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ABSTRACT

A Private War in the Caribbean: Nova Scotia Privateering 1793-1805
Dan Conlin Saint Mary's University, April 22, 1996

This thesis explores privateering from the British Colonies in North America in the period between 1793 and 1805. It asks why individuals and communities turned to privateering and how they were affected by the enterprise. Privateers were privately owned warships licensed and regulated by the state to keep a portion of their raiding. In this period, a network of small coastal communities in Nova Scotia centred on Liverpool and Shelburne responded to disastrous changes in the military and trade environment with a small fleet of a dozen private warships which captured about sixty enemy vessels. Existing literature on privateering, mostly popular and amateur work, has interpreted this activity as the product of either patriotism or greed. However a closer look indicates that economic necessity was the driving force. The wars with Revolutionary France led to the capture of many Nova Scotia merchant ships and mariners, followed by crushing insurance rates and American encroachment of the fisheries and lucrative West Indies trade. Privateering was a response to this economic warfare that replaced Nova Scotia losses with captured enemy ships and found work for idle shipyards and seamen. In a sense, it was an armed defence of the economic markets of the Caribbean against French and American incursion.

Their success founded several new fortunes and led the privateering port of Liverpool to gain greater economic and political autonomy from the provincial capital of Halifax. A price was paid in lives lost to battle, storms and naval press gangs along with social disruption such as rowdy drinking and a munitions explosion in Liverpool. Privateer seamen enjoyed unusual power in making sailing decisions and received higher wages than land, fishing or merchant service would have offered. This success was short lived. By 1805, enemy shipping moved to neutral American ships and court decisions turned against privateers. However privateering had carried Nova Scotia mariners and their communities through the bleak economic period at the turn of the century until the embargo acts stimulated trade in 1807. It also created a core of privateering families eager and able to exploit future privateering endeavours in the War of 1812.

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PREFACE

In the fall of 1800, strange rumours reached the busy wartime harbour of Halifax, Nova Scotia. The stories said that a privateer brig from the local settlement of Liverpool had defeated three Spanish warships in a battle off the coast of South America. It seemed so implausible, that most people dismissed it as one of the wild rumours of war, like the phoney stories of Napoleon's capture the previous year.¹

However on Oct. 16, rumour became reality when 80 men of the brig *Rover* returned to Liverpool in company with a much larger Spanish schooner they had captured. Cornered by the Spanish provincial navy schooner and two large gunboats, the *Rover* had driven off the gunboats and then taken the schooner in a bold act of seamanship that cost over 50 Spanish lives, but not a single Nova Scotian death.² It was a remarkable victory, small in terms of the great fleet actions of the war, but large in its skill and pluck. The details of the battle were published in England where even the influential *Naval Chronicle* heaped praise on the achievements of the mariners from the "little villages" of Nova Scotia.³

The activities of these Nova Scotian privateers is the subject of this thesis which explores privateering activity based in the Atlantic colonies of British North America in the Wars with Revolutionary France and Napoleon from 1793 to 1805. I have several aims: first to study a period of privateering that has received little study, and beyond that to explore links between the social background of privateer mariners and their

¹*Diary of Simeon Perkins*, Oct. 27, 1800, Vol. IV, (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1948) p. 261. False rumours of Napoleon's capture reached Liverpool on several occasions: Nov. 9, 1798, IV, p. 132; & Sept. 20, 1799, IV, p. 190.

²Details of the *Rover's* arrival were described by Simeon Perkins, the Liverpool merchant and diarist on Oct. 16, 1800, IV, p. 258-259. Detailed testimony of the battle and heavy Spanish losses was supplied and survives in the interrogation of Spanish prisoners by the Vice Admiralty Court. National Archives RG 8 IV Vol. 39.

³*Naval Chronicle* Vol. 5 (Feb 1801), p. 176.

communities with the large economic and military developments that led to privateering. Privateers based in Nova Scotia are the focus of this study, but the activities of French privateers and the growth of American shipping are also considered.

The world of private ships of war is an exotic and often misunderstood subject for a modern observer. Privateers were privately-owned warships, licensed and regulated by the state to attack enemy shipping and keep a share of what they captured. Private warships were the backbone of navies for centuries until the evolution of specialized warships and line-of-battle tactics led to professional naval officers and government fleets. Even as state navies grew in power, privateers assumed a crucial role in economic warfare and remained an essential option to weak naval powers and isolated colonies. The last hurrah of privateering came in the Napoleonic Wars and the practice was generally outlawed by the Declaration of Paris in 1856.

The first chapter looks at the historiography of privateering, its established direction and areas of neglect. The second chapter will chart the cause and chronology of the rise and fall of privateering in this period. The third chapter will examine the nature and significance of the military and business side of privateering. The fourth chapter will look at the social dimensions of privateering in terms of the background, relationships and consequences of privateering on individuals and community. A final chapter will draw some conclusions about the motivation and effects of privateering in this period. This study commences in 1793, with the declaration of war by France, and concludes in 1805, the year privateering halted before commencing again in 1812.

Privateering in this period provides a rewarding level of sources to explore. Regulated by a specialised court system, the Court of Vice Admiralty, privateer ships left a considerable paper trail. About 70 per cent of their case files have survived at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia and National Archives of Canada. Privateer owner, agent and town official Simeon Perkins of Liverpool, Nova Scotia, left a detailed day-to-day diary for this period describing the movements of privateering people, ships and money in

response to international events. A reasonable run of newspapers and colonial records survive at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia along with several collections of family papers illuminating different aspects of privateering

While this thesis considers privateering from all of the Atlantic Colonies of British North America, it was almost entirely an activity based in Nova Scotia where the Court of Vice Admiralty resided in Halifax ⁴ However the town of Liverpool, Nova Scotia, receives special attention. Liverpool was especially significant to privateering as it operated almost half the privateer ships of the period, but as a small town, it permits a study in some detail of the relationship between a community and a maritime endeavour

The word privateer was used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to refer to both the people who served on private warships, and the vessels themselves. I have restricted the use of the word alone to mean people. When indicating a privateer vessel, I incorporate the rig of ship, as in "privateer schooner", "privateer brig", "privateer ship" etc. (See Appendix for a guide to vessel rigs.) Ship has also been used as a generic term for vessel when the rig is unspecified

All wages are in provincial currency

⁴The very small numbers of prizes taken by vessels based in Quebec and New Brunswick were brought to Halifax for adjudication. Newfoundland had a Vice Admiralty Court but a search of its records shows no evidence of privateering activity. Public Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador GN 1, 2, 5 and MG 205.

Chapter One - The Historiography of Privateering

Canadian privateering was first noticed by antiquarian historians, at the turn of the century. Various writers at the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society, such as George Mullane and G.E.E. Nichols, sorted and compiled lists of privateers and their prizes in the various colonial wars in Nova Scotia as well as summarising some of the more interesting Vice Admiralty court cases. Their papers were presented to the society and published in their collections. While preliminary and antiquarian in their preoccupation with classification and description, they would remain the only scholarly examination of privateering for the next sixty years.⁵

In the 1920s and 30s privateering was discovered by a host of popular and romantic history writers, whose work still comprises the bulk of published material on the subject. Typically these works blended some documentary research with local legend, offering with little or no attribution and adding considerable imagined dialogue. The best known of these authors was Charles Henry Snider, a historical writer and yachtsman from Toronto. He led a wave of interest in privateering with a string of articles in Canadian Magazine followed by the most often cited book on Canadian privateering, Under the Red Jack (1928). His book is an anecdotal ship-by-ship look at the War of 1812 which emphasises the plucky heroism and patriotic motives of honourable privateer captains. Well researched through Vice Admiralty court records, Snider gives a good picture of the

⁵G.E.E. Nichols, "Notes on Nova Scotian Privateers", Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society, Vol. XIII (1908), pp. 111-152; George Mullane, "The Privateers of Nova Scotia, 1756-1783", Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society, Vol. XX, (1925), pp. 17-42.

tactics and careers of captains and owners. Writing in much the same style, although with less research and more license, was another Toronto writer, Joseph Schull.⁶

Two Nova Scotian authors, Archibald MacMechan and Thomas Raddall, also contributed to popular heroic scholarship of privateers in the same vein as Snider. They offer more observations of interest to social historians, although like Snider, seldom cite sources. MacMechan wrote about privateering in There Go the Ships in 1928, and two small books on privateering, The Log of a Halifax Privateer (1930) and Nova Scotia Privateers (1930). While concentrating on daring captains in the "wooden ships and iron men" tradition, MacMechan did offer some useful observations on living conditions and discipline. Thomas Raddall wrote two non fiction privateering books, The Saga of the Rover, (1935) and Rover: The Story of a Canadian Privateer (1958), and a novel based on privateering research, Pride's Fancy (1946). Privateering supplied him with dramatic heroes, but his work also contains perceptive observations of the people who joined privateer crews and the economic factors that attracted them.⁷

The popular romantic interpretation of privateers remains deeply ingrained and continues to crop up in recent publications such as John Leefe's The Atlantic Privateers (1978), a small book for schools in the tradition of Thomas Raddall. Romantic distortion was raised to heights Snider could never have conceived in the book Bandits and Privateers: Canada in the Age of Gunpowder (1988), by Edward Butts and Harold Horwood. They cast privateers as noble outlaws and good-guy pirates, where even cabin

⁶C. H. Snider, "Perkins Privateers," Canadian Magazine, Vol. 70, No. 4 (1928), p. 10-11, "Nova Scotians on the Spanish Main", Canadian Magazine, Vol. 70, No. 3 (Nov. 1928), p. 5-7; Under the Red Jack: Privateers of the Maritime Provinces in the War of 1812, (London: Martin Hopkinson & Co, 1928); Joseph Schull, "The Black Joke", Weekend Magazine Vol. 8, No. 30 (1958).

⁷Archibald MacMechan, The Log of a Halifax Privateer, 1920; Nova Scotia Privateers, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1930); There Go the Ships, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1928), pp. 57-100; Thomas Raddall, The Rover: The Story of a Canadian Privateer (Toronto: Macmillan, 1958). Pride's Fancy, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1946).

boys made £1000 Butts and Horwood give privateering single-handed credit for winning the War of 1812, "Privateers, mainly those sailing out of Nova Scotia, were the principal line of defence that prevented Upper and Lower Canada, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia from becoming American territories."⁸

It would be easy to dismiss these claims as sensational pop history, but this acute romanticism has left its mark on serious scholars. One example is an article on privateering in the leftist scholarly magazine *New Maritimes*, in 1990, which, once again restated Snider's stories of bold underdog captains and mixed them with the dubious Butts-Horwood claims of winning the War of 1812.⁹

A more significant effect of the romanticism surrounding privateers has been to discourage any serious inquiry. The tendency has been, given the exaggerated glories of privateering, to dismiss it completely as an insignificant side-show of no economic, social or military importance. In this sense, privateering received passing, but sadly inadequate commentary, in two important studies of Nova Scotian society. David Sutherland, in a study of the merchant classes of Halifax dismissed privateering as unprofitable and irrelevant. Elizabeth Mancke, in a comparison between the society of Liverpool, Nova Scotia, and Machias, Maine, also dismissed privateering as insignificant and unsuccessful.¹⁰ Both writers, unfortunately, make these claims with little examination of the large body of Vice Admiralty evidence to the contrary. Based largely on a cursory

⁸John Leefe, *The Atlantic Privateers: Their Story 1749-1815* (Halifax: Petheric Press, 1978); Horwood, Harold and Ed Butts, *Bandits and Privateers*, (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1987), p. 4, pp. 72-73. Horwood and Butts seem unaware of the existence of the Royal Navy.

⁹Gail MacMillan, "Duck Hunting with a Brass Band: New Brunswick's Nineteenth Century Privateers", *New Maritimes* (Sept/Oct 1990), pp. 16-18.

¹⁰David A. Sutherland, "The Merchants of Halifax, 1815-1850: A Commercial Class in Pursuit of Metropolitan Status", (PhD Diss. University of Toronto, 1975), pp. 173-176; Elizabeth Mancke, "Two Patterns of New England Transformation: Machias Maine and Liverpool Nova Scotia", 1760-1820 (PhD diss John Hopkins University, Baltimore Maryland, 1989).

look at an incomplete prize registry. Sutherland suggests privateer and navy captures had negligible economic impact on Halifax. Mancke holds that Liverpool withdrew from the American Revolution into passivity, overlooking the capture of over 20 prizes by Liverpool privateers in an aggressive burst of privateering near the end of the war.

This dismissal of privateering in these two studies was reflected in contributors to the recent survey book *The Atlantic Region to Confederation*. J.M. Bumsted saw privateers as mere "thugs and gangsters" of the American Revolution¹¹ where crews took all the risks but saw none of the profits, while David Sutherland restated his view of War of 1812 privateering as a self-serving extraction of profits that played no significant role in the war.¹²

So far the only exploration of the large amount of Vice Admiralty records on privateering has been two unpublished theses. James Henry Ross made a survey of Nova Scotian Revolutionary privateering in a 1957. He suggested that substantial privateering from Nova Scotia at the end of the war made up for the losses to American privateers but at the cost of imitating the aggressive and illegal behaviour of New England privateers. Faye Kert's 1986 MA thesis "The Fortunes of War: Privateering in Atlantic Canada in the War of 1812", was a far more detailed and scholarly examination of privateering based on systematic use of Vice Admiralty documents. Kert argued that the picture painted by Snider was romantic in tone but accurate in fact. Focusing mainly on the legal and business side, with a mostly chronological approach, she found that privateering was commercially lucrative, strategically useful and socially respectable.¹³ These two studies

¹¹J.M. Bumsted, "Resettlement and Rebellion", *The Atlantic Region to Confederation*, Ed: J. Reid and P. Buckner, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p 171

¹²David Sutherland, "War and Peace", *The Atlantic Region to Confederation*, 237-238

¹³ James Henry Ross, "Privateering in Nova Scotia During the American Revolutionary War 1775-1783", (B.A. Honours Thesis, Mount Allison University, 1957), Faye Kert, "The Fortunes of War: Privateering in Atlantic Canada in the War of 1812" (unpublished M.A. Thesis, Carleton University, 1986).

are useful summaries, but they are primarily descriptive and narrative, offering little analysis and not linking privateering to broader economic changes in trade or exploring any social dimensions to privateering. Kert has now shifted her work to explore the business links between privateering and navy prize captures in, as yet, uncompleted doctoral work for the University of Leiden.

Other aspects of the Canadian maritime experience have, in recent years been explored in new directions. The old captain and technology centred interpretation of nineteenth century shipping, best personified by Frederick William Wallace, have been revisited by authors such as Judith Fingard, Eric Sager and in collections such as Jack Tar in History.¹⁴ These studies have considered labour issues at sea, links between seafarer and their home communities, as well as the role of women and ethnic groups at sea. Privateering has not been considered from any of these viewpoints in Canada, although Kert makes a some interesting suggestions in these directions with her conclusion that aside from the profit seeking motivation, privateering was socially respectable and closely linked to family tradition.

Privateering in Canadian waters has only been given serious scholarly attention when it has involved American privateer raids against British settlements. This subject has been well studied. Olaf Jansen documented the serious damage to the Newfoundland fishery by American privateers. American privateering against Nova Scotia during the American Revolution was considered by John Brebner in The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia (1937) who used it to link the experience of Planters and Acadians and enforce a similar pattern of passive neutrality in the two cultures. John Faibisy explored this aspect in more detail with his thesis "Privateering and Piracy: The Effect of New England

¹⁴ Judith Fingard, Jack in Port: Sailortowns of Eastern Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982); Eric Sager, Seafaring Labour: The Merchant Marine of Atlantic Canada 1820-1914 (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989); Colin Howell and Richard Twomey, Jack Tar in History: Essays in the History of Maritime Life and Labour, (Fredricton, N.B.: Acadiensis Press, 1991.)

Raiding Upon Nova Scotia During the American Revolution" (1972) Mapping out a detailed list of captured Nova Scotian vessels and exploring the social and political impact of these attacks, he maintained that random and unregulated privateer raids turned sympathetic Nova Scotians against the revolution. While privateering by Nova Scotians is not the subject of either study, the almost complete lack of any reference, would lead anyone to assume that Nova Scotian mariners spent the war as passive victims ¹⁵

There have been some exceptions to the general dismissal of privateering, notably passing references in large economic studies. Harold Innis noted the relationship between privateering and the crisis the fishery experienced in the late 1790s ¹⁶ Julian Gwyn's economic studies of Nova Scotia have suggested privateering and prizetaking, while subordinate to army and navy spending, had significant impacts requiring further study, especially on the development of the shipping industry ¹⁷

In contrast to the lack of work on privateering from British North American colonies, French privateering has been somewhat better served by published scholars. French privateering from Port Royal has been well studied and published by Don Chard who saw it as formidable enough to provoke New England's invasion of Acadia. The important role of privateering at Louisbourg received considerable recognition in studies of the history of the fortress starting with J. S. McLennan's Louisbourg: From its Foundations to its Fall. He noted the importance of privateering to Louisbourg's

¹⁵ Olaf Janzen, "The Royal Navy and the Defence of Newfoundland During the American Revolution", Acadiensis, Vol. 14, No. 1 (1984), pp. 28-48; John Brebner, The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937); John Faibisy, "Privateering and Piracy: The Effect of New England Raiding Upon Nova Scotia During the American Revolution, 1775-1783", (Ph.D. Thesis University of Massachusetts, 1972.); "Yankee Raiders and the Republican Incursion Into Nova Scotia, 1776-1777", The Log of the Mystic Seaport, Vol. 20, No. 3 (October 1977), pp. 82-90.

¹⁶ Harold Innis, The Cod Fisheries, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1940), pp. 237-238.

¹⁷ Julian Gwyn, "Economic Fluctuations in Wartime Nova Scotia, 1755 -1815," in Making Adjustments: Change and Continuity in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759-1800, ed Margaret Conrad, (Fredericton, NB: Acadiensis Press, 1991), pp. 83-83, 87

offensive capacity. He also found unexpected notions of duty and service in privateers and the greedy pursuit of prize money in navy officers which taken together, blur somewhat the chasm usually assumed to exist between the two careers. This picture was further developed A. J. B. Johnston in The Summer of 1744: A Portrait of Life in 18th Century Louisbourg, who highlighted the importance of the see-saw privateering campaign against New England as well as the high level of encouragement and direct investment by Louisbourg's officials.¹⁸

Internationally, the historiography of privateering evolved along similar lines as the Canadian literature but has recently progressed well beyond the romantic, popular stage to offer a solid body of published scholarship on British, French and American privateering. Privateering was generally dismissed by naval historians of the nineteenth century. Horatio Nelson's quote, "The conduct of privateers is as far as I have seen, so near piracy that I only wonder any civilised nation can allow them."¹⁹ and the work of Royal Navy officer turned novelist, Frederick Marryat, expressed the navy vision of privateers as ruthless destructive pirates in his novel The Privateersman in 1846.

British naval historians such as Commodore C.N. Robinson and W. Laird Clowes²⁰ added weight to this interpretation. Late nineteenth century American naval historians and boosters such as Theodore Roosevelt and Alfred Thayer Mahan²¹ had a

¹⁸ Chard, Don. "The Impact of French Privateering on New England, 1689-1713", American Neptune, Vol. 35 (July 1975), p.153-165; J. S. McLennan, Louisbourg: From its Foundations to its Fall (Sydney: Fortress Press, 1969), p.109, 118-119, 121, 304, 307-308; A. J. B. Johnston, The Summer of 1744: A Portrait of Life in 18th Century Louisbourg, (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1983), pp. 33-40, 49-51, 84-85.

¹⁹ E. P. Statham, Privateers and Privateering (London: Hutchinson, 1910), p. 11.

²⁰ Charles Napier Robinson, The British Fleet: The Growth, Achievements and Duties of the Navy of the Empire, (London: George Bell & Sons, 1896); William Laird Clowes, The Royal Navy: A History From the Earliest Times to the Present, 7 vols. (London: Sampson, Low Marston & Co, 1901).

²¹ Theodore Roosevelt, The Naval War of 1812, 1882.; Alfred Thayer Mahan, The Influence of Seapower Upon History, (New York: Hill & Way, 1967) and The Influence of Seapower Upon the French Revolution and Empire, (London: St. Clair Shores, 1970).

slightly tougher case to make, given the heavy American involvement in privateering in the American Revolution and War of 1812. While acknowledging the huge toll of enemy shipping destroyed by privateers, they claimed privateering misused resources that should have been committed to building a big ship navy.

Their comments were in some ways justified, as privateering had little place in the big fleet actions so beloved of naval historians and there were no shortage of privateering rogues. However these naval writers all had vested interests in condemning privateering. Mahan and Roosevelt were not just historians, but actively promoting enormous expansion of the late nineteenth century American navy, and were anxious to dismiss any low-cost alternatives.

In reaction to the promotion of privateering as a dark and worthless enterprise, there arose a generation of romantic patriotic writers on both sides of the Atlantic. "I commence my plea, soliciting public approbation in favour of privateersmen,"²² wrote George Coggershall in the introduction of his *History of the American Privateers and Letters of Marque*. American writers that followed included Edgar Maclay and Howard Chapin. In the United Kingdom, E. P. Statham and Charles Kendall wrote under the romantic populist banner. They all chronicled the daring and courageous careers of privateer captains. "Rich mainly in narrative, often rather breathless, hagiographic and bewildering,"²³ is how the historian John S. Bromley characterised the popular romantic approach. While entertaining, these writings were marked, especially by earlier writers, with jingoistic exaggeration, and generally tended to see privateering as an isolated collection of sea stories.

Internationally, it was from Bromley that privateering received its first serious scholarly attention. He wrote a ground-breaking series of articles that explored many

²²George Coggershall, *History of the American Privateers and Letters of Marque*, (New York: Putnam, 1861), p. xliii.

²³John S. Bromley *Corsairs and Navies 1660-1760*, (Hambleton Press, 1987), p. 220.

untouched aspects of privateering. He took a wide variety of approaches: a class-based study of Caribbean privateers, business studies of privateer and naval agents, strategic military studies and biographical treatments. Unfortunately Bromley's work remained fragmented in articles and was never integrated in a single work²⁴

Marcus Rediker's Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea was probably the first book to integrate the privateering experience in relation to other forms of marine employment. Rediker found privateering was in the middle of a spectrum of nautical work ranging from the extremes of meagre pay, brutal discipline in the navy and merchant service to the equitable sharing of remarkably democratic pirate ships. Compared to merchant ships, privateering offered better food, easier duties and a rare chance to receive a share of the ship's earnings. However, compared to the freewheeling society of pirates, privateers were subject to harsh discipline from tyrannical captains and a very inequitable share of earnings.²⁵ Rediker has been criticised for ignoring the viewpoint of officers and neglecting the ties of recruitment, patronage and regional interest that sometimes bound crews and officers in common interest,²⁶ but his work is still the best existing integration of the privateering experience into the social and economic reality of the eighteenth century.

Privateering has most recently received serious and comprehensive attention from business and military scholars such as David Starkey in Britain and Carl Swanson in the United States and the work of Patrick Crowhurst on French privateers. They have developed tools such as crew/tonnage ratios to measure and classify privateer ships and their profitability. Starkey and Crowhurst have tapped the rich potential of the detailed

²⁴Bromley never united his work in a book. Not until after his death were his articles compiled in Corsairs and Navies.

²⁵Marcus Rediker. Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

²⁶Critics include: J.D. Davies, Gentlemen and Tarpaulins, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 68, 89n; NAM Rodger, The Wooden World, (London: Collins, 1986).

records of prize courts to explore the business side to privateering. Departing from the discourse of greed versus patriotism, Crowhurst sees French privateering as a product of economic necessity, as French merchants, deprived of overseas trade turned to raiding in compensation. However the social upheavals of the French Revolution had severely weakened the experience networks of privateer investors from past wars.²⁷

Starkey found that while privateering had limited effects on the whole of the British economy, it had significant effects on trade at certain critical junctures, performing a sort of counter-cyclical effect, alleviating the depression brought on by wartime disruption of trade and stimulating otherwise idle resources such as ships and seamen. Far from being an isolated activity of unsavoury elements, privateering was a fully integrated and complementary part of the shipping industry. It also performed valuable, yet hard-to-measure contributions to the overall war effort. British privateers in fact took almost as many enemy ships as the navy in the eighteenth century. The very broad scale of Starkey's work, involving almost 7000 privateer vessels, gives it a very "macro" focus, despite the sprinkling of personal quotations.²⁸

Swanson's study of American colonial privateering also has a broad canvas, involving over 800 captures. Like Starkey he found privateering involved the most prominent merchants and officials of the normal shipping world. However, he also found privateering had important political significance in colonial America, with the prospects of privateering being a driving factor in the clamour for war with Spain. Swanson was also forced by the lack of Admiralty records, to develop a newspaper database of privateer activities. His focus is primarily on cargoes and ships, not people and much of his work revolves around on-going debates on macro economic debates over

²⁷Patrick Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade: Privateering 1793-1805* (Aldershot, England: Scolar Press, 1989).

²⁸David Starkey, *British Privateering Enterprise in the Eighteenth Century* (Exeter Great Britain: University of Exeter Press, 1990).

mercantilism. Only incidental information, on matters such as recruitment and wage data, is offered to interest a social historian.²⁹

To sum up the thrust and neglect of current privateer scholarship which this thesis seeks to build upon, Canadian privateering historiography remains dominated by popular and romantic histories. Published scholarship has either ignored privateering or concentrated on enemy privateers in Nova Scotia waters. A small amount of unpublished work or has been limited to legal and economic studies of the American Revolution and War of 1812. Internationally there exists a recently growing body of economic and military studies on privateering, but outside of the pioneering work of Bromley and Rediker, little consideration of its social dimension.

This thesis will seek to apply the tools and findings that have emerged from Starkey and Swanson's studies of privateering such as their classification of privateer types and the relationship between privateering merchant trade and the navy. As well, it utilises some of the new perspectives demonstrated in *Jack Tar in History* to add a social dimension to privateering, focusing on the relationship between individuals and communities. As opposed to the large scale used by Swanson and Starkey, this study limits itself to a shorter period of time to study people, their ships and communities in detail.

Two closely related questions are posed: why were individuals and communities drawn to privateering in Nova Scotia from 1793 to 1805 and what effect did it have on them? In answering the first part of this question, I hope to move beyond the greed versus patriotism debate, which I find unproductive as it is based on simplistic stereotypes that add little understanding of the economic and military considerations of the eighteenth century. It will be necessary to consider military and economic events that shaped

²⁹Carl E. Swanson, *Predators and Prizes: Privateering and Imperial Warfare 1739-1748*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991).

privateering in this period to seek an answer. In answering the second part, the effect of privateering, it will be necessary to identify who were privateers, as the consequences of privateering cannot be measured by merely charting the careers of captains, a weakness in the bulk of previous historiography. I will consider both the effect of privateering on the individuals who participated, and on their communities.

Chapter Two - The Rise and Fall of Privateering in the Caribbean

This chapter explores the rise and fall of privateering based from Nova Scotia in the wars with France and Spain from 1793 to 1805. The inputs, number of ships commissioned, and outputs, the number and outcomes of captures, provide an overall measure³⁰, while the correspondence of the Governor John Wentworth and the diary of Simeon Perkins show the decision making behind the ventures. From this analysis, privateering clearly emerges as a response to a crisis in trade. This evolution showed distinct phases from year to year as privateering and trade in the West Indies tended to a yearly cycle with cruises ending in the spring and owners pausing during hurricane season to ponder results and weigh further investment.³¹

Prelude to Privateering: 1793-1795

On the evening of April 12, 1793, the mail ship *Queen Charlotte* arrived in Halifax with startling news that soon spread all over town: war with France had been declared in February. The next day, the Lieutenant Governor made it official in a proclamation of war. Almost half of the proclamation was an invitation to privateers.

His Majesty Subjects having this Notice may take care on the one hand, to prevent any Mischief which otherwise they might suffer from the French and on the other, may do their utmost in their several stations to

³⁰David Starkey has established this output-input model as a way of measuring the broad scale of privateering activity in *British Privateering Enterprise in the Eighteenth Century* (Exeter Great Britain: University of Exeter Press, 1990), p. 15.

³¹Letters to Richard Uniacke, Bartlet Bradford May 16, 28, 1799, *Diary of Simeon Perkins*, Vol. V, p. 463.

distress and Annoy them by making Capture of their Ships, and by destroying their Commerce, for which purpose his Majesty has been pleased to order Letters of Marque or Commissions of privateers to be granted in the usual manner³²

The "usual manner" that Wentworth referred to was well understood by Nova Scotian mariners whatever their "stations". Privateering based in Nova Scotia had a long history. French privateers had played important roles in the attack, defence and supply of Port Royal and Louisbourg. Halifax had fielded 18 privateers in the Seven Years War. During the American Revolution, Halifax issued 77 letters of marque.³³

Privateering had evolved by 1793 an elaborate legal system to regulate its activities and distribute its proceeds. A group of interested merchants posted a bond of £1500, pledging themselves worth that amount should there be any violation of the King's instructions and regulations for private ships of war. That bond obtained a commission from the Governor to operate a private warship along with a warrant for the Court of Vice Admiralty to issue a Letter of Marque and Reprisal. The Letter of Marque authorized the privateer to bring captured vessels, called prizes, to Vice Admiralty's Prize Court for adjudication. The Vice Admiralty Judge would rule whether the capture was legal. This decision was based on affidavits of the privateer crew, captured documents and the interrogation of captured mariners, who answered a long detailed list of questions about their vessel and cargo called "the standing interrogatories". If the capture was judged legal, the vessel and its cargo were "condemned", that is ordered to be auctioned.

³²Public Archives of Nova Scotia, RG 1 Vol 171 p. 26. This notice can also be found in the Royal Gazette for several weeks following.

³³For French privateering see Don Chard, "The Impact of French Privateering on New England, 1689-1713", American Neptune, Vol. 35 (July 1975), p. 153-165; J. S. McLennan, Louisbourg: From its Foundations to its Fall (Sydney: Fortress Press, 1969), p. 109, 118-119, 121, 304, 307-308. For the Seven Years War and the American Revolution, see G. E. E. Nichols, "Notes on Nova Scotian Privateers", Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society, Vol. XIII (1908), pp. 111-152; James Henry Ross, "Privateering in Nova Scotia During the American Revolutionary War 1775-1783", (B.A. Honours Thesis, Mount Allison University, 1957).

Once the court and administrative fees were deducted, the privateer owners, officers and crew were free to divide the remainder according to their own agreement. Royal Navy crews were also entitled to a share in their captures and used the same court system. The capture, judgement, sale, resale and distribution of captured ships by both privateers and the navy created a sort of industry, sometimes called "prizemaking" that involving many players in Nova Scotian society.

However, despite his announcement, the authority for Wentworth to issue Letters of Marque, was not forthcoming. On June 21, 1793, Wentworth wrote the first of many letters to the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies complaining that he had not been authorized to issue warrants for Letters of Marque. Not until 1803 would this authority be granted to Wentworth. The reasons for the delay are unclear, as Wentworth was always told the authority was on the way but had been "omitted in the pressure of greater concerns"³⁴ There are several possible explanations. In the first year of the war many of the Vice Admiralty Courts in the West Indies issued large numbers of Letters of Marque and approved many captures, by both privateers and navy ships, with little scrutiny. Eventually, in 1801, the Admiralty closed most of the West Indies courts in a major reform of the prize court system, but in the short term, the Admiralty may have been trying to limit abuse by limiting the numbers of privateering licenses issued.³⁵ As well, accusations of incompetence and infirmity aimed at the 77 year-old Judge of the Halifax Vice Admiralty Court, Richard Bulkeley, combined with the uncertainty about his

³⁴Wentworth to King June 21, 1793, PRO CO217 Vol 36, p.180. PANS Mfm 13853; Wentworth to Portland Oct. 28, 1796 PRO CO 217 Vol. 67 p.191. PANS Mfm 13865.

³⁵The abuses of ship seizures early in the war is described by Joseph Fewster, "The Jay Treaty and British Ship Seizures: The Martinique Cases", William and Mary Quarterly, Vol. 45, No. 13 (1988) p. 427. It is worth noting however that questionable seizures by the Royal Navy under the wide open authority of Orders in Council of Nov. 1793 were as much an embarrassment as those of privateers.

Vice Admiralty Court reform is described by Arthur J Stone. "The Admiralty Court in Colonial Nova Scotia", Dalhousie Review, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Fall 1994), p. 391.

successor; and the criticism of the management of Halifax's defences by Wentworth himself³⁶, may also have fuelled doubts about giving this authority to Halifax.

