Mansfield had demonstrated a "deplorable hardness of heart and abandoned spirit of justice" by not ruling slavery in England illegal, but as Thomas Lewis would have recognized, the justice's desire to avoid the issue of slavery's legality resulted in his freedom. Having been moved about the Atlantic from Guinea to Santa Cruz, St. Augustine, Havana, Philadelphia, New York, Pensacola, New England, the Carolinas, and Jamaica, captured and recaptured at sea, shipwrecked and twice kidnapped, Lewis understood the role that contingency and place played in the lives of colored mariners. For Lewis and other enslaved seamen, the enemy colors flying on approaching ships did not always fill them with the dread most mariners had of an on-coming conflict. Instead, enemy flags could mean freedom.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Lewis had been previously kidnapped by Captain Stapylton, but because the ship was shipwrecked, returned to England. *Lewis v Stapylton*, Granville Sharp Papers, N-YHS. Re-enslavement of colored seamen was so widespread that in Bermuda it was said to be "very customary" to provide slave mariners with passes showing them to be free "in Case they should be taken by the Enemy." Negro boys on North American vessels also carried certificates identifying them as being "free." Philip D. Morgan, "Encounters with Africans and African-Americans," circa 1600 to 1780," in *Strangers in the Realm*, 195; Jarvis, "Maritime Masters," 614n43; *New-York Gazette*, May 25, 1767.

⁷⁷ A good example of the role of contingency played in the lives of colored men at sea can be seen in the case of thirty-four Negroes seized from South Carolina plantations by a British privateer in 1779. The privateer was captured when it attempted to seize the Spanish ship *Victoria*. The Negroes found themselves then placed on the Spanish vessel only to be captured several days later by two British ships. Before the

The year after the conclusion of *Lewis v Stapylton*, Granville Sharp was provided with another opportunity to push Justice Mansfield to rule on slavery's legality in England. In 1772, while in England, the Virginia slave James Somerset fled his master Charles Stewart. After being recaptured, Somerset was imprisoned on a ship leaving for Jamaica, where Stewart intended sell him. With Sharp's assistance, Somerset was released from the ship and challenged Stewart's right to sell him. Justice Mansfield decreed in *Somerset v Stewart* that the "state of slavery is of such a nature... only positive law" could sustain the practice and that he "cannot say [slavery] is allowed or approved by the law of England." As a result, Somerset was released from Stewart's control. Justice Mansfield's decision emphasized that slavery was defined differently within the Atlantic world, not merely as between different nations, but as well as between the English metropolis and its colonial possessions. Although Justice Mansfield's decision was ambiguous in its reach and the jurist himself subsequently characterized it as going "no further than that the master cannot by force compel him [the alleged slave] to go out of the Kingdom," slaves throughout the British empire believed, as did many of their masters, that if a slave reached England he or she would be freed, demarcating England throughout the Atlantic world as a "land of liberty." In England, slaves considered "ungrateful Villain[s]" by their masters quickly fled. Others engaged in petitioning, believing under the *Somerset* decision "they were set free." Judges too believed that "negroes had been declared free" by Justice Mansfield. With word spreading quickly

Victoria and its Prize Negroes could be gotten into New York to be condemned, the Spanish vessel was captured by the Massachusetts naval ships the *Hazard* and *Tyrannicide*. The Negroes were housed in barracks on Castle Island and subsequently released to their owners who came to Boston after they reimbursed Massachusetts for expenses incurred in feeding and sheltering the bondsmen. George W. Williams, *The History of the Negro Race, From 1619 to 1880: Negroes as Slaves, as Soldiers, and as Citizens* (New York, 1883), Vol. 1, 376-79.

throughout England's black enclaves, a new dynamic took hold as many came to see England as a land of liberty.⁷⁸ As 'Freeman' wrote in a 1774 Philadelphia pamphlet, slaves in North America believed "setting foot on that happy Territory where slavery is forbidden to perch" was sufficient to free them.⁷⁹ While England was not the only place within the eighteenth century Atlantic world where blacks could escape enslavement, in the early 1770s it was the only Atlantic government whose executive and judicial branches took affirmative actions to ensure freedom for its black subjects within its borders. Scotland, Denmark and France all trailed England in taking such affirmative steps. A man enslaved by Glasgow resident Neil Buchanan "follow[ed] the Example of Somerset" and sued Buchanan "for his Freedom." Notwithstanding the efforts of this assertive bondsman, not until 1778 did Scotland, which had a separate legal system from England, issue a definitive ruling that "the dominion assumed over [a] Negro under the law of Jamaica, being unjust, could not be supported in this country to any extent." Denmark was perceived by some West Indians as a refuge for escaped slaves, a perception based on Denmark's allowing employment of slave mariners even if they lacked a sailor's pass and their owner's written permission. However, there was no Danish appellate ruling decision equivalent to the *Somerset*

⁷⁸ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 101; James Oldham, "New Light on Mansfield and Slavery," *The Journal of British Studies* 27:1 (Jan. 1988), 54; M.S. Wiener, "Evidence on Somerset's Case," *Slavery & Abolition* 23:1 (Apr. 2002), 125 (English slave fled telling his master's servants "he had recd a letter from his Unkle Sommerset acquainting him that Lord Mansfield had given them their freedom"); *Cay v Crighton*, Sharp Papers, N-YHS; Ruth Paley, "After Somerset: Mansfield, Slavery and the Law in England 1772-1830,," in *Law, Crime, and English Society*, ed. Norma Landau (Cambridge, 2002) 165, 180. See *Newport Mercury*, Sept. 28, 1772; *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie & Dixon), Williamsburg, Sept. 30, 1773; *Virginia Gazette* (Rind), Williamsburg, June 30, 1774 and Gretchin Gerzina, *Black London, Life Before Emancipation* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1995), 133 for examples of North American slaves who fled to England because of the *Somerset* decision. In the aftermath of Justice Mansfield's decision, slave owners hesitated taking their slaves to England. *Royal Gazette* (New York), Feb. 6, 1779.

⁷⁹ Caretta, *Equiano, the African*, 237; William Henry Drayton, "Some Fugitive Thoughts on a letter signed Freeman Addressed to the Deputies assembled in the High Court of Congress in Philadelphia. By A Black Settler" (Philadelphia, 1774), Evans Early American Imprints, 1st Series, No. 13630. The *Somerset* decision also caused a number of colonial slave owners to sell their slaves before traveling to England.

decision. In 1802 Denmark's Supreme Court decreed "that the free soil of the mother country did not confer freedom on the enslaved." Most European nations took similar positions concerning the status of slaves within their national borders. Through most of the eighteenth century, France had licensing provisions that required slaves imported be for personal use and only temporarily reside in France. The French *Code Noir* provided that Negroes "brought to or sent into France shall not be reason thereof acquire any right to their freedom." In 1777 the *Code* was amended to require the registration of all blacks and people of color, free or enslaved and the establishment of a series of *depots de noirs* in French ports where slaves accompanying their masters on Atlantic voyages were required to stay until they could be shipped back across the Atlantic.⁸⁰

Benjamin Franklin may have believed British self-congratulation for the *Somerset* decision to be "Pharisaical" for hypocritically freeing one slave while continuing to ship "hundreds of thousands" into slavery, but enslaved individuals in the Americas saw the matter differently.⁸¹ North American slaves had little doubt that England was now a land of liberty. Bacchus from Virginia was among the slaves who were thought to have "attempt[ed] to get on Board some Vessel bound for Great Britain, from the knowledge [t]he[y ha[d] of the late Determination of Somerset's case."⁸² Enslaved mariners who

⁸⁰ Susan Peabody, "There are no Slaves in France": *The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime* (Oxford, 1996); Samuel L. Chatman, "There are no Slaves in France": A Re-Examination of Slave Laws in Eighteenth Century France," *Journal of Negro History* 85:3 (Summer 2000): 144-153; July 20, 1740 Application for License, TNA HCA 65/22 (license for ship captain to bring Negro boy Hector into France); *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, Sept. 27, 1773; Iain Whyte, *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery, 1756-1838* (Edinburgh, 2006), Chap. 1. Scottish slaves' resistance to being transported to the West Indies resulted in at least one court case as early as 1756 challenging slave masters' authority to forcibly transport slaves out of Scotland. With the slave dying in jail while awaiting a hearing before the Court of Sessions, the issue remained unresolved in Scottish law for another twenty-two years. Whyte, *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery*, 14-15.

⁸¹ Carretta, *Equiano*, 206 quoting *London Chronicle*, June 20, 1776.

⁸² *Virginia Gazette*, June 30, 1774, in Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, v. 1, 149-150. The *Somerset* decision also resulted in the sale of American slaves. Unlike Benjamin Franklin and other North Americans who brought their slaves to England prior to 1772, after Justice Mansfield's decision, many

came to England also believed the *Somerset* decision would set them free. In May 1776 the Danish sloop *Lawrence*'s rudder broke in the Gulf Stream off of Canada as the ship was proceeding from New York and St. Thomas to Copenhagen. Upon being discovered by a British naval convoy and sailors from HMS *Greyhound* placed aboard the ship, the *Lawrence* was forced to dock at Portsmouth to make repairs. Four slave mariners on the *Lawrence* demonstrated an understanding that Justice Mansfield's decision might form the basis for their becoming free men in England when they took advantage of the *Lawrence* being in England to petition "not [to] be carried out of the Realm." By petitioning for freedom, the enslaved sailors on the *Lawrence* showed that they understood that the Atlantic was a place of "multiple legalities" in which liberty depended not only on which side of the Atlantic one lived, but also where one encountered the Royal Navy. For the *Lawrence*'s colored mariners, the presence of HMS *Greyhound* near Canada represented an extension of English authority far out into the Atlantic. The *Greyhound* presented the colored seamen with access to English courts and Admiralty officials who recognized their rights to freedom under the *Somerset* decision. For thousands of American slaves just several hundred miles to the west of where the *Lawrence* met the *Greyhound*, the *Somerset* decision provided no key to liberty. For the *Lawrence*'s mariners and many other maritime fugitives, England truly was seen as a "Happy Territory."⁸³

~~colonial slave owners decided to sell their slaves rather than risk bondsmen claiming their freedom by dint of being in England. *New-York Gazette & Weekly Journal*, Jan. 6, 1777 (The "only reason" a New Yorker sold his "Negro boy" was that the master "intend for England in a short time").~~

⁸³ Letter of Wm. Cooley and Wm. Stiles, 19 May 1776, enclosed in Mr. Stanley's 21 May 1776 letter to William Knox, TNA CO 5/148, f. 76. Most of the relevant documents concerning the *Lawrence*'s colored mariners can be found at TNA CO 5/148. I want to thank Christopher Leslie Brown for having brought these records to my attention. See also, May 18, 1776 Affidavit of James List and Robert Parnell, PCRO 11/1/16/27. Ships sailing from St. Thomas had long used colored mariners. In the 1730s, the majority of sailors employed by the Dutch West Indies Company at the island were of African descent. Arnold R.

Just what type of liberty did the *Lawrence's* colored mariners and other maritime fugitives find when they reached England after the *Somerset* decision? Although there are few records identifying these men, making this question “to a degree unanswerable,” an outline of their lives in England can be provided. Although *Somerset's* lawyers had sought to “keep slavery an ocean away” from England, a master’s right to service by a bondsman continued to include the right to enforce that service. *Somerset* imposed only one restriction on the exercise of that right: the prohibition against forcible transportation from England. Masters still had the right under English law to physically punish their servants, if not whip them as slave owners in the Americas did. English masters whose “moderate” physical punishment caused the death of their apprentices were said by Blackstone to have caused death by misadventure, as “the act of correction was lawful.” “Negro Boys,” such as William Boston, were sentenced to hard labor for misbehaving and slave fugitives formerly employed by the Royal Navy were transported to Australia. While the English judicial system might have provided a safeguard against forcible detentions, it offered little protection in the area of working conditions for the former slaves. Justice Mansfield and other judges held that former slaves had no rights to wages without an express contract of employment. Into the nineteenth century, ship captains imprisoned colored sailors in English jails for alleged debts to keep the seamen from seeking court orders establishing their freedom. When combined with courts generally not accepting a servant’s testimony as against his or her master, former slaves had very

Highfield, ed., *J.L. Carstens' St. Thomas in Early Danish Times. A General Description of all the Danish, American or West Indies Islands* (St. Croix, 1997), 29.

It should be noted that customs and naval officers did not appear to believe the *Somerset* decision was limited by the nationality of the enslaved individual. While the *Lawrence's* colored mariners spoke of not being taken “out of the Realm,” at least one and possibly more of the seamen were not British subjects. Nevertheless, officials in Portsmouth and London treated all four seamen the same, providing all four with the support of the government in obtaining their freedom.

limited recourse in disputes over conditions of employment. Former slaves living in England occupied a status that was “neither wages nor the whip.”⁸⁴

As experienced seamen, maritime fugitives, like any English Jack Tar, faced the continual threat of impressment in British coastal towns. With seamen deserting in numbers described by the comptroller of the Navy as “beyond imagination,” naval officers regularly used impressments to fill their vessels. During the American Revolution not even properly discharged naval seamen could escape being impressed back into naval service. When John Stradley was discharged at Portsmouth after serving on HMS *Grafton* for three and one-half years, he “fear[ed] of being Presst as I cum hom to take employment.” His fears came true as within less than a year Stradley was impressed, his naval service only ending with the Treaty of Paris.⁸⁵ With men such as black radical Thomas Wedderburn being impressed twice in the late eighteenth century, colored sailors in Great Britain had reason to share Stradley’s and other sailors’ fear of “being caught in the dog’s heels” of an impressment gang. Impressment of dark-skinned men was not just due to the Navy’s need for seamen. It was also caused by their being seen as different because of their skin color. Colored seamen were pressed as punishment

⁸⁴ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 284; Daniel J. Hulseboch, “Nothing but Liberty: *Somerset*’s Case and the British Empire,” *Law and History Review* 24:3 (Fall 2006), 647; George Van Cleve, “*Somerset*’s Case and its Antecedents in Imperial Perspective,” *Law and History Review* 24:3 (Fall 2006), 602-603; Ruth Paley “Imperial Politics and English Law: The Many Contexts of *Somerset*,” *Law and History Review* 24:3 (Fall 2006), 661-662. *Black People*, 32-33; Cassandra Pybus, “Bound for Botany Bay: John Martin’s Voyage to Australia,” in *Many Middle Passages*, ed. Emma Christopher, Cassandra Pybus & Marcus Rediker (Berkeley, 2007), 92-106; Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*, 25-49. In England “a Master who stabbed his Black Servant or any other Black would probably swing for it,” while in the West Islands few owners were ever punished for such conduct. Undated memorandum of Dr. John Fothergill, Granville Sharp Papers, N-YHS.

⁸⁵ *A Naval History*, p. 56; Memoirs of John Stradley, 1757-1783, NMM TRN/38, p. 24, 28-29, Frederick Marryat, *Frank Milday: The Naval Officer* (1829), EText #21554, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/21554/21554.txt> (accessed June 12, 2007). The man-of-war that ensured the *Lawrence*’s colored mariners landed in Portsmouth included among its crew men who were improperly impressed. Letter dated 6 March 1776 from Sir James Douglas, Commander in Chief of the port of Portsmouth to Admiralty, TNA ADM 1/951.

for violating community norms such as interracial sex. Men of African ancestry were also believed by some to be targeted by press gangs at the behest of former masters to keep the colored men from testifying in criminal proceedings.⁸⁶

It appears that John Draper, one of the *Lawrence*'s four slave mariners, may have been "pressed for the fleet" on February 17, 1777 and delivered to HMS *Sandwich* while it was docked at Portsmouth. Due to the commonness of John Draper as a name among eighteenth century British men and the incompleteness of HMS *Sandwich*'s muster rolls – birth and age information for most sailors is not indicated - it cannot be said with certainty whether or not this was the John Draper from the *Lawrence*. Whether Draper or his shipmates on the *Lawrence* were impressed, as sailors in England they remained, as one English ship captain of the time noted, "...the only class of beings in our famed Country of Liberty really slaves."⁸⁷ Thus, while the *Lawrence*'s slave mariners and other maritime fugitives achieved freedom as in England, it was limited.

Even after the *Somerset* decision, mariners of color remained vulnerable to being forcibly detained and transported to slavery in the Americas. John Annis, a cook on HMS *Anglicania*, who went to sea with his former master's consent, was forcibly held by his

⁸⁶ Paul Edwards, ed., *The Life of Olaudah Equiano* (New York, 1988), 36; Wallace Brown, *The Good Americans: The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (New York, 1969), 405; Edwards and Walvin, *Black Personalities in the Era of the Slave Trade*, 33 quoting *The Times*, 11-12 Feb. 1794 (Mungo was forcibly removed by a press gang after being shot at for being with a white man's wife who "said she'd live with no man but the Black"). As three of Paul Cuffee's black mariners found out in 1811, impressment of black mariners would continue into the nineteenth century. Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina, "Mobility in Chains: Freedom of Movement in the Early Black Atlantic," *South Atlantic History* 100:1 (2000), 55. In a nation with few women of African ancestry, relations between dark-skinned men and white women were common. Mixed Marriages in the Eighteenth Century, The Names of Men, Women & Children who are now on board the *Belisarius* Captain Sill lying at the Motherbank 16 February 1787, TNA T1/643, f. 139.

⁸⁷ Muster Roll, HMS *Sandwich*, 1777, TNA ADM 36/7790; Nicholas Rogers, "Liberty Road: Opposition to Impressment in Britain during the American War of Independence," in *Jack Tar Essays in Maritime Life and Labour*, ed. Colin Howell and Richard Twomey. Fredericton, New Brunswick, 1991, 53. A "John Draper" was listed on HMS *Isis*'s muster roll in December 1776 when it was docked at Portsmouth. The ship's muster roll did not indicate the birth place of this seaman, making it impossible to determine if he was the John Draper on the *Lawrence*. Muster Roll, HMS *Isis*, TNA ADM 36/7911.

master in 1774. Despite Equiano's best of efforts to stop his friend from being returned from London to enslavement in St. Kitts, Annis arrived in the West Indies, where he was "flogged most unmercifully" and remained enslaved until he died.⁸⁸ Annis' fate was shared by Williams, a Grenadian slave who escaped to England. In 1797, he returned to Grenada on the *Holderness* as a mariner, where his former master claimed him. After a negotiation they reached an agreement that Williams would be manumitted upon the Negro paying "30 joes" and working for Captain Brown of the *Holderness* for three years at a wage less than the then current rate. When Williams returned to London he sued Captain Brown, seeking full wages and arguing that having previously been in England he was a free man, and therefore the agreement with his owner had been made under false pretenses. The Court disagreed, holding Williams was "as free as any of us while in England," but on returning to Grenada he was a "runaway slave."⁸⁹ Clearly, the bounds of English liberty did not extend beyond the shores of England and residence in England was not sufficient to protect a colored mariner. A year earlier, Harry Harper, a Dominica maritime fugitive found that even getting to England was no guarantee of being treated as a free man. Having stowed on board Captain Alleyne's ship in Dominica, upon being discovered, he worked as a seamen for the voyage to England. On arriving in Bristol, Captain Alleyne claimed the colored mariner had signed an indenture to work as a sailor and under the laws of Dominica the Captain was liable for a £100 fine if he did not return the former slave. With the ship owner and mate supporting the Captain's position and there being no record of a legal proceeding being brought on Harry Harper's behalf, it appears that the unfortunate sailor may have been returned to slavery in the West

⁸⁸ Carretta, *Equiano*, 210-11.

⁸⁹ Williams v Brown, 1802, in Catterall, *Judicial Cases Concerning the Negro*, v. 1, 5-6, 23-25.

Indies.⁹⁰

Colored mariners residing in England who went to sea after the *Somerset* decision saw benefits in Royal Navy service. As naval seamen, they, unlike colored seamen on merchant or privateering vessels were rarely condemned as Prize Negroes. However, in several important ways these men's lives were fairly constrained. Just as the seamen of Scarborough rarely received the benefits of Britain's Seamen's Sixpence program, few colored mariners obtained such benefits. Although the colored seaman Briton Hammon may have received treatment at the hospital and John Thurston drew a pensioned colored mariner sharing the Greenwich Hospital esplanade on the Thames with white retired seamen, colored tars at Greenwich Hospital were exceptional (Illustration 4). The Pension Registers for Greenwich Hospital and Chatham Chest go on for pages with nary an entry for a colored seaman. In addition to rarely obtaining benefits for their service to the nation, most naval mariners of color had little success in being becoming officers.⁹¹ Barlow Fielding serves as a good example of both the opportunities and limits for colored mariners in the Royal Navy after *Somerset*. Fielding, "a Black Man," was a boatswain on HMS *Orpheus* off the Kent coast. As a boatswain, Fielding held a responsible position overseeing the ship's rigging and sails. In 1780 Fielding requested a transfer. Captain John Colpoys of the *Orpheus* explained the request was due to the ship's crew having "taken a Dislike to the man's Colour." Colpoys indicated to the Admiralty that it was "very difficult, and even impossible...for me to remove a Particular Prejudice which has

⁹⁰ Harry Grandy Letter to Granville Sharp, 4 Aug. 1796, Granville Sharp Papers, D3549/1/G2, GRO.

⁹¹ Briton Hammond, *Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Surprizing Deliverance of Briton Hammon, a Negro Man, Servant to General Winslow of Marshfield, in New-England; Who returned to Boston, after having been absent almost Thirteen Years, etc.* (Boston, 1760), 12. Governmental officials recognized that many seamen were not obtaining the pensions and took some steps to alleviate the situation. See HL/PO/PU/1/1763/3G3n58, 1763.



Illustration 4. *Greenwich Pensioners*, c. 1800.
John Thurston, NMM.

crept” into the ship’s crew. Instead of a transfer, two months later he entered Hasler Hospital in Gosport. Like many colored men in the Royal Navy, Jack Punch being the notable exception, Fielding may have been able to become a petty officer, but his skin color kept him from further progression in the officer ranks.⁹²

During the Revolution, few North American sailors, white or colored, were able to find berths on merchant ships from English ports. With two thousand Liverpool sailors rioting in 1775 over the lack of work, it is hardly surprising to find that in the following

⁹² Morgan, “Black Experiences in Britain’s Maritime World,” 122-23; .Captain Alleyne’s duplicity was shared by ship captains on both sides of the Atlantic willing to enslave free colored mariners. See e.g., Thomas Hutchinson April 23, 1773 Letter to Lord Dartmouth, TNA SP 89/75/41 (free mariner sold into slavery in Boston). Another example of a black seaman kidnapped off English streets was that of the Royal Navy seaman Amos Anderson. After having been discharged from the HMS *Loyalist* in November 1783, Anderson found himself “shanghaied, hustled aboard a ship and taken to the West Indies to be sold.” Pybus, *Black Founders*, 41. See Lavery, *Shipboard Organization*, 27-28 for a description of a boatswain’s duties.

year over 92% of all berths on Liverpool ships were manned by local mariners, and only a handful of Americans could be found on vessels sailing from the Merseyside port. Similarly, the “Distraction & Rebellion” in the colonies during the first years of the war limited the numbers of North American mariners to sail on Bristol merchant ships. In such a circumstance, where berths on merchant vessels were hard to obtain for transients, the Royal Navy was a particularly attractive option for colored seamen. By generally not surrendering slaves working on its ships to those claiming property rights in the seamen, the Royal Navy also provided a level of protection lacking in much of the Anglo-American world.⁹³

Individuals of African ancestry who were able to resist being illegally detained often were able to do so through the assistance of a patron such as Granville Sharp who could arrange for the hiring and payment of attorneys. The 1786 case of an unnamed Negro man illustrates this well. The young man was forcibly detained in London and put on a ship to Barbados. Two of his friends went to see Granville Sharp that same evening. Because it was a Friday night, Sharp was not able to immediately retain a lawyer. Only quick action by Sharp in sending the attorney by post carriage late Saturday night to Gravesend prevented the young Negro man from being shipped to Barbados as a slave. This story illustrates the difficulty of colored men remaining free in a society in which whites could transform their status by physically removing the men from England to West Indian colonies. It also demonstrates the importance of access to the legal system

⁹³ Ian Gilmour, *Riots, Risings and Revolution: Governance and Violence in Eighteenth century England* (London, 1993), 254-256; Liverpool Crew Lists, 1776, TNA BT 93/36; Customs and Excise Records, Ships from North America, TNA T 1/523/89, 104; Bristol Muster Rolls, 1777-1783, BRO SMV/9/3/1/8; Morgan, *Black Experiences in Britain's Maritime World*, 118-123 The influx of large numbers of immigrants may have also increased competition for berths in both Bristol and Liverpool in 1756. Hodson, “A Bondage So Harsh,” 109n55.

for men of color. When served writs of *habeas corpus* ship captains were barred from removing men of color from England. Without knowledge of the English system or having access to resourceful patrons, former maritime fugitives could not obtain such writs and were vulnerable to being returned to enslavement.⁹⁴

Life in England, with or without being impressed, kidnapped, re-enslaved, or abused, was difficult for many former slaves. Many observers noted that black refugees in London, many of whom had “been in his Majesty’s service, were... in great distress.” Black Loyalists were said to have “no prospect of subsisting in this country but by depredations on the public, or by common charity.” Whether compelled, as was Joseph Johnson, to begging in the streets of London, or depending upon the charity of others, maritime fugitives in England often barely eked out an existence. Most of these men received little, if any compensation from the Loyalist Claims Commission. Even the most desperate of black claimants found little sympathy before the Commission. Black claimants were presumed to be former slaves. As such they were thought to have benefited from the war, being “in a better country he may with industry get his bread.” Unfortunately, with large numbers of out of work sailors and soldiers crowding the streets of England’s cities, very few former American slaves found bread or work in England. Only four men received lifetime pensions. The largest pension of £18 went to Shadrack Furman. Unlike Hannah Snell, who received a considerably larger pension for