Wentworth clearly felt deprived of an important tool of war, especially since the Royal Navy redeployed almost all of the Halifax squadron to the Caribbean, leaving the small 28-gun frigate *Hussar* as the only major ship on station.³⁷ "I wish to God, I had an armed Schooner," he wrote to London, "Instructions have been sent to the Judge of Admiralty, for granting Letters of Marque, but no letter or commission to me to issue the commissions, which makes the instructions useless - and we have now two homeward bound ships for which Letters of Marque Solicited"³⁸

These two ships, the *Rasheigh* and the *Britannia*, were both large merchant ships heading for England with mail, passengers and cargo. Not intending to cruise for enemy ships, they wished Letters of Marque to take advantage of any easy capture that might come their way as well as to provide an incentive for crews to put up a determined resistance if attacked, in the hope of prize money. Wentworth offered a temporary solution, a commission in lieu of a letter of marque:

This is to certify that Thomas Melvill master of the ship *Britannia* burthen 301 tons bound for England did apply to me for a warrant to the Judge of the Vice Admiralty Court of this province to issue him a Letter of Marque and Reprisal against the French which I would have granted, but that the authority to me from the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty for that purpose has not yet arrived. In the meantime I have assured the said Thomas Melvill in Conformity to His Majesty's Pleasure Signified to me by the Right Honourable Henry Dundas one of His Majesty's principal Secretaries of State that His Majesty will consider him

³⁶See Stone, "Admiralty Court" p. 389 on Bulkeley's final years. The attack on Wentworth's defence preparation is described by Brian Cuthbertson, *The Loyalist Governor: Biography of John Wentworth*, (Halifax, Petheric Press, 1983), p. 67

³⁷Paul Webb, "British Squadrons in North American Waters", *The Northern Mariner*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (April 1995), p. 32.

³⁸Wentworth to King June 21, 1793 PRO CO217 Vol. 36, p. 179, PANS Mfm 13853.

as having a just claim to the Kings share of all French ships and property which he may make prize of³⁹

Wentworth was well within his authority to issue these "commissions in lieu" as they came to be called. Governors were given considerable discretion when it came to defensive measures in wartime, especially those that did not cost the treasury. The two "commissions in lieu" had the same effect in the Halifax Court of Vice Admiralty as a Letter of Marque although they made less of an impression at sea and or at courts outside of Nova Scotia. These commissions were, however, to serve Nova Scotia privateers until 1803 and successfully withstood a legal challenge by the sceptical Royal Navy.⁴⁰

The commissions granted to the *Britannia* and *Rasheigh* in 1793 were the first of about thirty commissions to armed trading ships granted in Halifax during the wars with France and Spain. (See appendix A) These were not privateers in the strict sense as their primary purpose was to make merchant voyages with cargo from one port to another and they consistently advertised in Halifax papers as such. They are easily distinguished from privateer vessels by their relatively small crews, compared to tonnage.⁴¹ Making voyages to stated destinations, paying crews by wages and not by share, they operated in a different way from privateer ships. Very few of these armed traders brought prizes to

³⁹Governor's Commission July 10, 1793, PANS RG 1 Vol.171, p. 48, PANS Mfm 15282.

⁴⁰West Indies Governors in the American Revolution with less authority than Wentworth commissioned privateers and the Royal Navy was ordered not to interfere. A. G. Jamieson, "Admiral James Young and the 'Privateers' ", *Mariner's Mirror*, Vol. 65, No. 1, (1979), p. 74. Similarly, when a Navy captain of the frigate *HMS Brunswick* seized a prize from the *Nelson*, a Shelburne privateer brigantine, in 1799, London backed up Wentworth's commission and ordered the prize released. Portland to Wentworth Jan 20, 1800, PRO CO217 Vol. 73, pp.21-23, PANS Mfm 13867.

⁴¹David Starkey has established a ratio of 2.5 men per ton as an approximate cut-off between deep water privateers and armed traders. David Starkey, *British Privateering Enterprise in the Eighteenth Century* (Exeter Great Britain: University of Exeter Press, 1990), p. 38-42. In the early nineteenth century armed traders were commonly called "Letter of Marque Ships" to distinguish them from privateers, but as this term is easily confused, I have opted for Starkey's term "Armed Trader".

Halifax, although they may have taken prizes to be condemned at other convenient British ports. In fact armed traders commissioned in other British ports, mainly London but also Saint John, New Brunswick, and the Channel Islands, also used Halifax as a convenient port to have their prizes judged

While privateer ships took far more prizes, armed trading ships are an important consideration in privateering as there was a close relationship between the two. Armed trading ships were sometimes a transition phase between merchant and privateer service. Privateer vessels were often converted to armed trading ships and one armed trading ship, the *Nymph*, became a privateer ship. Privateer officers and crews often moved to armed trading ships when privateering waned.

While merchant ships armed themselves, Wentworth remained concerned about inadequate naval protection of Nova Scotian waters. When the solitary navy frigate was away, he feared a single large French privateer could enter Halifax and destroy the dockyard.⁴² Eventually Wentworth received permission to purchase and outfit a provincial warship. The *Earl of Moira* went into service in February 1794 and patrolled Nova Scotian waters until 1802. At 135 tons, she was fast and shallow draughted enough to chase French privateers. As a vessel of the provincial marine, she was distinct from the Royal Navy, manned by soldiers of the Royal Nova Scotia Regiment and commissioned with the same certificate used for armed merchant trading ships and privateers.⁴³

⁴²Wentworth to Dundas, July 23, 1793, PRO CO 217 Vol 64. The Halifax station appears to have later received more about the turn of the century, but little history has been written about North American squadrons in this time period. The number of naval ships varied widely depending on season and the operations of large squadrons that would briefly stop in Halifax.

⁴³Earl of Moira's Commission, April 14 1794, PANS Vol 172 p 90, Mfm 15282. Nova Scotia had a well established provincial marine tradition dating to the 1750s, outfitting provincial warships when the Royal Navy station was inadequate. One of the early provincial marine commanders, Silvanus Cobb, was a founder of the town of Liverpool. See: W.A.B. Douglas, "The Sea Militia of Nova Scotia", *Canadian Historical*

During the first three years of the war, there were no privateers commissioned from Nova Scotia. This may have been partially due to Wentworth's lack of Letter of Marque authority, but this would prove no barrier to privateering later in the war. The Halifax merchant William Forsyth and the Liverpool merchant Simeon Perkins⁴⁴ indicate little interest in privateering in this period, but show great interest in the growth of the West Indies trade, which continued in this initial period of the conflict with only modest disruption. Deprived of Caribbean bases by British occupation of all the French islands in the Caribbean along with the slave rebellion in Saint Domingo, a relatively small number of French privateers found precarious bases only in the United States.⁴⁵ While this raised the alarming, but short-lived, prospect of a Franco-American alliance, these privateers proved more of a nuisance than a threat to Nova Scotia, although they inflicted considerable damage on the trade of New Brunswick. There was a brief panic in the fall of 1793 when a French fleet accompanied by privateers put into Boston harbour, but it was soon crippled by mutiny and returned to France in 1794 without venturing near Nova Scotia. The militia was mustered and rearmed and artillery batteries were hurriedly constructed during this invasion alarm, but few ships were armed and no privateers commissioned. Even the land-based defences were stood down by November of 1794.

Nova Scotia was enjoying the fruits of a growing West Indies trade. The United States was forbidden to trade with the British West Indies following the American Revolution. This led to a growing and lucrative trade.⁴⁶ Nova Scotian vessels carried

Review, Vol. 47, No. 1, (1966), pp. 22-37 and J.C. Arnell, "The Armed Vessels of the Nova Scotia Government in the Late Eighteenth Century", *Mariner's Mirror*, Vol. 55, No. 2, (1969), pp. 195-208.

⁴⁴William Forsyth Letterbooks PANS MG 3 Vol. 150. *Diary of Simeon Perkins 1790-1803*, Vols. III, IV (Toronto: Champlain Society).

⁴⁵Melvin Jackson, *Privateers in Charlestown 1763-1796*, (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1969), p. 20. American policy on French privateering wavered and varied. Eventually only Charleston remained open for their operations.

⁴⁶British West Indies islands managed to continue their trade with Americans either through smuggling or by emergency decrees but the restrictions on American trade

fish and lumber south and returned with salt, to make more fish, and more importantly cocoa, sugar, molasses and rum, all commodities that could be profitably re-exported or traded for American goods. Halifax but also the communities of Shelburne and Liverpool, Nova Scotia, eagerly pursued this business.

Larger vessels trading to the Caribbean came to be called "West Indies Men" The Liverpool merchant Simeon Perkins recorded with pride the departure from his town of the growing fleet of these West Indies traders in 1793.

"...This has a Grand Appearance for Such a Small place as this, 4 West Indies men to Sail in One day. These make fifteen West India men out at this time, Manned in a Manner, with our own people, 90 at least. "⁴⁷

Perkins would, in a few years, be recording in very similar fashion, the departure of squadrons of privateers to the West Indies. However, for the first years of the war with France, trading voyages to the West Indies continued in large numbers. The year 1794 appears to have been a boom year with Wentworth reporting to London that, "the general commerce and navigation of the province is much improved, every vessel finds employment, commodities a ready sale."⁴⁸ Liverpool's West Indies trade increased from 11 vessels employed in 1793 to 17 in 1794⁴⁹, the modest increase in wages and insurance offset by the increased demand for wartime supplies. Merchants like Simeon Perkins in Liverpool usually did not bother to arm their trading ships to the West Indies, but instead relied on false flags, fake papers and even fake nameplates to fool any French privateers they might encounter.

remained a powerful incentive for Nova Scotia exporters.

⁴⁷Perkins Diary Jan. 27, 1793, III, p. 205.

⁴⁸Basedo, S. and H. Robertson, "The Nova Scotia - British West Indies Commercial Experiment in the Aftermath of the American Revolution, 1783-1802", *Dalhousie Review*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (Spring, 1981), p. 58.

⁴⁹These voyage numbers extracted from Perkins diary 1793-1803 and are summarized in Volume III, p. xxxix. Customs registers from Liverpool do not appear to have survived for this era but customs records in nearby Shelburne show a similar pattern.

Only one Liverpool vessel was captured by French privateers in the first three years. In fact, a larger disruption of Nova Scotian trade in the early years of the war came from reckless British privateers based in the West Indies. Three Liverpool vessels were detained by privateers from Bermuda who used as justification the fake papers carried aboard to deceive French privateers. Most of these vessels appear to have been released, although incurring some legal costs to their Liverpool owners, as measures to deceive the enemy had long been regarded as an accepted practice by Vice Admiralty Courts.⁵⁰

The War at Sea Intensifies: 1796-1797

However this prosperous state of affairs began to unravel starting in late 1795. With the recapture of Guadeloupe, followed by other islands, the French were able to re-establish bases in the Caribbean. Further bases became available for French privateers when Spain, a formidable naval power, joined France as an ally in October of 1796. Large numbers of their privateers began to take a heavy toll on the British West Indies trade reaching serious levels by 1797.⁵¹ The Nova Scotia Royal Gazette described the Caribbean in early 1798, "those seas were swarming with French Privateers, which from their fast sailing and drawing but little water elude the vigilance of our cruisers."⁵² Vessels arriving in Nova Scotia from the West Indies fell from 56 in 1793, to 46 in 1795 and down to 21 by 1797.⁵³

⁵⁰Perkins notes appear optimistic on the outcome of the three cases. The *Adamant* was released, but captured by a French privateer soon after. The *George & Tracey* was released and arrived in Halifax the next month. Jean de Chantal Kennedy, *Bermuda's Sailors of Fortune*, Hamilton: Bermuda Press, 1963, p. 45.

⁵¹Patrick Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade: Privateering 1793-1805* (Aldershot, England: Scolar Press, 1989), p. 31.

⁵²*Nova Scotia Royal Gazette* Feb 27, 1798.

⁵³Basedo and Robertson, "The Nova Scotia - British West Indies Commercial Experiment", p. 62.

Many Nova Scotian vessels were captured; five from Liverpool alone in 1797.⁵⁴ Few naval convoys were available for escort, and when they were, convoy fees and naval impressment added themselves to inflated wartime wages and provision costs to demolish voyage profits. Most importantly, insurance rates for British ships more than doubled, when insurance could be found at all. Neutral American ships immune to most of these costs and closer to the West Indies, took over the island trade, aided by Jay's Treaty and local concessions that reopened access to British West Indies markets.⁵⁵ Liverpool's merchant and fishing fleet collapsed. Starting from 1796, merchant and ship owner Simeon Perkins records in his diary time after time, the entry "The voyage will be a losing one." Liverpool merchants petitioned the Admiralty that from 60 decked vessels at the start of the war, Liverpool was down to a single deep sea ship by 1799.⁵⁶

In 1797, Perkins notes in his diary the appearance of armament on local vessels for the first time. A schooner of the Shelburne merchant Robert Barry was described as armed⁵⁷ while a Liverpool brig put on a show of defence, mounting carved wooden guns and one short nine pounder.⁵⁸

Merchants were soon petitioning Wentworth for Letters of Marque and he resumed his demands for this authority in letters to London. Lord Portland, the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, promised to continue pressing the Admiralty, but in

⁵⁴Perkins Diary records the capture of: *The Phoenix* Jan. 4, IV, p. 1; *The Hope* and *Princess Amelia* Oct. 4, IV, p. 55.

⁵⁵William McNutt, *The Atlantic Provinces: Emergence of Colonial Society 1712-1857*, (Toronto, 1965), p. 114-115.

⁵⁶Perkins Diary June 16, 1798, IV, p. 101; Jan. 6, 1800, IV, p. 208; June 4, 1800, IV, p. 232; Aug. 2, 1800, IV, p. 243; Gerald S. Graham *Empire of the North Atlantic: The Maritime Struggle for North America*, 2nd Edition, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958), p. 223.

⁵⁷Perkins describes Barry's vessel, the schooner *Flying Fish*, as both a "privateer" and "armed schooner" but there is no record it had a commission, Letter of Marque or captured a prize, unless it was authorized by a Vice Admiralty Court in the West Indies Perkins Diary July 22, July 24, 1797, p. 40.

⁵⁸Perkins Diary May 10, 1797, p. 24.

the meantime he further encouraged Wentworth to issues the "commissions in lieu" instead of letters of marque.⁵⁹

As trade bottomed out in 1797-1798, Halifax merchants like William Forsyth were at least compensated by shifting their business the growing activity of the navy dockyard and garrison.⁶⁰ Not so fortunate were communities outside of Halifax. As trade dropped, the fishery also suffered. The increase in wartime wages and insurance was not matched by increased fish prices. In fact prices fell, as American fishermen moved in. Allowed by the Treaty of Paris, to set up bases to cure fish on the coast of Nova Scotia and encouraged by bounties from the American government,⁶¹ American fishermen made serious inroads into the fisheries of Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia fishermen were reduced to selling their fish to Americans who could buy at low prices and safely carry the Nova Scotia fish to West Indies markets.⁶²

Simeon Perkins vividly summed up this situation in a letter on May 16, 1798.

Our West India Trade being in a Manner Innihilated, and our Traders meeting with repeated Losses, has drained most of the Circulating cash out of the place, and every one appear to be too distressed to fit out their Vessels on the Fishing ... As to myself, I am scarcely in way to Support my Family..."

"Annihilation" of trade was the word of choice in many petitions, letters and memorials⁶³ as Liverpool and Nova Scotian merchants responded to this crisis with a long, delayed and mostly futile campaign for bounties (i.e. subsidies) on the fishery and for measures to exclude American competitors for West Indies markets. Another

⁵⁹Wentworth to Portland Sept. 29, 1799 PRO CO217 Vol. 70, p.191, PANS Mfm 13866.

⁶⁰David Sutherland, "William Forsyth", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, VIII,

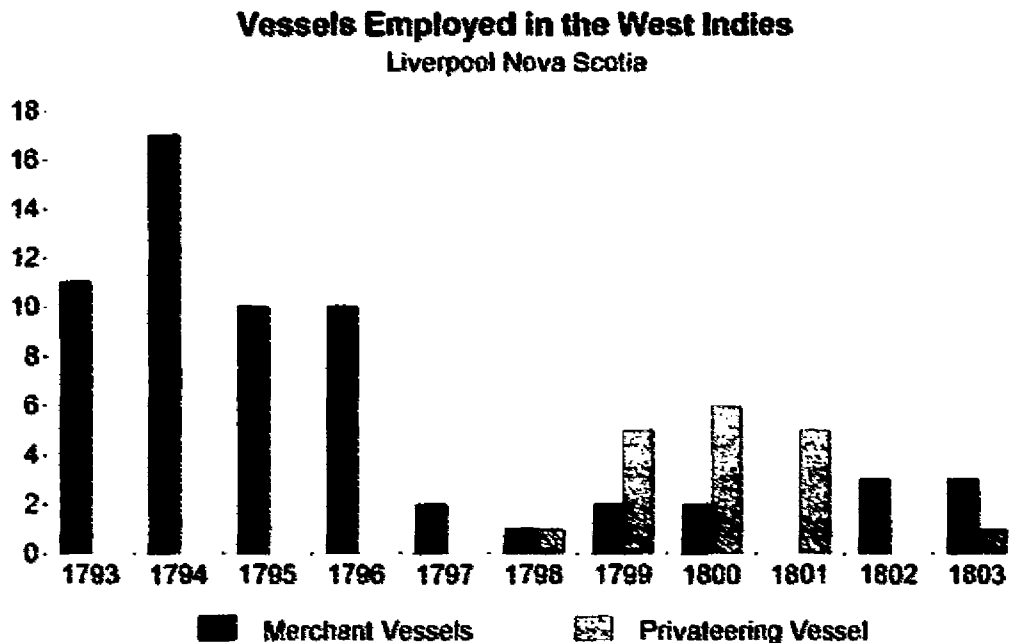
⁶¹Harold Innis, *The Cod Fisheries*, (Toronto: Ryerson, 1940), p. 219-223, 237.

⁶²William McNutt, *The Atlantic Provinces: Emergence of Colonial Society 1712-1857*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), p.115.

⁶³Innis, *Codfishery*, p. 235.

response was more dramatic. Many families began to leave Liverpool and return to the New England states that their parents had left a generation before. This was probably most dramatically demonstrated for Liverpool when even the Member of the Legislature, Benajah Collins, decided in 1797, that he could better pursue his fortune in Salem, Massachusetts.⁶⁴

Given the gloomy circumstance in Liverpool by 1798, it makes sense that Perkins and other Liverpool merchants would turn to privateering in this year, despite its risks and expenses. From a high of 17 West Indies voyages in 1794, Liverpool was down to a single voyage in 1798.⁶⁵



Source: Diary of Simeon Perkins entries on arrivals and departures of ships

⁶⁴Perkins Diary, Sept. 29 & Sept. 30, 1797, IV, p. 54.

⁶⁵These voyage numbers extracted from Perkins diary 1793-1803 and are summarized in Vol. III, p. xxxix. Customs registers from Liverpool do not appear to have survived for this era but customs records in nearby Shelburne and in Halifax show a similar pattern.

The First Season of Privateering: 1798

The province's first privateer ship, intended entirely for predatory cruising, put to sea in 1798 from Liverpool, a port that would eventually account for half of Nova Scotia's privateers, although it was one-tenth of the size of Halifax. The same group of Liverpool merchants and ship-owners who led their port's West Indies trade, (Simeon Perkins, Hallet Collins, Joseph Freeman, Snow Parker and Joseph Barss Snr.) turned to privateering with vigour. A 130-ton ship, specially designed for privateering was quickly constructed. Liverpool seamen responded equally quickly, 75 of them signing on in five days. As Wentworth still did not have Letter of Marque authority, the owners had to be content with a commission in lieu.

The *Charles Mary Wentworth* made its first cruise of the Caribbean from August to December 1798. Two substantial prizes were captured: a Spanish brigantine and an American brig retaken from a French privateer crew. It was an encouraging beginning for the Liverpool privateering community.

The captain of one of the Halifax armed traders also began to make a name for himself and his vessel in 1798. William Pryor, commander of the brigantine *Nymph*, was a Halifax merchant and captain who had been captured and imprisoned by the French early in the war. Released in an exchange, he was made master of the *Nymph* in December of 1798 and captured a small French privateer while returning from a trading voyage at St. Vincent.

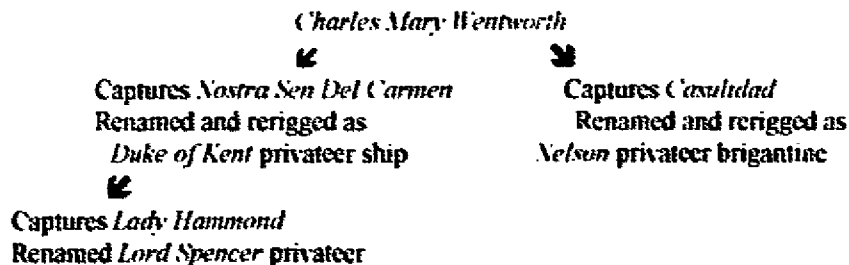
Success: 1799

The *Charles Mary Wentworth* left Liverpool in February for its second cruise convoying a Liverpool merchant ship, the *Victory*, and accompanied by a small privateer schooner as tender, the *Fly*. This cruise ended in the spring with spectacular success. Five prizes, worth in all an estimated £20,000, were captured. The cruise received special note in the Halifax papers and Liverpool merchants were soon delighting in the

parade of big Halifax merchants arriving by the boatloads in Liverpool to bid for the prizes as they were condemned.⁶⁶

Not surprisingly, a host of privateering ventures were soon launched in Nova Scotia. Privateering success tended to breed more privateers in a sort of chain reaction. Not only did successful captures attract attention, but they also made cheap vessels available to other privateer investors. Consider the chain reaction of privateer ships in 1799.

Privateer Chain Reaction



Source: Diary of Simeon Perkins

Loyalist merchants in Shelburne raided Liverpool for a captain, Ephraim Dean, and a vessel, the prize schooner *Casulidad*, a fast copper bottomed schooner taken from the Spanish. Renamed the *Nelson* and soon rigged as a brigantine, the Nelson took two prizes on its first cruise, although a suspicious (or greedy) navy captain detained one of them because of the *Nelson's* commission in lieu of letter of marque.

In Halifax, William Pryor, in the armed trader the *Nymph* took another prize, the *Sally*, while returning with rum from a voyage to St. Vincent. Apparently impressed by Pryor's success and the growing privateer trade, the owners of the *Nymph* converted her from an armed trader into a predatory privateer in the fall of 1799.⁶⁷

⁶⁶Perkins Diary, May 11, 1799, IV, p. 164; Royal Gazette, May 25, 1799, p. 3; Perkins Diary May 31, 1799, June 1 & 2, IV, p. 168-169. The passengers on one schooner alone read like a Who's Who of the Halifax merchant establishment.

⁶⁷The *Nymph's* new commission on Aug 26, 1799, showed it with a crew of 90 men and

The Liverpool privateering operations increased steadily in size and ambition, culminating with the departure of a squadron of three Liverpool privateers in December of 1799, carrying over 250 men in total. Working in tandem through signals, these teams often conducted virtual blockades of the Venezuelan coast and its principal port of La Guaira for weeks at a time. Their operations were no longer limited to the ocean. Nova Scotian privateers now began to attack Spanish coastal fortifications, usually batteries and forts defending islands or bays that the privateers wished to use as bases. While not always successful, these sorties often involved co-ordinated amphibious assaults by boatloads of marines backed by sea bombardment. In one case the Governor of one small island and his garrison of gunners were taken prisoner.

Wentworth was able to boast of the success of the privateers sailing under his name in a report, enclosed with another appeal for Letters of Marque, to London that fall.

The enclosed Journal of Proceedings of a Privateer fitted out & armed at Liverpool in this Province proves the great enterprize and spirit of the people & that they are useful to His Majestys Service by destroying the Forts, Ordnance & munitions of his Enemies as well as in capturing their property & destroying their commerce in which they have been particularly active and happily successful having taken and brought in prizes condemned to them in the Court of V. Admiralty of this province to the amount of forty thousand pounds Sterling.⁶⁸

There was a human price to pay for this success. A schooner taken early in the year, disappeared on its way home along with its prizecrew of six Liverpool mariners who were never heard from again. Another prize schooner was captured by rebel forces off Saint Domingo. Its crew members were eventually exchanged, but promptly pressed

newspaper accounts now refer to its voyages as "cruises" indicating an evolution from armed trader to privateer. PANS RG 1 Vol. 172 p89; Royal Gazette May 20, 1800 p.3.
⁶⁸Wentworth to Portland Sept. 29, 1799 PRO CO217, Vol. 70, p.188, PANS Mfm 13866.

into the navy. At least two privateers were killed in sea battles and another ten wounded. One privateer was killed in a land attack. Two others died of sickness.⁶⁹

The Peak Year: 1800

Not surprisingly, the financial successes of 1799 led to an even greater investment in privateering and 1800 marked the peak year of privateering in the wars with France. Liverpool merchants bought the *Francis Mary* and privateer, the *Nymph* in Halifax and built another, the *Rover* to join the *Wentworth* and *Duke of Kent*. Halifax sent out the *Earl of Dublin*, *General Bowyer* and the *Eagle*, while Shelburne continued with the *Nelson*.

The launch of the *Rover* in Liverpool marked the peak of privateering achievement for Liverpool. Designed and built in Liverpool, the fourteen gun brig fought two notable engagements, successfully attacking a French convoy of six ships and defeating three Spanish warships off the coast of Venezuela. The *Naval Chronicle*, the semi-official and widely read journal of the Royal Navy, published an account of the *Rover's* adventures. The preface recognized the connection between privateering and the trade crisis of the 1790s, as well as the remarkable nature of so much privateering from a "little village".

"Our readers should be informed that the loyal Province of Nova Scotia having suffered most severely in the early part of the war ... fitted out a number of privateers in order to retaliate ... one half are owned by the little village of Liverpool which boasts the honour of having launched the Brig *Rover* the hero of our present relation."⁷⁰

⁶⁹These casualties are mostly taken from Simeon Perkin's diary, with additional detail from letters by Joseph Freeman and Thomas Parker, National Archives of Canada, MG 23 J17

⁷⁰*Naval Chronicle* Vol. 5 (Feb 1801), p. 176.

In all, the eight privateers of 1800 took 22 prizes. The nationality of these captured ships was changing in a very important way --- they were almost all American. In the first years of privateering, the privateers took mainly French and Spanish vessels. However the logs and letters of the privateer captains reveal how scarce the French and Spanish ships had become. Instead the privateers encountered one American vessel after another leaving enemy ports.⁷¹ Even a report to the French Assembly admitted that not a single merchant ship in the Atlantic still sailed under the French flag.⁷² French and Spanish colonies were increasingly turning to the neutral Americans to carry their cargoes.⁷³ A complicated set of, hotly debated, legal rules determined whether the cargo was enemy or neutral property, making these cases challenging to prove.⁷⁴ However in 1800, most of the decisions went in favour of the privateers, with only five decisions being reversed on appeal.

An instructive example of some of the issues involved can be seen in two cases. The *Fly*, a 105 ton schooner captured by the Halifax privateer schooner, the *Eagle*, was carrying French wine and brandy to New York. The owner of the vessel and cargo, Stephen Jumel of New York, argued that as an American citizen, he had purchased the wine with his own money before it was loaded in France and it was thus neutral cargo in a neutral vessel. The privateers suspected a purchase of convenience, especially since

⁷¹The logbook of the *Charles Mary Wentworth*, Nov 1799 - May 1800, records at least seven American vessels boarded (and released) in enemy waters but no enemy vessels larger than launches, sloops and small schooners were taken. A Journal Kept by Benjamin Knaut During his Cruise on Board the Privateer Ship Charles Mary Wentworth 1799-1800 PANS MG 20 Vol. 215 No. 10.

⁷²Alfred Thayer Mahan. The Influence of Seapower Upon the French Revolution and Empire, (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co. 1970), p.375.

⁷³John Lynch. Bourbon Spain, (Oxford: Basil, Blackwell, 1989), pp. 369-370.

⁷⁴The British started the war declaring all trade with the enemy was subject to capture while Americans maintained "Neutral ship, neutral cargo". However after Jay's treaty, this was narrowed to a list of contraband goods or goods with clear proof of ownership by enemy citizens. However the wide variety of deceptive measures still left many grey areas. Depending on the level of proof required, many cases could swing either way.

some of the captured crew seemed to think Mr. Jumel was a French citizen, merely residing in New York. Mr. Jumel sent the court a proof of his American citizenship, but records and this letter by Mr. Jumel discovered aboard the *Fly* proved the cargo was French:

Be extremely careful to destroy our correspondence, one single letter, this for instance would expose vessel and cargo. We cannot too much repeat to much burn all our letters and everypaper that may rise a doubt of the property not being neutral.⁷⁵

However, in most cases, privateer crews were not so fortunate to find such a blatantly compromising letter. Perhaps a more typical case was the *Little Charlotte*, a 63-ton schooner captured by the Halifax privateer schooner, *Earl of Dublin*. The prize was carrying sugar loaded at Havana, for Leghorn, Italy. The owner, Charles DeWolfe of Bristol, Connecticut, argued that the Spanish sugar was payment for a debt owed him by a Spanish merchant and was therefore neutral cargo. Faced with a lack of decisive evidence from either side, the judge believed the privateers who argued that the sugar was merely being transhipped through DeWolfe to cover up its enemy origins. DeWolfe appealed but was unsuccessful.⁷⁶

While they mostly won in court, there were several losses at sea in 1800. Two privateer vessels, the sloop *Frances Mary* and schooner *Eagle*, were captured by the Spanish. A third privateer, the schooner *Lord Spencer*, was lost to a reef near the coast of Venezuela. Fortunately for Liverpool, there was little loss of life, all of the *Spencer's* crew being rescued, and most of the captured privateersmen appear to have been released in prisoner exchanges within a few months.⁷⁷ A far greater detriment to privateering operations was the impressment of privateer crews by Royal Navy ships. Several

⁷⁵National Archives of Canada RG 8 IV Vol. 34 "The Fly"

⁷⁶National Archives RG 8 IV Vol 36 "Little Charlotte".

⁷⁷*Perkins Diary*: Aug 2, 1800, IV, p.242 (*Francis Mary* taken); Oct. 4, 1800, IV, p.255 (*Eagle* taken); *Logbook of the Charles Mary Wentworth*, April 7, 1800.

privateer ships ended the cruises abruptly after impressment left them short-handed and captains refused to sail until legal protection of their crews could be obtained.

A Legal Check: 1801

The pace of privateering slackened in 1801, with half as many captures as the previous year. More significantly, court cases turned against the privateers. Half of their captures had to be released, sometimes with costs and damages levied against the privateer owners.

As to domestic News, they Say the Owners of the Nymph are like to be prossicuted for Detaining the Ship Fabius, for £5000 damages, and that Capt. Dean will not Succeed in making prizes of the Vessels he has brought in, as the Americans are in favour with Great Britain, and all the Prize Causes will be determined much on their Side. No News of the Rover. I think Privateering is Nearly at an End...⁷⁸

Perkins was correct in his belief that the courts had shifted to give Americans trading with the enemy, the benefit of a doubt. Fear of the presidential chances of the anti-British Thomas Jefferson in the latter stages of 1800 opened the doors to friendly consideration of American claims.⁷⁹ The many amorphous areas in trade laws made decisions in privateering cases subject to political pressures. Appeals from the Vice Admiralty Court went to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, a majority of whom were privy councillors and alert to imperial diplomatic concerns. A crucial court decision at this time, the *Polly*, reversed previous British policy and allowed Americans to ship enemy cargo, providing it had been landed, and customs paid in the United States, before reshipment to Europe. Although overturned several years later when concern over

⁷⁸Perkins Diary July 22, 1801, IV, p. 318. The owners of the Fabius eventually settled for £1000 in damages; Perkins Diary Jan. 25, 1802, IV, p. 360.

⁷⁹Robert Ernst, Rufus King: *American Federalist*, Chapel Hill, (N.C: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), p. 243.

Jefferson lessened, its protection of American interest had a profound influence throughout the empire for the next five years.⁸⁰

Whereas in 1799 Wentworth had responded to American complaints about their captured vessels with diplomatic explanations on how the law had to look after itself, "I very much wish it had been in my power to have been more useful",⁸¹ after 1800, he boasted of his efforts to influence the Vice Admiralty Courts. "I shall continue to recommend the greatest caution and moderation to our Courts in this Province" Wentworth ordered a written statement of ground-rules, distinguishing enemy cargoes from neutral ones, be drawn up to placate American fears. When the Attorney General, Richard John Uniacke, came up with a list of principles that struck Wentworth as too severe, he had the Judge of the Vice Admiralty Court rewrite them in a watered down fashion to suit American sensibilities.⁸²

One of many cases that illustrate how the courts had turned against the privateers was the 212-ton ship the *Argus*, captured by the Shelburne privateer brigantine the *Nelson*. The *Argus* was taken en route to Bordeaux with a large number of French and Spanish passengers who owned substantial parts of the cargo. Furthermore the ship's owner, Isaac Roget, was another very recent, French born, American citizen of New York. Despite what struck the privateers as a promising case of enemy citizens and property, the Attorney General, Richard John Uniacke, advised the *Nelson's* owners to

⁸⁰The *Polly* decision by Admiralty Court Judge William Scott was steadily eroded by appeal decisions after 1804 and finally overturned completely in 1806. Henry Bourguignon, *Sir William Scott, Lord Stowell*, (Cambridge G.B. Cambridge U. Press, 1987) p. 28, 238-240.

⁸¹Wentworth to Robert Liston British Consul at Philadelphia Nov. 18, 1799, PANS RG 1 Vol. 50, p.351, PANS Mfm. 15238.

⁸²Wentworth to Robert Liston, Nov. 7, 1800, PANS RG 1 Vol. 50, pp. 149-150, PANS Mfm 15238. Sadly the two statements of principle mentioned by Wentworth do not appear to have survived for historians to compare.

release the *Argus* rather than proceed to court where they would probably lose and have to pay damages. The *Argus* was allowed to continue to France.⁸³

A even more galling reversal for the *Nelson* was the capture of the *Eliza*, an 83 ton schooner. While its captain, officers and owner were American, almost all the crew were Spanish and French, as were the six passengers. The cargo of Cuban sugar was in large part owned by some of the Spanish passengers or by Americans living in Cuba. The captain and officers declared that the majority of the cargo was American owned and claimed no documents had been destroyed. However the cook testified that:

That some Person on board of her had taken & thrown some papers out at the Cabin Window That the deponent then saw some papers floating a Stern and that said officer sent the Boat and two men to take up the papers part of which they got. That when they saw the Privateer in Chase the Captain desired the Deponent to tell the Mate to take care of the Letters and on the Deponents delivering the Message to the Mate, the Mate said that he had hid the papers where the Devil could not get them.

Such evidence, circumstantial, but damning, would have been decisive in 1800, but on July 21, 1801, the *Eliza* was released. The release was processed with a legal document that also expressed a political assurance to American shipping interests.

Whereas Ephraim Dean Commander of the Brigantine Nelson ... upon a supposition that the said vessel and cargo belonged to one or more of the enemies of Great Britain the said vessel principally laden with the product of the Spanish colonies and bound to New York and whereas upon more particular examination respecting the said vessel and Cargo there is some reason to suppose the same is neutral property and the said Ephraim Dean and Crew of the said Nelson being desirous as far as in her power to avoid disrupting the Trade of Neutrals ... have agreed to give up and no further prosecute their libel against the said Schooner her cargo & to permit the said schooner to proceed upon her voyage without further delay.⁸⁴

⁸³National Archives. RG 8 IV Vol. 41 "The Argus"

⁸⁴National Archives RG 8 IV Vol 41 "Eliza".

This abrupt change in state policy towards privateers had occurred in previous wars. During the Seven Years War, British privateers were encouraged and given a free hand to seize neutral Dutch ships trading with the French. However when the Dutch threatened war, many captures were reversed and privateer investors paid the price of official brinkmanship.⁸⁵

Perkin's resentment at the favoured treatment given to Americans was echoed by other imperial shipping owners. War had helped pave new roads for American trade and made their ships an economic threat, which navy and privateer captures had helped check. A widely circulated pamphlet *War in Disguise or the Frauds of Neutral Flags* expressed this resentment of neutral, but mainly American, trade.⁸⁶

With French and Spanish cargoes seemingly carried by American ships but placed off limits by the courts, the privateering boom as Perkins noted, was for all intents and purposes, over. From the high of eight privateers operating in 1800, the province fell to two by the end of the summer of 1801. Several, such as the *Charles Mary Wentworth* and the *Rover* were converted to armed trading ships. In Bermuda, a similar wave of court reversals bankrupted several privateer owners.⁸⁷ In Nova Scotia, one owner, James Woodin of Halifax, also appears to have also been ruined. He had purchased most of the ownership of the *Earl of Dublin* from his partners and invested heavily in the new privateer brigantine the *General Bowyer*. The court's reversal of one of the *Earl's* largest captures produced huge repayment orders in his name by 1806.⁸⁸ By then, his former partners reported that Woodin was "in debt to them in many sums" and "absent from the

⁸⁵David Starkey, *British Privateering Enterprizes in the Eighteenth Century*. (Exeter Great Britain: University of Exeter Press, 1990), p. 267.

⁸⁶James Stephenson, *War in Disguise or the Frauds of Neutral Flags*. (London: C Whittingham, 1806).

⁸⁷Jean Kennedy, *Fifth of Bermuda: Gentleman Privateer*. Hamilton, Bermuda: Bermuda Books, 1964, pp. 84-85.

⁸⁸NA RG 8 IV Vol 32 "Berkley".

province and insolvent".⁸⁹ The ownership of Liverpool privateer vessels was spread between many owners, thus mitigating the blow of court reversals and, by in large, even when they lost cases, damages were seldom applied. In the most serious case, the owners of the *Fabius* dropped their damage claim from £5000 to £1000.⁹⁰ Usually the privateer owners merely had to return the vessel and cargo, or repay its value, occasionally with interest.

Peace: 1802

With the big returns on privateering fading, it was to no disappointment among privateer owners when welcome news arrived on November 21, 1801.

"This evening an express arrives from Halifax from the Owners of the Privateer Ship General Bowyer, Informing that a Pacquet was arrived from England last Thursday with News of a General Peace in Europe. Preliminaries Signed the 10th of October, and the Owners of the General Bowyer have ordered her directly home to Halifax."⁹¹

Called home from their cruising, the privateers from Halifax, Liverpool and Shelburne were soon disarmed and sent trading south, as merchants rushed to resume the West Indies business which rebounded, almost doubling in 1802 from its low point in 1797-98.⁹² Liverpool was no exception, sending the former privateer *Rover* and three other merchant ships to the West Indies.

⁸⁹NA RG 8 IV Vol. 33 "Brutus"

⁹⁰Perkins Diary Jan. 25, 1802, IV, p. 360.

⁹¹Perkins Diary Nov. 21, 1801, IV, p.346.

⁹²Basedo, S. and H. Robertson, "The Nova Scotia - British West Indies Commercial Experiment in the Aftermath of the American Revolution, 1783-1802", *Dalhousie Review*, 61, 1 (Spring, 1981), p. 65.

A Disastrous Resumption: 1803

However, the brief Peace of Amiens ended in May of 1803 and word soon reached Nova Scotia.

News that War was declared in England the 15th of May against France & Holland. A Sloop of war had arrived at Halifax last Monday with dispatches to that purpose, which Left England the 18 of May, at which time Some prizes had Actually arrived. The Brig *Rover* is expected to be fitted as a Privateer Immediately. I am to have a Small Share ... the Voyage proposed for the Schooner *Active* to the West Indies must be given up ...⁹³

Once again the West Indies trade was threatened, and merchants shifted vessels and capital from the West Indies into privateering. Enthusiasm was lacking at first, as Spain, whose weakly defended trade was the favoured prey for Nova Scotian privateers, was not included in the war. Perkins seemed especially doubtful, but as the *Rover* recruited, rumours of a possible war with Spain and news of three prizes taken by the Halifax privateer *General Bowyer* arrived.

"They have 36 men & boys on board. The shares have been sold at 11 & 12 £. As it is now war with the Batavian Republic & a very Great prospect of War with Spain, the prospect is better than it was when we Set out in the Business."⁹⁴

However despite the early success of the *General Bowyer* from Halifax, privateering was in for a crushing disappointment. Spain remained neutral until late 1804, but gambling on its entry into the war in 1803, the novice captain of the *Rover* took three prizes of obvious neutrality. The resulting legal claims for compensation soon overwhelmed the owners of the *Rover* and embarrassed Governor Wentworth. Public

⁹³Perkins Diary June 24, 1803, IV, p. 468.

⁹⁴Perkins Diary Aug. 26, 1803, IV, p. 483.

face was saved by putting the blame on the *Rover's* captain, Benjamin Collins, who had his captain's commission revoked.⁹⁵

The Last Hurrah: 1805

Censured by the Governor and absorbed in settling the many outstanding cases before the Vice Admiralty Courts (some cases from 1800 dragged on until 1807)⁹⁶ Liverpool's privateer owners appears to have lost most of their interest in privateering. Judging by the low turnout in the final cruises of the *Rover*,⁹⁷ seamen themselves seemed to have judged the chances of success as meagre.

Halifax merchants bought the famous *Rover* as an armed merchant ship but also showed no enthusiasm. The West Indies trade, while diminished by the war and suffering from a new wave of French attacks in 1805, did not collapse as it had in the late 1790s⁹⁸ American merchant ships were no longer immune to French attacks. As Napoleon tightened his continental system, they faced more and more French seizures. Sadly this was little compensation to Liverpool where the fishery suffered new lows from American competition.

Spain's declaration of war in December of 1804, briefly awakened interest in privateering. Henry Newton, a friend to several Liverpool families, wrote them from

⁹⁵Wentworth to P. Bond, British Consul in Philadelphia April 6, 1804. PRO CO 217 Vol. A 137 p.38. PANS PANS Mfm13869.

⁹⁶NA RG 8 IV The *Berkley* (Vol. 32) and *Brutus* (Vol. 33), taken by the *Earl of Dublin* in 1800, were not settled until 1807 and 1806, respectively.

⁹⁷The *Rover* was intended to be manned by 60 men and early cruises easily attracted this compliment. However from 1801 on, the crews fell to 45 and 36 men. PANS RG 1 v171 p105, v224 p136; *Perkins Diary* Jan. 27, 1801, IV, p. 278; Aug. 26, 1803, IV, p. 483.

⁹⁸West Indies voyages fell from 51 in 1803 to 38 in 1804 but this was a far cry from the mere 21 voyages in 1797. Basedo and Robertson, "The Nova Scotia - British West Indies Commercial Experiment", p. 65.

Capetown in the spring of 1805. "I hope prosperity will again shine upon you. A Spanish War, I trust will add something to your stores."⁹⁹

Liverpool outfitted the privateer ship the *Duke of Kent* and once again it sailed for the Spanish Main. However the voyage was not a spectacular success. The *Duke* captured two schooners and a valuable shipment of slaves. However one of the schooners was recaptured by the Spaniards, at the cost of two Liverpool lives, and despite certificates of protection from the Governor, a Royal Navy ship impressed three Liverpool seamen.

Faced with, in Perkins's words, "a very moderate Cruise"¹⁰⁰ and still settling damage compensation, Liverpool's privateer owners closed their books. Liverpool seamen, no doubt eyeing the unprotected prospect of impressment, also turned their backs on privateering. Whatever attraction privateering might offer to a still sluggish Nova Scotian economy, completely evaporated in 1807 with an upsurge of trade in the wake of the Embargo Acts. When the *Duke of Kent* fired a gun to announce its return to Liverpool Harbour in the afternoon of August the 18th, 1805, it was the last recorded privateer to cruise from Nova Scotia until the War of 1812. Privateering had effectively ended in 1801 when it became almost impossible to seize enemy goods in American vessels. The lesson was not lost on some young privateer officers such as Enos Collins who could see that the day when the Americans themselves became the enemy, the prospects would become very good for the experienced community of privateers that war had cultivated in Liverpool in the years 1798-1805.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹Edward Newton to Mrs. Dewolfe, May 23, 1805, National Archives MG 23 J17

¹⁰⁰Perkins to Uniacke, Aug. 21, 1805, *Perkins Diary*, V, p. 474.

¹⁰¹It is widely believed that Collins bought a small, fast ex-slave ship in 1811 in anticipation of a coming conflict with the United States. C.H.J. Snider, *Under the Red Jack*, London: Purnell and Sons, p.10-11.

Chapter Three - The Military and Business Character of Privateering

All Gentlemen Volunteers; Seamen, and able bodied Landsmen, who wish to acquire Riches and Honor, are invited to repair on board the *Revenge*, Privateer ship of War now laying in Halifax Harbour "102

This advertisement for privateers during the American Revolution appealed to the twin attractions of privateering: "riches and honour". The mixed motivational nature of privateering has long made it a difficult activity to understand and explore.

This chapter will explore the business and military sides to privateering: the nature and organization of privateers in these areas, as well as their success/failure rate and overall contribution. Privateering was a mixture of the military and the commercial. Most historiography on privateering, amateur and scholarly, has centred on a debate on the question whether privateers were motivated by greed or patriotism. Were they an embryonic navy or mere pirates who got away with it? This debate is misleading and essentially sterile, reflecting naive notions of what a navy was and simplistic assumptions about piracy. Patriotism is a limited tool in understanding war in the eighteenth century in the same way greed is a simplistic way to understand business. Although, as we saw in Chapter Two, privateering was primarily economically-driven, being mainly a response to a crisis in trade, it used military tools and tactics and made contributions in different ways to the British war efforts.

It is somewhat easier to explore the military, as opposed to the business side of privateering, thanks to the way the trade was regulated. Government authorities sought to regulate and control private commerce raiding with requirements declarations, registration, mandatory cruise reports and the scrutiny of captures by the Vice Admiralty

¹⁰²*Nova Scotia Gazette* Jan. 12, 1779. No recruiting advertisements have been found for privateers in the 1793-1805 era.

Courts.¹⁰³ These records have left a fairly detailed account of the weapons and operations of privateers. However once a captured ship was approved, its disposal was completely left to the privateer owners whose records, unlike the governors and courts, were seldom preserved. However, careful reading of the government records can reveal many insights on the business organization of privateering and in the 1793-1805 era, the Diary of Simeon Perkins is a unique resource in this respect recording the expenses, revenues and processes of privateer owners.

MILITARY ASPECTS OF PRIVATEERING

Weapons and Tactics

This topic could also be titled: cruisers and cruising. "Cruise" referred to a trip made in search of prizes. It was distinct from a voyage made to a specific destination for trade. Privateer and navy ships made cruises. Merchant ships and armed trading ships made voyages or passages. The term "cruiser" could refer to either navy or privateer vessel. In protests and petitions, angry neutrals often used the term "cruisers" interchangeably to refer to both privateers and naval vessels.¹⁰⁴

Cruising required a ship, and a vessel of one sort or another was the basic weapons unit of privateering. While much scholarship on privateering has often concentrated on ships to the exclusion of people,¹⁰⁵ an examination of the vessels

¹⁰³David Starkey, *British Privateering Enterprise in the Eighteenth Century* (Exeter Great Britain: University of Exeter Press, 1990), p. 24-25.

¹⁰⁴Newspaper and customs registers relied on the term "cruise" to distinguish privateers from merchant vessels. Examples include: *Royal Gazette* Dec. 25, 1798 and May 20, 1800 and the *Shelburne Customs Register 1797-1826*, Shelburne County Museum, on loan from Ian Campbell. For the use of the term "cruiser" by neutrals, see letter from Thomas Fitzsimon, Feb. 17, 1801, *American State Papers*, Foreign Relations Vol. II, p. 347.

¹⁰⁵The preoccupation with the design and appearance of ships is perhaps to be expected in the romantic approach to privateering such as C.H.J. Snider's *Under the Red Jack*. However even a scholarly work such as Carl Swanson's *Predators and Prizes: American*

involved is worthwhile considering how privateering was organized around ships and ships companies. Privateers in the wars with Revolutionary France favoured larger vessels than in other periods, such as during the American Revolution and the War of 1812. The average size was 120 tons with a crew of 75 (See Appendix A) and square-rigged vessels were more popular than schooners. In comparison, the War of 1812 privateer vessels, were almost always schooners under 100 tons with correspondingly smaller crews. Privateer vessels in this period were larger because they made longer cruises, up to six months, to the distant Caribbean, compared to the short cruises of a few weeks off New England in wars with the United States

Three basic types of vessels were employed by the Nova Scotian privateers. The most common were full-rigged ships such as the *Charles Mary Wentworth* and the *General Bowyer*. Liverpool privateer owners especially favoured full-rigged ships, adding an extra mast to schooners and brigantines acquired for privateering. Although by size, in the navy they would be rated as ship-rigged sloops-of-war, their deck layout, with full quarterdecks, suggests the "frigates in miniature" of late eighteenth-century New England privateers.¹⁰⁶

In a slightly smaller range, brigs and brigantines such as the *Rover*, were also popular, and likely reflected the sharp flush-decked lines coming into fashion. A few schooners were also used, although they were substantially larger than the familiar coastal schooner. Privateering in the Caribbean demanded large vessels, both to sustain a long cruise, and to hold their own against the swarms of small "picaroon" gunboat privateers

Privateering and Imperial Warfare 1739-1748, focuses in great detail on preferred ship rigs and tonnage.

¹⁰⁶ A full-rigged ship has square sails on all three masts. See Appendix of ship rigs. Unfortunately no plans have survived from Nova Scotian privateers, but a survey with detailed dimensions, of the *General Bowyer*, suggests the "frigate in miniature" of vessels such as the *Rattlesnake* in Howard Chapelle's, The History of American Sailing Ships (New York: Bonanza Books, 1935), p.130-176.

based on French held islands.¹⁰⁷ The owners of the privateer vessel the *Frances Mary*, unwisely chose a small sloop for privateering, and she was captured on her first cruise.

The average size and rig of Nova Scotia privateers in this period was similar to vessels developed for the West Indies trade, which utilized large schooners, but mainly favoured square rigged vessels in the 130-ton range.¹⁰⁸ The external similarity was demanded by the winds and shallow waters of the Caribbean. It also, no doubt, helped the privateer vessels appear to be innocent merchantmen.

However, internally the privateer vessels were radically different, the most obvious difference being their armament. A detailed declaration of weapons filed in 1799 by the privateer ship, the *Duke of Kent*, provides a good illustration of the array of weapons aboard a privateer:

she is Mounted with Twenty Carriage Guns carrying Shot of four and Six pounds Weight, is - navigated with one hundred Men has thirty small arms One hundred Cutlasses Twenty Barrels of Powder - Thirty Eight Rounds of Great Shot and the said ship is Victualled for Six months...¹⁰⁹

Cannons, often called guns or the "Great Guns" in logbooks, were the primary armament. They were usually loaned by the Admiralty from the Navy Dockyard stores at Halifax, along with shot (cannon balls and grapeshot). In the first year of privateering alone, Liverpool privateers were loaned 27 cannons and over 1600 rounds of shot by the Halifax dockyard¹¹⁰. The government supply in the form of an expensive item illustrates the level of government support and encouragement enjoyed by privateers. The most

¹⁰⁷H.J.K. Jenkins "Privateers, Picaroons, Pirates: West Indian Commerce Raiders, 1793-1801," *Mariner's Mirror* 73,2 (1987): p.183.

¹⁰⁸Nova Scotia and New Englanders both preferred vessels in the 130-ton range for the West Indies. The preference of British shipowners for larger vessels, unsuitable for the island trade, has been offered as one reason why American vessels were so successful in supplying the British West Indies. John Bartlett Brebner, *North Atlantic Triangle*, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1949) p. 171.

¹⁰⁹Declaration of Joseph Freeman, Jan. 7 1805, PANS MG 20 Vol. 701 #20.

¹¹⁰PANS MG 1, Vol. 980, No. 4.

common guns were four pounders, that is, guns that fired a ball weighing four pounds. Four pound guns were short range and fired shot of modest destructive power. "Our crack four pounders made an awful din, but with one fat ball the Yank stove us in," Stan Rogers observed perceptively in "Barrett's Privateers".¹¹¹ Privateers preferred heavier guns, ideally six pounders with a couple of nine pounders as long range "chase guns" to catch fleeing ships. However, the government qualified its support of privateering by reserving most of the heavier guns for Royal Navy vessels and also required privateers to hand over the heavier guns they captured for naval use. Four pounders did have the advantage of weighing little, thus making a privateer vessel faster and more sea worthy. Cannons made ships top-heavy and in bad weather were usually taken from their carriages and secured below. An encountering with the enemy immediately after a storm could be disastrous. The *Nelson*, from Shelburne, lost two dead and five injured in a nasty battle with a large French privateer schooner which caught her just after a major gale with half of her guns still stored in the hold.¹¹²

Although most privateer cannons were loaned by government, a few were purchased, likely the heavier-weight guns not available from the government. The *Royal Gazette* often carried advertisements for cannons for sale from Halifax merchants like William Forsyth.¹¹³

Swivel guns, small cannons mounted on swivelling racks along the rail, were not popular with Nova Scotia privateers in this period and only the *Nelson* and a couple of armed merchant trading ships appear to have mounted them. Swivels were only useful in

¹¹¹Stan Rogers, recording of "Barrett's Privateers", *Fogerty's Cove*, Dundas Ont: Cole Harbour Music Ltd, 1977. This song is imaginary, although details such as these are remarkably authentic.

¹¹²Thomas Parker to Joseph Barss, Snow Parker & Simeon Perkins 24 Dec. 1799. NA MG 23 J17.

¹¹³Forsyth-Smith advertised six and four pounder cannons for sale, complete with carriages, shot and gun tackle in 1798-99, starting in the *Royal Gazette* Oct. 30, 1798

close boarding operations and their unpopularity probably reflects the lack of such fighting by privateers from Nova Scotia.

Swords and cutlasses were the most common hand weapon and almost every member of the ship's company owned or was issued one by the owners. About a third of the crew, likely the marines and officers, carried pistols and muskets. Most of these were probably militia weapons issued to Liverpool at the beginning of the war. The main fighting platform for musketry, in naval ships, was along the rails, mostly on the quarterdeck, and on the forecastle at the bows, leaving the waist, in the centre of the ship, clear for the cannon guncrews.¹¹⁴ On some ships, musketmen were posted in platforms on the masts ("the fighting tops") but it is not clear whether the *Wentworth's* modest masts were large enough to accommodate both marines and seamen working sail. In addition to more orthodox weaponry, privateer vessels carried an array of less formal, but nasty, edged weapons including: "tomahawks, harpoons, lancers, boarding pikes and hatchets."¹¹⁵

Aside from carrying weapons, properly outfitted privateer vessels differed in many ways from merchant ships. The evidence of these elaborate preparations by Nova Scotia privateers speaks of the knowledge, skill and resources demanded by the specialized trade of privateering. Gunports and decks were screened from enemy view by waistcloths (large sheets of canvas dyed black). Decks were protected from falling debris and enemy boarders by boarding netting, tarred nets suspended above the decks. The rails were also lined with rolled-up hammocks held in specially designed racks acting as a sort of

¹¹⁴Simeon Perkins records 182 firearms in Queens County, June 6, 1798, IV, p. 100, and it is likely the privateering muskets were drawn from this pool. Marine deployment described by, N.A.M. Rodgers, *The Wooden World*, p. 55. Marines were also assigned to help the guncrews, when their musket fire was not needed. Micheal Lewis, *A Social History of the Navy*, p. 277.

¹¹⁵Janet Mullins, *Some Liverpool Chronicles*, (Liverpool NS: Liverpool Advance, 1941), p. 17.

sandbag against enemy shot and splinters.¹¹⁶ Purpose-built privateer vessels were built with high sides to shield gun crews and deter boarders and carried capstans, instead of the lighter windlass, to quickly haul up anchors and lifting guns.¹¹⁷

Tactics

The fundamental tactic in privateering was "the Chase". A letter from the captain of the *Duke of Kent* in 1799 contains a vivid report of the chase of an enemy vessel, the *Lady Hammond*.

At 3 P.M., the 8th Discovered a Sail a Running down. at 4 she discovered us, hall'd his wind and ran for the land. I amediately gave Chase, and gave him a gun, found him to be an armed Brig. it came on dark we lost Sight of him. at 9 P.M. being clost in with the land, Discovered a Sail and Supposing it to be the Brig, Gave Chase, and prepared for action. at 10 came within hail. She not giving a direct answer, I gave her a shot, She Steering for the land, and it being Veary dark, and within half a mile of the Land, I Sheared clost Along Side of him, and ordered him to ware amiatly, or else I would Give him another shot, and Sink him. he then Wore Round, and stood out from the Land. I sent my boat on board, took charge of him, and brought the Capt. on board.¹¹⁸

This passage convey the spirit and fundamentals of successful chase. Vigilance was essential as the *Lady Hammond* discovered to its chagrin. Privateer lookouts were encouraged with rewards, often stipulated in the ship's articles. John Rourk, a seaman in

¹¹⁶The Log of the Charles Mary Wentworth PANS MG 20 Vol. 215 #10 describes preparing boarding nets and waistclothes on Dec. 14, 1799.

¹¹⁷A detailed look at the characteristics of a privateer ship versus a merchant ship is provided the by appraisal of the *Brutus*, an American built privateer ship destined for sale in Havana but captured by a Halifax privateer. The *Brutus* was converted to another Halifax privateer vessel, the *General Bowyer*. NA RG 8 4 Vol. 33.

¹¹⁸Thomas Parker to Joseph Barss, Snow Parker & Simeon Perkins, Aug. 12, 1799. NA MG 23 J17.

the *Nelson*, received an extra £5 from the capture of the prize *Austria*, "he having first seen her".¹¹⁹

Speed was crucial; it demanded not only a fast ship, but sharp seamanship, as some of the piloting of the *Duke* and *Lady Hammond* illustrated. The privateer vessel would crowd on all available sail as the chase began, sometimes straining rigging to the point of breaking off topmasts and pulling bows and decks under water.¹²⁰ Evasive action by enemy ships usually consisted of attempts to out-sail the privateer vessel with speed or manoeuvring in shallow water. Occasionally enemy crews ran their vessels aground to escape from privateers, hauling money or valuables into the woods. Privateer boat crews sometimes then switched to land chases through bush and jungle, and in one case attacked a house where the Spanish crew had barricaded themselves.¹²¹ Often neutral ships did not try to elude privateers, hoping their neutral papers would prevent seizure, and well aware that evasion was evidence of guilt if brought before a Vice Admiralty court.

Most privateering actions were decided by the chase, and once escape was impossible enemy ships usually surrendered in a ritual one writer characterised as "formalised as a quadrille".¹²² The privateer would fire a shot or two to signal the merchant vessel to heave to. A boarding party would be sent to the merchant ship to secure it and inspect the cargo while the merchant captain was summoned to the privateer

¹¹⁹Crewlist of the *Nelson*, Sept. 2, 1800, PANS MG 1 Vol. 951, Item #735

¹²⁰The *Duke of Kent* lost a topmast in one chase in 1799 and flooded her decks during another. (Thomas Parker report, Aug. 12, 1799, NA MG 23 J17.) The *Charles Mury Wentworth* lost a foremast during a chase in 1800. (Log of the *Wentworth*, Mar. 26, 1800). In a famous action in the War of 1812, a Royal Navy schooner carrying too much sail while chasing an American privateer actually sailed right under water and sank with all hands! Howard Chapelle, *History of American Sailing Ships*, (New York: Bonanza Books, 1935).

¹²¹Log of *Wentworth*, Dec. 28, 1799.

¹²²Melvin Jackson, *Privateers in Charleston*, Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1969, p. vi.

vessel with his papers. If the captured ship claimed to be neutral, a critical decision had to be made at this point. Seizing a bona-fide neutral ship would mean a long, expensive court case. However ship's papers were frequently false. Privateers carefully watched for an inconsistency or odd behaviour. The *Nelson* from Shelburne carried a "boarding officer" who specialized in inspecting merchant ships and received almost as many shares as the captain.¹²³ On other privateer vessels the first officer carried out this duty.

Daring "cutting out" operations were occasionally used by Nova Scotian privateers. This involved sending the ship's small boats into an enemy harbour at night and taking ships at anchor. A Liverpool story of uncertain origin describes a cutting out operation in La Guaira Harbour by a Liverpool privateer:

In the dark of the moon, several jolly boats and cutters from Liverpool privateers rowed in without even getting a hail from the Round Tower.¹²⁴

At least one prize was taken by Nova Scotian privateers in this extremely risky method. The schooner *Fame* was cut out from an unspecified harbour, likely on the island of Puerto Rico. An attempted cutting out operation in Guadeloupe Harbour by the *Charles Mary Wentworth* in 1800 was foiled by a barking dog aboard one of the target ships.¹²⁵ The risks of cutting out were brought home in 1805 when ten Nova Scotians were captured in an attempted cutting out operations at Puerto Rico.¹²⁶

¹²³Crewlist of the *Nelson* PANS White Collection MG I Vol. 951 Item 735.

¹²⁴This was a story recorded by F.F. Tupper in *Historic Liverpool* (Liverpool: Advance Publishing, 1944). He believed it involved the crew of the privateer sloop *Francis Mary*, who cut out a prize called the *El Hercules*. However Perkins, newspapers and the Vice Admiralty records don't record this capture. The *Hercules* could have been condemned in the West Indies or Tupper may have confused its capture with a different vessel.

¹²⁵The *Perkins Diary* leaves blank the port where the *Fame* was taken: "A prize Schooner Arrives from the Rover cut out from ____." May 6, 1801, IV, p.303. The barking dogs described in the Log of the *Wentworth*, Mar. 16, 1800.

¹²⁶*Perkins Diary*, Aug. 3, 1805, V, p. 131.

Nova Scotia privateers made several attacks on land fortifications in this period, not something usually expected of privateers. They were all located on islands, capes and bays on the "Spanish Main", what is today the coast of Venezuela

Date	Location	Target	Attacked by	Outcome
July 17, 1799	Cumana Bay	Spanish Fort with 18 cannon	C. M. Wentworth	Fort taken without casualties. Cannon spiked and pushed into sea. Powder, muskets, artillery equipment captured ¹²⁷
July 22, 1799	Conama Island	Spanish Fort with 5 cannons	C. M. Wentworth	Fort taken, 1 privateer killed, 5 Spanish prisoners taken. Cannon spiked & pushed over cliff. Powder and Muskets captured ¹²⁸
Dec. 31, 1799	Blanquilla Island	Spanish battery	Duke of Kent & Lord Spencer	Battery destroyed with little opposition, most of garrison away ¹²⁹
Jan. 27, 1800	Cape Horn Bay	Spanish battery	C. M. Wentworth & Duke of Kent	Unable to land due to heavy surf and stiff enemy fire ¹³⁰

The selection of these targets raises some interesting questions. Attacking fortifications does not fit the "self serving" explanation of privateering, as such targets "offered hard knocks and no prize money". They may perhaps have been taken to secure a useful anchorages or silence batteries that protected potential prizes. However the wording of the following reports indicates a different explanation. "At 12, Sent the boats into the bay, they finding no vessels there thought proper to go in and destroy the fort of five 12 pounders" and "in the name of our Lord the King, having taken possession of a Fort belonging to the said King of Spain". This suggests that the forts offered an opportunity to make a gesture of military prowess, an enhancement of reputation. The fact that one attack was carried out while a Royal Navy frigate was nearby, suggests this, as does the praise these actions earned in Wentworth's dispatches to London

a Privateer fitted out & armed at Liverpool in this Province proves the great enterprize and spirit of the people & that they are useful to His

¹²⁷Report by Joseph Freeman, PRO CO217 Vol. 70, p.193, Mfm 13866

¹²⁸NA RG 8 4 Vol. 115; Perkins Diary Sept. 4, 1799, p.187

¹²⁹PANS MG 20 Vol. 215 #10.

¹³⁰Ibid

Majestys Service by destroying the Forts, Ordnance & munitions of his Enemies ¹³¹

The "forts" attacked were not big fortresses, but mostly gun batteries fortified with earthworks and palisades. Sometimes they were weakly garrisoned, but some of them provided stout resistance and required considerable skill. The attack on the Cape Horn Bay battery was especially daunting. The *Charles Mary Wentworth* anchored in range of the battery and bombarded it from different angles swinging on specially rigged anchor cables, while the *Duke of Kent* manoeuvred to deliver close broadsides in support of an amphibious assault by small boats on nearby beaches. However heavy surf on the beaches backed up by intense enemy musket fire made a landing impossible, or at least too costly for privateering considerations. ¹³²

Co-ordination between Nova Scotian privateer vessels was very common in this period. The small squadrons of Liverpool privateers would leave Nova Scotia together and cruise the same area of the Caribbean, sometimes in close company, sometimes separating for several weeks. They not only sailed together, but used flag signals to co-ordinate attacks and share information. This mutual aid was important not only in obtaining prizes, but also for emergencies. When the *Charles Mary Wentworth* briefly ran afoul of a reef off Point Arilia on the Spanish Main, Jan. 1, 1800, her emergency signals brought swift aid from her consorts, the *Duke of Kent* and *Lord Spencer*. ¹³³ When the *Lord Spencer* hit a reef and sank in February 1800, her crew were rescued by the Shelburne privateer, the *Nelson*. The *Nelson*, which must have been tremendously crowded, carried the extra crew, for 16 days until meeting the *Duke of Kent*, who gave the *Spencer's* crew a captured Spanish schooner to continue their cruise. ¹³⁴ The costs

¹³¹Wentworth to Portland, Sept. 29, 1799, PRO CO 217 Vol. 70 p.188, Mfm 13866.

¹³²Log of the *Wentworth*, Jan. 27, 1800.

¹³³Log of the *Wentworth*, Jan. 1, 1800.

¹³⁴*Perkins Diary*, May 10, 1800, IV, p.227; Log of *Wentworth*, April 7, 1800.

and rewards of these shared cruises would have been subject to special agreements, which have unfortunately not survived, although Perkins notes having to negotiate with the *Nelson's* owners over the salvage of the *Lord Spencer*.¹³⁵

Nova Scotian privateers also co-operated at times with other British privateers. The *Charles Mary Wentworth* made joint attacks off Guadeloupe with the Antigua privateer *Lydia* and exchanged information and signals on several occasions with two Bermuda privateer ships, the *Experiment* and *Lord Liverpool*.¹³⁶ These relationships were not always harmonious. When the *Duke of Kent* joined forces with the *Experiment* to patrol the Mona Passage in March of 1800, an argument over a shared prize resulted in a court case that dragged on for three years.¹³⁷

Privateers generally had a sinister reputation for attacking enemy settlements with no military and little commercial value; purely loot-gathering marauding expeditions. Attacking the homes and settlements of unsuspecting families carried a nasty stigma. Marryat, who served in the Royal Navy at the time, described this practice:

This system of marauding is considered the basest of all modern warfare, no quarter is ever given to those who are taken in the attempt. In return the privateersmen hesitate at no barbarity when engaged in such enterprizes.¹³⁸

This tactic, very popular with American privateers in the American Revolution, was sometimes practised by British privateers in the Caribbean, often enough to cause Parliament to pass a bill in 1809 outlawing "privateer depredations on the coast of the

¹³⁵Perkins Diary, June 13, 1800, IV, p.234.