⁹⁴ Granville Sharp Letter to Archbishop of Canterbury, 1 Aug. 1786, Granville Sharp Papers, D3549/13/1/C3, GRO; Shylon, *Black Slaves in Britain*, 113, 125 (Somerset received assistance from not only Granville Sharp, but also from Thomas Walkin, Elizabeth Cade and John Marlow, who made affidavits regarding his seizure, and the ‘widow’ who paid for the writ of habeas corpus). That many former slaves in Britain believed their freedom was in significant part due to the efforts of Granville Sharp is evident by an undated letter from Quobna Ottobah Cugoano. In it Cugoano tells Sharp “we are those whose minds and bodies are considered slaves, even in England itself, till your aid and extortions set us free.” Quobna Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery*, ed. by Vincent Carretta (London, 1999), 189.

rather minor wounds and who had gainful employment in England after being discharged from the Navy, the black man after having had his home and crops burned, being tortured and whipped five hundred times, was blinded in one eye and left with a nearly severed leg from his service to the King. With no other resources, Furman was forced to beg for a few pence playing the fiddle on London's streets. Furman was, in fact, relatively fortunate. Other black men, unable to find work or receive charity died in workhouses. The distressed condition of these men led to the formation of the Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor in 1786, and thereafter helped spur the movement to send many of the former slaves to Sierra Leone.⁹⁵

These men often found creating intimate relations in England challenging. Men of African ancestry far outnumbered women of African ancestry. Cassandra Pybus' review of London baptismal records discloses as high as a 16 to 1 male to female ratio among blacks in the post-Revolutionary era. Many of these men had been forced by circumstances not of their own choosing to leave wives and lovers behind in North America. Thus, not surprisingly, former slaves frequently had white English women as partners and spouses. Equiano and Quobna Ottobah Cugoana were but two of the scores of men of African ancestry who married white English women.⁹⁶ Although inter-racial relations were not uncommon, maritime fugitives coming to England in the post-*Somerset* era faced resistance to their presence based on fears of miscegenation. Men of African ancestry were often viewed as "sullen, spiteful, treacherous, and revengeful" and

⁹⁵ Edwards and Walvin, *Black Personalities*, 25; Brown and Senior, *Victorious in Defeat*, 173; Norton, "The Fate of Some Black Loyalists," 407-09; Pybus, *Black Founders*, 43, 52-55.

⁹⁶ Pybus, *Black Founders*, 51; Carretta, *Equiano*, 213-19; Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves* (New York, 2006), 135; Norton, "The Fate of Some Black Loyalists," 414-15.

not proper partners for English women.⁹⁷ With individuals of color in England facing possible re-enslavement up until the end of the English slave trade, freedom for former slaves in England could be a tenuous proposition. Thus, while in the mid-1770s England was a “land of liberty” offering liberties not possible for most blacks in the Americas – choices as to residence, occupation, and intimate connections – colored sailors who landed in England still faced considerable restrictions, both legal and economic.

Finding Freedom in the Atlantic

If the history of colonial America was one in which “losers far outnumbered winners,” then the same can be said with regards to slaves who attempted to flee via the sea.⁹⁸ Hundreds of maritime fugitives from northern colonies escaped by obtaining berths on privateers, merchant vessels, and warships. Yet, except for the former seamen who in the aftermath of the Revolution came to England, large numbers of maritime fugitives from Britain’s northern colonies do not appear to have reached havens of freedom in the Atlantic “Negro Littoral.” The considerable distance that separated most havens of freedom from northern colonies presented a formidable hurdle for maritime fugitives. Unlike slaves from the Danish West Indies, they could not find freedom in Puerto Rico by swimming or escaping on small boats. Nor did they have the opportunity for fleeing to Haiti by a short boat trip, as did the Jamaican sailors on the Pilot Boat *Deep Nine*. Instead, maritime fugitives who sought to reach havens of freedom directly had to travel hundreds of miles.⁹⁹ While John Cannon’s and Captain Rouse’s slaves may have been

⁹⁷ “Anglicanus,” *Gentleman’s Magazine*, XXXIV (1764), 495, cited in Shyllon, *Black People in Britain*, 94-95.

⁹⁸ John Murrin, “Beneficiaries of Catastrophe: The English Colonies in America,” in Eric Foner, ed., *The New American History* (Philadelphia 1997), 3-30.

⁹⁹ Hall, “Maritime Maroons,” 485-491; Richard Sheridan, “From Jamaican Slavery to Haitian Freedom: The Case of the Black Crew of the Pilot Boat, *Deep Nine*,” *Journal of Negro History* 67 (1982), 328-39; Stark, “Rescued from their Invisibility,” 566.

able to traverse the hundreds of miles between northern ports and havens in Spanish Florida and the West Indies by steering stolen vessels, their story was not a common one. Instead, for most maritime fugitives, getting to such havens of freedom required at least two, if not many voyages.

Maritime fugitives who obtained berths on merchant ships sailing to the West Indies and England were often not motivated by the wages offered. They simply wanted to get as quickly away from their former masters as possible. Thus, if doing so required round-trip voyages to British West Indies islands, the runaways signed on for such voyages. If the opportunity presented itself, fugitives would forfeit wages by jumping ship in the West Indies, rather than sailing back to North America. Doing so enabled some maritime fugitives to take advantage of the lack of white seamen in the West Indies and obtain berths to England or a foreign West Indies port. Others were not so fortunate. Hanover, a slave believed to have participated in setting fires in New York in 1741 was captured in Jamaica four years after fleeing there and returned to New York. For many maritime fugitives, a round-trip voyage back to the port they came from required these men to hide again before seeking a voyage to a more hospitable port. Some were recaptured while awaiting a second voyage.¹⁰⁰ Tom and other West Indian-born slaves fled their North American masters seeking to return to the West Indies by obtaining a berth in a northern port. By attempting to reconnect with family and friends, these men

¹⁰⁰ *New York Conspiracy*, 217; Lepore *New York Burning*, 173, App. B and C; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 26, 1745. While northern maritime fugitives often sought to flee to foreign West Indies islands, slaves from British West Indies colonies sought to find freedom through movement to North American colonies. Men, such as Amaro, who jumped overboard from the Jamaican sloop *Benjamin* when it was in the Delaware River, regularly appeared on the docks of northern ports. *American Weekly Mercury*, Aug. 23, 1722. See e.g., *American Weekly Mercury*, Jan. 25, 1726, Apr. 14, 1740; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 15, 1743, Aug. 7, 1746, July 5, 1753; *New-York Mercury*, June 20, 1757; *Pennsylvania Chronicle & Universal Advertiser*, Oct. 23, 1769; *New-York Gazette & Weekly Mercury*, Dec. 23, 1782. Slaves from southern colonies also fled via the sea to northern ports. *Pennsylvania Packet & General Advertiser*, Aug. 19, 1783.

exposed themselves to possible re-enslavement in the West Indies. Given this circumstance, those maritime fugitives returning to the West Indies were most likely to visit for only a short period before hopefully obtaining berths to England or a foreign West Indies island.¹⁰¹

As the example of Scarborough makes clear, even if dark-skinned maritime fugitives succeeded in escaping via the sea, creating lives as mariners could be very difficult. With the strong preference for local mariners in many smaller Atlantic ports, these runaways were not likely to easily integrate themselves into such maritime communities. And as the examples of Liverpool and Bristol during the American Revolution illustrate, war and economic upheavals could also serve to shut doors in large ports.¹⁰²

A significant barrier to maritime fugitives obtaining freedom and achieving independent lives was the darkness of their skin. The hundreds of Prize Negroes condemned during the wars of the eighteenth century demonstrate the vulnerability of mariners who were dark-skinned, both those born free and those formerly enslaved, to being captured and sold into slavery (Appendix C). The risk that maritime fugitives faced at sea is summarized in testimony of Peter Verzian of the Boston sloop *Revenge*. Seeking to have four dark-skinned Spanish mariners condemned as prize goods, Verzian asserted, “Does not their Complexion and features tell all the world that they are of the blood of Negroes and have suckt Slavery and Cruelty from their Infancy?”¹⁰³ Even after making multi-legged voyages from enslavement to one of the Atlantic’s havens of freedom, and

¹⁰¹ *New-York Mercury*, Aug. 29, 1763.

¹⁰² A comparison of Scarborough with London, Portsmouth or New York underscores Daniel Vickers’ contention that Atlantic ports are best understood as spanning a spectrum based on the size and scale of their operations. Vickers, *Young Men and the Sea*, 4.

¹⁰³ Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period*, 410-411.

having successful careers as sailors, years after their escape from enslavement maritime fugitives could find themselves subject to the whip of a slave master. Warfare created doors of opportunity for freedom due to expanding needs for mariners, while exposing colored mariners to enslavement as thousands of ships were captured and condemned. In short, stepping onto an Atlantic ship was, for colored mariners, to move into a swirling vortex where liberty was always at risk.¹⁰⁴

Notwithstanding the limited success northern maritime fugitives had, the Atlantic represented redemption from the daily brutality of enslavement. Whether Bambaras from Senegambia, who believed in a water spirit that maintained one's life force after death, or Kongoleses who understood the Kalunga as a dividing line between the living and spirit worlds, for many West Africans the surface of the Atlantic held positive connotations. Enslaved people often creatively connected to their African heritage. One slave did so by placing canoes and paddles on the grave of his family member so as to allow passage back across the ocean to Africa. By being "willing to cross" the Atlantic, maritime fugitives undertook a more practical and physical connection to their African heritage by using the sea to undo their Middle Passage and obtain their freedom.¹⁰⁵ Unlike their Middle Passage "experience of motion without discernible direction or destination," maritime fugitives' flight into the Atlantic had a destination – freedom, if not a clearly demarcated path to obtaining it. Flight via the sea was difficult, and ultimately would prove unattainable for many. Maritime fugitives understood their chances for success were limited. Yet for this group of determined, resourceful and skilled group of slaves, the possibilities of being recognized as free subjects "from the moment they set foot" in a

¹⁰⁴ Appendix B. Examples of the continual vulnerability of colored men in the Atlantic include Randy Sparks, "Two Princes of Calabar," *WMQ*; and Pybus, "Bound for Botany Bay".

¹⁰⁵ Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 62-65; Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 201.

port served as a powerful incentive to take a chance and seek freedom in the Atlantic.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 122. Sheridan, “From Jamaican Slavery to Haitian Freedom,” 333 (The Haitian constitution provided that fugitives were Haitian subjects as soon they “set foot” in Haiti). Recognizing the cleverness of these runaways, slave masters often referred to them as “rogues.” *Pennsylvania Packet*, Oct. 28, 1779

APPENDIX A

Fugitive Slave and Slave Sale Advertisements, 1713 – 1783

The more than 7,200 advertisements for fugitive slaves, slave sales and slaves to be purchased published in Philadelphia, New York City, and Rhode Island newspapers are the foundation upon which this dissertation rests. My review of the various newspapers started with looking at several secondary sources that contained copies of a portion of the fugitive slave advertisements in New York and Pennsylvania newspapers. I then reviewed original copies in various archives to both verify the accuracy of secondary sources and identify advertisements not contained therein. To fill in the gaps I used the American Antiquarian Society's extensive microfilm collection of newspapers and the *Accessible Archive* on-line database of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. Fortunately, near the end of the research phase of this project I obtained access to *Readex's* Early American newspaper database. *Readex's* on-line search function made possible a review of all the newspapers published in Philadelphia, New York and Philadelphia.¹

Many advertisements did not specify the number of "Negroes" or "slaves" being sold. Whenever an advertisement used the term "couple," two slaves were included in my analysis. If the advertisement referred to "several" or "few" Negroes, three slaves were counted.

¹ The secondary sources include Hodges & Brown, *Pretends to be Free*; Smith and Wojtowicz, *Blacks Who Stole Themselves*; Kenneth Scott, *Genealogical Data from Colonial New York Newspapers* (Baltimore, 1977); Taylor and Sweet, *Runaways, Deserters, and Notorious*, Vol. 1 & 2. As described in Chapter One, my analysis is based on considerably more advertisements than other historians studying Pennsylvania, New York and Rhode Island have used. In addition, this dissertation is the first study to engage in a comparative analysis of maritime flight from multiple North American ports. It should be noted that use of *Readex* does not provide absolute certainty that all relevant advertisements were identified. On several occasions, *Readex* searches did not disclose advertisements, the originals of which I had previously reviewed.