¹³⁶Log of the *Wentworth* Jan. 18, 1800 (*Experiment*); Feb. 10, 1800 (*Lord Liverpool*).

¹³⁷NA RG 8 IV Vol. 32 "St. Michael". Capt. Hezekiah Frith of the *Experiment* was finally awarded a half of the prize polacca *St. Michael*. Perkins Diary Sept. 28, 1802, IV, p. 420.

¹³⁸This description taken for a novel by Marryat but reflects his naval experience, as well as expressing his Navy hostility to privateers. Frederick Marryat. *The Privateersman*, (London: J.M. Dent & sons, 1915), p. 7.

enemy for the purpose of plundering individuals".¹³⁹ Bermuda papers record the exchange of crew members of one Halifax privateer ship who were captured ashore on Puerto Rico, possibly raiding ashore.¹⁴⁰ The log of the *Charles Mary Wentworth* does not record any such looting raids during her six-month cruise, although one can speculate that such raids would be deliberately unrecorded. It does describe nightly forays along the coastline by the *Wentworth's* small boats. Led by a young Lieutenant Enos Collins, they seized small cargoes of cocoa and money for Spanish launches (small open boats). Some nights, they could have struck inland. In his old age, Collins would refer cryptically to his Caribbean days, "You will observe sir there were many things happened that we don't care to talk about."¹⁴¹

On the other hand, the *Wentworth's* log makes frequent reference to purchasing and bartering supplies from Spanish colonists. When low on provisions, Nova Scotian privateers seem to have preferred the ploy of disguising themselves as neutral Americans and buying provisions from isolated Spanish settlements. Many small Spanish vessels, which turned out to be fishing boats, were released unmolested. While they were lawful prizes, they were not worth the effort.¹⁴²

Although the evidence is sparse, it would seem on balance that land raids were certainly not a priority with Nova Scotia privateers in the Caribbean, and probably infrequently resorted to when a cruise had come up empty. They had come a long way to capture large ships full of valuable cargoes, not steal shoebuckles and china. Land raids

¹³⁹Henry Bourguignon, *Sir William Scott, Lord Stowell*, (Cambridge G.B: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 254.

¹⁴⁰Henry Wilkson, *Bermuda from Sail to Steam* Vol. 1, (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 146.

¹⁴¹*Letters and Papers of Enos Collins, Bulletin of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia*, No. 13 (Halifax: PANS, 1959), p. 5.

¹⁴²The *Wentworth Log*, records several of these buying and bartering trips under American colours: Feb. 15, April 4, April 15, 1800, PANS MG 20 vol. 215 #10.

could also be counter-productive for a privateer hoping to lurk and cruise with a low profile, as they tended to spread alarm and provoke defensive measures.

Cruising Grounds

In Thomas Raddall's novel, *Pride's Fancy*, an imaginary privateer owner gives sailing orders to one of his captains.

Make for the Mona Passage, say or amongst the Virgins and the loo'ward Isles for a lick at the French trade out o' Guadeloupe and Martinico . . . Failing all those places - and mind you its like trouting up our river at home, sometimes ye can pick up fish where-ever you drop a line, but most times ye've got to try from pool to pool - failing all these why, go down wind to the Main and cruise along between Margarita Island and the Cartegena roads. Been famous pickings on the coast in time past. No more galleons full o' gold and silver without escort like the old tales say. But there's a busy trade along the Main, cargoes o' cocoa, coffee, wine from old Spain, dyewood-don't turn up your nose at dyewood, Nathan, it fetches a mighty good price in Philadelphia or New York.¹⁴³

Privateers showed distinct preferences for certain cruising locations, based on past successes and fresh intelligence. The Vice Admiralty Court required the position of each capture, in latitude and longitude, from the privateer commander, and cross checked this with prisoner interrogations.¹⁴⁴ Plotting the captures on a map reveals the geographic distribution of privateer captures. (See Map 1) The far-flung nature of privateering in this era is immediately apparent with captures ranging from near Sable Island to the southern mid-Atlantic. Four main hunting grounds are evident. The most popular was "the Spanish Main", the Venezuela coast of South America, specifically the coast

¹⁴³Raddal, *Pride's Fancy*, pp. 133-134.

¹⁴⁴The location and cargo information is taken mostly from libel and interrogation documents Vice Admiralty casefiles, NA RG 8 IV. Sometimes approximate locations, "3 leagues from West end of Porto Rico" were given instead. Question three of the "standing interrogatories" for prisoners requested the position of capture. It was usually within a few degrees of the position given by privateers, although many prisoners were junior seamen and gave only approximate positions.

between Margarita Island and Puerto Cavello. These captures yielded outbound cargoes of cocoa and indigo and inbound cargoes of wine, brandy and flour.

Many captures were also made amongst the islands of the Caribbean, with the Mona Passage, between Puerto Rico and Santo Domingo being the most popular location. Vessels with sugar, rum and tobacco from Caribbean islands were frequently taken here.

A third group broadly encompassed the mid-Atlantic and included vessels from both the Spanish Main and the islands, bound with cargoes for Europe. A related fourth interception area was off the coast of the United States. These were usually vessels with enemy cargoes of cocoa, sugar and other produce of French and Spanish colonies, which had been transhipped in American ports to evade the British blockade.

Relations and Operations with the Royal Navy

Traditionally scholars have seen great hostility between privateers and the Royal Navy, as they competed for both manpower and enemy prizes. While privateers suffered considerably from naval impressment in the Caribbean, they enjoyed good relations with the Royal Navy on the Halifax station, and managed to establish understandings with certain naval ships in the West Indies. Simeon Perkins found Admiral George Vandeput co-operative when the privateers began to organise in 1798, "I wait on the Admiral. Introduced by Mr. Uniacke. He is very agreeable, & willing to Supply us with the Guns, Shot, &c, for the Privateer." Vandeput not only armed Perkins's privateer, but even lent his theatre box to Perkins for a performance that night.¹⁴⁵

The instructions issued to privateers required them to assist the Admiralty by gathering information "of the designs of the enemy, of any of their fleets, ships vessels or

¹⁴⁵Perkins Diary June 29, 1798 The show, a musical called The City Romp along with some sort of comedy called Chrononbotonthologos, was the first play Perkins had ever seen, aside from visiting theatre troops in Liverpool. He was not very impressed.

parties".¹⁴⁶ One of the reports submitted by the *Charles Mary Wentworth* illustrates this function:

August the 9 Left the Spanish Main and stood for Curacao for the Purpose of Examining the Island. August the 10, made the Island Examined the Harbour Saw two Dutch Frigates there one having her Sails bent and ready for sea the other her Topmast Launched and very few men on board Saw a number of small privateer? in the harbour, by the Best information that I Could, there were 600 Cannon mounted on the Island.¹⁴⁷

In the West Indies, privateer vessels usually kept well out of the way of Royal Navy ships, both to avoid impressment of their seamen and to avoid having their prizes seized by unscrupulous navy commanders who sometimes would claim a privateer prize as their own.¹⁴⁸ However there were many exceptions to this friction. While the *Charles Mary Wentworth* had nine men pressed by the navy frigate HMS *La Unite* in 1799, many other navy ships on the same cruise left the *Wentworth* unmolested, such as HMS *Boston* which "very politely" stopped the *Wentworth* to check her papers and gather intelligence.¹⁴⁹

On occasion, privateer ships cruised in company with Royal Navy ships. The *Duke of Kent* spent several days with HMS *Boston* in January of 1800, sharing a capture of a schooner.¹⁵⁰ The *Duke of Kent's* commander, at this time was Joseph Freeman who excelled at cultivating good relations with the Royal Navy. Later in the War of 1812,

¹⁴⁶Starkey, *British Privateering*, p. 24-25.

¹⁴⁷Report by Joseph Freeman, PRO CO217 Vol. 70, p.193, Mfm 13866.

¹⁴⁸The *Nelson* lost a prize this way to the HMS *Brunswick*. There were several examples of questionable navy claims, often achieved with violent intimidation of privateer crews, to privateer prizes both in the War of 1812 and the American Revolution. Snider, *Under the Red Jack*, p. 103-111. George Mullane, "The Privateers of Nova Scotia, 1756-1783", *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society*, XX, (1921) p. 36-39.

¹⁴⁹Log of *Wentworth*, Jan. 19, 1800

¹⁵⁰Log of *Wentworth*, Jan. 26 & 27, 1800. This prize was probably sent to a West Indies Vice Admiralty Court as there are no records about it in Nova Scotia.

Freeman often teamed up with many navy ships on cruises to share in more captures, and playing a crucial role in the destruction of the famous American privateer, the *Young Teazer*, and re-enforcing the crew of HMS *Shannon* just before its duel with the USS *Chesapeake*.¹⁵¹ After his noted defeat of three Spanish warships in 1800, Alexander Godfrey, of the *Rover*, is believed to have been offered a Royal navy commission in recognition of his skills and achievement.¹⁵² The Bermuda privateer ship the *Experiment*, under Hezekiah Frith also made joint cruises with Royal Navy vessels at this time and was attached to a navy squadron for a month.¹⁵³ This sort of co-operation was not as uncommon as many historians have assumed, and largely explored evidence suggests that the Royal Navy often used privateers as tenders and scouts and it was far from unheard of for navy officers to take a spell at privateering between naval commands

Overall Military Value of Privateering

The military value of Nova Scotia's privateering fleet can be measured in two ways: its imperial value and its local or community value. The first involves privateering's contribution to Britain's war with France and Spain. The second involves privateering's contribution to the defence of Nova Scotia.

¹⁵¹Snider, *Under the Red Jack*, p.122, 133, 134,146.

¹⁵²*Halifax Monthly Magazine*, (Vol. 2, 1853) pp.338-349. Naval records have not been explored on this point, but such an offer would have been quite plausible. One of the most prominent Royal Navy officers in early Halifax, John Rouse, was a former privateersman. After distinguishing himself at Louisbourg in 1745, he was commissioned into the Royal Navy. Swanson, *Predators and Prizes*, p. 67. Navy officers became privateersmen and vica-versa more often than generally acknowledged. Colin Elliot, "Some Transactions of a Dartmouth Privateer During the French Wars at the End of the Eighteenth Century" in *Studies in British Privateering, Trading Enterprize and Seamen's Welfare, 1775-1900*, (No. 17 Exeter Papers in Economic History), p 37.

¹⁵³Jean de Chantal Kennedy Frith of Bermuda: *Gentlemen Privateer*, (Hamilton:: Bermuda Books, 1964), p. 80.

The primary purpose of privateering was to destroy the enemy's trade, and with their 60 captures, the privateers of Nova Scotia made a contribution. In the grand scale of the war, it was a modest contribution to the hundreds of merchant vessels taken by the navy and British privateer forces all over the empire. However when the newspaper reports of the state of the nation speech, by Lord Dundas, arrived in Liverpool in May of 1801, Simeon Perkins made careful note of the scorecard of enemy vessels taken so far in the war: "80 ships of line, 181 frigates, 224 smaller Ships of War, and 743 Vessels of different Kinds." No doubt, Perkins was resting content that Liverpool's contribution could be counted among the big picture.¹⁵⁴

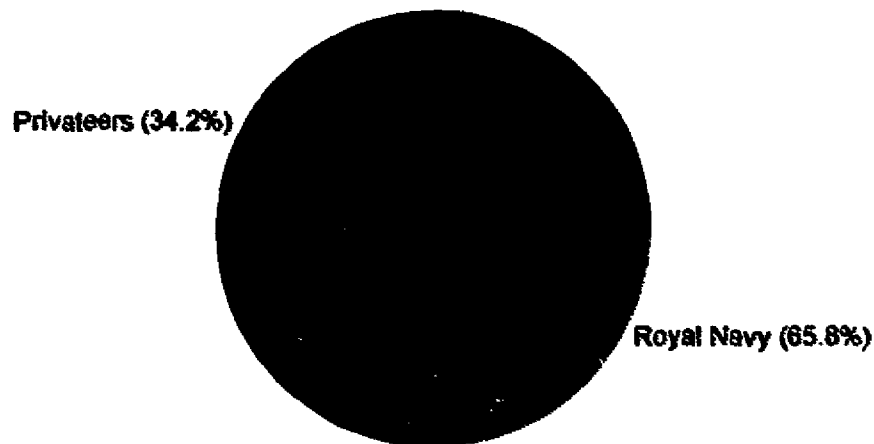
The effects of Nova Scotian privateers were most felt by the Spanish Colonies in Venezuela. The small privateering squadrons conducted an effective blockade of northern Venezuela for weeks at a time, often shutting down important harbours such as La Guaira, the port of entry for Caracas. This was a significant contribution as France had intended Spain to be a useful ally for its naval resources and rich colonial revenues, and the potential of Spain's resources was a serious concern of British strategists. The severe losses to Spanish shipping to its American colonies in the late 1790s was "the most damaging in the history of the Spanish Empire" and ended for good the Spanish monopoly on trade with its own colonies as the neutral ships, especially American, became a permanent fixture.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴Perkins *Diary* May 23, 1801, IV, p. 306. Lord Dundas was the British Secretary of War 1794-1801. *Dictionary of National Biography*, p. 372.

¹⁵⁵Christopher Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*, Manchester: Manchester U. Press, 1992), p. 80. John Lynch, *Bourbon Spain*, Oxford: Basil, Blackwell, 1989, p. 395. Spanish colonial exports fell by 49 per cent from 1799 to 1801, the peak years of Nova Scotian privateering.

Of course privateers were not the only commerce destroyers. Some significant patterns emerge when the results of the Nova Scotia privateers are compared with their Royal Navy counterparts operating from Halifax.¹⁵⁶

Prizes to the Royal Navy and Privateers
Adjudicated in Halifax 1798-1805



Source: Vice Admiralty Court Register National Archives NA RG 8 IV Vol. 115

Privateers accounted for over a third of the 158 prizes taken before the Vice Admiralty Court in Halifax during the privateering era. Consider the ratio of predators to prizes between 1798 and 1805:

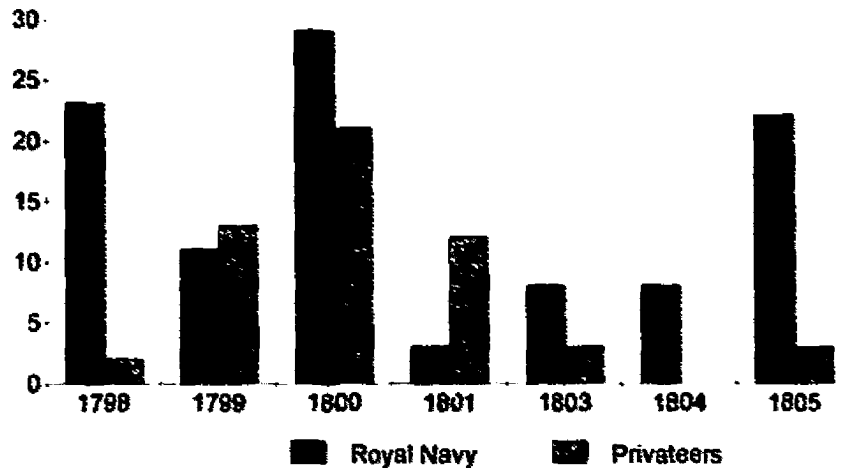
	Vessels	Prizes	Ratio
Privateers	12	54	4.5
Royal Navy	28	104	3.7 ¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶Numbers from both charts are taken from a registry of Halifax prize court cases. NA RG 8 IV Vol. 115, p4999-5000. Only captured vessels brought to Halifax are measured. However both privateer owners and naval commanders usually preferred to bring prizes to their homeports where their own agents and patrons could assist in a prompt and generous decisions in their favour.

¹⁵⁷This ratio compares active privateers vessels with navy vessels that made prizes. It

Despite some privateers who took no prizes, the Nova Scotian privateers were on average, quite efficient commerce destroyers, slightly more successful than the various Royal Navy ships assigned to Halifax, who of course had less rewarding duties such as convoy protection.

If each year is looked at individually, the privateering participation shows some interesting patterns:



Privateers took more ships than the navy in 1799 and came close to equalling navy captures in 1800. Interestingly, the drop in navy captures in 1799, was almost equal to the rise in privateer prizes. In a broader strategic sense this could be seen taking the commerce-destroying role from navy ships and freeing them for more urgent naval tasks such as seeking enemy warships or convoy protection. Of course from a naval point of view, this would confirm the frequent accusation that privateers took prizes away from the navy. However this drop in naval captures could also reflect the reassignment of Royal Navy ships from the fluctuating Halifax station. Both navy ships and the privateers felt the reversal of Admiralty policy towards neutral ships, with their captures falling off

leaves out armed trading vessels as well as navy vessels that did not take prizes. The total of 28 Royal Navy ships, 1798-1805, is taken from the National Archives of Canada indexed Finding Aid to the Vice Admiralty Collection NA RG 8 IV p. 22 to p. 30.

in 1801, but the navy, unlike the privateers, did not depend on captured ships to operate, so its commerce raiding continued, albeit at a lesser rate until a sharp rise in 1805.

Privateers tended to cruise areas, such as the coast of Venezuela, that were poorly patrolled by the navy and they proved adept at capturing smaller vessels that the navy would not bother with, or more usually, could not catch.¹⁵⁸ Naval cruisers were larger and had deeper draughts than privateer vessels. They operated poorly in coastal areas and could seldom catch swift, shallow draught vessels. The Royal Navy had a chronic problem operating smaller warships thanks to bad ship design, high desertion rates and demoralised crews, especially in colonial theatres.¹⁵⁹ This problem was later addressed, in large part by copying and converting captured privateers.¹⁶⁰

Aside from their primary role of commerce destruction, the Nova Scotia privateers made some direct military contributions. In total they captured about 60 enemy cannon in prizes. This ordnance was eagerly sought by the Halifax dockyard for navy use, especially six pounder guns were apparently in short supply.¹⁶¹ The capture of Spanish batteries along the Spanish Main destroyed at least 23 more cannons as well as capturing scores of muskets and gunpowder. The privateer brig, the *Rover* took a large

¹⁵⁸Bermuda privateers also succeeded in finding prizes that eluded the navy. Henry Wilkinson, Bermuda From Sail to Steam Vol. 1, (London: Oxford University Press, 1973) p. 146.

¹⁵⁹John Bromely considered the limitations of navy versus privateer coastal operations in "Channel Island Privateers", Corsairs and Navies, p. 340. Alfred Thayer Mahan considered navy pursuit problems in The Influence of Seapower Upon the French Revolution and Empire, p. 210. A vivid description of the problems of a Royal Navy schooner in Halifax is in Harold Hahn's The Colonial Schooner, (Annapolis Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1981) p. 29.

¹⁶⁰Howard Chapelle, The Search for Speed Under Sail, (New York: Norton, 1967), p. 130.

¹⁶¹Perkins to Uniacke May 16, 1799, Perkins Diary, Vol. V, p. 463.

The shortage of six pounders was described by the Halifax agents of the *Nelson*, letter Oct. 11, 1799, PANS MG 1 Vol. 951 #637. About a fifth of the prizes taken were armed.

Garda Costa (the Spanish provincial marine) schooner in 1800, capturing seventy soldiers and seamen and killing at least thirty.¹⁶²

The Nova Scotia privateers had only modest success in capturing enemy privateers, taking only one small privateer and capturing a large ship newly built for privateering but lightly armed.¹⁶³ This does not seem to be for lack of trying. Nova Scotian privateer vessels fought at least ten engagements with French privateers. In two cases larger French privateers tried, unsuccessfully, to take the Nova Scotian vessels. However in most cases the Nova Scotian privateers deliberately sought them out, evidently they were under orders from their owners. Thomas Parker, captain of the *Duke of Kent*, felt compelled to offer apologies and explanations to the owners in a report where he described two unsuccessful chases of French privateer schooners, "I am very sorry to inform you that we have lost 2 French privateers mainly owing to our ships being crank, not having sufficient ballast, and that of the right kind."¹⁶⁴ These French privateer schooners were able to outsail Parker. On other occasions, French privateers escaped by dashing into the safety of Guadeloupe's harbour, even though the Nova Scotians pursued them until bracketed by the fire of heavy shore batteries.¹⁶⁵

Turning from broad imperial issues in the Caribbean, to the provincial military issues of Nova Scotia, privateering played an auxiliary role in the defence of Nova Scotia. John Wentworth clearly saw the privateers as a defensive asset. He preceded his plea for privateering authority in 1793 with a description of the lack of naval ships on station and

¹⁶²The captured schooner was the *Santa Rita*, 120 tons, 12 guns. In this engagement, the *Rover* also severely damaged two Spanish gunboats that accompanied the *Santa Rita*. The Spanish losses were well detailed by four Spanish prisoners interrogated by the Vice Admiralty Court. NA RG 8 IV Vol. 39 "Santa Rita".

¹⁶³The *Nymph* took a French privateer of 4 guns in 1798, *Royal Gazette*, Dec. 28, 1798. The Halifax privateer ship, the *Earl of Dublin*, took the *Brutus*, a 130-ton ship en route to sale to privateer buyers in Havana in 1800. NA RG 8 IV Vol. 33 "Brutus".

¹⁶⁴Thomas Parker to the agents of the Duke of Kent, Aug. 12, 1799. NA MG 23 J17.

¹⁶⁵Log of Wentworth, Mar 17, 1800.

then pleaded. "... I wish to God, I had the armed Schooner mentioned in my previous letters ... Instructions have been sent to the Judge of Admiralty, for granting Letters of Marque, but no letter or commission to me to issue the commissions¹⁶⁶

In 1794 when a French fleet at New York raised an invasion scare, Wentworth listed the forces at his disposal, and included the 186 men serving in the various armed trading ships at Halifax, a force that was almost equal to the 200 men in the single naval frigate on station.¹⁶⁷

On two occasions the Liverpool privateers acted directly as defensive units for the town. In August of 1803, three small French privateers arrived to lay in wait off of Liverpool Harbour. Unfortunately for them, Liverpool was a rather poor choice for a raid at this time, as it was swarming with armed privateersmen preparing for a cruise. At the first news of the French privateers, the Liverpool privateers manned several small boats and attacked the French with musket fire, sending them fleeing into the Atlantic. On another occasion, a large armed ship was reported to be ominously waiting at White Point, just outside the approaches to Liverpool Harbour. The privateer brig, the *Rover*, preparing for a cruise, quickly assembled its men, fitted sails and within an hour sailed out to challenge the stranger. She turned out to be a Halifax-bound merchant ship that had just made landfall from the Caribbean.¹⁶⁸

However, as rallying as these two examples were, if privateers were really an important defensive asset, Liverpool would have outfitted them in the first two years of the war when the invasion fears were greatest, instead of waiting five years to take up privateering. Moreover, there were many other occasions when reports of French privateers, and even the capture of Nova Scotia vessels, were not responded to by Liverpool privateers. In 1801, a French privateer took three or four vessels in the Cape

¹⁶⁶Wentworth to King, June 21, 1793, PRO CO217 Vol. 36, p. 179.

¹⁶⁷State of Force at Halifax, May 8, 1794 PRO CO 217 Vol. 36.

¹⁶⁸Perkins Diary Aug 5 & 6, 1803, IV, p. 479; Jan 18 1801, IV, p. 276.

Sable area. However, despite the presence of the privateer ship in Liverpool, the *Nymph*, newly arrived from a cruise, the Liverpool leadership opted instead to leave the task to forces from Halifax. A navy brig and two provincial armed brigs arrived the next day to drive off the French intruder.¹⁶⁹ Perkins did not offer any explanation. He did mention that the sails and equipment of the *Nymph* had been stored away, and perhaps her crew may have been dispersed.

The Nova Scotia privateers were not, as some writers (including Thomas Raddall) have suggested, the birth of the Canadian Navy.¹⁷⁰ They did not create a lasting naval establishment and their operations, however significant at the time, were too independent, to qualify as a regular navy. If any case could be made in this area, it would apply to the Provincial Marine vessels such as the *Earl of Moira*. However, even these units were temporary products of a crisis, and left little military legacy.

However privateers make a strong case to be considered as a seagoing militia, a community controlled military force that answered to local needs and one that was at least as effective as the Sea Fencible reserve units being created at the same time in Britain.¹⁷¹ This function is strongly supported by the many links between the Queens County militia regiment and its privateer companies. There was a noticeable parallel between leadership of the Queens County militia and the Liverpool privateers.

¹⁶⁹Perkins *Diary* Aug. 9, 11 & 19, 1801, IV, p. 322, 323, 325.

¹⁷⁰Raddall made this claim in *The Rover*, p.6.

¹⁷¹The Sea Fencibles manned Martello Towers and small armed vessels to protect shipping and harass French invasion preparations from 1793 to 1810. Their effectiveness varied but they eventually numbered 25,000 men. Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*, p. 9.

	Militia Rank	Privateer Station
Sim Perkins	Colonel	Principal owner & agent for privateer vessels
Nathaniel Freeman	Lt. Col	Lieut C.M. Wentworth
William Freeman	Major	
Nathan Tupper	Capt	Lieut (1799) & Capt (1800) C.M. Wentworth
Joseph Barfs	Capt	Principal owner & agent for several vessels
Hallet Collins	1st Lieut	Principal owner of several privateer vessels
Snow Parker	1st Lieut	Principal owner & agent of several privateer vessels
Issac Dexter	2nd Lieut	Builds & refits privateers, son on C.M. Wentworth
Elkanah Freeman	2nd Lieut	2nd Lieut Lord Spencer ¹⁷²

Privateer owners picked captains and the captain picked his senior officers. This process integrated the privateers within a familiar structure of command closely tied to the community in which they lived. This overlap was not restricted to privateer owners and officers but also encompassed a large proportion of the seamen and marines who volunteered to sail under officers they knew from the militia service on the land. The reputation of certain officers created important bonds, similar to the "command by respect" of leaders in New England's volunteer provincial units.¹⁷³

Other parallels existed in both material and official guise. The uniforms of the privateer marines were borrowed from the Queens County militia and the muskets and sidearms on privateers were almost certainly militia weapons. The Governor recognized the nature of militia service at sea with special warrants for militia members to serve on privateers. The main purpose of these warrants was to protect privateers from navy pressgangs but, as these protection warrants were subject to careful scrutiny by naval commanders, they were based on a genuine reality of militia service at sea.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷²PANS RG 1 v 171 p132 Return of the Queens County Militia May 5 1795.

¹⁷³Steven Eames, "Rustic Warriors: Warfare and the Provincial Soldier on the Northern Frontier, 1689-1748", (Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Hampshire, 1989), pp. 324-235.

¹⁷⁴Thomas Raddall discusses militia uniforms in the *The Rover*, p. 21. The Queens County militia were issued 200 muskets at the beginning of the war to distribute at their discretion. *Perkins Diary*, III, Aug. 17, 1793, p. 246. One of several militia warrants issued for the privateers was: Warrant by John Wentworth for 100 men of the Queens Co. Militia to serve on the *Duke of Kent*, Nov. 4, 1799, MG 20, Vol. 702, Item No. 34.

The land and sea militias of Liverpool also carried out overlapping functions. Privateers and militia call-ups both provided wages, food and work for the unemployed. Interestingly, the land militia of Liverpool also captured ships and shared in Vice Admiralty awards. In 1797 the militia secured a French ship, the *Bernsdorf*, that was stranded near Liverpool and after a struggle with Halifax authorities, received a share of its capture. Most of the militia men who led this seizure became privateers soon after.¹⁷⁵

Paying for themselves by captures, privateers were by nature more offensive than defensive weapons. However the Liverpool privateers probably saw a defensive side to their privateering. Excluded from peacefully trading in the Caribbean, they were not going to relinquish the southern waters without a struggle and thus replaced their trading ventures with military ones. Many of their prizes belonged to the competitors who had seized the Caribbean trade, neutral American merchants ships.¹⁷⁶ The way privateering changed to the perception of security in Liverpool can clearly be seen in Simeon Perkin's reactions to strange sails on the horizon of Liverpool Bay. Before privateering, an unrecognised ship was a cause for alarm, mustering of the militia, priming of the cannons at Fort Point. After the advent of privateering, strange sails were a cause for optimism, often being a new prize sent in by Liverpool's privateers.¹⁷⁷ Privateering had largely made Liverpool a well-armed and militarily organized community, a poor choice of target for enemy raids and a far cry from its helpless status in the early stages of the

¹⁷⁵The militia men who took the *Bernsdorf* initially demanded to immediately divide its salvage among themselves, fearing that the navy would take all the proceeds. They were persuaded by militia officers to submit its capture to the Vice Admiralty Court which eventually awarded the militia a portion. *Perkins Diary*, III, p.xxiv-xxv; July 8, 1797, IV, p. 37.

¹⁷⁶Interestingly American armed merchant ships also carried the burden of trade defence in this period. John Pelzer, "Armed Merchantmen and Privateers: Another Perspective On America's Quasi-War With France", *American Neptune*, Vol. 50 No. 4, p. 270.

¹⁷⁷Compare the alarmed reaction to a strange ship on Jan. 10, 1797, IV, p. 3 to Perkins' hopeful reaction to another strange sail on Sept. 18 1798, "A Brig appears in the Harbour. We wish it a Prize."

American Revolution. Instead of being a helpless victim of a huge international struggle, Liverpool had become a player.

THE BUSINESS OF PRIVATEERING

Privateering as a business was part of a larger industry of processing, buying and selling captured enemy vessels in wartime. Sometimes called "prizemaking", this business involved a large numbers of participants. Next to supplying the navy and dockyard, it was one of the chief economic activities in Halifax during wartime and one that offered a chance at spectacular profits.

This business revolved around the Vice Admiralty Courts. The Court of Vice Admiralty dealt with a wide range of shipping issues ranging from salvage and wage disputes to customs seizures. Its most important function in wartime, however, was to act as prize court, judging captured enemy shipping. Its procedures, for the times were considered straightforward and fast (unless a decision was appealed to London, which usually entailed a delay of at least two and sometimes four years.) A captured ship was "libelled" by the attorney general in a document, alleging it was enemy property. The judge allowed the libel and set a date for a trial, usually within two weeks of its capture. The trial would consider a range of evidence including the captured ship's papers and the interrogation (but not cross examination) of the captured crew members and affidavits of witnesses. If judged as enemy property the ship or cargo would be "condemned" and ordered sold at auction. The court fees would be deducted from the auction proceeds as well as customs and the auctioneer's commission. (Until 1708, the Crown took a tenth of privateer captures and a third of navy captures, but this was abolished to allow the prize money, minus costs and customs, to "the encouragement of Seamen".¹⁷⁸)

¹⁷⁸John Bromley, "Prize Office and Prize Court", Corsairs and Navies, p. 464.

The net proceeds would then be released to the privateer agents, "the captors", to distribute according to their ship's articles. If a captured ship was not condemned, it would be released to its original owners, "the claimants", upon payment of fees by the claimant or the privateer, depending of the validity of the capture.¹⁷⁹

The schooner *Maria* is an example of all the people who had a hand in prizemaking. The 90-ton schooner *Maria* was captured off Florida by the Liverpool privateer ship, the *Nymph* in 1801. She was condemned by the court and ordered sold in Liverpool, where bidders paid £1939 for the schooner and her cargo of sugar and cotton.

Of the £1939 - £172 was taken by provincial and imperial customs
 £58 to the Marshall as commission for the auction
 £11 to the Judge of Vice Admiralty for Adjudication fees
 £70 to the Attorney General
 £80 to the Deputy Marshall for keeping the schooner in custody
 £31 to the agents, Simeon Perkins
 £1 to labourers for mooring and unloading
 £98 to the Deputy Registrar for interrogations, accounts, commission.

After all these deductions, the net value of £1406 would be split between the owners and the crew. The *Nymph* had a crew of 90, probably with a 150 shares in total, so each seamen would receive £4-10. However a final player entered the picture in the form of William Forsyth, a Halifax merchant acting as agent for the *Maria's* owner. He appealed the court's decision, eventually losing, but freezing up the money from the *Maria* until 1804.

The *Maria* was purchased by Enos Collins, for £205. He evidently renamed her the *Ratler*, and sailed to the West Indies, returning the next spring, as a passenger in another vessel, likely having sold the schooner in southern waters.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹Arthur Stone, "The Admiralty Court in Colonial Nova Scotia", *Dalhousie Review*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Fall 1994), p. 67.

¹⁸⁰NA RG 8 IV Vol. 42 "Maria" p18423. Perkins Diary Oct. 25, 1801, April 7, 1802.

The diverse business structure of privateering went the range from privateer seamen, to officers, owners and agents and an array of officials. The distribution of a prize was set out by the ship's articles. The officers and crew were entitled to half of prize proceeds. This was their return for labour and risk at sea. Amongst the crew, the prizemoney was distributed according to shares. The crewlist of the *Shelburne* privateer, the *Nelson* recorded the share held by each crew member. The captain held 8 shares; officers 5; petty officers 2 to 3 shares; seamen 1 share; and boys 1/4 to a 1/2 share.¹⁸¹

It is possible to broadly compare the distribution of prize proceeds among different types of warships. Nova Scotian privateers fell in the middle of a broad international spectrum of the sharing out of captured goods.

Captain - Seaman Share Ratios

	Royal Navy	British Privateers	Nova Scotia	United States	France	Pirate (1720s)
Captain	1/4 of total	12 to 16	8	8	6 to 8	2
Seaman	1	1	1	1	1	1

Nova Scotian privateers shared out in much the same way as New England privateers, and considerably more equitably than British privateers. Interestingly, despite the "Equalite-Fraternite-Liberte" emblazoned on their Letters of Marque, the French colonial privateers of this period distributed prize money in much the same way as their English colonial counterparts. No privateers approached the levels of equality practised by "Golden Age" pirates.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Crewlist of the *Nelson*, PANS MG 1 Vol. 951, #735.

¹⁸² Royal Navy share values - Rodgers, *Wooden World*, p. 128; British privateer share values - Starkey, *British Privateering*, p. 76; Nova Scotia share values - Crewlist of *Nelson* PANS MG1 Vol. 951 #735; United States share values - Ships' Articles from War of 1812 privateer "Buckskin" NA RG 8 IV Vol. 120 kindly located by Faye Kert in Ottawa; French share values: From "Role de l'Equipage" of three French Privateers NA RG 8 IV, "Jou Jou National" 1794 Vol 4, "Republican" 1794 Vol 5, "National Cockade"

The owners of the privateer were entitled to the other half of the prize proceeds and they retained ownership of the vessel. They were responsible for buying or building it, and outfitting it. Ownership of a privateer was seldom held by one person. In Liverpool, there were usually eight principal owners. Captains of Liverpool privateer vessels, such as Joseph Freeman and Alexander Godfrey, often held owner's shares, in addition to their captain's share. The principal owners met regularly to settle bills and make decisions on future cruises and court decisions.

Ownership of Liverpool privateer vessels was well distributed among the merchant class of the town. Hallet Collins, Snow Parker, Joseph Freeman, Joseph Barss Senior, Simeon Perkins, Thomas Bennett, John Roberts, and Zebulon Perkins were the principal owners of the *Charles Mary Wentworth* and would remain the core owners of the *Duke of Kent* and the *Rover*. Merchants often spread their privateer investment over several vessels. Perkins recorded his holdings at Christmas time in 1799:

The Privateer Accounts are got thro, the Ship C. Mary Wentworth's Bills, the Ship Duke of Kent's Bills; the Schooner Lord Spencer, Including the first Cost of the Schooner. I own 1/32 of the CMW, 1/16 of the Duke, 1/16 of the Lord Spencer, & my Son John 1/32 of the Spencer, which I make him a present of.¹⁸³

In Halifax, in contrast, the community of investors in privateering was smaller. A broad selection of the big merchant houses in Halifax outfitted armed merchant traders to protect their trade that might travel outside of convoy and acted as agents for privateer and navy captures. However, the circle of privateer owners was smaller, and they were drawn from the lower ranks of the merchant community. The two main Halifax privateers, the *Earl of Dublin* and *General Bowyer*, were owned by three principal

1795 Vol 8. Continental French privateers paid wages instead of shares, the captain making 400 francs a month, a seaman 120 to 160 francs a month Crowhurst, *French War on Trade*, p. 155; Pirate share values - Rediker, *Between the Devil*, p. 118.

¹⁸³ Perkins Diary, Dec 23 1799, IV, p. 206.

investors: Benjamin Etter, William Duffus and the Woodin family. Etter was a watchmaker; Duffus a shopkeeper and William Woodin dealt in wood and fuel.¹⁸⁴ They clearly came from the shopkeeper-craftsmen middle class of Halifax, not from its dominant merchant class.¹⁸⁵

Wise privateer investors invested in several ships. Not only did it increase the chance of sharing, albeit with in smaller portion, in a windfall cruise, but it also spread the burden of disaster, if the privateer was captured, or more seriously, if a capture was reversed by the courts with substantial interest or damages. A handful of privateering owners who bought sole ownership of their vessels were ruined when appeal courts in London reversed a condemned prize and, long after the proceeds had been spent and distributed, demanded re-embursement for the original owners. James Woodin in Halifax fell victim to this, as did Daniel Tucker in Bermuda.¹⁸⁶

In Liverpool, a core group of two to three owners acted as owner-agents for all the owners, and usually for the crew as well. This key position, called the "armateur" in Europe, made day-to-day decisions and carried out the administration and the paperwork of privateering.¹⁸⁷ It was held repeatedly in Liverpool by Simeon Perkins, Snow Parker and Joseph Barss Senior. They were also entrusted to represent the owners and crew to the legal authorities in Halifax, and negotiate on behalf of the privateer. They were authorized by letters of agency signed by all the owners and crew, which gave them great latitude to make decisions and authorized them to collect the proceeds of prizes to distribute. This was obviously a very sensitive job requiring trust. On several occasions, privateer crew members decided they would be better served by selecting their own

¹⁸⁴ 1793 Polltax PANS RG 1 Vol. 444.

¹⁸⁵ David Sutherland, The Merchants of Halifax, 1815-1850: A Commercial Class in Pursuit of Metropolitan Status, (PhD Diss. University of Toronto, 1975), p. 28.

¹⁸⁶ NA RG 8 IV Vol. 33 "The Brutus". Jean de Chantal Kenedy, Bermuda's Sailors of Fortune, (Hamilton Bermuda: Bermuda Press, 1964), p. 42.

¹⁸⁷ Starkey, British Privateering, p. 67.

independent agents. The amateurs, or owner-agents, were in many ways the centre of privateering decision-making on the land.

These agents were paid only modestly in Liverpool. Simeon Perkins, agent for the *Charles Mary Wentworth* on its second cruise, recorded in disgust that for the many hours of work taking care of four prizes worth almost twenty thousand pounds, the other owners awarded him on £32: "I esteem the Sum they have allowed us a pitiful compensation, and in my present mind I think we Shall not do the Owners Business if any more prizes should arrive."¹⁸⁸ However there were fringe benefits to privateer agency. An intimate knowledge of prizes permitted shrewd bidding at prize auctions. Elsewhere privateering agents were often paid by a commission, as much as five per cent.¹⁸⁹ Community interest, and competing offers of agency in Liverpool may have been responsible for the low fees so bemoaned by Perkins.

At sea and in foreign ports, the privateer captain acted as agent, making decisions and reporting back to the owners. Privateer owners would also appoint agents to represent them in other ports. William Cochran and Richard Lawson were frequent Halifax agents for Liverpool privateers. Agents were usually paid by commission, although Charles Prescott and Richard Lawson were happy to be flexible about this with the Liverpool privateers according to Perkins:

I am writing a Power of Attorney for the Owners of the Privateers Rover & Nymph, to Sign for Messrs Prescott & Lawson, to Look after our Business in England, concerning the Prizes that have been appealed, for Capt. Parker agreed with them, when he was in Halifax to undertake the Business. They told him they would be reasonable in their charges, and would leave it to the Agents and owners, to allow them a reasonable compensation for the Business they might do.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸Perkins Diary, July 27, 1799, p. 179.

¹⁸⁹N.A.M. Rogers, *Wooden World*, p. 128.

¹⁹⁰Perkins Diary Dec. 4, 1802, p. 434.

Because Nova Scotia privateers operated in a "deep water" environment, they had to call on a far-flung array of agents. A variety of trusted merchants were selected as agents in the various Caribbean Islands where privateer ships might repair, resupply or bring small prizes not large enough to make it back to Nova Scotia. The Liverpool privateers made frequent use of John Robertson on St. Kitts. He obtained supplies, took charge of prize goods, forwarded money and made legal arrangements as well as entertained privateer officers in Basseterre, St. Kitts.¹⁹¹ William Shenington filled the same role in Antigua, as well as assisting in a major overhaul and careening for the *Wentworth*.¹⁹² The *Nelson* used the Kingston, Jamaica firm of Ballantyne, Duke & Co to claim one of their prizes back from the Royal Navy.¹⁹³ The lists of agents used in 1805 by one Armed Merchant trading ship in Halifax illustrates the far-flung nature of privateering interest. It listed firms in Halifax, St. Johns, Gibraltar, Lisbon, Valencia, Cadiz, Naples, Malta, and London.¹⁹⁴

Halifax merchants also represented the officers and crews of Royal Navy ships as agents and frequently represented the owners of enemy and neutral ships seeking to defend their cases before the Vice Admiralty Court. These agents were usually paid on a commission basis, receiving a value of the captured ship if it was released by the court. Five per cent was more or less the standard rate.¹⁹⁵ James Foreman, George Grassie, Lawrence Hartshorne, Thomas Boggs, and William Cochran frequently acted as agents for Royal Navy captures. Foreman-Grassie alone processed £157,621 worth of navy

¹⁹¹Log of *Wentworth* Dec. 18, Dec. 19, Dec. 23, 1799. *Perkins Diary* Aug. 21, 1805.

¹⁹²Log of *Wentworth* March 10, 1800; *Perkins Diary* May 2, 1800, IV, p. 226.

¹⁹³Letter William Robertson to Foreman-Grassie, Sept 11, 1799. PRO CO217 Vol. 70, p.191, Mfm 13866.

¹⁹⁴NA RG 8 IV Vol. 49 "La Concorde", p. 21230. This was a prize taken by the *Young Phoenix* of Jersey. The list of agents was written on the back of the Letter of Marque.

¹⁹⁵John Bromley, "Prize Office and Prize Agency", *Corsairs and Navies*, p. 476.

captures in 1800. William Forsyth made a speciality to representing the owners of captured vessels in case after case during the 1790s.¹⁹⁶

The Attorney General, Richard John Uniacke, represented both privateers and navy at the Vice Admiralty court. He was in charge of gathering evidence, preparing and arguing the case. This required a good legal mind, and a fair bit of work, although in many of the simpler, uncontested, cases, the paperwork was identical and routine.

Perkins seems to have valued his services, noting during Uniacke's first privateer case, "The prize is libelled, & no difficulty in Condemnation in 21 days. Mr. Uniacke was very clever in the Business."¹⁹⁷ Uniacke was paid by fees earning between £50 and £300 for every prize he worked on. His fees, from privateering alone, for the five years from 1798 to 1803 totalled about £3500.¹⁹⁸

The Judge of the Vice Admiralty Court had a guaranteed salary of £2000 a year, so his fees were relatively modest.¹⁹⁹ However the Court of Vice Admiralty employed a substantial staff who were paid by a range of fees that typically consumed 10 to 15 per cent of the value of a prize. These posts, interestingly almost all held by Protestant Irishmen in Halifax,²⁰⁰ included, the registrar to record and issue documents, and the Marshall to enforce judgements, and backed up a network of deputy registrars and deputy marshals throughout the province. The system of Vice Admiralty deputies was of

¹⁹⁶Information on most navy captures, including value and agents, are listed in a detailed registry. PANS RG 1 Vol. 500A p.1-15. William Forsyth's business is outlined in, David S. Macmillan, "The "New Men" in Action: Scottish Mercantile and Shipping Operations in the North American Colonies, 1760-1825", Canadian Business History. Selected Studies 1497-1971, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1972), pp. 72-72.

¹⁹⁷Perkins Diary Sept. 18, 1798, IV, p. 121.

¹⁹⁸Uniacke's fees are recorded in about 75 per cent of the privateer case files at the National Archives NA RG 8 IV. His standardized fees, £58 for a simple case, £105 for larger ships, make an accurate estimate of the total possible.

¹⁹⁹Arthur J. Stone "The Admiralty Court in Colonial Nova Scotia", p. 391

²⁰⁰Minutes of the Charitable Irish Society, PANS MG 20 Vol. 64. Irish members included: the Judge Richard Bulkeley, the attorney General Richard John Uniacke, the deputy marshall Robert Hill, deputy registrar Charles Morris, and auctioneer Charles Hill.

considerable importance to Liverpool. Perkins and Uniacke had a struggle, in the end successful, to allow the privateers to keep their prizes in Liverpool while awaiting judgement.²⁰¹ This kept control over the prizes in the hands of local officials such as Joshua Newton, the deputy registrar (and Perkins son in law) in Liverpool. The marshals and deputy marshals charged substantial daily fees to cover custody costs for docking, maintaining and guarding ships while waiting for the court to decide. The court also employed a range of clerks, translators and criers to process claims. This spread prize proceeds even further by contracting with wharf and warehouse owners and stevedores.²⁰²

The final participants in prizemaking were the merchants who bid on ships and cargoes at prize auctions. They required two things: enough capital in cash to buy at auctions,²⁰³ and good information on the quality and condition of captured goods. The bidders at prize auctions were frequently the same merchants involved as owners and agents. Capt. Alexander Godfrey of the *Rover* bought one of his own prizes for £850, and then sold it in Halifax soon after for £1000,²⁰⁴ a fast profit on top of his own shares as captain. Many merchants were even more successful. In the 1820s, during an economic downturn, a letter writer to the Acadian Recorder recalled the "good old days" of wartime Halifax.

²⁰¹Perkins discusses his negotiations and pleas to keep prize custody in Liverpool on Letter, Perkins to Henry Newton, Sept. 11, 1798, V, p. 457; Diary Aug 17 & Aug. 18, 1800, IV, p. 246.

²⁰²The prize files contain detailed bills from the registrar and marshal, often citing daily wharfage rates and labour rates for stevedores. In one case, there is even a bill for the stevedores coffee breaks (Six tablespoons of coffee and 10 tablespoons of sugar, for 15 shillings and eight pence.)! NA RG 8 IV Vol. 33 "The Brutus".

²⁰³Halifax auctions often demanded cash. Liverpool auctions usually allowed short term notes to pay in cash within thirty to ninety days. Circulating currency was a chronic problem in Nova Scotia of this period.

²⁰⁴Perkins Diary, Nov. 29, 1800, IV, p. 268; and April 27, 1801, IV, p. 301.

Halifax at that time became a general depot for French prizes, and this proved to our merchants a source of immense profit, and laid the foundation of capital upon which it was easy to build. The trading ships of France, regularly sent in by the fleets off our coasts, and the whole of their cargoes which were sold under the hammer of the auctioneer at prices so low, that when they were again sold to the Americans who came here for the purposes of purchasing, they frequently yielded a net profit of one, two and sometimes even three hundred per cent. The sole medium of payment was of gold and silver coin, and this made the circulating medium of extreme plenty .. it was impossible but that our merchants would amass large capital and many even now could show its golden effects.²⁰⁵

Having established the flow and distribution of money from privateer prizes, it is possible to measure the profits in privateering by matching Simeon Perkins records of auction sales and share prices, with the costs and fees in Vice Admiralty records.²⁰⁶ Taking the privateer ship *Charles Mary Wentworth* as an example, this is the return on her total of five cruises.

1st Cruise - Aug. 15 to Dec. 16 1798 Expenses: £2277 Four Months
2 prizes, total value: £9960 Total Owners share: £4387 Single Seaman's share £32

Voyage Profit: 92%

2nd Cruise - Feb. 3 to May 11, 1799 Expenses: £1669 Three Months
5 prizes, total value: £20,000 Total Owners share: £9000 Single Seaman's share £48

Voyage Profit: 814%

²⁰⁵ *Acadian Recorder*, Aug. 18, 1821 cited in Julian Gwyn, "A Little Province Like This The Economy of Nova Scotia Under Stress, 1812-1853", in *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, Vol. XI, Gananoque, Ont: Longdate Press, 1988, p. 196.

²⁰⁶ The prizemaking process was summarized by this formula

Total value of vessel and cargo at auction
 minus customs and commissions (usually around 10 per cent)
 minus court fees (from £50 to £300)
 divided by two: 1. Owners share (1/8, 1/16 etc) minus agent's commission
 2. Crew share divided by number of shares
 (C.M. Wentworth, 137 shares) minus agent's
 commission

3rd Cruise - June 19 to Sept 11, 1799 Expenses: £950 Three Months
 2 prizes, total value: £2650 Total Owners share: £1250 Single Seaman's share: £9

Voyage Profit: 25%

4th Cruise-Nov. 27 1799 to May 5, 1800 Est. Expenses £1500 Six Months
 1 prize, total value: £1078 Total Owners share: £500 Single Seaman's share: £3

Voyage Profit: a loss of at least £1000

The *Charles Mary Wentworth* proved an excellent investment at first, more than paying for herself on her first voyage and earning spectacular profits on her second. However her earning fell rapidly and after her fourth cruise, she was sold as an armed trading merchant ship and her former owners shifted their investment to newer, and less leaky, privateers such as the *Duke of Kent* and the *Rover*. For the mariners involved, the declining returns were felt even more sharply. The first and second cruises were very rewarding, yielding share money two to four times what a merchant voyage on wages would have paid. However, the last two cruises fell well behind what they could have earned in wages. (See Chapter 4)

It is possible to estimate the total value of the ships and cargoes captured and condemned by privateers and sold in Nova Scotia. Actual values are recorded for about a fifth of the ships captured. A reasonable estimate for the whole can be derived by establishing an average value, per ton, of vessels of similar class. Brigantines averaged £44 per ton. Schooners averaged £37 per ton; Sloops, £36.²⁰⁷ Only vessels that were condemned were included. (See Appendix H).

²⁰⁷Prize files include detailed accounts of prize sales, in cases that were appealed. Perkins also records the buys at many auctions. The method of value per ton has been used to a great extent in Brian Locking, "Some Contributions of the Royal Navy to the Halifax Wartime Economy: Prize Vessels and Recaptures", (unpublished graduate paper, University of Ottawa, 1995), p. 20

Approximately £120,000 of enemy shipping was captured by and awarded to Nova Scotian privateers between 1798 and 1805. The significance of this amount can be appreciated when it is considered that until 1793, the spending of the army, navy and civil government combined in Nova Scotia was only £120,000 per year. And even in the busy wartime economy where their combined spending moved up to £244,900 per year,²⁰⁸ privateering was a significant contribution to the wartime economy. Some of this prize revenue would arguably have reached Nova Scotia anyway, through Royal Navy captures, but much of it would not.

Privateer captures, as we have seen, represented about a third of the prize cases in Nova Scotia in this period. However the economic contribution of privateer, as opposed to naval captures was proportionally greater. The lion's share of navy prize money, almost three quarters of every prize, went to senior officers and the admiral of the station.²⁰⁹ Most of this money likely went to homes and estates in England instead of Nova Scotia. A study of Royal Navy captures in the American Revolution has estimated that only customs, court and agency fees from navy captures can be considered to have remained in Nova Scotia.²¹⁰ Privateer owners and crews, in contrast, were almost entirely from Nova Scotia. British merchants had invested in considerable numbers of Nova Scotia privateers in the American Revolution, but their investment in this period was limited to armed merchant trading vessels.

More significantly, about £86,000 of the total value of privateer captures went to Liverpool and Shelburne privateers, diverting a significant share of wealth from Halifax to coastal communities. It is difficult to guess, given the diffuse ownership, of privateers,

²⁰⁸Julian Gwyn, "Economic Fluctuations in Wartime Nova Scotia, 1755 -1815", in Making Adjustments: Change and Continuity in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759-1800, Margaret Conrad, ed, Fredericton, NB: Acadiensis Press, 1991, p. 74.

²⁰⁹Rodgers, The Wooden World, p. 128.

²¹⁰Brian Locking, Some Contributions of the Royal Navy to the Halifax Wartime Economy, p. 19.

how this money was re-invested, but logically most of the merchant privateering owners expanded their previous trading interests. Simeon Perkins used his first rush of privateering money to pay off a large debt that had been growing during the bad times before privateering. He then constructed a large new warehouse on his wharf and went on to build a new sawmill.²¹¹ As well as buying shares in other vessels under construction, Perkins built a large schooner in 1802, the *Active*, no doubt fuelled by his privateering earnings.

Enos Collins had been a captain of his father's trading ships before privateering,²¹² but following several successful cruises as privateering officer, he moved to buy and sell his own vessels, one of his first purchases being a prize schooner.²¹³ Collins was destined for another round of privateering, during the War of 1812, becoming the most successful privateer owner in the province and eventually one of the wealthiest merchants in British North America.

Privateering, especially in the scale of the late 1790s, was bound to distort different aspects of the economy. Prize goods sometimes flooded the market driving down prices. Captured flour in Liverpool depressed flour and bread prices in Liverpool for a whole summer in 1799. Low flour prices from prize sales were also noted in Halifax.²¹⁴

In other wars, especially the War of 1812, privateering had a significant negative impact on shipbuilding, as the market for ship was flooded with cheaply obtained prize

²¹¹Perkins *Diary*, July 12, 1802, IV, p. 400.

²¹²Collins frequently captained vessels to the West Indies, Quebec and Newfoundland, but prior to 1800, they seem to be his father's vessels, described as "in a schooner of his father". Perkins *Diary* May 13, 1797.

²¹³Collins bought the *Maria*, prize to the *Nymph* on Sept 30, 1801. NA RG 8 IV, Vol. 42.

²¹⁴Letter, Perkins to Bartlet Bradford, May 28, 1799, Perkins *Diary*, V, p. 463; Peamish Murdoch, *A History of Nova Scotia*, Vol. III, (Halifax: James Barnes, 1867), p. 129.

vessels.²¹⁵ However Nova Scotia did not have a significant export shipbuilding industry in the late 1790, so the effect was not as dramatic. In Liverpool, where merchants regularly built ships for their own use, there was a pause in shipbuilding while the harbour was filled with prize ships. However there was considerable work generated for shipwrights, carpenters and caulkers in rerigging and refitting privateer vessels in addition to the two ships (the *Wentworth* and the *Rover*) which were constructed specifically for privateering.

Shipbuilding resumed quickly when peace returned as investors such as Perkins put money into new vessels, and in these new ships, we can see evidence that privateering acted as a stimulant for changes in shipbuilding design. The period from 1790 to 1812 was an important one of changes in ship design. The basic eighteenth century vessel, built mainly for capacity, with broad beam and rounded bows, gave way to faster sailing vessels with narrower hulls and sharp bows. These changes were pioneered by privateer, smuggling and slaving vessels.²¹⁶ Many of the vessels Nova Scotia privateers captured were built for blockade running and privateering and doubtlessly embodied many of these changes, as is evident in the prizes taken by the privateers that were noted for their speed. One in particular, the *Casualidad*, taken by the *Charles Mary Wentworth*, gained quick attention for her fine lines. She became the subject of a bidding war between Liverpool and Shelburne privateering owners. Won by Shelburne owners and renamed the *Nelson*, her reputation for speed became an item of Shelburne folklore.²¹⁷

²¹⁵The decline of shipbuilding during prizetaking has been noted by Gwyn, "Economic Fluctuations in Wartime", p. 83 and Charles Armour and Thomas Lackey, *Sailing Ships of the Maritimes*, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1975), p. 20.

²¹⁶Howard Chapelle, *The History of the American Sailing Ships*, (New York: Bonanza Books, 1935), p. 131.

²¹⁷An oral tradition around the *Nelson* holds that her sharp lines inspired Donald McKay, the famous designer of clipper ships in the early nineteenth century. The *Nelson's* remarkable lines, visible when hauled out, began the subject of stories for years afterwards. The stories, and a sketch of her lines, are supposed to have inspired the young McKay, born in Jordan River near Shelburne in 1810, to someday build sharp ships

After the influx of these fast prizes in the busiest years of privateering, Simeon Perkins noticed a change in Queens County yards, a change with which he was not entirely comfortable with, as can be seen in his remarks on new vessels. "She Looks rather long and Narrow, and appears to have a very Good Looking Bottom for Sailing..." and "She is a pritty Looking Vessel, but I think She would be better if She was one foot wider, & one foot or 9 inches deeper."²¹⁸

Privateer auctions, which demanded cash or short term notes, had an impact on circulating currency, but opinion is divided. The Acadia Recorder claimed that prize auctions attracted large amounts of cash to Nova Scotia. However it has also been suggested that Nova Scotia merchants drained cash out of circulation by holding large amounts back to prepare while waiting for prize auctions.²¹⁹ The latter is most likely the case as during the peak of privateering most of the bidders were Nova Scotian and did not represent American hard cash. However the privateer auctions in Liverpool did attract circulating currency from the Halifax merchants.²²⁰

The trouble with privateering as a business was its volatile and short-lived nature. Depending on the whim of war or diplomats, the sources of prizes could dry up all too quickly. However, perhaps one of the more significant indicators of how important it had become to Liverpool as a supplement to normal commerce, was the continuing attraction of privateering, even after the court cases of 1801 had sucked the best returns from the business. In 1805, with the West Indies trade still stagnant and the fisheries suffering

of his own. McKay of course, moved to New York and Boston and went on to fame as the leading designer of clipper ships such as the *Flying Cloud*. This story related by F.F. Tupper, in his rambling nostalgic local history Historic Liverpool, (Liverpool: Advance Publishing, 1944), while almost certainly apocryphal, tells something about the legacy of speed that the privateer captures left behind.

²¹⁸Perkins Diary, April 25, 1801, IV, p. 300; July 10, 1801, IV, p. 316.

²¹⁹Brian Cuthbertson, The Loyalist Governor: Biography of John Wentworth, (Halifax Petheric Press, 1983), p. 90.

²²⁰Perkins notes the welcome arrival of £500 in cash for the privateers on Sept. 14, 1799, IV, p. 189. Liverpool privateer auctions accepted credit, but on short terms.

even further, Simeon Perkins prepared, with realistic expectations for another privateering venture. "the Cruize is likely to turn out it will not be a very Lucrative Business but in these hard times I am glad to under take any Lawful Business to Support my Family & pay my Debts."²²¹ This search for alternate income, however risky, made sense in the war-dominated economy of Nova Scotia in the early nineteenth century

²²¹Perkins Diary, Aug. 9, 1805, V, p. 133.

Chapter Four Social Dimensions to Privateering

The owners of the privateer ship the *Charles Mary Wentworth* planned to send her to Halifax on her maiden voyage in August of 1798 to buy some final supplies and to show her off to their patron, Sir John Wentworth and his son, the ship's namesake. However despite the political merits of this plan, the crew of the *Wentworth* had different ideas and overruled the owners. Simeon Perkins was forced to write a rather embarrassed letter to his agent in Halifax.

If Sir John is disappointed that we did not Send the Ship Charles Mary Wentworth to Halifax, I must request you to make an apology for the owners, the difficulty of Regulating, & Satisfying a Crew of Privateersmen newly assembled, is very great, and we were afraid that it would create Some uneasiness among them."²²²

The crew of the *Wentworth* wanted to get the cruise started as well as avoid any naval press gangs in Halifax. They had their way and this chapter will explore the relations behind privateering which permitted a special class of seamen to defy the designs of their owner and even the governor himself. First the backgrounds of people drawn to privateering will be examined, seeking to rescue them from the generic description of previous historiography which seldom ventured beyond, "a crew of fifty-five ... mostly fishermen".²²³ Secondly the social relations between privateer crews, officers and owners will be considered. Finally some aspects of the relationship between privateers and their home community will be charted.

²²²Simeon Perkins *Diary* Vol. V, p. 456, letter Aug. 16, 1798.

²²³Janet Mullins, *Liverpool Privateering*, (Liverpool, N S: Advance Publishing, 1944), p.21.

Much of this work follows broadly Marcus Rediker's approach in Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea and offers a comparison between the experience of Nova Scotia privateers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century to his findings in the early eighteenth century. In common with Rediker I hope to ask not just on "what was done to them" but "what did they do for themselves"²²⁴ with a special focus on the social relations forged by privateers in acts of negotiations and resistance. A collective biography approach is also employed with the crew of one privateer ship in order to look at the origins and class distinctions among crew members²²⁵.

The Crew of the *Charles Mary Wentworth*

The best glimpse of who really sailed in privateers is offered by the crewlist of the privateer ship, the *Charles Mary Wentworth*²²⁶ in November of 1799. Crew lists are uncommon for this period, but two Nova Scotian privateer rolls survive, one from the *Wentworth* of Liverpool and one from the *Nelson* of Shelburne. (See appendix.) They provide an opportunity to study a microscopic cross section of the privateering community.

As Liverpool was the major privateering port in Nova Scotia, the *Wentworth* crew has been singled out for a study in some detail. The *Charles Mary Wentworth* was custom built for privateering in 1798 by a group of privateer investors (Simeon Perkins, Snow Parker, Joseph Barss, Hallet Collins, and Joseph Freeman) who were central to the

²²⁴ Marcus Rediker, Between The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987) p. 7.

²²⁵ This approach influenced by Eric Sager, Seagoing Labour and more directly Del Muise, "Iron Men? Yarmouth's Seagoing Workforce in Tradition, 1871-1921", Jack Tar in History, p. 247-269.

²²⁶ The *Charles Mary Wentworth* was named after the son and patron of Nova Scotia's privateers, Governor John Wentworth. Charles and Mary Rockingham were the child's godparents in Britain. The privateer's owners were not happy when Wentworth suggested the name as Charles Mary was a quiet and sickly child, but they could hardly say no. Perkins Diary July 31, 1798, IV, p. 111.

activity in Liverpool from the American Revolution through to the War of 1812. She made five cruises to the Caribbean capturing ten prizes until larger and faster ships such as the *Rover* and *Duke of Kent* replaced her as she grew older and leakier. While small compared to naval warships, at 130 tons, she was a full rigged ship and considerably larger than the schooner privateers of the War of 1812.

Background of Crew

Thomas Raddall used the crewlist of the *Charles Mary Wentworth* to inspire characters in his novel, *Pride's Fancy*. He imagined a privateer captain signing up his crew:

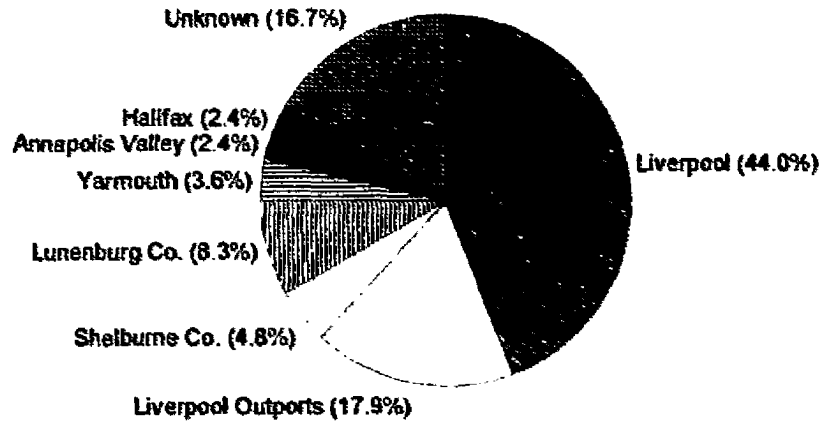
I had expected some difficulty in filling my roll, for war was a dangerous business after all and the Caribees a very far cry from home, but men came in a steady trickle all day long. Some of them surprised me - Shanks, the schoolmaster was one ...

I did not have to look far for a cook; Black Boston was there, grinning all over his broad black face, and with a Negro youth, a nephew of his to be his mate. For botswain I took Michael Brady, the giant Irishman who had drifted into Gosport from a man-o'-war and taken up with a Portugee woman on the back road ... In two days and three parades I had my crew, eighty men and boys, some of them sailors familiar with the Caribbee trade before the war, some of them fishermen, and the remainder hunters, loggers, men of every trade known to the river and the town. Mr. Pride [the owner] himself had chosen the prize masters amongst them, half a dozen trading captains out of a berth since '94, most of them older men than I and none too pleased to call me captain.²²⁷

Raddall substituted imaginary names and expressed some dated stereotypes but he identified several fundamental characteristics of the age, ethnicity and occupations of typical Liverpool privateers. To begin with community of origin, the *Wentworth* crewlist reveals that a network of small coastal communities drew together in privateering.

²²⁷ Thomas Raddall, *Pride's Fancy*, (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1946), p. 125-126

Charles Mary Wentworth Crew: Hometowns



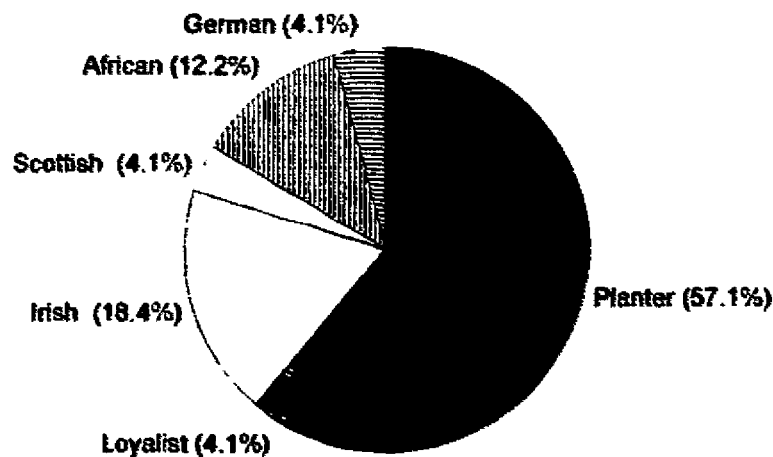
Most, about 60 per cent were from Liverpool itself, or more accurately the network of small villages that made up Liverpool township, including the fishing village of Herring Cove and the upriver timber village, The Falls. (See Map II) A further extension of the network took in nearby outports of Queens County such as Port Medway and Port Mouton. Lunenburg County communities account for a substantial share, but Shelburne does not, probably because Shelburne had its own privateer, the *Nelson*. Yarmouth and the Annapolis Valley contribute a handful.