APPENDIX B

Methodology Used to Create Colored 18th Century Mariners Database (“*CMD*”)

My identification of maritime fugitives has largely been based upon a review of New York, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island advertisements. Despite the wealth of information contained in the advertisements, they describe a subset of a much larger maritime community. Free colored mariners, fugitive slaves escaping via the sea whose masters did not advertise them, slaves hired out for maritime labor, and hundreds of other colored mariners, all were not the subject of advertisements placed in New York, Pennsylvania or Rhode Island newspapers. These advertisements alone cannot fully describe the world that maritime fugitives encountered and became part of when they fled slavery. To recreate that world my research included the review of muster rolls, log books, High Court of Admiralty and Vice-Admiralty records, newspaper dispatches, ship captains’ journals, account books, military pension records, and secondary sources. This research resulted in the creation of the *CMD* which now contains more than 8,700 colored mariners from throughout the Atlantic world.

Who are included in the *CMD*? *CMD*’s mariners include maritime fugitives, any crew member on a ship that had a classical (e.g., Scippio or Caesar), African (e.g., Quash) or place (e.g., Bristol) name, and those lacking a surname, which typically was an indication during the eighteenth century that an individual was or had been a slave. Due to most eighteenth century records not providing racial identification and many colored mariners having been given Christian surnames, the *CMD* undercounts the number of eighteenth century colored mariners, although the extent of that undercounting cannot be

stated with certainty.²

References to colored individuals on ships that did not meet the described criteria were not included in this listing. Doing so excluded an unknown number of colored individuals who may have been mariners. For example, the Negro on the sloop *Active* that in 1778 sailed from Jamaica to New York was not included as the newspaper dispatch does not make clear whether he was being transported as a slave or was a crew member. Similarly, neither the “5 Negroes” on the Rhode Island sloop cast away in the Gulf of Florida in 1734 nor the twenty-one “fine Negro Slaves” on a French Privateer captured in December 1747 were included.³

This database includes all identifiable mariners described as “Negro,” “Mulatto,” “Mustee,” or “Indian.” It does so because the racial boundaries in the eighteenth century Atlantic were elastic, enslaved individuals in northern colonies included members of all these groups, and intermarriages among these groups by free and enslaved mariners was not uncommon. For example, in 1715 the Rhode Island General Assembly permitted the importation of nine Indian slaves from South Carolina without payment of a slave import duty. Fifty-nine years later the Rhode Island census indicates that forty-six percent of households that owned slaves employed both Indians and blacks, and almost 36% of all Rhode Island slave fugitives were Mustees, Mulattos or Indians. A number of Rhode Island families had heads of households with West African or classical names such as

² During the eighteenth century the Royal Navy kept probably the most complete records of any governmental institution in the Atlantic world. Notwithstanding being sticklers for record keeping, the Royal Navy failed to keep records indicating racial identification until 1764 when muster rolls were supposed to indicate the birth place of all crew members. Not until the 1770s did most ship captains consistently provide such information. In addition, many northern masters had their slaves baptized and given Christian names. Lovell, *Art in a Season of Revolution*, 193. As a result, many colored mariners will never be identified.

³ *Pennsylvania Packet*, Sept. 15, 1778; *American Weekly Mercury*, Apr. 11, 1734; *New-York Gazette*, Mar. 28, 1748; Table 13-1.

Cuff, Caesar or Sambo, and intermarriages between Native Americans and Mulattoes, such as that between Mary and Thomas Ninegrat, were commonplace. In Massachusetts intermarriage between Indians and Blacks was also common. Famous colored mariners, such as Paul Cuffe and Crispus Attucks were of Indian and Black ancestry, as were less noted mixed-race mariners, such as Aaron Briggs a witnesses to the *Gaspee* affair. These men would often express pride in their mixed race heritage.⁴ The 1774 Connecticut Census included both “Negroes” and “Indians” within those counted as “Black,” as it appears the 1755 Rhode Island census did too.⁵ In New York and New England Indian and Mustee men were frequently enslaved, and as was detailed in Chapter One, a number of these men served on whaling ships leaving ports from Boston to New York City.⁶ Mixed race men could be found throughout the Atlantic maritime community, be it on a whaling boat sailing across the Hudson River to set New York afire in 1776, or in a sloop fleeing Boston. Enslaved Native Americans could be found in New York despite the 1679 law banning enslavement of New York Indians. Men like Symon and Venture, who lived in New York’s East Ward with their mariner master Captain Giles Shelly, were

⁴ *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations* Vol. IV, 197; Ezra Stiles *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, D.D., L.L., D.* ed. by Franklin B. Dexter (New York, 1901), 329; Ann Marie Flane, “Customary Laws of Marriage: Legal Pluralism, Colonialism, and Narragansett Indian Identity in Eighteenth century Rhode Island,” in *The Many Legalities of Early America*, ed. by Christopher L. Tomlins and Bruce H. Mann (Chapel Hill, 1999), 181-182; Winch, *Gentleman of Color*, 179.

⁵ *New-York Gazette*, Oct. 9, 1738; Stiles, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, 329; Plane, “Customary Laws of Marriage,” 205n61; Ruth Wallis Herndon and Ella Wilcox Sekatau, “The Right to a Name: The Narragansett People and Rhode Island Officials in the Revolutionary Era,” *Ethnohistory* 44:3 (Summer 1997): 433-462; William S. Simmons and Cheryl L. Simmons, eds., *Old Light on Separate Ways: The Narragansett Diary of Joseph Fish, 1765-1776* (Hanover, NH: 1982) (mulattos and mustees living on reservation lands in eighteenth century Rhode Island). See Gary B. Nash, “The Hidden History of Metzio America,” *WMQ* 82:3, 941-964, for a discussion of mixed racial groupings in colonial North America.

⁶ *New-Hampshire Gazette*, Oct. 20, 1766, June 27, 1768, Sept. 25, Oct. 2, 1769, Aug. 15, Sept. 15, 1774, May 29, Oct. 9, 1775, Aug. 3, 1782; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 4, 1774; *Pennsylvania Packet*, Aug. 20, 1782; Farr, *A Slow Boat to Nowhere*, 160; Bolster, *African-American Seamen*, 72, 89; Sweet, “Bodies Politic,” 316; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 27; HCA 32/454/12. The significant presence of Native Americans and Mustees in Rhode Island is evident in South Kingston having 223 Indian and 33 African slaves in 1730, and Mustees comprising more than 8% of fugitive slaves advertised in Rhode Island newspapers. Margaret Ellen Newell, “The Birth of New England in the Atlantic Economy: From Its Beginning to 1770,” in *Engines of Enterprize* (Boston, 2000), 55.

probably imported into New York from the West Indies or New England. That Native Americans made up a not insignificant segment of New York's slave population is evidenced by the fact that approximately three percent of New York's fugitive slaves were of Native American ancestry.⁷

As the *CMD* in its present state is not a complete survey of relevant sources on eighteenth century Atlantic mariners, it should also be considered as suggestive, rather than definitive. For example, as detailed in Chapter Four and Appendix C, I undertook a sampling of British naval ships on the North American station from 1713-1783 to determine the extent of colored mariners in naval ships in the area and the possibilities for slave fugitives refuge on such ships. I identified 387 colored mariners on British warships who are included in the *CMD*. As this sampling is of but of a small segment of the British navy mariners serving in the Atlantic, it significantly undercounts the number of colored naval seamen.

APPENDIX C

COLORED MARINERS CONDEMNED AS PRIZE SLAVES IN VICE ADMIRALTY COURTS OR BY NORTH AMERICAN GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITIES, 1713-1783

Several historians have noted the presence of captured colored mariners who were condemned into slavery as prize goods in northern ports during the eighteenth century. James Lydon has estimated of the number of colored mariners libeled in North America during the eighteenth century wars to have reached one hundred and fifty. My review of

⁷ Benjamin Carp, "The Night the Yankees Burned Broadway," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 4:2 (Fall 2006), 486, 510-511; Foote, *Black and White Manhattan*, 81, 198; *New-York Journal, or General Advertiser*, Mar. 14, 1771.

Pennsylvania, Delaware, New York, New Jersey and Rhode Island newspapers using the *Readex Evans Early American Newspaper* database and miscellaneous secondary sources has identified 341 colored mariners condemned as prize goods between 1713 and 1783, almost double Lydon's estimate for the entire eighteenth century. Ninety-five colored seamen were condemned as prize goods between 1739 and 1748, fifty-three in the 1750s, six in the 1760s and one hundred and eighty-seven during the American Revolution. Were one to be able to quantify the number of captured colored mariners not brought into northern ports to be condemned, but rather exchanged at sea, then add in those colored mariners brought to northern ports during Queen Anne's War, and conduct a systematic review of French and Spanish sources, as well as British naval and colonial records, the number of captured colored seamen condemned into slavery in North America during the eighteenth century would certainly exceed five hundred.⁸

⁸Zabin, "Places of Exchange," Chap. 2; Bond, "Spanish Negroes," 13-15; Lydon, "New York and the Slave Trade," 386; "Governor Hunter to the Lords of Trade," (New York, Jun. 23, 1712), *Documents Relative to the History of New York*, 5:342

APPENDIX D

**PERCENTAGE OF COLORED MARINERS
AMONG BRITISH NAVAL SHIPS ON NORTH
AMERICAN STATION, 1713-1783⁹**

	<u># CM¹⁰</u>	<u>Total # of Naval Crew¹¹</u>	<u>% Colored Mariners</u>
1713	3	219	1.37%
1714	3	220	1.36%
1715	3	338	0.88%
1716	1	338	0.30%
1717	1	294	0.34%
1718	5	294	1.70%
1719	7	334	2.10%
1720	4	240	1.67%
1721	2	240	0.83%
1722	3	240	1.25%
1723	9	230	3.91%
1724	4	270	1.48%
1725	2	270	0.74%
1726	2	260	0.77%
1727	6	260	2.31%
1728	12	260	4.62%
1729	7	260	2.70%
1730	7	260	2.70%
1731	4	160	2.50%
1732	3	160	1.88%
1733	1	270	0.37%
1734	1	270	0.37%
1735	1	270	0.37%

⁹ Source: Muster Rolls, Pay Rolls or Pay Tickets (ADM 33, 34 and 36) for 49 randomly selected HMS warships resulting in the review of at least two ships' crew lists per year. (*Adamant, America, Beaver, Blandford, Brilliant, Brune, Captain, Centaur, Chatham, Chesterfield, Coventry, Deal Castle, Elizabeth, Eltham, Gosport, Greyhound, Guardland, Hampshire, Isis, Jason, Launceston, Lively, Lizard, Ludlow Castle, Lyme, Kennington, Mermaid, Minerva, Nightingale, Northumberland, Norwich, Otter, Phoenix, Prince George, Reserve, Robust, Romney, Rose, Savage, Scarborough, Seaford, Seahorse, Senegal, Shoreham, Soleby, Squirrel, Swan, Tartar, Vigilant*). Dark-skinned mariners who served on the North American station but not identified in this sampling are included among the CMD.

¹⁰ Colored mariners or "CMs" only includes those seamen which could be positively identified as a Negro, Mulatto, Indian or mixed-race with some African ancestry. For years prior to 1764 when naval musters were not required to indicate a seaman's birth place, identification of a mariner as colored was largely done on the basis of the sailor having a name typically given to slaves (e.g., Pompey, Cato, Bristol).

¹¹ "Total naval crew" is based on the number of men a ship borne while on the North American station. Where the number of men borne was not reflected in the records reviewed, the ship's complement, which typically was greater than the number of men borne, was used.

	<u># CMD</u>	<u>Total # of Naval Crew</u>	<u>% of Colored Mariners</u>
1736	4	270	1.48%
1737	5	430	1.16%
1738	3	550	0.55%
1739	11	550	2.0%
1740	12	298	4.03%
1741	13	298	4.36%
1742	6	318	1.89%
1743	3	318	0.90%
1744	5	318	1.57%
1745	17	445	3.73%
1746	5	318	1.57%
1747	4	493	0.81%
1748	25	493	5.07%
1749	1	220	0.45%
1750	2	220	0.91%
1751	2	305	0.66%
1752	4	340	1.18%
1753	1	365	0.27%
1754	1	365	0.27%
1755	2	265	0.75%
1756	2	265	0.75%
1757	3	295	1.01%
1758	8	635	1.26%
1759	5	635	0.79%
1760	1	635	0.16%
1761	2	315	0.63%
1762	2	365	0.55%
1763	2	275	0.72%
1764	2	240	0.83%
1765	6	229	2.62%
1766	2	280	0.71%
1767	3	285	1.05%
1768	2	200	1.00%
1769	5	360	1.39%

	<u># CMD</u>	<u>Total # of Naval Crew</u>	<u>% of Black Mariners</u>
1770	4	240	1.66%
1771	5	420	1.19%
1772	2	420	0.48%
1773	1	540	0.19%
1774	4	540	0.74%
1775	4	365	1.10%
1776	9	420	2.14%
1777	22	540	4.07%
1778	21	540	3.89%
1779	9	370	2.40%
1780	8	475	1.07%
1781	17	846	2.01%
1782	13	340	3.82%
1783	6	340	1.76%
Total:	387	24,546	1.58%

APPENDIX OF STATISTICAL TABLES

Table 1-1, Philadelphia, Population, 1700-1780.