While the crew of the *Charles Mary Wentworth* was overwhelmingly drawn from this network of coastal Nova Scotian communities, a minority, probably most of the unidentified 20 per cent, were drawn from the very diverse pool of international seamen who circulated around the North Atlantic. Perkins records a dozen such unidentified men arriving from Halifax to join the Liverpool privateers in 1799 and describes one crew as being made up of "men of all Ages & Countries".²²⁸ Specific examples illustrate the diverse origins of this part of the crew. The *Wentworth's* logbook and crewlist directly identifies one man as Spanish and another as from Antigua. A seaman on the *Rover*

²²⁸Perkins *Diary* Nov. 25, 1799, IV, p.200 ("men of all ages and countries"); June 13, 1799, IV, p.171 (Halifax recruits).

named John Williams, was an African mariner who had worked on US vessels voyaging to Haiti before joining the privateer and settling in Liverpool.²²⁹ Several seamen from captured American vessels joined Liverpool privateers following their capture. French and Spanish prisoners of war in Halifax were sought as translators.²³⁰ Translators and extra hands were also hired in small numbers from Caribbean island such as St. Kitts and Antigua.

Charles Mary Wentworth: Ethnic Groups



Looking at ethnic origin, most of the crew, and all of the officers except one, were descendants of New England Planters.²³¹ The Irish are the next largest identifiable

²²⁹National Archives RG 8 IV 35. Perkins Diary Feb 27, 1799, IV, p. 151.

²³⁰The *Duke of Kent* signed on a translator at St. Kitts, 1799 National Archives MG 23 J17, letter Aug. 12. The owners of the *Nelson* instructed their Halifax agents to find: "A linguist who understands Spanish & English is to be got in the Prison Ship sent bound to this vessel or in 3 weeks" PANS MG 1 Vol. 951 White Collection Item 636, letter Oct. 2, 1799.

²³¹And as most geneologists will eagerly assert, many of the Planter names are descendents from the Plymouth Colony (The Pilgrims), but the majority of Liverpool Planters came from several New England locations.

group, making up a large proportion of the Marine squad on board. Many appear to have drawn from the unsuccessful settlement of New Dublin at Petite Riviere.

A significant number of the privateers were African. The logbook mentions that the fifer, Simon Tetany, was "a Black man" hired in Antigua. James Hammliton, cook's mate, is very likely the same James Hammliton that Simeon Perkins names in his diary as a Black man from Port Mouton.²³² One deckhand, simply identified as Francis, has a name shared by several Mi'kmaq and Black families in the Liverpool area.²³³ Joseph Eley, Peter Brown and David Luke are not positively identified but also bear surnames of Black families in the Shelburne/Birchtown area. Several other members of the crew have names that were shared by both Black and White families (Miles, McCleod and Daizy) on the South Shore.²³⁴ Thus it appears African privateers account for somewhere between two and ten per cent of the crew of the *Charles Mary Wentworth*. Africans made up about 18 per cent of American privateer crews in the War of 1812. Although it has been noted that Africans in the nineteenth century were relegated to jobs not deemed masculine or dignified enough for white men, such as cooking, the African crew members on the *Charles Mary Wentworth* occupy a wide range of positions from specialised trades like translation and music, to able seamen, to the subordinate roles of cook and "boy".²³⁵ Africans would continue to make up a sizeable proportion of Liverpool privateer vessels in 1812-1814, when many Black War of 1812 refugees, such as the Croxton and Gaskins families, served as privateers.²³⁶ Most of the positively

²³²Perkins Diary June 28 1792; Sept 12 1801, IV, p.331

²³³T.B. Smith Collection, PANS, Reel 14945.

²³⁴David States, a historian at Parks Canada researching Black mariners, kindly assisted with this identification.

²³⁵Dye, Ira "Physical and Social Profile of Early American Seafarers, 1812-1815", *Jack Tar in History*, Ed: Colin Howell & Richard Twomey, (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1991), p. 230; Margaret S. Creighton, "American Mariners and the Rites of Manhood" *Jack Tar in History*, p. 151.

²³⁶Mullins, *Some Liverpool Chronicles*, p.28.

identified African privateers such as James Hamilton were "Free Blacks" as opposed to slaves. Ironically on several occasions they would have participated, and benefited from, the capture of cargoes that included fellow Africans in slavery.

Also of interest, are two names, Low and Francis, which were shared by both African and Mi'kmaq families in the Liverpool area. Simeon Perkins also mentions a man named Bigto, "an Indian from Port Jolly", in connection with the privateer schooner *Lord Spencer*.²³⁷ While the evidence is not conclusive, Mi'kmaq service in privateers would make sense, given both the proximity of a band of Mi'kmaqs living in Queens County, as well as a distinctly sea-going heritage of the Mi'kmaqs in general, and of the "Cape Sable" Mi'kmaqs in particular, who had earlier in the eighteenth century, a formidable reputation of as sea raiders.²³⁸

Organization

The organizational arrangement to the crew lists to the *Charles Mary Wentworth* and *Nelson* tells us a great deal about work and life on privateer ships. The crew were assigned naval ranks instead of the normal positions of the merchant sailor ranks (First Lieutenant instead of First Mate, for example). Privateers by tradition used military ranks. This was partially demanded by the very different nature of fighting as opposed to merchant voyaging which required a complex and specialized reporting and command structure.²³⁹ However, beyond the practical, there seems to have been a social reason

²³⁷Perkins *Diary*, Mar. 19, 1800, IV, p.218. Bigto arrived with a letter from a prize to the *Lord Spencer* that had arrived at Port Hebere. He may have been a *Spencer* privateer on his way home, or simply a messenger.

²³⁸Micmacs captured at least 80 vessels English vessels between 1713 and 1760, and this is probably a low estimate. Olive Dickason, "Louisbourg and the Indians: A Study in Imperial Race Relations 1713-1760", *History and Archeology* #6. (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1976), p. 74-75. For a case study of one seizure, and Micmac-New England relations, see Bill Wicken, "26 August 1726", *Acadiensis*, Vol. 23 (Autumn 1993), p. 5-22.

²³⁹Starkey, *British Privateering*, p.44.

for the naval flavour of these privateering vessels. The *Charles Mary Wentworth's* first Captain, Joseph Freeman, had a reputation for closely replicating Royal Navy practices, right down to copying naval uniforms.²⁴⁰ This was probably linked to a desire for respectability on the part of the privateers, in the same way that the privateer vessels were almost all named after important military and political leaders. This was especially important in gaining, authority, respect and co-operation from the navy.

The military hierarchy adopted by the *Wentworth* and *Nelson* contained many intricate layers. Aside from the senior officers - which included three levels of Lieutenants, Sailing Master, and Doctor - the *Charles Mary Wentworth* also had a wide range of petty officers. Some were in charge of military trades: Gunner and Armourer, while others made up links in a complex chain of command and supervision, stretching from the Lieutenants, masters, boatswain and on down to the topmen, the senior seamen who supervised the seamen assigned to different parts of the deck (aftercastle, waist etc.) and rigging (foremast top, mainmast top etc.)²⁴¹ The specialized skills possessed by these men were an essential, but often overlooked aspect to a successful privateer vessel. While Alexander Godfrey was given credit for the *Rover's* remarkable victory over three Spanish warships in 1800, many in his hometown believed it was the dexterity of his gunner Ebenezer Harrington, who carried the day.²⁴²

²⁴⁰Mullins, p. 28.

²⁴¹A "How-To" guide on the organization of a privateer crew was written by merchant and privateer captain, William Hutchinson, *A Treatise on Practical Seamanship*, (Liverpool, W. Hutchinson, 1777), pp. 159-187. His ideas are summarized with other examples in Starkey, *British Privateering*, pp. 42-44. Thomas Raddall's novel, *Pride's Fancy*, (New York: Doubleday, 1946), pp. 145-146, contains many perceptive observations and vivid description of the organization of a privateer's crew.

²⁴²Lucius Dexter, *History of Brooklyn*, p. 13. Cited in T.B. Smith Collection, PANS MG 1 Vol. 817-863, item 1201, micro 14946.

Hierarchy of the Crew of the Charles Mary Wentworth

Class	Shares	Stations			
O	8 shares	Captain			
F					
F	5 shares	1st Lieut			
I					
C		2nd Lieut			
E					
R		3rd Lieut			
S	3 1/4 shares	Sailing Master			Surgeon
Lieut Marines					
		& mate		& mate	
P	2 3/4 shares	Boatswain	Master of Arms		
E				TRADES	
T	2 1/2 shares	Boatswain's	3 Pri/cmasters	Gunner	Stewart
T		Mate	& mates	Carpenter	
Y				Armourer	
	1 1/4 shares	TOPMEN		Cooper	Stewart's
		capt fore top			mate
O		capt main top			
F		capt mi/in top			Cook
F		capt Forecastle			
I	1 1/2 share	capt waist		MATES	
C		capt aftercastle		Gunner's	Cook's
E		capt after gangway		Armour's	mate
R					
S					
S	1 1/4 share	Seaman	Seaman	Seaman	fifcor
E		Seaman	Seaman	Seaman	linguister
A		Seaman	Seaman	Seaman	Spamiard
M		Seaman	Seaman	Seaman	
E	1 share	Seaman	Seaman	Seaman	
N		Seaman	Seaman		
		forecastleman			
		Waister			
		Waister			
B	3/4 Share	capt forttop's boy			2 cabin
O		mi/in top boy			boys
Y	1/2 Share	painter boy			
S	1/4 Share	5 boys			

SOURCES: Derived from the crewlists of the C M. Wentworth (PANS MG20/215/10) and the Nelson (PANS MG1/951/735 and the kind assistance of Graham McBride, curator, Maritime Museum of the Atlantic.

Although not spelled out in the lists, the seamen would have been further divided into two watches, or shifts, rotating at four hour intervals. Certain crewmembers, called "idlers" by the seamen were excepted from the watches. These include the large contingent of marines onboard the *Wentworth*. Marines were sea-going soldiers. They were armed with the ship's muskets and the *Wentworth's* log often describes them cleaning, repairing and exercising with their small arms. They wore uniforms from the Queens County Militia, and were often picked for being good shots.²⁴³ While marines did not stand watches, they would assist with heavy tasks such as pumping and capstan hauling, but did not go aloft to work sails as they were usually "landsmen", rather than skilled seamen. A contingent of marines was a distinctive feature of a privateer vessel, and even the smaller privateers of this period, such as the schooner *Lord Spencer*, carried a company of marines. Serving as a marine was often an entry into the world of sea-skills for a landsman. The majority of the Irish on the *Charles Mary Wentworth* were found in the marine company. This likely reflects their labour background, being recently arrived settlers who had not established themselves as fishermen or mariners as the New England Planters had succeeded in doing over several generations. Marines were also sometimes employed as a ship's police, a function no doubt aided by their ethnic and occupational distinctiveness from the seamen.²⁴⁴

The large size of the crew is clear from this list. A merchant ship of this size (130 tons) could be sailed with a dozen men, but the *Charles Mary Wentworth* has eighty-two. A privateer vessel, especially at the start of a cruises, was a crowded place, as many extra

²⁴³Log of the *Wentworth*, Dec. 9, Dec. 14, Dec. 24, 1799; Jan. 4, 1800; Raddall, *The Rover*, 28.

²⁴⁴N. A. M. Rodgers, *The Wooden World*, p. 28. Capt. Bligh cited the lack of marines on the *Bounty* as one reason for the famous mutiny. Greg Denning, *Mr. Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 20. A talkative seaman discussing prize business was silenced by a marine aboard the *Duke of Kent*. NA RG 8 IV Vol. 33 "L'August-St. Michael".

hands were needed to storm enemy decks in a boarding operation, but more importantly to provide extra crews, called "prize crews", to take captured ships back to Liverpool. Bitter was the captain who had to pass up a prize because his crew was too small to spare a prizecrew!²⁴⁵ Thus the *Charles Mary Wentworth* not only lists many extra seamen but also extra captains, called prizemasters, who would command the captured ships. The prizemasters were an odd part of the ship's hierarchy. There seem to have been two types. Some prizemasters, such as Lodowick Harrington, also served as senior officers and are designated on court documents as "Lieut & Prizemaster". Others had little authority until they were assigned a prize and seem to have been equal to petty officers.²⁴⁶

It is interesting to compare the classes aboard the privateer ship with the classes ashore in Liverpool and Queens County. The privateer ranks closely reflected the class divisions ashore. A polltax taken just before the war, in 1792, provides a useful measure of the class structure of Queens County, listing the tax assessment of every male, and their occupations.²⁴⁷ At the top were a group of seven merchants, the same men who held most of the government appointments in Liverpool. A sort of subordinate ruling class were the 15 sea captains of Liverpool, who were mostly the sons and brothers of the top merchants. The county's middle class, about 20 per cent, was divided roughly equally between tradesmen, mostly woodworkers, and owners of small fishing boats. About 70

²⁴⁵This problem plagued some British privateers in the American Revolution, Starkey, *British Privateering*, p. 239. The Bermuda privateer captain Hezekiah Frith, missed four French prizes for the same reason in 1794. Jean de Chantal Kennedy, *Frith of Bermuda*, (Hamilton: Bermuda Books, 1964), p. 53.

²⁴⁶National Archives RG 8 IV, Vol. 39. Prizemasters on the *Nelson* received petty officer equivalent shares. PANS MG 1 Vol. 951 #735.

²⁴⁷The polltax was taken in both 1791 and 1792 to reduce provincial debt. While omitting women, men under 21 and probably not recording many Africans and transient labourers, it is our best empirical measure of Liverpool society for this era, given the lack any detailed census for Liverpool after 1787 and before 1827. PANS RG 1 Vol. 444 1/2.

per cent of men were not listed with an occupation, but were assessed at the basic rate, of one shilling, indicating they were labourers

By and large, the ranks aboard a privateer ships closely mirrored these divisions on land. The owners of the *Charles Mary Wentworth* comprised five of the seven merchants of the town. The officers were mostly drawn from the families of merchants, specifically those listed as sea captains in the polltax. The petty officers on the *Wentworth* mostly come from the small fishing boat owners or tradesmen and the seamen and marines were drawn from those assessed as labourers.

Other distinctions emerge when the background of the officers are considered separately from the whole crew. The officers were drawn exclusively from Liverpool township itself. The one exception is the marine officer, Benjamin Knaut from Lunenburg, who married the daughter of one of the owners and moved to Liverpool. This pattern of officers drawn exclusively from Liverpool was repeated in other privateers such as the *Duke of Kent*, the *Rover* and the *Nymph*. One of the few genuine outsiders who served as an officer was John Galvin, an ex-Royal Navy officer shipwrecked from HMS *La Tribune*. However his first and last cruise ended in acrimony, moving from a violent argument with the captain to death threats against the other officers and a challenge to a duel. Other members of the crew sympathized, but he clearly did not fit in with the Liverpool officer/merchant class, and left town.²⁴⁸

One of the most noticeable distinctions between officers and seamen were family connections, especially those connected to the owners of the privateer. For example, the captain of the *Wentworth*, Thomas Parker, was a brother of one of the ship's owners, Snow Parker. The first officer, Enos Collins, was the son of another owner, Hallet Collins. Nathan Tupper's father was also an owner of the *Charles Mary Wentworth's*

²⁴⁸*Perkins Diary* Dec. 17, 1798, IV, p.139; Jan. 12, 23-26, 1799, IV, pp.143-146. Galvin did have sympathy outside the privateer officer corps. Perkins mentions that "many people" in Liverpool took his side.

sister ship, the *Duke of Kent*. The marine officer, married one of Hallet Collins' daughters.

Age also separated officers from the seamen. Most officers were in their late twenties to early 30s while most of the crewhands were in their early 20s. The petty officers and prizemasters were slightly older on average with some men in their late 40s such as Ebenezer Harrington and Samuel Kinney. Perhaps most noticeably, there was a sizeable contingent of boys from 10 to 16 years old. Boys commonly went to sea in Liverpool at 15 or 16, learning their trade as junior crew members, cook's helpers or cabin boys on larger ships.²⁴⁹ However class distinctions are hinted at even among this younger generation. Samuel Parker, 15, was the son of one of the owners and listed as "Stewart" and later became a sea captain and cargo supervisor. Benjamin C'aboon, 14, the son of an Irish seaman is listed as "Cabin Boy" and remained a seaman and fisherman for the rest of his life.

Beyond the occupations listed in the polltax, it is possible to consider the career paths of privateersmen, through the diaries of Simeon Perkins and genealogical research in Liverpool. The occupation of captain, or master mariner, in the West Indies or New England trade was shared by all the senior officers. They later followed career paths in two directions. Some, such as John Goreham continued as captains. Others like Benjamin Knaut and Enos Collins settled on land as ship owners, public office holders. Enos Collins later amassed an enormous fortune in ships, trade and investment to be acclaimed upon his death in 1871 as the "richest man in British North America."²⁵⁰ The personal privateering fortunes of several privateer owner/officers such as Joseph Freeman, Joseph Barss, Snow Parker and Enos Collins, laid the foundation of several Liverpool political dynasties that dominated the town's politics for the next twenty years.

²⁴⁹Thomas Raddall, Research Notes on Joseph Barss, Raddall Collection Dalhousie University, MS 2 202 Q1.

²⁵⁰Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol. X, p. 190.

For the first time these men ended Liverpool's use of absentee Halifax members of the legislature ²⁵¹

However, money and mobility did not automatically come to all privateer officers, despite their connections to the vessel's owners. Consider Benjamin Collins. A cousin of privateer owner Hallet Collins, he rose up the rank from officer in 1799, to First Lieutenant in 1800, and finally captain of the *Rover* in 1803. However, on his first and last cruise, he made several rash seizures of neutral ships with little evidence and landed the Liverpool privateering community in hot water. Collins lost his privateering commission. He started over as a captain of a fishing schooner and while he eventually returned to the West Indies trade, he attained none of the public office of peers such as Benjamin Knaut or of wealth like Enos Collins ²⁵²

The seamen were almost evenly split in the specialization of their labour backgrounds (See appendix C). Based on the Simeon Perkins diary and polltax entries, a third had served as seaman on either coastal or deep-sea ships. A third had fishing backgrounds and a third had worked in forestry, either in sawmills or the forests. The prominence of forestry workers is interesting. It may reflect a greater role of timber in Liverpool's economy than many have assumed. Most of the woods workers and some of the fishermen were employed at different times by Simeon Perkins and probably reflect his direction of wage labourers from sawmill and forest to privateer ship he also owned.

Most of the seamen and marines would continue in these occupations after their privateer service. A few went on to own small boats or captain fishing schooners. Many

²⁵¹Brian Cuthbertson, *Johnny Bluenose at the Polls*, (Halifax: Formac, 1994), p.181-182.

²⁵²For basic information on Benjamin Collins, see PANS T.B. Smith Coll. MG 1 Vol. 837-38, Mfm 14945; RG 8 IV Vol. 31, Vol. 44; *Perkins Diary* Oct. 30, 1800; Sept. 28, 1805; Letter Wentworth to Bond, April 6, 1804, PRO CO 217 Series A37 Mfm 13869; *More History of Queens Co.* p.193.

continued to serve on privateers into the War of 1812 where some, such as John Gardner and John Morine, advanced to become petty officers and prize masters ²⁵³

The working class success story of the crew has to be Francis Kempton. Kempton came from a meagre economic background. His father, although one of the first settlers of Liverpool and a veteran who had served under Wolfe at Quebec, was described by Perkins as a "poor labourer"²⁵⁴ who worked in the woods. He and his son were assessed under the polltax at the lowest rate of one shilling. Kempton, however, was able to use the opportunity of privateering to break through from labouring in forests to becoming an officer and later captain and ship owner following his privateer service. Kempton provided history with one of the few voices of lower-deck privateer identity, describing himself:

*Francis Kempton is my nam
Seaman is my station
Nova Scotia is my dwelen plax
And England is my nashon* ²⁵⁵

However Kempton's success was an exception. John Morine and William Dolliver are more representative of typical privateers. Morine built a small fishing schooner following his service as a privateering seaman. In following years was hired as a coastal schooner captain and had an active War of 1812 privateering career as a prizemaster. William Dolliver was seaman before the war, he was still working as a labourer in between privateering voyages, although he was able to buy a small fishing boat by the end of his privateering adventures in 1805 ²⁵⁶

There was at least one father-and-son team (Samuel and Samuel Kinney Jr) and many pairs of brothers. (John & Stephen Gardner, John & Prince Goreham, Lodowick &

²⁵³Snider, Under the Red Jack, index.

²⁵⁴Perkins Diary Vol. I, p. 70.

²⁵⁵Thomas Raddall, In My Time (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976) p. 223

²⁵⁶Perkins Diary (Morine) May 23, June 3, 1804, IV, p. 35, 37; Snider, Under the Red Jack, p. 228, 231, 241. (Dolliver) Perkins Diary, May 8, 1805, IV, p. 111.

Benjamin Harrington, Daniel & John Morine, James & John McLeod) Interestingly the two families that have members among both the seamen and among the officers are those with a long history of privateering, the Harringtons and the Freemans.

Women were often present at sea in small numbers in naval vessels of this period, but there is no convincing proof of women serving aboard a Nova Scotia privateer.²⁵⁷ However privateering was very much a family venture, as evidenced by the many father-son-brother teams aboard the *Charles Mary Wentworth*, and this included the female members of family who stayed ashore. Women played a critical role while male members of households were at sea. They surface regularly in the records as managing affairs for absent husbands. For example, Hannah Hunter negotiated the sale of a quarter of her husband's privateer share while he was at sea, no doubt to provide money for her family until his ship came in.²⁵⁸ Rebecca Irish of Halifax took a group of privateer owners to court in 1806 seeking her late husband's share of cruise.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷For discussion of women in the navy, see Lewis, *A Social History of the Navy*, p. 280-287, as well as Peter Kemp, *The British Sailor, A Social History of the Lower Deck*, (London: J.M. Dent 1970), p. 167-171.

References to women in privateering literature are rare. The mutinous crew of the British privateer *King George*, alleged in 1779 that their unpopular captain took two prostitutes to sea with him. Starkey, *British Privateering*, p. 227. A woman disguised as a man was discovered aboard a privateer from Liverpool, England, earlier in the century, Gomer Williams, *History of the Liverpool Privateers*, p. 201.

The closest thing to an reference to female privateers in Liverpool is one reference in Simeon Perkins' diary, Oct. 17, 1801, IV, p. 340, "A Capersue Schooner arrives from Halifax. Capt. Stephen Smith, Capt. Thomas Burnaby, & Mr. David Barss, with their wives, Mr. John Bold Howell, & Giden Vanenburg, all lately of the Privateer Ship *General Bowyer*." While a generous reading could interpret this as meaning the Mrs. Smith, Burnaby and Barss were on board the *General Bowyer*, it much more likely refers to the frequent visit of Liverpool women to Halifax where they joined husbands, made social rounds and saw relatives.

²⁵⁸Receipt from Hannah White Dec. 31, 1800, PANS White Coll. MG 1 Vol. 951 #646.

²⁵⁹NA RG 8 4 Vol. 33 "The Brutus". Unfortunately the owner argued, apparently successfully that, as the ownership of the privateer had changed, they were not liable.

While it is unlikely women served aboard Nova Scotia privateers, the vessels themselves present some interesting gender issues. Almost all of the predatory privateers were named after important men. *Duke of Kent*, *Lord Spencer*, *General Bowyer*, *Admiral Nelson* and the *Charles Mary Wentworth* (named after the Lt. Governor's son). The prizes they captured were in majority named after women (e.g. *Abigail*, *Josephine*, *Sally*) and the very common Spanish shipname, *Nostra Señore Del Carmen*. Armed merchant trading ships however, retained female names such as *Eliza*, *Jane* and *Princess Amelia*.²⁶⁰

Curiously, while owners ashore like Simeon Perkins mostly used the term "privateersman", the logbook of the *Charles Mary Wentworth* consistently uses gender neutral language and collective language with the terms "hands" and "the people" instead of "men" whenever the activities of the crew are described. This collective language has also been noted in logbooks of navy mutineers at the Nore in 1797.²⁶¹

The hierarchy of Liverpool privateer vessels were reflected in their physical layout. Matching the description of features in letters and diaries, it seems likely the *Charles Mary Wentworth*, the *Duke of Kent*, the *Nymph* and the *Nelson* followed the basic layout of a New England designed privateer of the late eighteenth century.²⁶² The

²⁶⁰ A debate exists over why female ship names have traditionally predominated. One point of view suggests male sailors transfer the feminine side of their identity to their vessels. Another suggests female names avoid unacceptable male-male relationships between man and ship. Trevor Kenchington, "The Names of Nova Scotian Fishing Boats", *Northern Mariner*, Vol. V, No. 2, (April 1995) p. 18.

²⁶¹ Joseph P. Moore "The Greatest Enormity That Prevails: Direct Democracy and Workers Self Management in the British Naval Mutinies of 1797", *Jack Tar in History*, p. 94.

²⁶² The best discussion of privateer design is found in Howard Chapelle, *The History of American Sailing Ships* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1935), p. 130-176. The United States was a driving force of privateering design at this time and built many of the ships used by the French and Spanish, including prizes which were converted to Nova Scotian privateers, the *Nymph*, the *Brutus*, and *Nelson*, and probably the *Duke of Kent*. Snider's *Under the Red Jack*, p. 56-58, and RadJall's *Pride's Fancy*, p. 81-84, also explore the layout and accommodation aboard a privateer.

larger of these privateer vessels, in the 130 to 200 ton range, although only half the size of a naval frigate, resembled "frigates in miniature" with a full length gundeck, a quarter deck, and stern galleries. Living quarters differed radically from merchant ships and, following navy practice, vividly expressed the ship's hierarchy.

Living arrangements on Royal Navy sailing vessels have been well explored by nautical historians.²⁶³ Matching their findings with privateer details from the *Wentworth's* logbook, a useful outline of who lived where can be constructed. The captain was quartered at the very stern, with the only windows on the ship and directly over the powder magazine and drink locker, giving him direct control of those two explosive commodities. Forward of his quarters lived the senior officers, prizemasters and senior petty officers in a windowless warren of canvas and wooden partitions surrounding a small common eating space, the wardroom. It was a small space, that became smaller still in bad weather when cannons were sometimes stored there.²⁶⁴ The crew's quarters, the forecabin, were towards the bow. In merchant ships the seamen's quarters were separated from the officers by the large cargo hold and located in front of the foremast. "Before the mast,"²⁶⁵ is how Simeon Perkins often signed on seamen. However the large number of privateer seamen required special arrangements.²⁶⁶ The

²⁶³ Many books have been written about the anatomy of sailing ships, but most are on the technical side, and deal with very large ships of the line. An innovative and speculative consideration of living space and power relations on the *Bounty* is offered by Greg Denning, in *Mr. Bligh's Bad Language*, p. 19-23. N.A.M. Rodgers', *The Wooden World*, pp. 61-68 is valuable as it considers living conditions on smaller, privateer sized, warships, although perhaps somewhat optimistically and from an earlier period (1740-1777). Michael Lewis relates in detail the relationship between ship's hierarchy and living conditions in *A Social History of the Navy 1793-1815*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960) pp.228-278. Similar, although less analytical is Peter Kemp, *The British Sailor: A Social History of the Lower Deck*, (London: J.M Dent 1970), p. 167-171.

²⁶⁴ *Logbook and crewlist of the Charles Mary Wentworth* Dec. 7, 1799, PANS MG 20 Vol. 215

²⁶⁵ *Perkins Diary* Nov. 22 1798, IV, p.135.

²⁶⁶ In fact, according to Graham McBride a curator at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, one of the men on the *Wentworth's* crew list, the forecabinman, had the specific

seamen's quarters spread aft, into the area normally occupied by the hold, but not needed as privateers carried little cargo other than their own stores.²⁶⁷ Privateers displaced the cargo and pushed their boundaries towards the officers, in effect blurring the usual clearcut separation of living arrangements. Topmen and lower petty officers took the more secure births. The cable tiers, where the anchor cable was stored, were much sought after.²⁶⁸

At the very bottom of the ship's hierarchy, at sea, were Spanish and French prisoners as well as slaves (carried as cargo), taken from captured enemy ships.²⁶⁹ They would be quartered in the hold or a makeshift brig under the forecastle at the lowest level of the ship. Whole barrels of handcuffs were sometimes taken to sea to confine prisoners. However privateers often allowed co-operative prisoners, or those in small enough numbers, freedom of the ship.²⁷⁰ In any case, prisoners were seldom aboard for long, as they took up precious space and even more precious provisions. At the first opportunity prisoners would be released on shore, or given a small captured boat. Only a handful, one or two per captured enemy ship, would be held to testify for the Admiralty Court back in Nova Scotia. Slaves were sold at the first opportunity on Caribbean Islands such as St. Kitts.²⁷¹

duty of looking after the crew accommodation in the forecastle

²⁶⁷C. H. J. Snider, *Under the Red Jack*, 57. Snider describes the layout of a smaller War of 1812 privateer in some detail.

²⁶⁸Lewis, *Social History of the Navy*, p. 270.

²⁶⁹Slaves were captured on at least four occasions: Mar. 20, 1800, IV, p. 219; Mar. 25, 1801, IV, p. 294. At one point, Captain Joseph Freeman wrote Simeon Perkins in that he had thirty slaves on board worth £3000. *Simeon Perkins Diary* Aug. 9, 1805, V, p. 132.

²⁷⁰Mullins, *Chronicles*, p. 17. Privateer and merchant captain William Hutchinson offered sensible advice on freeing prisoners with precautions in, *Treatise in Seamanship*, p. 188.

²⁷¹Thomas Parker letter, Dec. 24, 1799, National Archives MG 23 J17 Vol. 1

Risks and Reward

So here I am in my twenty first year
It's been six years since we sailed away.
And I just made Halifax yesterday.

God damn them all! I was told.
we'd cruise the seas for American gold
We'd fire no guns! Shed no tears!
But I'm a broken man on a Halifax pier
The last of Barrett's Privateers ²⁷²

Stan Rogers' song *Barrett's Privateers* has created the strongest popular image of privateering today. Its theme of betrayal of innocence and broken promises has been cited by some historians, such as J. M. Bumsted in *The Atlantic Region to Confederation*, as proof that privateer crews received almost nothing while bearing all the risks of the trade.²⁷³ This is in contrast to Marcus Rediker's Marxist interpretation that privateering offered eighteenth century sailors a rare and, relative to low merchant wages, more equitable share in a ship's earnings. An examination of the rewards versus the risks of privateering in Nova Scotia indicates that seamen did assume harsh risks but were succeeded in reaping awards beyond their normal prospects.

Risk

Let us first look at how privateer crews fared in the most basic return of all --- getting home alive. Between 500 and 1000 men shipped out of Liverpool on privateers between 1793 and 1805.²⁷⁴ Their losses as recorded by Simeon Perkins were:

²⁷² Stan Rogers, "Barrett's Privateers" *Fogarty Cove* (Dundas, Ont: Fogarty Cove Music, 1977). Rogers skillfully evoked many details of privateer life but his song is based on an imaginary episode with some 1960s anti-war sentiment added. No Nova Scotia privateer ever suffered the same disaster in battle, sunk by one shot with almost all hands, as did Barrett's "Antelope".

²⁷³ J. A. Bumsted, "Resettlement and Rebellion", *The Atlantic Region to Confederation*, Ed. J. Reid and P. Buckner, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994) p. 171.

²⁷⁴ This is a very approximate estimate. Six Liverpool privateers made nineteen cruises in this time, but the turnover rate is unclear. The most who went to sea at any one time was 240 on November of 1799 when the *Charles Mary Wentworth, Duke of Kent, & Lord*

DATE	VESSEL	LOSSES
1799	March C. M. Wentworth	Thomas Roberts & prizecrew lost at sea in prize bug
	March C. M. Wentworth	Navy deserter pressed & recaptured
	May 29 C. M. Wentworth	George Forbes Vaughan dies ashore after sickening afflict
	July 7 C. M. Wentworth	One crewman pressed by frigate HMS Castor
	July 17 C. M. Wentworth	Nathan Freeman killed attacking Spanish fort
	Late July C. M. Wentworth	Thos. Freeman & 5 crew captured in Haitians, escape but pressed
	Aug Nelson	Several killed & wounded attacking 20 gun French merchant ship
	Sept C. M. Wentworth	Sickness aboard Peter Frude dies, 40 others sick
	Dec 29 Lord Spencer	Three wounded in fight with French privateer
	Dec 24 Nelson	Battle with French privateer 2 dead, 5 wounded
1800	Jan. 15 C. M. Wentworth	HMS La Unity presses nine men
	Feb 2 C. M. Wentworth	Translator Peter Brown sickens, left ashore
	Feb 6 C. M. Wentworth	Spanish overpower prizecrew injuring Sam Kinnex & Matthew Daux
	Mar Lord Spencer	Vessel wrecked on reef, crew all saved by Nelson
	June 8 Duke of Kent	Prizemaster James Hopkins sickens dies in St. John NB
	July Francis Mary	Crew of 40 taken by Spanish, exchanged, pressed by HMS Sansperil
	Sept 7 Duke of Kent	HMS Neried presses 20 men
	Sept Eagle	Captured by Spanish Frigate with crew of about 50
	Dec 15 Duke of Kent	John Hume lost overboard
1803	Nov Rover	Prizecrew jailed in US for illegal capture
1805	June 10 Duke of Kent	Spanish overpower prizecrew killing 1 seaman capturing 12 others Burnaby who dies in jail
	June 11 Duke of Kent	Spanish capture prizecrew of 10 men under Benjamin Collins
	July Duke of Kent	William Atwood pressed
	Aug. 3 Duke of Kent	HMS Jason presses Andrew Little, Mich Waters, John Verge

Summary: Battle Deaths 10 Battle Injuries 10 Taken prisoner 112
 Lost at Sea 7 Deaths while impressed 13 Impressed 77
 Sickness Deaths 4 Serious Sickness 44

These numbers probably slightly under-report the losses as they are mainly drawn from Perkins Diary, which detailed as it was, tended to focus on the merchant/officer class of Liverpool. However no large or serious occurrence of death, sickness or injury was likely to be ignored by Perkins, and the picture that emerges is not one of large bloody battles, but instead a steady string of small tragedies in short but violent confrontations in the Caribbean

Most battle losses were light as privateer attacks usually involved attacks on lightly armed merchant ships. Some sharp battles were fought with French privateers and

Spencer sailed together

Spanish naval vessels but weather and sailing allowed the Nova Scotian vessels to emerge mostly unscathed. One bloodbath engagement was fought by the privateers in this period, when the *Rover* was cornered by a Spanish naval schooner and two gunboats in 1800. Even through the muted translation of interrogated Spanish prisoner Valentine Aguirre, one can catch glimpses of blood stained decks:

There were a great many men killed in the schooner Santa Rita that were thrown overboard in the action and several remained dead on the deck when the schooner was taken. He does not know how many were killed in the gunboats but supposes there must have been a good many as they were much exposed to the fire of the Brig Rover²⁷⁵

However this level of carnage was atypical. A more common example of the violence faced by privateers was the retaking of a Spanish prize in 1805. It was described by the prizemaster, Thomas Burnaby, who died of his wounds a few days after writing this letter:

I took possession of the launch and at 8 in the evening was working up to the schooner, and while in stays the Spaniards hove the man that was with me overboard, while I was wounded in the head with by a musket and they retook the launch. I endeavoured to persuade them to pick up the man Patrick Ryan, who was struggling in the water. This they refused to do but continued to beat and bruise me.²⁷⁶

The Nova Scotia privateers were relatively free of deadly sickness, considering they were operating in the Caribbean where malaria and yellow fever were a serious risk. Great strides had been made in the 1790s in dealing with scurvy and smallpox. Navy deaths fell from a yearly loss of one sailor in 42 (1779) to one in 143 (1813).²⁷⁷ As the precise number of privateer sailors from Liverpool is not clear, it is difficult to compare

²⁷⁵NA RG 8 IV Vol. 39 "Santa Rita".

²⁷⁶Thomas Burnaby letter, June 8, 1805, published in History of Queens County by James More, Halifax: Nova Scotia Printing Co, 1873, p. 192.

²⁷⁷Christopher Hall, British Strategy in the Napoleonic War, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 14.

these rates but it appears Nova Scotia sailors also benefited from the advances in health. The larger Liverpool privateers usually carried doctors but their contribution to health would have been modest, given the limited state of medical science in the period.²⁷⁸

Only two Nova Scotia privateers were captured by the enemy. The Liverpool schooner *Francis Mary* and the Halifax schooner *Eagle*, were captured by the Spanish. However both crews appear to have been released within a few months. The *Eagle's* crew were exchanged for prisoners on a Bermuda privateer.²⁷⁹ The *Francis Mary's* crew were exchanged by HMS *Sanspareil* but they were all, except for the captain and first mate, pressed aboard the navy ship.²⁸⁰ Privateer vessels, being fast and well armed, were actually less likely to be captured than merchant vessels. Four Liverpool merchant ships were captured in the Caribbean during the privateering period. Insurance rates show a privateering voyage to the West Indies was actually considered less risky than a trading voyage, receiving lower rates.²⁸¹

Most privateers who were captured were taken when they were trying to sail a captured ship, a prize, back to Nova Scotia. These small, often damaged and leaky Spanish vessels were vulnerable to storms, easy prey for Spanish and French gun boats. Spanish gun crews captured two Nova Scotia prize vessels in two days in July of 1805. Patrick Ryan, was killed and the prizemaster Thomas Burnaby died soon after in prison. The other prizecrew were released in an exchange a few months after.²⁸²

²⁷⁸Simeon Perkins mentions three doctors who served on privateer ships. Dr. Andrew Collins, Dr. George Forbes Vaughan, and Dr. Joseph Falt. Vaughan fell sick on his first voyage and died soon after returning to Liverpool.

²⁷⁹Henry Wilkinson, *Bermuda From Sail to Steam* Vol. 1, (London: Oxford Press, 1973), p. 146.

²⁸⁰Perkins Diary Aug. 2, 1800, IV, p. 243.

²⁸¹Merchant voyages to the West Indies in wartime required premiums from 20 to 25 per cent. Privateering voyages paid only 10 to 17 per cent. Akins Insurance Ledger 1803-1809 Public Archives of Nova Scotia RG 1 Vol. 1 #2.

²⁸²James More, *A History of Queens County* (Halifax: Nova Scotia Printing Co., 1873), p. 192-193.

Capture was not the only danger faced by prize crews. James Hopkins, a young seaman, lodged a protest with the Justice of the Peace on the Turks and Caicos Island after a disastrous voyage in a Spanish schooner captured by the *Duke of Kent*. Hopkins was put aboard the schooner under a prize master just before weather turned ugly.

The night of the 29th when at about 11 the wind blew contrary that at this time they had 11 pds of bread, 10 1/2 pds of pork & beef for the support of 15 men, that from this situation they were induced to proceed to St. Kitts as directed by their commander and that in doing so they broke their rigging, sprung their foremast and carried away their bowstrip . . . in consequence taking on a great deal of water . . . they should be obliged for the preservation of their lives to run into some enemies port near them "283

However, on their way to surrender to escape drowning, they met another British privateer who gave them some rations, helped with repairs and evacuated half the crew, leaving Hopkins to sail on with eight remaining men. They made it as far as the Turks and Caicos where Hopkins sold the remains of the derelict ship and part of its cargo to feed himself and the crew and made arrangements to ship both cargo and crew back to Liverpool. Unfortunately, he never made it back, falling sick on the voyage home and dying in a hospital in Saint John, New Brunswick.²⁸⁴

The greatest hazard of all to life and liberty of a privateersmen, far beyond battle, disease and storm, was service in the British Royal Navy. Short-handed navy ships would often stop and pick over the best crewmen from a privateer ship. Almost 80 Liverpool privateers were pressed into Royal Navy ships between 1798 and 1805. One devastating impressment in 1799 took 20 men from the *Duke of Kent*, over a quarter of her crew. Privateer officers were usually able to get released within a few months, but it is difficult to tell how many of the seamen ever made it back to Liverpool, as many of them simply disappeared from the record. At least twelve privateersmen died in the navy.

²⁸³NA RG 8 4 Vol. 38.

²⁸⁴Perkins Diary, June 8, 1800, , IV, p.233.

Those who survived usually served at least a year before release. In comparison, privateers captured by the Spanish were usually exchanged in under a year, making capture by the enemy often a better proposition than service in the navy.²⁸⁵

Remarkably enough, at least three privateers pressed into the Royal Navy jumped overboard in enemy waters, seeing their chances in prison as better than on the lower decks of a King's ship. Many of their adventures in outwitting the navy became Liverpool folklore. James Macleod managed to swim to shore in Venezuela and eventually worked his passage back to Liverpool.²⁸⁶ However another, Robert Millard, drowned in his attempt.²⁸⁷ Zenas Millard's escapades were especially revealing. He was captured by Haitian Revolutionaries from a prize vessel of the *Charles Mary Wentworth* in August 1799. He escaped with the rest of the prize crew but the navy pressed them while they were travelling back to Liverpool. Millard jumped overboard, preferring the chances in the prisons of the Black revolutionaries in Haiti to life under British officers in the Royal Navy. He was able escape yet again from prison and made his way to Charleston, South Carolina where he wrote this letter to his parents:

I have seen great many hardships and suffered sorely depend on it I have been taken three times since I saw you last ... When I was taken after I left the ship, I was a prisoner seven weeks, and not enofe to eat to keep life and sole together ... I was so weak I could not walk across the room ... I lef the rest of my shipmates all well, but Hannah's brother He was very sick ... I remain your loving son till death, Amen²⁸⁸

²⁸⁵These impressment figures are based on *Perkins Diary* entries. Major notes on impressment include: Dec. 20, 1799, IV, p.207; Mar. 19, 1800, IV, p.218; Aug. 2, 1800, IV, p.243; Feb. 23, 1801, IV, p.285; July 1, 1801, IV, p.314; Aug. 18, 1805, IV, p.135.

²⁸⁶Public Archives of Nova Scotia, T.B. Smith Collection Reel 14952. Macleod's navy captain is said to have threatened to "Hang him like a rabbit," to which Macleod replied, "If you want to make rabbit pie, first you must catch your rabbit."

²⁸⁷*Perkins Diary*, July 1, 1801, IV, p.314.

²⁸⁸Public Archives of Nova Scotia, T.B. Smith Collection Reel 14957.

A few things should be noted however, about the hazards of privateering. As Rediker points out, almost all these dangers: capture, impressment and storms, were faced by fishermen and merchant seamen.²⁸⁹ As indicated by the insurance rates, merchant seamen in the Caribbean actually ran a greater risk of capture. As well, many merchant seamen, captured and imprisoned early in the war before exchanges were set up, spent far longer times in foreign prisons than the privateers. Merchant and fishing vessels also attracted impressment, although the heavily manned privateer ships attracted somewhat more of it. Perkins recorded 19 merchant and fishing seamen who were pressed during the privateering years of 1798-1805 and at least another dozen who were pressed in the years before privateering commenced.²⁹⁰

Secondly, the owners and captains of the Liverpool privateers went to great efforts to protect and rescue their crews from impressment. Simeon Perkins was constantly writing and petitioning the Governor's office and the Admiralty to release impressed seamen. Captain Joseph Freeman, the most popular privateer captain with the Liverpool owners, refused to put to sea again until some protection could be devised for his crew. Eventually Governor John Wentworth agreed to commission all privateer crews as soldiers in the militia, theoretically excluding them from forced service in another branch of the King's service. This did not provide complete protection from impressment but seems to have lessened it. There was no reoccurrence of wholesale impressment that took over a quarter of the *Duke's* crew in 1800. However navy commanders could find excuses to take a handful of men not explicitly covered by militia protection.

²⁸⁹Rediker, *Between the Devil*, p. 32-33.

²⁹⁰Perkins *Diary* July 20, 1799, V, p.465 ; Nov. 17, 1800, IV, p.265 ; May 16, 1805, V, p.113 ; July 3, 1805, V, p.124 ; Letter, Mar. 23, 1798, V, p.454. Letter Aug. 6, 1805, Vol. V, pp.473-474.

Wages

Having looked at the risks, we can now consider if privateer sailors made any money. Consider the earnings of a typical seaman who would have sailed with the *Charles Mary Wentworth* on her four cruises

1st Cruise - Aug. 15 to Dec. 16, 1798	Four Months
2 prizes, total value: £9960	Single Seaman's share: £32

2nd Cruise - Feb. 3 to May 11, 1799	Three Months
5 prizes, total value: £20,000	Single Seaman's share: £48*

3rd Cruise - June 19 to Sept. 11, 1799	Three Months
2 prizes, total value: £2650	Single Seaman's share: £9*

4th Cruise - Nov. 27, 1799 to May 5, 1800	Six Months
1 prize, total value: £1078	Single Seaman's share: £3

Average Seamen's Share: £23 Average return per month at sea: £5 7/month

Source: Perkins Diary and Vice Admiralty Prize Cases. Shares marked with * were recorded by Perkins. The others were estimated based on the value of prizes taken ²⁹¹

Seamen received a modest portion of the total value of the prizes they took. As outlined in Chapter Three, many people were ahead of them when the prizemoney was distributed. If the case was appealed, the court costs would soar and payment would be delayed for years. Some Liverpool prize cases took three years to resolve. In Halifax, an appeal of one rich prize to the privateer schooner *Earl of Dublin* took four years to

²⁹¹Perkins used his diary to keep track of expenses and revenues for his own business purposes, making it a rich and reliable source for this information. While he does not record share values and net returns for all cruises, these can be estimated based on the average value of prizes. Perkins records the returns for the *Wentworth* in the following entries: Letter, Perkins to Uniacke, Oct. 20, 1798, V, o. 458; Jan. 14, 1799, IV, p. 130; May 11, 1799, IV, p. 164; July 31, 1799, IV, p. 180; Mar. 11, 1800, IV, p. 217; April 26, 1800, IV, p. 226.

decide and six years after the capture, the first mate and a widow of one crew member had to petition the Vice Admiralty Court for their share.²⁹²

A privateer seaman did not get rich, but compared to his other work options, he did quite well. An experienced merchant seaman, earning top wartime wages, could earn £4 a month.²⁹³ Land wages were considerably less, the common labour wage in Nova Scotia at this time being about £2 a month. Perkins paid about £3 for experienced men working on land, and found some left him at this wage to go privateering.²⁹⁴ With the average return for the *Wentworth* being almost £6 a month, it was clearly an attractive option. Of course it depended on what cruise. The second cruise of the *Wentworth* was a welcome windfall for its crew, delivering almost a year and a half of land wages for three months' work. However the second cruise only broke even with land wages and fell below merchant shipping wages. The *Wentworth's* final cruise, a gruelling six months patrol of the Caribbean, yielded only a half pound per month, a serious loss in terms of opportunity costs.

By a rough estimate, it took at least two prizes for a large privateer ship, like the *Wentworth*, to make money on an average cruise. Liverpool privateer vessels made a total of 18 cruises. On three cruises, no prizes were made and on three more, only one

²⁹²"The Petition of Rebecca Irish Widow and Administrator of Levi Irish" National Archives of Canada, RG 8, IV, Volume 33, File: "The Brutus" pp14308A-C.

Unfortunately the owners had broken up and dispersed and it is not clear that Widow Irish was able to collect anything.

²⁹³The merchant wage of £4 a month is based on wage settlement documents filed at the Vice Admiralty Courts 1796-1803. NA RG 8 IV Vol. 151, 152, 154 as well as wages mentioned by Perkins in his diary and those recorded on captured American ships in various prize files NA RG 8 IV. Wartime merchant wages doubled and tripled because of high demand and high risk. Rediker, *Between the Devil*, p. 97.

²⁹⁴Stephen Hornsby, *Nineteenth-Century Cape Breton: A Historical Geography*. (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queens Press, 1992), p. 18. Perkins Diary Nov. 21 & 23, 1799, IV, p.200.

prize was taken. That left a one in three chance that a privateer cruise would be meagre or barren in this period

Relations between Crew, Officers and Owners

While the risk faced by privateers could be daunting, they found ways to beat the system. One way was for crew members to band together and appoint their own agents to calculate shares and charge a lesser fee than the owner's agents. Simeon Perkins sometimes complained about the ungrateful privateers were appointing their own agents and complicating things for him.²⁹⁵ Another method was to negotiate bonuses when signing on. Peter Leonard joined a Liverpool privateer during the American Revolution in exchange for "1 barrel of flour, 4 gallons molasses, 14 lbs sugar, and 2 shirts" as well as a promise that Simeon Perkins would see to his family if he did not return.

A more common method in the 1790s involved selling part of a share for cash before the voyage began. The crewlist of the *Nelson* records the trading of these crew shares. A quarter to a half of their share was sold by almost every crew member, officers included, before the cruise even began.²⁹⁶ Perkins bought quarter shares from two privateers in 1799 at £2 per quarter share. At other times, seamen were offered from £11 to £13 for their shares.²⁹⁷

Seamen could also sell their share, or parts of it, during long waits for the Vice Admiralty Court decisions. Depending on the wealth of a prize and the progress of the case, privateer share prices would rise and fall, involving sailors with shares to sell in what some historians have called "the privateer's stock market". Crewmen from the *Nelson* were offered £19 a share following a successful cruise.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁵Perkins Diary Aug. 18, 1803, IV, pp.481-482, Letter Mar. 28, 1799, V, p.461

²⁹⁶Crewlist of Nelson Sept. 2, 1800MG I Vol 951 Item 735.

²⁹⁷Perkins Diary, Nov. 23, 1799, IV, p.200, Aug. 26, 1803, IV, p. 483.

²⁹⁸Howard Chapin, *Privateer Ships and Sailors*, (Toulon, France: Moulon, 1926), 12, Perkins Diary, IV, Sept 29 1799.

While privateer crews did not get rich, they were at least fed, and with the sale of their shares, their families had some cash. Cash was a precious thing to have in an economy with little circulating currency. In some ways privateering can be compared to the militia call-ups in the late 1790s when the portion of the Queens County militia were called to Halifax for several months of work on fortifications, once a year. These appear to have been popular, not so much for the meagre wages, but for the free food and clothing in times of little work.²⁹⁹ It is interesting to note that during the peak of privateering, the demand on the Overseers of the Poor in Liverpool dropped steadily from £125 in 1797, to £120 in 1799 and £80 in 1801.³⁰⁰

Beyond subsistence, privateers found other ways to enhance their share of the trade, and one method was to steal parts of it before it was judged by the courts and, from a seaman's viewpoint, slid into the hooks of judges, lawyers, the owners, and other landsharks. There are indications this was pretty common, and in some dramatic ways, reluctantly accepted by owners. Captain Thomas Parker sent a letter along with a valuable prize ship to the owners of the *Charles Mary Wentworth* on August 12 1799. "I hope you will make use of every means (and that with all speed) to secure the cargo, as it consists of articles too easy made away with. I have not the least doubt of your fidelity, but you know it is hard to trust many characters."³⁰¹

John Boit, the captain of an American ship captured by the privateer *Rover* sailing to a French port told the Vice Admiralty Court that he noticed the cargo, namely clothing, started to disappear from boxes within hours of his capture.³⁰² Perkins notes in his diary that it was more than a few souvenirs and fancy hats turned up in the chests of some seamen shortly after.

²⁹⁹Brian Cuthbertson, *The Loyalist Governor*, p. 77.

³⁰⁰Perkins Diary, Vol. IV, p. liv.

³⁰¹Letter from Thomas Parker National Archives of Canada MG 23 J17 vol.1.

³⁰²Public Archives of Canada RG 1 IV Vol.35.

Finally an elaborate theft ring by several seamen from the *Charles Mary Wentworth* was discovered in October of 1798. The *Wentworth* had captured a large Spanish ship with a cargo of cotton and cocoa. A few days after the ship and cargo arrived in Liverpool, two of the privateers who had helped capture it were caught stealing the cargo. Interrogations and search warrants soon revealed a sizeable operation that involved stealing cocoa and cotton, hiding it in attics and basements around Liverpool and shipping it to Annapolis Royal by schooner where it was sold. Four privateersmen, James Doggett, John Dexter, and Angus Chislom, and James Gardner Jr were arrested but "by the Particular request of the Prossicutors and the other Owners of the Privateer", they were released with a bond for good behaviour and court fees of 23 shillings each. Keep in mind that this was a serious property crime in the eighteenth century when thieves were still hanged in Halifax. Five years after this case, two sailors in Liverpool caught stealing wine from a Quebec schooner got thirty lashes and a month in jail. However in this case, the owners basically let them go. Doggett, Dexter, and Chislom even got hired on further privateer voyages. From the privateer seaman's point of view they were only trying for a fair shake at a cargo they had fought for. From the owners' point of view, the acceptance indicates a remarkable level of tolerance for such leakage.

Although history writer Thomas Raddall generally stayed with a captain's point of view, and attributed discontented crews to pointless, primitive aggression, he did offer this look into the thoughts of a fictional captain who had just captured a Spanish ship full of wine:

"The men were gathered in the waiste, growling like surly dogs. They had taken a fortune, of which their share would be precious small when the lawyers, the vice admiralty court, and the owners had taken theirs. Now they would have at least a fill of the wine if they had to cut my throat for it ... I knew my men, and I had sense enough to know there comes a time when the master must stand aside and swallow his discipline."³⁰³

³⁰³Raddall, *Prides Fancy*, p. 180. In this case, the fictional captain relented and allowed

Relations between the crew and officers at sea are worth considering in this context. Perkins's diary has three references to privateersmen who had been "disorderly" or "in riot" aboard and put in irons. Captain Joseph Freeman had a man in irons before he even left Liverpool Harbour in February 1799, although this may well have been seamen still intoxicated from departure celebrations, a common problem.³⁰⁴

Mutinies were not unknown on British privateer vessels,³⁰⁵ but there is no serious evidence of this on Nova Scotian privateers, save the few references to "riotous" or "disorderly" behaviour, which are also words used to describe rough horseplay and drinking at this time. However, the possibility of a mutiny was a conceivable, if unlikely route that was known to Liverpool mariners and probably accounts for the care noted by Perkins in the way privateer were treated in matters of confrontation. The crew of a Halifax privateer vessel had mutinied in Liverpool Harbour during the American Revolution. There was an attempted mutiny aboard one of the mail ships in Halifax Harbour in 1793 and finally, according to oral traditions in Liverpool, some Liverpool mariners who were impressed into the navy, had participated in the famous navy mutinies at Spithead in 1797.³⁰⁶

The diversion of the maiden cruise of the *Charles Mary Wentworth* showed the careful approach owners and officers were often forced to take. Another remarkable

the crew a hogshead of wine.

³⁰⁴Perkins Diary, Feb. 4 1799, IV, p. 148. Perkins often complained about delays in rounding up "dispersed" seamen. John Wentworth enlarged one letter in a postscript, explaining he now had more time because the mail ship's drunken seamen had to be roosted out of their "debauched lairs" PANS CO 217 Vol. 67, p. 144.

³⁰⁵Redicker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, p. 32, 228, 308-309.

³⁰⁶James Henry Ross, "Privateering in Nova Scotia During the American Revolutionary War 1775-1783", (MA Thesis Mount Allison University, 1957), p. 57.

Letter, Wentworth to Dundas, Oct. 10, PRO CO 217 Vol. 64, p. 419.

The Liverpool connection with Spithead comes from a local collection of stories, legends and rumours collected by F.F. Tupper and published after his death by the *Liverpool Advance* newspaper, *Historic Liverpool*, 1944, p. 136.

example occurred when Captain Alex Godfrey of the privateer brig *Rover* encountered a French convoy of large heavily armed ships in 1800, he wrote "On consulting with my ships company, we determined to bear down and attack them"³⁰⁷ Such consultation would have been unthinkable to a naval or merchant commander

Godfrey ran into trouble a few weeks later when he attempted to apply some the normal merchant shipping rules to his privateer crew. He had returned to Liverpool with three prizes. Hoping to make a quick turnaround, he ordered the crew to immediately put to sea again, arguing that since they had cruised without calling on a port, they were obliged under normal charter rules, to stay with the ship. However his crew claimed that a privateer cruise was different from a merchant voyage and that they had discharged their obligation by cruising, fighting and taking risks and now wanted a break. Following the confrontation, Godfrey's entire crew walked off and he was obliged to hastily recruit a new one.³⁰⁸

Privateer crews when dissatisfied with a captain or cruise would vote with their feet. When Captain Joseph Freeman punished three privateers on the brigantine *Nymph* by handing them over to the Royal Navy in 1801, three more of his men deserted at Hampton, leaving him short handed and sending him home. This act also made him unpopular with Simeon Perkins because Perkins had bought shares from several of the deserters and Freeman had wrecked his side investment.³⁰⁹

Military desertion provided a significant example of inter-racial co-operation in 1801 among privateer seamen against one of their owners and the military authorities. In the summer of 1801, two army deserters joined the Liverpool privateer, the *Rover*. However two days after the *Rover's* returned from a cruise on Sept. 10, 1801, an army patrol turned up in Liverpool looking for the men. Forewarned, the deserters hid, and

³⁰⁷Alexander Godfrey letter to *Naval Chronicle* Vol. 5 (Feb 1801), p. 176

³⁰⁸Perkins Diary, July 11 1800, IV, p.339.

³⁰⁹Perkins Diary Aug. 7 1801, IV, p.322.

then managed to escape to the United States. They were hidden by fellow privateersman, James Hammlton, a Black farmer and privateersman who served on the *Charles Mary Wentworth* and the *Rover*. Hammlton sheltered his messmates for two days with assistance of another crew member from the *Rover*, James Dick. Ordered by the army to investigate, Simeon Perkins discovered the two at Phillip's Tavern in Liverpool and questioned them. They did not co-operate but were not charged and the deserters appeared to have escaped. Hammlton and Dicks's race-bridging conspiracy is noteworthy as it reflects, albeit on a smaller scale, the multi-racial gangs of seamen who plotted resistance to press gangs and colonial authorities in eighteenth century London and New York.³¹⁰

Privateering evolved a certain culture of its own, both to integrate men aboard ship and to define their relations in port. Nova Scotian privateers borrowed and adapted several maritime and military rituals. As mentioned, Joseph Freeman tended to adapt British navy traditions to the vessels he commanded. He was also reputed to conduct Sunday services that mixed reading of scripture with readings of the navy Articles of War.³¹¹ Some familiar nautical traditions appear to have been modified by privateers to suit their needs. On Dec. 12, 1799, the logbook of the *Charles Mary Wentworth* recorded: "At 6 AM Old Neptune paid us a visit when he found 23 of his children who had not bin to see him before, he made them all go thro the usual custom of shaving & ducking, gave them his advice." However halfway through the ceremony, a strange sail was sighted and the crew, Neptune among them, rushed to action stations preparing for

³¹⁰Peter Lincaugh & Marcus Rediker, "The Many Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves and the Atlantic Working Class in the Eighteenth Century", *Jack Tar in History*, p.15

³¹¹Mullins, *Liverpool Privateering*, p. 19. More, *History of Queens County*, 143. The articles of war was the Royal Navy's code of offences and punishments. As private ships of war, privateers were also subject to the articles, although privateer officers could decide when and how to enforce them. David Steel, *The Ship Masters Assistant and Owners Manual*, (London: D. Steel, 1796), p.122.

what might be the first battle of their cruise. It turned out to be only a neutral merchant ship, but the enemy was encountered four days later.³¹²

The "crossing the line ceremony" is an ancient tradition on merchant and navy ships. But for privateers in the late 1700s, it had a special significance. Crossing the Tropic of Cancer, just south of Florida, marked the entry to the war zone of the Caribbean where slave revolts and the wars of the French Revolution had unleashed hordes of French and Spanish privateers. An English privateer captain of earlier in that century, Woodes Rogers, also used the Tropic of Cancer instead of the Equator to bond his mixed bag of English, Dutch and Irish privateers with the mariner's baptism: "Hoiste 'em halfway up to the yard and let 'em fall at once into the water." Those not keen could pass it up by paying a fine used to buy drinks for everyone else, but few refused.³¹³ Many of the privateer crew on the *Charles Mary Wentworth* were strangers. One in four were novices. They quickly had to become a fighting team if the ship was to survive a very hostile environment. The fishermen and forest workers drilled with cannon, cutlass and small arms as soon as they put to sea, but Father Neptune conveyed visible proof of initiation.³¹⁴ It also suspended the hierarchy between officers and seamen as all became briefly equal before Neptune, a fitting symbol for privateering's promise of greater power and equality, however brief.

Prior to a cruise, privateer captains "cried the town" by parading with uniforms, ribbons on their clothes, drums beating and flags flying. These parades were followed by a rendezvous, essentially free drinks for the crew on the owners followed in a popular

³¹²Log of Charles Mary Wentworth PANS MG 20 Vol 215

³¹³Woodes Rogers, Life Aboard a British Privateer, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1894), p. 24.

³¹⁴John Bromley also saw the line crossing ceremony adapted to the special privateering needs of the late 1600s, when it was used to break ties with Europe and elect buccaneering officers. Corsairs and Navies, p. 9.

tavern.³¹⁵ This was a very old naval recruitment method but for Nova Scotia privateers, who needed little inducement to attract recruits, it also told the community and the sailors themselves that they were part of something special, worth parading over. Some owners like Simeon Perkins were wary of rendezvous as, during the American Revolution, they sometimes became drunken and riotous, especially if rival privateer ships were simultaneously recruiting. However Perkins noted with relief how the rendezvous that began in 1798 all seemed to "break up in Good Season & very orderly."³¹⁶ Even when three ships were recruiting at the same time, in the fall of 1799, there was no violent competition.

It is telling to note that these recruiting rituals were very similar to the way elections were conducted in Liverpool at this time. A privateering rendezvous resembled the "Open Houses" that political candidates would hold to attract supporters with free food and drinks at a selected tavern during the voting.³¹⁷

In another privateer ritual, the *Wentworth's* crew conducted elaborate military funerals such as the burial of the ship's doctor who fell sick on board of the *Charles Mary Wentworth* in 1799. His coffin, covered with the privateer's flag and a pair of crossed swords, was buried with full military honours. An elaborate procession of officers and crew made their way to the cemetery for burial under six volleys from the ship's marine company.³¹⁸

³¹⁵Perkins records parades and rendezvous on Aug. 2, 3 & 4, 1798, IV, p.112-113; Jan 14, 1799, IV, p.144; Oct. 19, 1799, IV, p.194; May 26, 1800, IV, p.231 and Oct. 30, 1800, IV, p.262.

³¹⁶Perkins *Diary*, Aug. 2, 1798, IV, p.112.

³¹⁷Brian Cuthbertson, *Johnny Bluenose at the Polls*, Halifax: Formac, 1994, p. 4. The election Open Houses preferred the same taverns used for privateering business, such as Mrs. West's and often resulted in the same drunken rowdiness such as the fistfights at Mrs. West's that followed the 1793 elections. Perkins *Diary*, Mar. 4, 1793, III.

³¹⁸Perkins *Diary*, May 30, 1799, IV, p.168.

If the experience of Nova Scotian privateers is compared with the findings of Marcus Rediker, it becomes apparent that privateering did offer a more attractive option for merchant seamen at this time. In spite of the tough discipline applied by captains like Joseph Freeman, privateers in Liverpool took advantage of the demands of wartime to negotiate a redefinition of the social relationships in the wage-based merchant service. The potential for greater earnings and extra power was balanced by greater risks, but those risks were not an enormous departure from the risks faced by seamen who remained on fishing and merchant vessels. Seamen were still limited by a court and ownership system that saw them assume much of the risk for modest returns. However, within those constraints, they found avenues that gave them more room to carve out an economic and social niche.

Unlike Rediker's findings for the early eighteenth century, captains and owners in Liverpool did display consistent concern for the fate of their seamen when it came to rescuing them from impressment, perhaps reflecting the community obligations of a small town like Liverpool. The existing social order was still maintained and at no time did equity in wages and treatment approach equity levels carved established by Caribbean pirate crews, but owners and officers had to treat their seamen differently, sometimes apprehensively as Simeon Perkins expressed in his concerns about "some uneasiness "

Social Impact of Privateering on the Community of Liverpool

Privateering was the chief business of Liverpool from 1798 to 1801 as both the fisheries and West Indies trade remained moribund. It was an activity that drew in large numbers of people and large amounts of resources. Liverpool at the height of the privateering in 1798 to 1801 went through a period of what can perhaps be called "commercial militarization." Outfitting privateers and disposing of their captured goods dominated the affairs of the port. To feed the huge crews of privateer vessels, cattle were driven overland from Annapolis. Bakeries in Shelburne, Lunenburg, Halifax and even as

far as New York and Quebec City were put to work making bread. Large amounts of gunpowder, scores of cannons, hundreds of muskets and cutlasses flowed into Liverpool. In fact, so many sword blades were imported to Liverpool that Halifax customs officials briefly held up their shipment, alarmed that something nasty might be brewing.³¹⁹ Privateer ships and their prizes seriously crowded the port of Liverpool, requiring new wharves and warehouses. Some of the side effects in miniature sound familiar to Halifax in the twentieth century: riots and munitions explosions. Rowdy privateer sailors and alcoholism flared up as problems³²⁰ and the huge and hasty concentration of gunpowder led to a munitions explosion on the Liverpool waterfront that killed one person, wrecked several warehouses, stores, a home and butcher shop.³²¹

At times, such as the departure of the squadron of three privateers in November of 1799, almost half the male population of Liverpool was away privateering.³²² As discussed earlier, this left women with extra responsibility in managing the affairs of privateering families. As a general measure, during the privateering era of 1797-1803, the number of women who were mentioned in Simeon Perkins diary doubled, compared to the previous six years.³²³ Among the women with more work were Mrs. Scott the

³¹⁹Perkins Diary July 2, 1798, IV, p. 105. The many cannons, loaned, purchased and captured by the privateers proved the most enduring material culture legacy of privateering. When privateering finally ended in 1815, dozens remained and were planted muzzle-down on street corners to act as corner curbs. Forty of them were visible in 1907. Many remained until the 1970s when the last were removed for street widening. Several have been mounted in different locations in the town. Queens County Museum, Raddall Collection A 95 22.2 "Privateering Cannons".

³²⁰Simeon Perkins Diary mentions drinking and disorder problems on several occasions: Jan. 24, 1799, IV, p.145; May 12, 1799, IV, p.164; Nov. 25, 1799, IV, p.201; Dec. 14, 1799, IV, p.204-205; July 6, 1800, IV, p.238.

³²¹Perkins Diary, Nov. 14, 1800, IV, p.264.

³²²Perkins notes that over 232 men departed aboard the three ships on Nov. 27, 1799, IV, p. 201. More were at sea with the Shelburne privateer the *Nelson*. The 1794 polltax showed 326 men in Liverpool. (PANS RG1 Vol. 444, Item 9) and the census of 1787 showed 1014 men, women and children in 1787, (Mancke, *Two Patterns*, p. 58).