<u>Year:</u>	<u>Total:</u> ¹²	<u>Black:</u>	<u>Black %:</u>
1700	4,389		
1744	9,405		
1749	13,017		
1753	14,421		
1760	18,616		
1767	18,600	1,481	7.5
1769	28,052		
1775	33,290	728	
1777	34,244		

Table 1-2, New York Population, 1703-1771.¹³

<u>Year:</u>	<u>Total:</u>	<u>Black:</u>	<u>Black %:</u>	<u>Black Male-Female:</u>	<u>M/F Ratio:</u>
1703	4,375	630	14.4%	233/397	0.57
1723	7,428	1,362	18.8%	628/734	0.86
1737	6,945	1,719	24.75%	-----	---- ¹⁴
1749	13,294	2,368	17.1%	1,140/1,138	1.0
1771	21,863	3,137	14.3%	1,500/1,637	0.97

Table 1-3: Newport, Population, 1709-1783.¹⁵

<u>Year:</u>	<u>Total:</u>	<u>Black:</u> ¹⁶	<u>Black %:</u>
1708	2,208	220	10%
1730	4,640	797	17.3%
1748	6,508	1,173	18%
1755	6,753	1,234	18.3%
1774	9,209	1,292	14%

¹² John K. Alexander, "The Philadelphia Numbers Game: An Analysis of Philadelphia's Eighteenth Century Population," *PMHB* 74 (1974), 314-324. Estimating from the number of houses in the city, Billy Smith reached similar conclusions as to Philadelphia's population. Billy G. Smith, "Death and Life in a Colonial Immigrant City: A Demographic Analysis of Philadelphia," *Journal of Economic History* 37:4 (Dec. 1977), 865. There is no census of Philadelphia's population for the period prior to 1790. Alexander arrived at his estimates by multiplying the number of houses in the city by 6.27, a multiplier derived from the 1790 census.

¹³ Greene and Harrington, *American Population before the Federal Census of 1790*, 88-112; Nash, "The New York Census of 1737," 432.

¹⁴ Gary Nash has demonstrated that the 1737 census numbers understated New York's population (7,104 and its black populace (1,283), but provides no female/male breakdown.. 6,932 1,432

¹⁵ "An Account of the People of the Colony of Rhode Island, Dec. 1755," Evans Early American Imprints, no. 40794; *Urban Growth in Colonial Rhode Island*, Tables 5 & A-2; Irving H. Bartlett, *From a Slave to Citizen: The Story of the Negro in Rhode Island* (Providence: The Urban League of Greater Providence, 1954), 9-10; Crane, *A Dependent People*, 157.

¹⁶ "Black" includes both those listed as "black" and Indian." "Indians" totaled 148 in 1730, 68 in 1748 and 46 in 1774 (there are no numbers for Indians in 1755).

Table 2-1, Pennsylvania Slave Imports, 1720- 1783.¹⁷

<u>Year</u>	<u>Africa</u>	<u>West Indies</u>	<u>Coastal North America</u>	<u>Un- known</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
1720	0	0	0	2	0	2
1721	0	0	0	5	0	5
1722	0	0	0	0	0	0
1723	0	0	1	10	0	11
1724	0	0	0	4	0	4
1725	0	0	0	5	0	5
1726	0	0	5	6	0	11
1727	0	9	0	11	0	20
1728	0	0	0	10	0	10
1729	0	22	0	24	0	46
1730	0	18	0	10	0	28
1731	0	15	0	11	0	26
1732	0	26	0	8	0	34
1733	0	3	0	21	0	24
1734	0	32	0	16	0	48
1735	0	2	0	7	0	9
1736	0	8	25	9	0	42
1737	0	12	40	9	0	61
1738	0	14	68	14	0	96
1739	0	11	18	16	0	45
1740	0	28	6	12	0	46
1741	0	40	0	0	0	40
1742	0	7	0	33	0	40
1743	0	12	0	1	0	13
1744	0	6	0	11	0	17
1745	0	0	2	9	0	11
1746	0	0	0	0	0	0
1747	4	5	0	7	0	16
1748	0	0	0	5	0	5
1749	0	0	22	0	0	22
1750	0	0	7	0	0	7
1751	0	14	27	8	0	41
1752	0	14	8	0	0	22
1753	0	7	8	0	0	15
1754	0	0	23	0	0	23
1755	0	9	0	0	0	9
1756	0	6	0	0	0	6
1757	57	6	4	0	0	67
1758	0	14	2	0	0	16
1759	61	8	30	0	0	99
1760	74	20	10	0	0	104

¹⁷ Slave sale advertisements reviewed from *Pennsylvania Gazette*, *Pennsylvania Chronicle and Universal Advertiser*, *Pennsylvania Packet or General Advertiser*, *American Mercury*; *TASD*; and Donald S. Wax, "Negro Imports Into Pennsylvania, 1720-1766, *Pennsylvania History*, 32, 3 (July 1965), 254-287.

1761	253	3	26	0	3	290
1762	147	7	12	0	0	166
1763	110	11	5	0	0	126
1764	337	12	0	0	0	349
1765	0	70	23	0	0	93
1766	120	1	3	0	0	124
1767	0	0	0	0	0	0
1768	0	0	0	0	0	0
1769	0	0	0	0	0	0
1770	0	0	0	0	0	0
1771	0	0	0	0	0	0
1773	0	0	0	0	0	0
1774	0	0	0	0	0	0
1775	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS:	1,163	472	170	486	3	2,294

Table 2-2, New York Slave Imports, 1720- 1783.¹⁸

<u>Year</u>	<u>Africa</u>	<u>West Indies</u>	<u>Coastal North America</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
1715	38	15	0	0	38
1716	43	28	9	0	80
1717	266	55+	0	0	320
1718	65	446	1	0	511
1719	0	109	0	0	109
1720	0	61	11	0	72
1721	117	87	2	0	206
1722	0	97	0	0	97
1723	0	105	1	0	106
1724	0	52	8	4	64
1725	59	143	6	1	209
1726	0	146	33	0	179
1727	0	217	3	0	220
1728	0	127	3	0	130
1729	0	202	13	1	216
1730	0	157	8	0	165
1731	369	150	2	1	522
1732	130	141	1	0	272
1733	133	155	1	0	289
1734	0	55	1	0	56
1735	0	123	2	0	125
1736	0	13	0	0	13
1738	100	62	43	1	206
1739	274	130	4	0	408
1740	64	61	0	0	125
1741	0	36	7	0	43
1742	0	12	2	1	15
1743	0	7	0	0	7
1744	137	0	0	0	137
1745	0	0	0	0	0
1746	0	0	0	0	0
1747	0	0	0	0	0
1748	0	9	0	0	9
1749	137	0	0	0	137
1750	548	0	0	0	548
1751	985	4	0	0	989

Table 2-1

¹⁸ Naval Office Records, TNA CO 5/1222-1228; *New-York Gazette or Weekly Post-Boy*, 1748-1773; *New-York Mercury*, 1752-1767; *Rivington's New York Gzzetteer*, 1773-1774; *TASD*; David Eltis email messages to author, Feb. 22 and Mar. 9, 2006.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Africa</u>	<u>West Indies</u>	<u>Coastal North America</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>Total</u>
1754	232	0	0	0	232
1755	0	0	0	0	0
1756	0	0	0	0	0
1757	0	0	0	0	0
1758	274	0	0	0	274
1759	268	0	0	0	268
1760	650	0	0	0	650
1761	239	0	0	0	239
1762	61	0	0	0	61
1763	240	9	0	0	249
1764	0	30	0	0	30
1765	300	0	0	0	300
1766	0	0	0	0	0
1767	137	0	0	0	137
1768	376	0	0	0	376
1769	274	0	0	0	274
1770	578	0	0	0	578
1771	0	0	0	0	0
1773	137	0	0	0	137
1774	0	0	0	0	0
1775	137	0	0	0	137
TOTALS:	7,647	3,127	166	18	10,958

Table 3-1, Age and Gender of Slaves Offered for Sale (Not in Parcels) in Pennsylvania Newspapers, 1720-1783.

	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>		<u>Unknown</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
0-15	243	26.64	130	18.39	81	56.25	454	25.75
16-20	201	22.04	150	21.22	0		351	19.91
21-34	125	13.71	116	16.41	0		241	13.67
Over 35	17	1.86	6	0.85	0		23	1.30
Adult	286	31.36	260	36.78	0		546	30.97
Unknown	40	4.39	45	6.36	63	43.75	158	8.96
Total	912	51.73	707	40.14	144		1,763	

Note: *American Weekly Mercury; Pennsylvania Chronicle & Universal Advertiser; Pennsylvania Evening Post; Pennsylvania Gazette; Pennsylvania Ledger; Pennsylvania Journal; Pennsylvania Packet.* Any individual referred to as a “boy” or “girl” was deemed to be fifteen or younger.

Table 3-2, Race of Slaves Offered for Sale (Not in Parcels) in Pennsylvania Newspapers, 1720-1783.

	<u>N</u>	<u>% of 1763 slaves</u>
Negro	1688	95.75%
Mulatto	69	3.91%
Indian	5	0.28%
None	1	0.06%

Table 3-3, Physical Characteristics of Slaves in Pennsylvania Slave-for-Sale Advertisements, 1720-1783.

	<u>N</u>	<u>% of 1763 slaves</u>
None Listed:	1,305	74.02%
Strong:	115	6.52%
Healthy:	178	9.07%
Small-pox:	141	8.00%
Stout:	106	6.01%
Measles:	56	3.18%
Hearty:	30	1.70%
Breeder:	8	0.45%
Spry/Nimble:	5	0.28%
Handsome:	4	0.22%

Table 3-4, Personal Characteristics of Slaves in Pennsylvania Slave-for-Sale Advertisements, 1720-1783.

	<u>N</u>	<u>% of 1763 slaves</u>
None Listed:	722	40.95%
Likely:	968	35.34%
No Fault:	211	11.97%
Honest:	159	9.02%
Handy:	157	8.90%
Sober:	98	5.56%
Good:	63	3.57%
Lusty:	32	1.82%
Marital Status:	22	1.25%
Smart:	22	1.15%
Active:	21	1.19%
Industrious:	11	0.62%
Good-tempered:	10	0.57%
Clever:	8	0.45%
Trusty:	3	0.17%
Fine:	2	0.11%

Table 3-5, Occupations of Slaves in Pennsylvania Slave-for-Sale Advertisements, 1720-1783.

	N	% of 1763 slaves
None Listed:	811	46.00%
Domestics/House Servants:	638	23.29%
Town or Country:	203	11.51%
Cook:	132	7.49%
Dairy/Farmer:	116	6.58%
Horse Care:	28	1.58%
Country Work:	27	1.53%
Mariners:	24	1.36%
Baker:	23	1.30%
Forge/Iron Worker:	22	1.24%
Cooper:	15	0.85%
Blacksmith:	12	0.68%
Chimney-sweep:	11	0.62%
Sail-maker:	9	0.51%
Carpenters:	8	0.45%
Mason:	7	0.40%
Husbandry:	7	0.40%
Miller:	6	0.34%
Barber/Dress Hair:	5	0.27%
Sawyer:	5	0.27%
Rope-maker:	4	0.15%
Shoemaker	4	0.23%
Taylor:	4	0.23%
Ship Carpenters:	3	0.17%
Tallow Chandler:	3	0.17%
Tanner:	3	0.17%
Bricklayer:	2	0.11%
Butcher:	2	0.11%
Candle-maker:	2	0.11%
Chocolate-maker:	2	0.11%
Ship-caulker:	2	0.11%
Tobacco Cutting:	2	0.11%
Painter	1	0.06%

Table 3-6, Months of Pennsylvania Slave-for-Sale Advertisements, 1720-1783.

	<u>TOTAL:</u>
January	93
February	74
March	109
April	110
May	87
June	89
July	112
August	129
September	120
October	105
November	97
December	98
Total:	1,223

Sources: See Table 3-1.

Table 3-7, Years of Pennsylvania Slave-for-Sale Advertisements, 1720-1783.

1720	3	1752	2
1721	8	1753	5
1722	2	1754	42
1723	13	1755	24
1724	18	1756	25
1725	10	1757	20
1726	7	1758	2
1727	13	1759	5
1728	14	1760	4
1729	19	1761	5
1730	16	1762	2
1731	15	1763	5
1732	29	1764	4
1733	26	1765	3
1734	15	1766	3
1735	16	1767	13
1736	10	1768	21
1737	21	1769	21
1738	26	1770	12
1739	18	1771	7
1740	19	1772	13
1741	25	1773	16
1742	25	1774	17
1743	30	1775	20
1744	22	1776	22
1745	19	1777	31
1746	19	1778	49
1747	33	1779	46
1748	31	1780	48
1749	41	1781	51
1750	4	1782	47
1751	2	1783	69
TOTAL:		1223	

Table 4-1, Age and Gender of Slaves Offered for Sale (Not in Parcels) in New York Newspapers, 1727-1783.

	Male		Female		Unknown		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0-15	384	31.37	265	20.18	142		791	28.88
16-20	228	18.63	299	22.77			527	19.25
21-34	208	16.99	288	21.93			496	18.11
Over 35	24	1.96	25	1.90			49	1.79
Adult	380	31.05	436	33.21	60		876	31.98
Total	1,224	44.69	1,313	47.94	202		2,739	

Sources: *New-York Chronicle, New-York Evening Post, New-York Mercury, New-York Gazette, New-York Gazette and Northern Intelligencer, New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury, New-York Gazette, or Weekly Post-Boy, New-York Journal, New-York Mercury, New-York Weekly Journal, Rivington's New-York Gazetteer, Rivington's New-York Gazette, Rivington's New-York Loyal Gazette, Royal Gazette (New York).*

Table 4-2, Race of Slaves to be Purchased, New York Slave-for-Sale Advertisements, 1727-1783.

	N	% of 2739 slaves
Negro	2380	86.89%
Mulatto	39	1.42%
Mustee	1	0.03%
Black	1	0.03%
None	318	11.61%

Table 4-3, Physical Characteristics of Slaves in New York Slave-for-Sale Advertisements, 1727-1783.¹⁹

	N	% of 2739 slaves
None Listed:	1,953	71.30%
Strong:	169	6.17%
Healthy:	252	9.20%
Small-pox:	336	12.27%
Measles:	122	4.45%
Stout:	82	2.99%
Hearty:	23	0.84%
Handsome:	16	0.58%
Breeder:	10	0.37%
Spry/Nimble:	7	0.26%
Well-seasoned:	1	0.03%

¹⁹ Tables indicating slaves' personal, physical and occupational characteristics will not total 100% as some advertisements indicate several such characteristics for individual slaves.

Table 4-4, Personal Characteristics of Slaves in New York Slave-for-Sale Advertisements, 1727-1783.

	N	% of 2739 slaves
None Listed:	987	36.04%
Likely:	968	35.34%
No Fault:	381	13.91%
Honest:	201	7.34%
Handy:	198	7.23%
Sober:	119	4.34%
Good:	95	3.47%
Lusty:	38	1.39%
Marital Status:	35	1.28%
Smart:	30	1.10%
Active:	26	0.95%
Industrious:	15	0.55%
Good-tempered:	13	0.47%
Clever:	10	0.37%
Trusty:	5	0.18%
Fine:	3	0.11%

Sources: See Table 4-1.

Table 4-5, Occupations of Slaves in Table 4-1, Age and Sex of New York Slave-for-Sale Advertisements, 1727-1783.

	N	% of 2739 slaves
None Listed:	1193	43.56%
Domestics/House Servants:	638	23.29%
Cook:	269	9.82%
Town or Country:	251	9.16%
Dairy/Farmer:	123	4.49%
Mariners:	56	2.04%
Horse Care:	36	1.31%
Country Work:	28	1.02%
Baker:	27	0.99%
Any business:	20	0.73%
Cooper:	16	0.58%
Barber/Dress Hair:	13	0.47%
Blacksmith:	10	0.36%
Chimney-sweep:	10	0.36%
Carpenters:	9	0.33%
Mason:	7	0.26%
Sail-maker:	7	0.26%
Shoemaker	7	0.26%
Miller:	5	0.18%
Tobacco Cutting:	5	0.18%
Taylor:	5	0.18%
Sawyer:	5	0.18%
Tin Men:	4	0.15%
Rope-maker:	4	0.15%
Distillery:	3	0.11%
Husbandry:	3	0.11%
Ship Carpenters:	3	0.11%
Tallow Chandler:	3	0.11%
Bolter:	2	0.07%
Bricklayer:	2	0.07%
Butcher:	2	0.07%
Candle-maker:	2	0.07%
Chocolate-maker:	2	0.07%
Grinding:	2	0.07%
Mining:	2	0.07%
Tanner:	2	0.07%
Ship-caulker:	2	0.07%
Handle a file:	1	0.03%
Painter	1	0.03%
Currier:	1	0.03%

Table 4-6, Months of All New York Slave-for-Sale Advertisements, 1727-1783.

January	160
February	149
March	162
April	209
May	166
June	145
July	154
August	149
September	154
October	179
November	130
December	118

Table 4-7, Years of All New York Slave-for-Sale Advertisements, 1727-1783.

1727	3	1755	10
1728	0	1756	13
1729	5	1757	35
1730	6	1758	49
1731	5	1759	74
1732	8	1760	85
1733	9	1761	104
1734	12	1762	155
1735	4	1763	126
1736	12	1764	113
1737	7	1765	82
1738	9	1766	76
1739	10	1767	103
1740	3	1768	76
1741	0	1769	32
1742	4	1770	33
1743	4	1771	32
1744	0	1772	32
1745	2	1773	27
1746	2	1774	20
1747	13	1775	39
1748	26	1776	14
1749	36	1777	31
1750	21	1778	23
1751	21	1779	41
1752	32	1780	47
1753	7	1781	41
1754	11	1782	48
		1783	21

Table 5-1, Age and Gender of Slaves (Not in Parcels) Offered for Sale in Rhode Island Newspapers, 1727-1783.

	Male		Female		Unknown	TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	N	%
0-15	55	40.44	35	31.82	9	99	37.64
16-20	19	13.97	14	12.72		33	12.55
21-34	21	15.44	25	22.72		46	17.49
Over 35	1	0.74	3	2.72		4	1.52
Adult	40		33	30.00	8	81	30.80
Total	136		110		17	263	

Sources: *Newport Mercury*, *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, and *Rhode Island Gazette*.

Table 5-2, Race of Slaves to be Purchased (Not in Parcels), Rhode Island Slave-for-Sale Advertisements, 1727-1783.

	N	% of 263 slaves
Negro	259	98.48
Mulatto	2	0.76
Mustee	2	0.76

Table 5-3, Physical Characteristics of Slaves in Rhode Island Slave-for-Sale Advertisements (Not in Parcels), 1727-1783.

	N	% of 263 slaves
None Listed:	202	76.81%
Healthy:	31	11.79%
Strong:	21	7.98%
Small-pox:	7	2.66%
Stout:	4	1.52%
Spry/Sprightly:	4	1.52%
Well-set:	1	3.80%

Table 5-4, Personal Characteristics of Slaves in Rhode Island Slave-for-Sale Advertisements (Not in Parcels), 1727-1783.

	N	%
Likely:	128	48.67%
None Listed:	91	34.60%
No Fault:	30	11.41%
Active:	9	3.42%
Honest:	6	2.28%
Lusty:	5	1.90%
Good-		
Tempered:	4	1.52%
“Breeder”:	4	1.52%
Useful:	2	0.76%
Handy:	1	0.38%

Table 5-5, Occupations of Slaves in Rhode Island Slave-for-Sale Advertisements (Not in Parcels), 1727-1783.

	N	% of 263 slaves
None Listed:	200	76.05%
Domestic &		
House Servants:	25	9.51%
Farmer:	17	6.56%
Cook:	4	1.52%
Rope-making:	4	1.52%
Blacksmith:	3	1.14%
Horse Care:	2	0.76%%
Barber/		
Hair Dressing:	2	0.76%
Seamen:	1	0.38%
Sail-maker:	1	0.38%
Cart Driver:	1	0.38%
Painter:	1	0.38%
Husbandry:	1	0.38%
6Hatter:	1	0.38%

Table 5-6, Months of Rhode Island Slave-for-Sale Advertisements (Not for Parcels), 1727-1783.

January	20
February	18
March	19
April	24
May	16
June	16
July	15
August	18
September	15
October	21
November	19
December	18
Total:	218

Table 5-7, Years of All Rhode Island Slave-for-Sale Advertisements (Not in Parcels), 1727-1783.

1720	1	1758	5
1759	6	1760	7
1761	3	1762	6
1763	15	1764	17
1765	14	1766	12
1767	17	1768	13
1769	10	1770	12
1771	11	1772	9
1773	12	1774	12
1775	5	1776	1
1777	3	1778	2
1779	3	1780	5
1781	10	1782	5
1783	2		

Table 6-1, Age and Gender of Slaves Offered for Sale (Not in Parcels) in Pennsylvania, New York & Rhode Island Newspapers, 1727-1783.

	Male		Female		Unknown		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0-15	682	30.02	430	20.19	232	63.91	1,344	28.21
16-20	448	19.72	463	21.74	0		911	19.11
21-34	354	15.58	429	20.14	0		783	16.43
Over 35	42	1.85	34	1.60	0		76	1.59
Adult	706	31.07	729	34.23	8	2.20	1,423	29.86
Unknown	40	1.76	45	2.11	123	3.39	208	4.37
Total	2,272		2,130		363		4,765	

Sources: See Tables 4-1, 5-1 & 6-1.

Table 6-2, Race of Slaves Offered for Sale in Pennsylvania, New York & Rhode Island Newspapers (Not in Parcels), 1727-1783.

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Negro	4,327	90.81
Mulatto	110	2.31
Indian	5	0.01
Mustee	3	0.01
Black	1	0.002
No Race Indicated	319	6.69
Total:	4,765	

Table 6-3, Physical Characteristics of Slaves Offered for Sale in Pennsylvania, New York & Rhode Island Newspapers (Not in Parcels), 1727-1783.

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
None Listed:	3,460	72.61%
Small-pox:	484	10.16%
Healthy:	461	9.67%
Strong:	305	6.40%
Stout:	192	4.03%
Measles:	178	3.74%
Hearty	53	1.11%
Breeder:	22	0.46%
Handsome:	20	0.42%
Spry/Nimble:	12	0.25%
Well-seasoned:	1	0.02%

Table 6-4, Personal Characteristics of Slaves Offered for Sale in Pennsylvania, New York & Rhode Island Newspapers (Not in Parcels), 1727-1783.

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Likely:	2,046	42.94%
None Listed:	1,800	37.78%
No Fault:	612	12.84%
Honest:	366	7.68%
Handy:	355	7.45%
Sober:	217	4.55%
Lusty:	75	1.57%
Good:	63	1.32%
Marital Status:	57	1.20%
Smart:	52	1.09%
Active:	35	0.73%
Industrious:	26	0.55%
Good-tempered:	17	0.36%
Clever:	8	0.17%
Trusty:	3	0.06%
Fine:	2	0.04%

Table 6-5, Occupations of Slaves Offered for Sale in Pennsylvania, New York & Rhode Island Newspapers (Not in Parcels), 1727-1783.

	N	%
None Listed:	2,204	46.25%
Domestics:	1,301	27.30%
Cook:	405	8.50%
Farmer:	256	5.37%
Any business:	223	4.68%
Mariners:	81	1.70%
Horse Care:	66	1.39%
Country Work:	55	1.15%
Baker:	50	1.05%
Cooper:	31	0.65%
Blacksmith:	25	0.52%
Forge/Iron workers:	22	0.46%
Chimney-sweep:	21	0.44%
Barber:	20	0.42%
Carpenters:	17	0.36%
Sail-maker:	17	0.36%
Mason:	14	0.29%
Husbandry:	11	0.29%
Miller:	11	0.23%
Sawyer:	11	0.23%
Shoemaker	11	0.23%
Taylor:	9	0.18%
Rope-maker:	8	0.17%
Tobacco Cutting:	7	0.15%
Ship Carpenters:	6	0.13%
Tallow Chandler:	6	0.13%
Bricklayer:	4	0.08%
Butcher:	4	0.08%
Candle-maker:	4	0.08%
Chocolate-maker:	4	0.08%
Ship-caulker:	4	0.08%
Tin Men:	4	0.08%
Distillery:	3	0.06%
Painter	3	0.06%
Tanner:	3	0.06%
Bolter:	2	0.04%
Grinding:	2	0.04%
Mining:	2	0.04%
Handle a file:	1	0.02%
Currier:	1	0.02%
Hatter	1	0.02%
Cart Driver:	1	0.02%

Table 6-6, Months of Pennsylvania, New York & Rhode Island Slave-for-Sale Advertisements (Not in Parcels), 1727-1783.

	<u>TOTAL:</u>
January	273
February	241
March	230
April	343
May	264
June	250
July	281
August	296
September	289
October	305
November	246
December	234
Total:	3,252

Sources: See Tables 4-1, 5-1 & 6-1.

**Table 6-7, Years of Pennsylvania, New York & Rhode Island Slave-for-Sale
Advertisements (Not in Parcels), 1720-1783.**

1720	1	1755	10
1727	3	1756	13
1728	14	1757	35
1729	5	1758	54
1730	6	1759	80
1731	5	1760	92
1732	8	1761	107
1733	9	1762	161
1734	12	1763	141
1735	4	1764	130
1736	12	1765	96
1737	7	1766	88
1738	9	1767	120
1739	10	1768	89
1740	3	1769	42
1741	0	1770	45
1742	4	1771	42
1743	4	1772	41
1744	0	1773	39
1745	2	1774	32
1746	2	1775	44
1747	13	1776	15
1748	26	1777	34
1749	36	1778	25
1750	21	1779	44
1751	21	1780	52
1752	31	1781	51
1753	7	1782	53
1754	11	1783	21

Table 7-1, Age & Gender of Fugitive Slaves Advertised in Pennsylvania Newspapers, 1727-178

	Male		Female		Unknown		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0-15	55	4.64	15	10.22	9	75	79	6.01
16-20	161	13.84	26	18.98	0	0	187	14.23
21-34	460	39.64	49	35.77	0	0	509	38.74
35 & older	139	11.95	12	8.76	0	0	151	11.49
Young	12	0.95	0	0	0	0	12	0.91
Adult	259	22.26	26	18.98	0	0	285	21.69
Unknown	78	6.71	10	7.30	3	25	91	6.93
Total:	1,164	88.65	137	10.43	12	0.84	1,314	100.0

Sources: See Table 3-1. Slaves referred to as “Children” are included as being 0-15 years of age.

Table 7-2, Race of Fugitive Slaves Advertised in Pennsylvania Newspapers, 1727-1783.

	N	% of 1314 slaves
Negro:	1,009	76.79%
Mulatto:	224	17.05%
Yellow/ish:	61	4.64%
Spanish Indian:	8	0.61%
Spanish Negro:	6	0.46%
Mustee:	5	0.38%
Spanish Mulatto:	2	0.15%
Black:	1	0.08%

Table 7-3, Physical Characteristics of Fugitive Slaves Advertised in Pennsylvania Newspapers, 1727-1783

	N	%
None Listed:	376	28.61%
Stout/well-fed:	300	22.83%
Small-pox:	118	8.98%
Scarred:	107	8.15%
Tall (5'10 or taller):	102	7.76%
Short/low stature:	93	7.08%
Fat/Chunky/Thick:	85	6.47%
Middle Stature:	84	6.39%
Strong:	46	3.50%
Large/Thick Lips:	35	2.66%
Lame/halt in walk:	32	2.43%
Bow legged:	30	2.28%
Bad/Lost Teeth:	28	2.13%
Large/flat Nose:	21	1.60%
Thin faced:	20	1.52%
Stoops:	17	1.29%
Wearing Iron Collar:	17	1.29%
Lost Finger/Toe/Limb:	16	1.22%
Knock-kneed:	16	1.22%
Well or straight-Limbed/upright:	14	1.06%
Whipped:	13	0.99%
Lumps:	13	0.99%
Eye Blemish/Red:	13	0.99%
Thin:	12	0.91%
Frost-bitten:	11	0.84%
Large feet:	11	0.84%
Round shouldered:	11	0.84%
Branded:	10	0.76%
Bald:	8	0.61%
Bushy Hair:	8	0.61%
Country marks:	7	0.53%
Teeth Filed:	6	0.46%
Been Shot:	5	0.38%
Blind:	5	0.38%
Pregnant:	4	0.30%
Healthy:	3	0.23%
Handsome:	3	0.23%
Proud/stately:	3	0.23%
Large breasts:	1	0.08%
Large hands:	1	0.08%
Meek:	1	0.08%

Table 7-4 Personal Characteristics of Fugitive Slaves Advertised in Pennsylvania Newspapers, 1727-1783.

	N	%
None Listed:	687	52.28%
Likely:	132	10.05%
Lusty:	79	6.01%
Plays a musical instrument:	67	5.10%
Active/brisk/lively:	59	4.49%
Fond of Liquor:	57	4.34%
Down/Grave Look:	54	4.11%
Reads/writes:	53	4.03%
Artful:	45	3.42%
Talkative:	44	3.35%
Stammers/lisp:	33	2.51%
Sly/cunning:	32	2.44%
Bold/saucy/outlandish:	27	2.05%
Smart/intelligent:	23	1.75%
Sensible:	19	1.45%
Handy:	16	1.22%
Smooth faced/complexion:	15	1.14%
Full faced:	13	0.99%
Marital Status:	12	0.91%
Villain:	12	0.91%
Pleasant countenance:	11	0.84%
Smooth/well tongued:	9	0.68%
Rouge:	8	0.61%
Subtle or crafty:	8	0.61%
Able:	7	0.53%
Smiling countenance:	7	0.53%
Swearer:	7	0.53%
Good-tempered:	4	0.30%
Nimble/spry:	4	0.30%
Addicted to stealing:	3	0.23%
Full of flattery:	3	0.23%
Modest:	3	0.23%
Fond of Gaming:	2	0.15%
Sober:	2	0.15%
Speaks quickly:	2	0.15%
Strange:	2	0.15%
Small Eyed:	2	0.15%
Small feet/ear:	2	0.15%
Subject to fits:	2	0.15%
Surly:	2	0.15%
Clever:	1	0.08%

Table 7-5 Occupations of Fugitive Slaves Advertised in Pennsylvania Newspapers, 1727-1783.

	N	%
None Listed:	926	70.47%
Mariner:	79	6.01%
Farmer:	75	5.71%
Domestic & House Servant:	48	3.65%
Carpenter:	30	2.28%
Iron/Forge Worker:	22	1.67%
Cooper:	18	1.37%
Shoemaker:	17	1.29%
Tanner/Skinner:	14	1.07%
Horse Care:	13	0.99%
Cook:	11	0.84%
Chimney-Sweep	8	0.61%
Sawyer:	8	0.61 %
Blacksmith:	7	0.53%
Barber/Dresses Hair:	6	0.46%
Mason:	6	0.46%
Preacher/Minister:	6	0.46%
Brick-maker	5	0.38%%
Butcher:	5	0.38%
Ship-Carpenter:	5	0.38%
Baker:	4	0.30%
Husbandry:	4	0.30%
Miller:	4	0.30%
Taylor:	4	0.30%
Weaver:	4	0.30%
Country work:	3	0.23%
Block-maker:	2	0.15%
Brush-maker:	2	0.15%
Hatter:	2	0.15%
Labourer:	2	0.15%
Painter:	2	0.15%
Rope-maker:	2	0.15%
Soldier:	2	0.15%
Basket-maker:	1	0.08%
Silversmith:	1	0.08%
Spoon-maker:	1	0.08%
Stone-cutter:	1	0.08%
Tallow-maker:	1	0.08%
Wheelwright:	1	0.08%

Table 7-6 Months of Pennsylvania Fugitive Advertisements, 1727-1783.

	<u>TOTAL:</u>
January	56
February	49
March	51
April	63
May	92
June	109
July	139
August	108
September	126
October	125
November	83
December	72
Total:	1,073

Table 7-7 Years of Pennsylvania Fugitive Advertisements, 1727-1783

1719	1	1720	4	1721	4
1722	7	1723	5	1724	4
1725	3	1726	4	1727	4
1728	3	1729	8	1730	9
1731	4	1732	0	1733	9
1734	5	1735	1	1736	6
1737	5	1738	8	1739	7
1740	8	1741	8	1742	3
1743	8	1744	9	1745	13
1746	11	1747	20	1748	20
1749	26	1750	4	1751	4
1752	0	1753	7	1754	8
1755	13	1756	18	1757	12
1758	5	1759	7	1760	13
1761	8	1762	18	1763	38
1764	22	1765	26	1766	22
1767	8	1768	8	1769	15
1770	28	1771	22	1772	22
1773	33	1774	23	1775	26
1776	45	1777	35	1778	77
1779	54	1780	49	1781	52
1782	50	1783	61		

Table 8-1, Age & Gender of Fugitive Slaves Advertised in New York Newspapers, 1727-1783

	Male		Female		Unknown		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0-15	137	10.54	29	14.59	5	100	171	11.47
16-20	186	14.31	31	16.67	0	0	217	14.55
21-34	438	33.69	52	27.96	0	0	490	32.86
35 & older	117	9.00	14	7.53	0	0	131	8.79
Young	9	0.69	1	0.54	0	0	8	0.53
Adult	277	21.31	16	8.60	0	0	293	19.65
Unknown	136	10.46	43	23.12	0	0	179	12.01
Total:	1300	87.19	186	12.47	5	0.33	1491	

Sources: See Table 4-1; and *Pretends to be Free*. Note: Child defined for ages 0-15.

Table 8-2, Race of Fugitive Slaves Advertised in New York Newspapers, 1727-1783.

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Negro	1142	76.59%
Mulatto	183	12.27%
Yellow	107	7.18%
Indian	17	1.14%
Mustee	16	1.07%
Black	10	0.67%
Spanish Indian	8	0.54%
Unknown	8	0.54%
Total:	1491	

Table 8-3 Physical Characteristics of Fugitive Slaves Advertised in New York Newspapers, 1727-1783.

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Mid-stature:	473	31.72%
None Listed:	377	25.29%
Stout or		
Well-set:	220	14.76%
Tall:	180	12.07%
Small-pox:	123	8.25%
Likely:	111	7.44%
Strong:	16	1.07%
Healthy:	1	0.06%
Measles:	0	0%
Good-tempered:	0	0%

Table 8-4 Personal Characteristics of Fugitive Slaves Advertised in New York Newspapers, 1727-1783.

	N	%
None Listed:	721	48.36%
Likely:	163	10.93%
Lusty:	93	6.23%
Fond of Liquor:	77	5.16%
Plays a musical instrument:	74	4.96%
Active/brisk/lively:	59	3.96%
Down Look:	48	3.22%
Talkative:	40	2.68%
Reads/writes:	31	2.08%
Stammers/lisp:	28	1.88%
Sensible:	23	1.54%
Artful:	22	1.48%
Sly/cunning:	22	1.48%
Smart/intelligent:	18	1.21%
Handy:	16	1.22%
Marital Status:	14	0.94%
Villain:	12	0.80%
Pleasant countenance:	11	0.74%
Smooth/well tongued:	7	0.47%
Rouge:	8	0.54%
Crafty:	8	0.54%
Good-tempered:	4	0.27%
Nimble/spry:	4	0.27%
Sober:	4	0.27%
Fond of Gaming:	2	0.13%

Table 8-5 Occupations of Fugitive Slaves Advertised in New York Newspapers, 1727-1783.

	N	%
None Listed:	1374	91.15%
Domestics:	6	%
Cook:	6	%
Farmer:	18	%
Horse Care:	0	%
Ship Carpenters:	3	%
Carpenters:	8	%
Blacksmith:	7	%
Valet:	0	%
Waiter:	2	%
Barber:	4	%
Carpenters:	8	%
Shoemaker	6	%

Table 8-6, Months of New York Fugitive Advertisement, 1727-1783.

January	82
February	51
March	59
April	54
May	143
June	136
July	161
August	135
September	150
October	136
November	116
December	86

Table 8-7, Years of New York Fugitive Advertisement, 1727-1783

1721:	1	1723:	1
1727:	2	1728:	1
1729:	2	1730:	1
1733:	6	1734:	5
1735:	5	1736:	3
1737:	4	1738:	4
1740:	5	1741:	2
1742:	1	1743:	1
1744:	4	1745:	4
1746:	12	1747:	12
1748:	15	1749:	12
1750:	15	1751:	15
1752:	10	1753:	9
1754:	8	1755:	14
1756:	26	1757:	33
1758:	25	1759:	40
1760:	40	1761:	43
1762:	53	1763:	66
1764:	53	1765:	38
1766:	38	1767:	31
1768:	25	1769:	31
1770:	33	1771:	31
1772:	22	1773:	30
1774:	24	1775:	33
1776:	39	1777:	43
1778:	51	1779:	42
1780:	70	1781:	62
1782:	56	1783:	57

Table 9-1, Age & Gender of Fugitive Slaves Advertised in Rhode Island Newspapers, 1727-1783.

	Male N	Female N	Unknown N	TOTAL N	%
0-15	16	0	0	16	8.0
16-20	35	1	0	36	17.9
21-34	76	8	0	84	41.8
35 & older	18	1	0	19	9.5
Young	0	0	0	0	0.0
Adult	13	1	0	13	6.5
Unknown	31	1	0	32	15.9
Total:	189	12	0	201	

Sources: See Table 5-1. Note: Slaves referred to as “Children” are included as being 0-15 years of age.

Table 9-2 Race of Fugitive Slaves Advertised in Rhode Island Advertisements, 1754-1783.

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Negro	129	64.2
Mulatto	39	19.4
Mustee	17	8.5
Indian	16	8.0

Table 9-3, Physical Characteristics of Fugitive Slaves Advertised in Rhode Island Newspapers, 1727-1783.

	N	% of 201 slaves
Scarred:	40	19.9%
Well-set:	39	19.4%
Thin/Slim/ Slender/ Middling:	30	14.9%
None Listed:	24	11.9%
5' 10" or Taller:	21	10.4%
Small-Pox: Filed Teeth Or Country Marks:	9	4.5%
Stout:	8	4.0%
Bushy Hair: Defective Teeth:	6	3.0%
Limping:	4	2.0%
Lusty:	3	1.5%
Strong:	3	1.5%
	2	1.0%

Table 9-4, Personal Characteristics of Fugitive Slaves Advertised in Rhode Island Newspapers, 1727-1783.

	N	% of 201 Ads
None Listed:	183	91%
Strong Drinker:	5	2.5%
Subtle:	4	2.0%
Rogue:	4	2.0%
Talkative:	4	2.0%
Clear- Speaker:	3	1.5%
Smart:	3	1.5%
Bold:	2	1%
Compliant:	1	0.5%
Likely:	1	0.5%
Polite:	1	0.5%
Lusty: Talks Little:	1	0.5%
Well- Behaved:	1	0.5%

Table 9-5, Occupations of Fugitive Slaves Advertised in Rhode Island Newspapers, 1727-1783.

	N	% of 201 slaves
None Listed:	169	84.1%
Mariners:	15	7.5%
Blacksmith:	3	1.5%
Farmer:	3	1.5%
Painter:	2	1.0%
Domestic & House Servants:	2	1.0%
Coopers:	2	1.0%
Ropemaker:	2	1.0%
Clothier:	1	0.5%
Leather Dressers:	1	0.5%
Shoemaker:	1	0.5%
Barber:	1	0.5%
Doctor:	1	0.5%

Table 9-6, Months of Rhode Island Fugitive Advertisements, 1727-1783.

	<u>TOTAL:</u>
January	6
February	6
March	6
April	16
May	12
June	15
July	9
August	17
September	15
October	22
November	16
December	10
Total:	150

Table 9-7, Years of Rhode Island Fugitive Advertisements, 1727-1783

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Cumulative Total</u>
1755	2	2
1758	1	3
1759	5	8
1760	5	13
1761	0	13
1762	6	19
1763	12	31
1764	7	38
1765	9	47
1766	4	51
1767	6	57
1768	13	70
1769	9	79
1770	9	88
1771	9	97
1772	9	106
1773	10	116
1774	15	131
1775	18	149
1776	7	156
1777	9	165
1778	2	167
1779	7	174
1780	3	177
1781	4	181
1782	15	196
1783	5	201

Table 10-1, Age & Gender of Fugitive Slaves Advertised in Pennsylvania, New York and Rhode Island Newspapers, 1720-1783

	Male		Female		Unknown		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0-15	208	4.17	34	9.60	14	82.35	154	5.12
16-20	382	14.94	63	17.80	0	0	457	15.02
21-34	974	37.37	133	37.57	0	0	1,118	37.19
35 & older	274	10.55	23	6.50	0	0	301	10.01
Young	21	0.76	0	0	0	0	20	0.66
Adult	549	21.81	82	23.16	0	0	657	21.86
Unknown	245	10.39	19	5.37	3	17.65	299	9.95
Total:	2,653	88.26	336	11.17	17	.57	3,006	100.0

Note: Slaves referred to as "Children" are included as being 0-15 years of age.

Table 10-2 Race of Fugitive Slaves Advertised in Pennsylvania, New York and Rhode Island Advertisements, 1727-1783.

	N	%
Negro	2286	76.04
Mulatto/Sp.		
Mulatto	448	14.90
Yellow(ish)	169	5.62
Indian/Sp.		
Indian	49	1.63
Mustee	38	1.26
Black	11	0.37
Unknown	8	0.27

Sources: See Table 5-1.

Table 10-3, Physical Characteristics of Fugitive Slaves Advertised in Pennsylvania, New York and Rhode Island Newspapers, 1720-1783

	N	%
None Listed:	789	26.24%
Middle Stature:	587	19.53%
Stout/well-made/well-fed:	528	17.56%
Tall (5'10 or taller):	303	10.08%
Small-pox:	250	8.32%
Scarred:	147	4.89%
Fat/Chunky/Thick:	124	4.13%

Table 10-4 Personal Characteristics of Fugitive Slaves Advertised in Philadelphia, New York and Newport Newspapers, 1720-1783.

	N	%
None Listed:	1591	52.93%
Likely:	296	9.85%
Lusty:	173	5.76%
Plays a musical instrument:	141	4.68%
Fond of Liquor:	139	4.62%
Active/brisk/lively:	118	3.93%
Down Look:	102	3.39%
Talkative:	88	2.93%
Reads/writes:	84	2.79%
Artful:	67	2.23%
Stammers/lisp/ Thick speech:	61	2.03%
Sly/cunning:	54	1.80%
Smart/intelligent:	44	1.46%
Sensible:	42	1.39%
Handy:	32	1.06%
Bold/saucy/ Impudent/outlandish:	27	0.90%
Marital Status:	26	0.86%
Villain:	24	0.80%
Pleasant countenance:	22	0.73%

Table 10-5 Occupations of Fugitive Slaves Advertised in Pennsylvania, New York and Rhode Island Newspapers, 1720-1783.

	N	%
None Listed:	2469	82.14%
Mariner:	112	3.73%
Farmer:	96	3.19%
Domestic & House Servant:	56	1.86%
Carpenter:	38	1.26%
Shoemaker:	24	0.80%
Iron/Forge Worker:	22	0.73%
Cooper:	20	0.66%
Cook:	17	0.57%
Tanner/Skinner:	14	0.47%
Horse Care:	13	0.43%
Barber/Dresses Hair:	11	0.37%
Blacksmith:	11	0.37%
Chimney-Sweep	8	0.27%
Sawyer:	8	0.27%
Ship-Carpenter:	8	0.27%

Table 10-6, Months Fugitive Slaves Advertised in Pennsylvania, New York & Rhode Island Newspapers, 1727-1783.

January	144
February	106
March	116
April	133
May	247
June	260
July	309
August	260
September	291
October	283
November	215
December	168
Total:	2,532

Table 10-7, Years of Pennsylvania, New York and Rhode Island Fugitive Advertisement, 1716-1783

1716	1	1719	1
1720	4	1721	5
1722	7	1723	6
1724	4	1725	3
1726	4	1727	6
1728	4	1729	10
1730	12	1731	4
1732	1	1733	15
1734	10	1735	4
1736	9	1737	9
1738	12	1739:	9
1740:	13	1741:	10
1742:	4	1743:	9
1744:	13	1745:	17
1746:	23	1747:	32
1748:	35	1749:	38
1750:	19	1751:	11
1752:	10	1753:	16
1754:	16	1755:	29
1756:	44	1757:	45
1758:	31	1759:	52
1760:	58	1761:	51
1762:	77	1763:	116
1764:	82	1765:	73
1766:	64	1767:	45
1768:	46	1769:	55
1770:	70	1771:	62

Table 10-7, Continued:

1772:	53	1773:	73
1774:	62	1775:	77
1776:	91	1777:	87
1778:	130	1779:	103
1780:	122	1781:	122
1782:	121	1782:	123

TABLE 11-1: *Ages of Indian, Negro, Mulatto, Swarthy and Yellow Mariners, New London Crew Lists, 1803-1878.* Source: New London Crew Lists, 1801-1878, <http://www.mysticseaport.org/library/initiative/CrSelect.cfm> (accessed June 27, 2006).

<u>Mariner's Complexion</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Average Age</u>	<u>Number Mariners 40-75</u>	<u>% of Elderly</u>
Indian	175	21.98	4	2.29%
Negro	565	26.14	47	8.3%
Mulatto	312	24.22	9	2.88%
Swarthy	15	27.26	1	6.66%
Yellow	241	24.85	14	5.89%
TOTAL:	1,308	24.90	75	5.75%

TABLE 11-2: *Ages of Black, Coloured, Cooper, Indian, and Mulatto Seamen, Protection Certificate Register Database, 1803-1878.* Source: New England Protection Certificate Registers, <http://www.mysticseaport.org/library/initiative/CrSelect.cfm> (accessed July 4, 2006).

<u>Mariner's Complexion</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Average Age</u>	<u>Number Mariners 40-75</u>	<u>% of Elderly</u>
Indian	175	21.98	4	2.29%
Negro	565	26.14	47	8.3%
Mulatto	312	24.22	9	2.88%
Swarthy	15	27.26	1	6.66%
Yellow	241	24.85	14	5.89%
TOTAL:	1,561			

TABLE 12-1 *Age Distribution Among Scarborough's Mariners, 1748-49*

Source: CUST 91/111, TNA

Age Group	N	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
10-19	152	14.5%	14.5%
20-29	518	49.2%	63.7%
30-39	192	18.2%	81.9%
40-49	110	10.5%	92.4%
50-59	62	5.9%	98.3%
60-70	18	1.7%	100%
	<hr/> 1052	<hr/> 100	<hr/>

Elderly Mariners (40-70): 18.06%

Mean: 31.4

Range: 10 – 70

TABLE 12-2 *Age Distribution Among Scarborough's Common Seamen, 1748-49*

Source: CUST 91/111, TNA

Age Group	N	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
10-19	146	21.0%	21.0%
20-29	401	57.6%	78.6%
30-39	82	11.8%	90.4%
40-49	40	5.7%	96.1%
50-59	21	3.0%	99.1%
60-70	6	0.9%	100%
	<hr/> 696	<hr/> 100%	<hr/>

Elderly Mariners (40-70): 9.6%

Mean: 25.8

Range: 10 - 65

TABLE 12-3 *Age Distribution Among Scarborough's Cooks, 1748-49*

Source: CUST 91/111, TNA

Age Group	N	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
10-19	0	0%	0%
20-29	2	5%	5%
30-39	3	7.5%	12.5%
40-49	6	15%	27.5%
50-59	22	55%	82.5%
60-70	7	17.5%	100%
	<hr/> 40	<hr/> 100.0	<hr/>
Elderly Mariners (40-70):	87.5%		
Mean:	52.0		
Range:	20 - 70		

TABLE 12-4 *Age Distribution Among Scarborough's Captains and Officers, 1749*

Source: CUST 91/111, TNA

Age Group	N	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
10-19	6	1.9%	1.9%
20-29	116	36.7%	38.6%
30-39	107	33.9%	72.5%
40-49	64	20.2%	92.7%
50-59	19	6.0%	98.7%
60-70	4	1.3%	100%
	<hr/> 316	<hr/> 100	
Elderly Mariners (40-70):	27.5%		
Mean:	33.5		
Range:	17 - 60		

TABLE 12-5 *Age Distribution Among Scarborough's Mariners, 1759*

Source: CUST 91/112, TNA

Age Group	N	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
10-19	38	13.38%	13.38%
20-29	110	38.73%	52.11%
30-39	54	19.01%	71.12%
40-49	22	7.75%	78.87%
50-59	49	17.25%	96.12%
60-70	11	3.87%	100%
	<hr/> 284	<hr/> 100.0	<hr/>
Elderly Mariners (40-70):	28.9%		
Mean:	32.6		
Range:	12-67		

TABLE 12-6 *Age Distribution Among Scarborough's Common Seamen, 1759*

Source: CUST 91/112, TNA

Age Group	N	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
10-19	34	16.9%	16.9%
20-29	84	41.8%	58.7%
30-39	29	14.4%	73.1%
40-49	11	5.5%	78.6%
50-59	35	17.4%	96.0%
60-70	8	4.0%	100%
	<hr/> 201	<hr/> 100.0	<hr/>
Elderly Mariners (40-70):	26.87%		
Mean:	31.66		
Range:	12-67		

TABLE 12-7 *Age Distribution Among Scarborough's Cooks, 1759*

Source: CUST 91/112, TNA

Age Group	N	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
10-19	0	0%	0%
20-29	0	0%	0%
30-39	0	0%	0%
40-49	3	27.27%	27.27%
50-59	5	45.45%	72.72%
60-70	3	27.27%	100%
	<hr/> 11	<hr/> 100.0	<hr/>

Elderly Mariners (40-70): 100%

Mean: 54.09

Range: 45-63

TABLE 12-8 *Age Distribution Among Scarborough's Captains and Officers, 1759*

Source: CUST 91/112, TNA

Age Group	N	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
10-19	4	5.6%	5.6%
20-29	27	37.5%	43.1%
30-39	25	34.7%	77.8%
40-49	8	11.1%	88.9%
50-59	8	11.1%	100%
60-70	0		
	<hr/> 72	<hr/> 100.0	<hr/>

Elderly Mariners (40-70): 22.2%

Mean: 33.6

Range: 17 - 54

TABLE 12-9: *Average Age of Scarborough's Cooks, 1748-1759.*

1748-49:	52.9
1750:	52.4
1754:	52.0
1757:	50.4f
1759:	54.7
1748-1759:	52.9

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