³²³Women are mentioned 220 times between 1797 and 1803 compared to 99 times in

midwife, who in the absence of two of Liverpool's three doctors serving on privateers, doubtlessly had more call on her general medical knowledge

Aside from additional responsibility, some women were able to take advantage of business opportunities in privateering. As Liverpool Harbour grew crowded with privateer ships and their prizes, Mrs. Cobb, the widow of privateer officer, Sylvanius Cobb, was able to rent out her family's storehouse and wharf as a much needed base for the *Duke of Kent* in 1799.³²⁴

Another example was, Phoebe West. She ran one of the most popular of Liverpool's three main taverns. "Mrs. West's" seems to have been the preferred location for regular meetings and dinners for privateer owners and officers. It was also a prime location for privateering recruitment.³²⁵ As well, Phoebe West was integrated into the world of privateering through family, as her eldest daughter married the famous privateer captain, Alexander Godfrey, and her brother in law served on the *Charles Mary Wentworth*.³²⁶

Taverns, of course, were used for more than meetings and dinners. Drinking and carousing by privateers was a noticeable feature of Liverpool in this period. Perkins notes loud privateer celebrations several times in his diary as well as numerous threats,

1790-1796. *Perkins Diary* Indexes Vol. III & Vol. IV, pp.513-550.

³²⁴*Perkins Diary* Sept. 12, 1799, IV, p. 189. Judging by the exacting terms of the rental, Mrs. Cobb apparently had some experience in business, requiring a deposit and placing very specific limits on the use of her property.

³²⁵Phoebe West opened the tavern with her husband, John West, and continued to operate it after his death in 1783 until her death in 1806. Her establishment appears to have been the "middle of the road", not as fancy as Mr. Phillip's, where the Governor would dine on visits, but not implicated in the rowdy drinking at Mr. Bowle's or Mr. Manning's taverns

Perkins Diary, Vol. II, p.15n; Vol. III, p. 7n. PANS T.B. Smith Coll. MG I Vol 817-863 Micro 14956 "Pheobe West"; *Perkins Diary*, IV, p.99, p.112, p.133, p.139.

³²⁶PANS T.B. Smith Collection. MG I Vol. 817-863, Reel 14956.

assaults and one duel challenge among privateersmen. One sad incident in particular points to the social costs of privateering:

William Brocklesby had hanged himself in an old barn ... He was formerly Subject to Drink, till about 2 1/2 years ago he reformed & Lived very temperate, until lately he got with the Privateers people at Mr. Boyle's [tavern], and got in Liquor, and has ever since been very intemperate... & scarcely went home to Sleep ... An awful Instance of the Depravity of Human nature, and the Dreadful Effect of Sin, in particular that of Drunkenness."³²⁷

Not surprisingly, pressure arose to restrict a growing number of taverns in Liverpool. Several tavern keepers were able to extend their license through privateering connections but others had their licenses curtailed.³²⁸ The family of Thomas Harrington blamed his heavy drinking on a privateering cruise and subsequent naval impressment.³²⁹

At least one illegitimate birth followed in the wake of privateering. Rebecca Freeman, the widow of a man pressed into the navy, was reported pregnant, most likely by recently returned privateer, John Dexter. The economic and social consequences of this disturbed Perkins. The last time Perkins had noted a burst of illegitimate births occurred during the American Revolution, also a time when many men were away privateering.

Several such instances have happened of late, to the great disgrace of the place, tho till lately it was remarked that never was a place clearer of such vices, - not being a bastard born for many years.³³⁰

The church's attitude towards privateering was mixed. Perkins, an intensely pious man and pillar of the Methodist church, integrated privateering into his beliefs with little

³²⁷Perkins Diary, Dec. 14, 1799, IV, p.204-205.

³²⁸Perkins Diary, Nov. 14, 1799, IV, p.198; Dec. 9, 1799, IV, p.204.

³²⁹PANS T.B. Smith Coll. MG 1 Vol.817-863 "Harrington, Thomas"

³³⁰Perkins Diary Mar 26, 1778, I, p.187; Dec. 22, 1801, IV, p.354. It is unclear what became of this pregnancy. Rebecca Freeman appears to have married again in 1804 to a Doctor Heffernan, Perkins Diary, Oct. 7, 1804, V, p.67.

difficulty. He hailed some privateer victories, such as the *Rover's* battle with the *Santa Rita*, as providential acts of God and the passage he wrote in May of 1798, less than a month before the decision to turn to privateering, indicates that religious anger may have been part of the decision to strike back at the French:

The foreign News is that the French go on very Spiritedly in making preparations for Invading England ... God only knows what they may be permitted to do. They appear to be a wicked people, that have denied the Christian Religion and Cast of the fear of God.³³¹

A Halifax priest writing to his bishop in 1802, was quite happy to accept captured goods from privateers, although he characterized the work of privateers as theft.

I am sending you some vestments ... Some privateers from here stole them from some Spaniards, and not knowing what to do with them made them a present to us. You see my Lord, how the misfortune of some becomes the good fortune of others.³³²

However, Henry Aline, the famous New Light preacher, took a harsher view. He was briefly captured by American privateers during the American Revolution. Although he was treated kindly, Aline warned:

Let them that wish well to their souls flee from privateers as they would from the jaws of hell (-Eternal damnation), for methinks a privateer may be called a floating hell.³³³

Aline was perhaps upset by the swearing aboard, and was probably also concerned by the distraction of souls by the lure of earthly riches.

However, despite Aline's condemnation, privateers were an important element of congregations he inspired in Liverpool. When privateering took off, Liverpool

³³¹Perkins Diary, May 31, 1798, IV, p. 99.

³³²Thomas Raddall, *Halifax: Warden of the North*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, p. 136.

³³³Aug 22, 1781 *The Journal of Henry Aline*, (Hantsport, Lancelot Press,) p. 182.

churchgoers were divided between the Methodist church and the New Light congregations. Privateers were drawn more or less equally from both churches.³³⁴ A widow of a pressed privateer, Hannah Blowers, underwent baptism shortly after her husband died during impressment by the navy off of the *Duke of Kent*.³³⁵ The two congregations were busy with rival building and renovation schemes of their respective churches during the height of privateering, no doubt fuelled in part by donations from the shares of privateering voyages.³³⁶

Given the pre-occupation with privateering in Liverpool, it is no surprise that Liverpool's churches would have many members who were privateers, and that the churches would benefit from their new income. As the examination of privateer crewlists illustrates, privateering drew from almost every element of the town of Liverpool and its associated communities in Queens County and the South Shore of Nova Scotia, be it Planter, Irish, African, Loyalist or Mi'kmaq. Privateer hierarchies reflected the economic and social classes ashore and the opportunities from privateering were also distributed according to class, with Liverpool's merchant class benefiting most of all. In this manner privateering resembled almost any business or economic activity of the time.

However privateering parted company with businesses like the fishery and merchant shipping in several important ways: owning shares, not wages, privateer crews were paid in cash, not the credit which so dominated the fishing industry. The share structure was also reflected in a unique culture that blurred the common class barriers, giving crews more power and respect. This was most seen at sea in the increased

³³⁴It is difficult to precisely measure church membership at this time of devotional flux but as a basic indicator, I have used the subscription list of the New Light church in 1794 (PANS MG 4 Vol. 77) and of the Methodist Church in 1798 (PANS MG 4 Vol. 79-NA typescripts).

³³⁵Perkins Diary Nov. 8, 1801, IV, p.344.

³³⁶A third of those who donated money to Methodist church construction in 1799 were privateers. MG 4 Vol. 79 - NA typescripts.

decision making power of crews. It was also reflected on land where the ritual of recruitment was one of the few activities, in addition to the occasional election, where the Liverpool's elites had to solicit its workers.

To the community of Liverpool as a whole, privateering acted to both stimulate and disrupt, a classic wartime effect.³³⁷ However prior to the venture into privateering, Liverpool had received much of the disruption, but little of the stimulation of war. Privateering was an initiative that reoriented a stream of wartime activity into Liverpool and its related South Shore communities. It also brought additional costs, but on the whole, the balance was likely positive. The uneven distribution of its gains, and the very real human costs in lives and social trauma tempered the achievement, but the successful organization of substantial deep-water raiding squadrons and the recognized feats of its mariners expressed a growing maturity to the town and earned Liverpool greater autonomy from Halifax.

³³⁷David Starkey noted this consistent double edged-effect of war on shipping communities throughout the eighteenth century in *British Privateering*, p 60.

Conclusion

The driving force behind privateering in Nova Scotia at this time was the province's economic relationship with the West Indies. Privateering only became attractive when the West Indies trade collapsed. Privateering was carried out by the same owners and crews who voyaged to the West Indies and when peace arrived in 1802, they eagerly sought a return to peaceful trade. In fact privateer ships and crews themselves often strove to carry on this trade, when converted to armed trading ships, bringing West Indies cargoes back under the protection of their own guns.

Privateers played a useful military role in commerce destruction but their most important military role was to the community of Liverpool. Privateer vessels were in a distinct sense a sea-going version of the county's militia, sharing many organisational and goals of the militia establishment in Liverpool. In a broader sense privateering was an armed defence of the West Indies market both directly and indirectly. Privateers sought to destroy the French privateers that had crippled this trade, but their most frequent prey became neutral American merchant ships who had taken over West Indies supply. The privateers in a sense were taking a piece out of their competition. The commercial-military tension evident in this relationship reflects tensions that would eventually lead to the War of 1812.

With a total gross of about £120,000, privateering injected significant sums of money into the economy of Nova Scotia, and most significantly, into the economies of communities outside of Halifax. This revenue came at a time when other activities, notably the fishery and the west Indies trade, were depressed. In this manner, it performed a valuable "counter-cyclical function".

These benefits came at a cost, the most distressing being the lives lost in the far Caribbean, along with the social disruptions to Liverpool itself in violence, alcoholism and family distress. However, many of these effects were not unique to privateering, being part of the risks of fishing and West Indies trade. A telling loss to the privateers was the fate of two of their boldest officers, Alexander Godfrey and Lodowick Harrington, not to privateering battles, but to peacetime hazards. Godfrey perished from fever on a West Indies trading voyage. Harrington was killed in a fishing accident.³³⁸

The long term effects of the privateering venture in 1798-1805 were diffuse. A substantial amount was skimmed off the top by officials in Halifax who regulated privateering, and by Halifax merchants who had larger resources to buy prize goods at auction and realise the profits of resale elsewhere --- all without real risk, financial or physical.

However, by retaining the custody of prizes and keeping prize auctions in Liverpool and Shelburne, privateering owners were able to limit this haemorrhage to Halifax. The biggest drain on valuable investment of privateering profits was the bleak economic picture in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Nova Scotia. While a bright spot in a continually depressed fishery and carrying trade, privateering was not powerful enough to completely transform these losses and much of the revenue from privateering was no doubt eroded by losses in other sectors.

Better opportunities were in store. Trade revived in 1808 when the embargo acts returned the West Indies trade to Nova Scotia. Timber exports steadily grew in the early nineteenth century as war cut England from its old timber supplies in the Baltic.³³⁹ Privateering supplied some resources to take advantages of these opportunities by

³³⁸*Perkins Diary*, Dec. 11&13, 1801, IV, p. 352 (Harrington); Jan 17&18, 1805, V, p 88 (Godfrey).

³³⁹Elizabeth Mancke, *Two Patterns of New England Transformation: Machias Maine and Liverpool Nova Scotia, 1760-1820* (PhD diss John Hopkins University, Baltimore Maryland, 1989), p. 61.

sustaining and strengthening Nova Scotia's merchant fleet and in some cases, such as Simeon Perkins's new sawmill, by new investment in timber. However the complementary way that privateering in the late 1790s sustained other maritime trades would not be its most visible legacy. The large core of experienced privateer owners and seamen trained in the Caribbean would put to sea in large numbers in the next war, taking their trade to the waters of the United States.

While the major force behind privateers was economic, it is misleading to characterise their activities as a product of greed or avarice, unless all economic and business decisions are interpreted this way. Prizemoney was the chief attraction to naval service for both officers and seamen in the Royal Navy.³⁴⁰ While privateers did profit from war, so did most of the successful businesses in Nova Scotia, be it a farmer in the Annapolis Valley selling beef to the army or a merchant in Halifax selling mast timber to the navy.

One of the attractions of privateering was the social mobility it seemed to offer by giving all hands a direct share in voyage returns, instead of the finite reward of meagre wages. The mobility created by privateering was enjoyed most of all by Liverpool's elite. The officers and younger owners of privateers represented a new generation of Liverpool leadership who were able to end their dependence on Halifax merchants and absentee politicians. For Liverpool's middle class, the tradesmen and small boat owners, the opportunities were important but less dramatic. For many, the command of prizemaster represented their first command and a stepping stone to master of larger vessels later in their career, an opportunity previously reserved for only sons of Liverpool's merchant elite. For Liverpool's working classes privateering offered on average, better money than any of their other employment options, in cash, when it was hard to come by. It also

³⁴⁰Rodgers, *Wooden World*, p. 135; Lewis, *Social History of the Navy*, p. 135, 316; Bromley, *Corsairs*, 452.

offered a unique working environment that gave them more say in how and where they would sail. While privateering was a valuable opportunity, it was certainly not the searoad to wealth for a working mariner. Thomas Raddall was not very far off the mark when he described them as "young and looking for riches and finding nothing but adventures and sore bones."³⁴¹

³⁴¹Thomas Raddall, *Prides Fancy*, p. vi.

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APPENDIX A

Privateer Vessels Nova Scotia 1793-1805

Ship	Year	Crew	Tons	Guns	Rig	Prizes	Home Port
Charles Mary Wentworth	1788-1800	80	130	16	ship	11	Liverpool
Fly	1789	40	71	10	schnr	3*	Liverpool
Nymph	1799	90	169	18	brgtn	2	Halifax
Nelson	1799-1801	80	140	16	brgtn	11	Shelburne
Duke of Kent	1799-1805	100	196	20	ship	8	Liverpool
Lord Spencer	1799	58		12	schnr	1	Liverpool
Rover	1800-1803	60	100	16	brg	8	Liverpool
Eagle	1800	65	148?	14	schnr	1	Halifax
Earl of Dublin	1800	80	100	10	schnr	5	Halifax
Nymph	1800	100	130	18	ship	2	Liverpool
General Bowyer	1800-1803	80	135	14	ship	7	Halifax
Frances Mary	1800	50		10	sloop		Liverpool
AVERAGE Crew:		73.6					
AVERAGE Tons:			117				
AVERAGE Guns:				14.5			
TOTAL Prizes:				56			

Armed Trader Merchant Ships Nova Scotia 1793-1805

Ship	Year	Crew	Tons	Guns	Rig	Prizes	Home Port
Britania	1793		301		ship		
Rasheigh	1793		220		ship		
Duchess of Argyle	1793	25	78	8	sloop		St John's NFL
Tnton	1795		165		ship		
Royal Fusiliers	1795				schnr		
Lucy	1795				ship		Halifax
Charles Mary	1796		78		schnr		Halifax
Royal Edward	1796	30	368	16	ship		
Swallow	1797	10	98	6	schnr		
Adamant	1797	20	100	8	Brngtn		Shelburne
Flying Fish	1797				schnr		Shelburne
Jane	1798	20	159	10	ship		Halifax
Sisters	1798	20	114	6	brg		Quebec
Nymph	1798				brg	2	Halifax
Lord Nelson	1799	27	277	12	ship		Halifax
Caroline	1799	11	90	4	schnr		
Flora	1799	18	146	10	brg		
Commerce	1799	20	210	10	ship		
Phoenix	1799	12	73	4	Brng		
John	1800	28	248	12	ship		
Foster Barham	1800	20		6			
Eliza	1800		145		brg		Halifax
Charles Mary Wentworth	1800	14	130	16	ship		Liverpool
Asia	1800	50		20	ship		Halifax
Jason	1800	25		10			Halifax
Jane	1801	20	159	10	ship		Halifax
Governor Carleton	1803					1	St John, NB
Rover	1804	12	100	6	brg		Halifax
Young Phoenix	1805		182	12	ship	1	Jersey, Channel Is
Mary	1805				ship	1	London
AVERAGE Crew:		21.2					
AVERAGE Tons:			164				
AVERAGE Guns:				9.79			
TOTAL Prizes:				5			

APPENDIX B Prizes to Nova Scotian Privateers

Map No.	Ship	Rig	Tons	Flag	Date of Capture	Captain	Outcome
19	Nostra Señora Del Carmen	brgin	145	Span	Sept 4, 1799	C. M. Wentworth	Condemned Oct 2/1799. Auctioned in Lpool Oct 18/1799
20	Morning Star	brgin	US	Oct 26, 1799	C. M. Wentworth	Half salvage awarded & released SPD Jan 4/1799	
21	French Privateer - name unknown		Fre-P	Dec. 1799	Brig Nymph		doesn't appear to have been condemned in Halifax
24	Schooner-name unknown	Schnr		Feb or Mar 1799	C. M. Wentworth	Lost at sea sailing for Liverpool. Last seen Mar 17, 1799	
25	Nostra Señora Del Carmen	brgin	160	Span	March 5, 1799	C. M. Wentworth	Condemned April 16, 1799. Sold & renamed as Duke of Kent June 1799
26	Diligence	schnr	40	Spa		C. M. Wentworth	Sold to Gamet Mear June 3, 1799
27	La Liebre	brg	120	Spa-L	April 5, 1799	C. M. Wentworth	Condemned June 7/9 1799
28	Fortuna	schnr	50	Spa	April 11, 1799	C. M. Wentworth	Condemned May 27/1799. sold June 3/1799 to Wm Allen
29	Casualidad	schn	140	Spa-C	April 18, 1799	C. M. Wentworth	Cond June 10, 1799. Sold June 3, 1799 becomes Sheburne privateer Nelson
31	Josephina	schnr	80	Fre	July 7, 1799	C. M. Wentworth	Condemned Sept 28, 1799. Renamed Greyhound
32	Anna Lophia	Sloop		Dan	July 23, 1799	Duke of Kent	Cargo seized but vessel released in Caribbean
33	Nostra Señora Del Carmen	Schnr		Span	July 24/1799	C. M. Wentworth	Offloaded Cargo condemned Oct 21, 179. Vessel recaptured by Haitians under Rigaud
36	Francisco	laenci	Spa	Aug 2, 1799	C. M. Wentworth	Released with POWS	
38	Nostra Señora Del Rosana	Schnr	80	Aug 4, 1799	Nelson		seized by HMS Shrewsbury taken to Jamaica
39	Lady Hammond	schnr	Dan	August 8, 1799	Duke of Kent		Condemned sold in Lpool becomes Lons Spencer Privateer. Long appeal. Results uncertain
40	Spanish Sloop	sloop	Spa	Aug 19, 1799	C. M. Wentworth		Cargo seized. sloop released with POWS. Cargo condemned with Misc merch Oct 21, 1799
42	St Crisfo del Gaz	Xeber	65	Spa	Aug 29, 1799	Duke of Kent	Condemned Oct 21, 1799. Sold Nov. 14 1799
43	Sally	brgin	79	US	August 31, 1799	Brig Nymph	Half salvage awarded Oct 14 22, 1799. Sold in Halifax Feb 22, 1800
44	Santo Chnsto del Grace	Xeber	60	Spa	Aug 31, 1799	Nelson	Auctioned Nov 4, 1799
47	Betsy	schnr	US	Dec 17, 1799	C. M. Wentworth	Judged at St Kitts for 75% value plus sale of slaves	

Ship	Rig	Tons	Flag	Date of Capture	Captor	Outcome
48 La Conception	schnr	Spa		Dec. 29 1799	Nelson	Driven aground in chase cargo seized, condemned June 10/1800
49 Nostra Señora del Carmen	schnr	28 Spa		Jan. 25, 1800	Duke of Kent	Sold to pay expenses on Turk's Island
50 schooner	schnr			Jan. 26, 1800	Duke of Kent	Taken with HMS Boston
51 Hazard	schnr	36		Feb. 3, 1800	Lord Spencer	Sold to Robert Barry May 14/1800
52 St. Michael	Polac	50 Spa		Mar. 2, 1800	Duke of Kent	Condemned April 19, Appealed sold May 14/1800 to Rbt Barry
53 French Schooner	Schnr	Fre		Mar. 9, 1800	Duke of Kent	Taken by Duke Mar. 9, retaken by Fre privateer Mar. 12, re-retaken by Teazer Mar. 18, taken into Antigua
54 Eagle	schnr	146 US		April??	Brig Nymph	
55 Two Sisters	schnr	Denis			Brig Nymph	Condemned in Bermuda
56 Union	sloop	50 Dane		Mid April 1800	Duke of Kent	Cond. Sold to James Bent July 17/1800 renamed "James"
58 Nostra Señora De La Concepción	bngtn	100 Spa			Duke of Kent	Auctioned July 17, 1800 Vessels sold for around 300
62 Fly	schnr	105 US		June 14, 1800	Eagle	Condemned July 14, 1800 Unsuccessfully appealed
63 Moses Myers	bngtn	160 US		June 17, 1800	Rover	5/8 salvage awarded-Aug 11, sold in Lpool Sept 22 to Joseph Cooper, Appealed Aug 27 Salvage reduced to 1/8-SFD
64 Rebecca	ship	US		June 17, 1800	Rover	5/8 salvage paid to privateers & release to owners
65 General Greene	sloop	68 US		June 25, 1800	Rover	Condemned Aug. 18 1800 Sold Sept. 22, 1800. Condemnation Reversed Aug 3, 1803
66 Diligent	schnr				Earl of Dublin	customs seizure
71 Brutus	ship	135 US-LI		July 31, 1800	Earl of Dublin	Cond Sept 2/1800 Unsuccessful appeal Sold to Jm&Wm Woodin Sept 11/1800 Renamed as privateer Gen Bowyer
72 Little Charlotte	sloop	63 US		August 2, 1800	Earl of Dublin	Sold in Halifax Sept 28 1800 Appeal is unsuccessful
73 Berkley	bngtn	143 US		Aug. 14, 1800	Earl of Dublin	Cond. Sept. 19/1800 Sold to Salisbury & Higgin Dec 31/1800, Appealed 3 value restored Nov 18 1800
74 Nostra Señora Del Carmen	schnr	60 Spa		Sept. 6, 1800	Rover	Cond Nov. 11, 1800 Sold to Alex Godfrey Nov. 22/1800
76 Santa Rita	schnr	120 Spa-C		Sept. 11, 1800	Rover	Condemned Nov. 11, 1800
77 Howard	ship	165 US		Sept. 16, 1800	Earl of Dublin	Part of cargo condemned ship and most of cargo released-Oct 18 1800

Ship	Rig	Tons	Flag	Date of Capture	Captain	Outcome
78 Sally	brgm	147 US	Oct. 19, 1800	Nelson	Released by agreement as neutral. Nelson pay costs	
79 Austria	brgm	140 US	Oct. 22 1800	Nelson	Cond. Nov 23/1800-some cargo released. Sold to James Ewing Jan 1801. Appealed. Full Value restored April.	
82 Fabius	ship	223 US	Dec. 1, 1800	Ship Nymph	Released Mar 20/1801-claimants and captors sharing costs	
84 schooner with coffee				Nelson	Taken to Annapolis	
85 American Schooner	schmr	US	Jan. 6, 1800	Lord Spencer		
86 Nostra Señora Del Carmen	schmr	60 Spa	March 13, 1801	Rover	Condemned May 12, 1800. Sold to John Kirk May 18/1801. Appealed Mar 9/1802. Inhibitor received SPD Sept-1800. Released after trial in Tortula	
87 Industry	stloop	US	Mar 23, 1801	Nelson		
88 La Fame	schmr	Fre	April, 1801	Rover	Sold June 3/1801 to Whitworth Cuddey, Granville	
89 Adams	schmr	50 US	April 2, 1801	Rover	Condemned May 26/1801.	
90 Columbus	ship	152 US	April 6, 1801	General Bowyer	Released May 25/1801-claimants pay most costs	
92 Nostra Señora Del Carmen	schmr	Spa	June?? 1801	General Bowyer		
93 Eliza	schmr	83 US	June 22, 1801	Nelson	Released, claimants paying costs	
94 Abigail	brig	115 US	June 30, 1801	Nelson	Released, claimants paying costs, no damages	
95 Argus	ship	212 US	July 3, 1801	Nelson	Released, claimant paying costs	
96 Maria	schmr	90 US-L	July 8, 1801	Ship Nymph	Condemned Aug 17/1801. Sold in L'pool Nov 30/1801 to Enos Collins. unsuccessful appeal June 30/1802. value paid to ...	
97 Peggy	schmr	73 US	August 28, 1801	General Bowyer	Cash condemned Oct 10, ship released Oct 9	
98 Nancy	schmr	72 US	September 29,	General Bowyer	Condemned Nov 2, 1801. Appealed 1802 but results uncertain	
101 Trois Freres	brgm	160 Fre	July 1803	Governor Carlet	Condemned Oct 3, 1803 but some cargo returned to M. Dany	
102 Lazarotte	brgm	Spa	Sept 3, 1803	Rover	Released, privaters paying half costs	
106 Spanish Schooner	Schmr	Spa	June 4, 1805	Duke of Kent	Retaken by Spanish gunboat, claimed to be Comma	
107 L'Hirondelle	schmr	30 Fre	July 6, 1805	Duke of Kent	Condemned Sept 23/1805	

APPENDIX C

Charles Mary Wentworth Crewlist November 1799 to May 1800 PANS MG 20 Vol 215 Item#10

Name	Position	Age	Home	Ethnic Origin	Occupation
Parker, Thomas	captain	28	Liverpool	NE Planter-Yarmouth	Captain-Brig Union 1790-1792, 1794, active Brack 1795, 1798, brig Patty 1797-9
Colins, Enos	1st Lieut	25	Liverpool	NE Planter-Cape	Captain and co-owner of WJ ships
Graham, John	2nd Lieut	25	Liverpool	NE Planter	Permanent shipowner, WJ India & US Ports
Upper, Nathan, [Jr]	3rd Lieut	20	Liverpool	NE Planter	Captain of C&M-SPD July 22, Sept 30 1800 Capt of new Brig Lly-SPD June 2
Kilbr, Benjamin	Lieut-Memias	31	Liverpool	German	ship owner & public official
Colins, Andrew	Surgeon	21	Liverpool	NE Planter	Doctor
Harrington, Ludowick	treasurer	26	Liverpool	NE Planter	Capt. Male & Fisherman, several fishing voyages for Perkins, later Goodenough
Morrison, Francis	treasurer's mate	21	Liverpool	NE Planter	Master of ship Friendship 1800-SPD April 18, moves to large by 1812
Kenny, Sam, Jr	boatswain	23	Liverpool	NE Planter	Mill worker-SPD Nov 25 1800 Feb 21 1804
Allen, Jacob	boatswain's m	47	Sable River	NE Planter	Master & Pilot, makes many fishing voyages to Labrador, discharged from Rot
Harrington, Ebenezer	gunner	30	Liverpool	NE Planter	On fishing schooner boy July 1, 1799, seaman May 29 31 1799 capt July 1 1798
Pipe, Stephen	gunner's mate	32	Liverpool	NE Planter	Carpenter, court constable 1805-TBS, moves to Antigonish 1805 to settle land
Davies, John	carpenter	20	Liverpool	NE Planter	Labourer, seaman
Ely, Joseph	carpenter's m	15	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman, later carpenter
Parker, Samuel	steward	29	Liverpool	NE Planter	Small boat owner, carpenter
Campbell, (Gamble?)	steward's mate	23	Liverpool	NE Planter	Fisherman-SPD May 16 1799
Harrington, Thomas	Master Arms	30	Liverpool	NE Planter	Becomes Capt of coastal schooner
Milrod, John	armourer	49	Liverpool	NE Planter	Carpenter, Lucas says known for his ingenuity medical devices, rotating light
Graham, Prince	cooper	22	Liverpool	NE Planter	Wood & Mill worker, captain small schooner, "a poor family" dependent on sons, S
Strickland, Christopher	promaster	22	Liverpool	NE Planter	Father owned a fishing schooner & capt of schooner Victory-SPD May 23 1792 June 29
McLeod, James	promaster's	30	Liverpool	NE Planter	master carpenter
Kenny, Samuel	promaster's	27	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Safford, Sam	promaster's	49	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Nickerson, James, Jr	cook	22	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
McGovern, Michael	cook's mate	30	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Harrington, James	surgeon's mate	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Byrd, John	sgt of Marine	30	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Harris, Robert	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Hickland, Henry	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Day, Joseph	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Andrew, George	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Cornwall, Beat	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Bowers, George	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Stokes, Harrington	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Marlin, William	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Gardner, Jens	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Grant, Peter	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Woods, James	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Woods, Joseph	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Crane, David	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Parks, Daniel	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Marlow, Patrick	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Elson, Charles	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Hayes, David	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Hayes, William	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Dalvey, William	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Godfrey, Warren	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Moore, Daniel	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Gardner, John	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Dexter, Samuel	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Murphy, Thomas	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Fisher, Peter	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Smith, Thomas	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Gardner, Stephen	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Wilson, John	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Cannon, Benjamin	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Murray, James	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Daddy, Mathew	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Parr, Zachary	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Miles, William	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Subler, Timothy	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Little, John, Charles	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Menard, John	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Bush, Henry	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Topper, Oliver	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Crosby, Nelson	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Barret, Robert	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Morris, John	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Luke, David	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Ryder, Simon	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Tanner, Leonard	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
McComiskey, Neal	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Harlow, Sals	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Fremman, Nathan	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Harrington, Benjamin	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Lindress, Selet	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Ramo, John	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Tidney, Simon	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Francis?	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman
Silvers, Peter	marine	19	Liverpool	NE Planter	seaman

APPENDIX D

Nelson Crewlist Sept 1800 PANS MG 1 Vol. 651 Item #735

No.	Name	Position	Shares
1	Dean Ephraim	Captain	8
2	Crocheron Abraham	1st Lieut	5
3	Dean Jonas	2nd Lieut	5
4	Durfee Robert	Doctor	3 1/4
5	Brown William	Captain's Boy	1
6	Miller John??	Prizemaster?	2 1/2
7	Goodwin John	Prizemaster	2 1/2
8	Crainer Michael	Carpenter	2 1/2
9	Johnson Joreman	Stewart	2 1/2
10	Hagar? James		2
11	Walham John	Boatswain	2 3/4
12	Hines John	Boatswain's Mate	2 1/4
13	Cosby? John	Sgt Marines	1 3/4
14	Donnahue Gilbert	Marine	
15	McFarlin? Ichab	Marine	1 1/4
16	Newcomb James	Seaman	1 1/4
17	Low Richard	Boy	0 1/2
18	Low Cesar	Marine	0 1/4
19	Craftford John	Boy	0 1/2
20	Smith Henry	Boy	0 1/2
21	Tell? John	Seaman	
22	Nann? Samuel	Boy	0 3/4
23	Hardy John		
24	Slagin? Adam?	Marine	1
25	Lewison Philip	Seaman	1 1/2
26	Grand Lewis	Cook	1 1/2
27	Power? William?	Marine	1
28	Leeds? Hysom?	Seaman	1 1/4
29	McCarthy Charles	Seaman	1 3/4
30	Swinesberg Christian	Armourer?	2
31	McKinzie William	Boy	1
32	Hart Ebs	Seaman	1 1/4
33	Wigfall? Joseph	Seaman	1
34	Fell Adam	Seaman	1 1/4
35	Fell Thomas	Boy	0 3/4
36	Sutherland Charles	Boy	0 1/2
37	Riley Simon	Seaman	1 1/2
38	Bessy? Edmond	Seaman	1 1/2
39	Sutherland William	Boy	0 3/4
40	Stephens? James	Seaman	1 1/2
41	Pro?jun? Peter	Boy	0 3/4
42	Hemmeon? William	Boy	0 1/2
43	Rourke John	Seaman	1 1/4
44	Roberts Owen	Marine	
45	Inman? John	Seaman	1
46	Leco Felix	Seaman	1
47	Gibson Samson	Marine	1
48	Parsons William	Marine	1
49	Parsons William [Jnr]	Boy	0 1/2
50	Herbert Thomas	Boy	1 1/4
51	Johnson David	Boy	1
52	Emmanuel Francis	Seaman	1
53	Swinesburg Germal	Boy	0 3/4
54	Gonzalez Nicholas	Seaman	1
55	Crowell Thomas	Seaman	1 1/4
56	Dooty Mores	Boy	1
57	McLean Duncan	Piper	1
58	King Thomas	Seaman	1 1/8
59	Garrat Abraham	Boy	0 3/4
60	Jackson Abraham	Boy	0 3/4
61	Smith George	Cooper	1 1/2
62	Ryan Patrick	Armors Mate	1 1/4
63	Brown Robert	Gunner	2 1/2
64	Rass? Thomas	Boy	1
65	McKelley Patrick	Seaman	1
66	McLean William? Charles	Boy	0 3/4
67	Stone William	Marine	1
68	Burns John	Boy	1
69	Simeon? George	Boy	0 3/4
70	Robertson William	boarding officer	5
71	Wells John	Seaman	1
72	McLean Charles	Prizemaster [Sally]	2 1/2
73	Densted John	Big Boy	0 3/4
74	Lane John	Seaman	1 1/2

TOTAL Shares: 106 3/8

APPENDIX E

NS Privateering Cruises

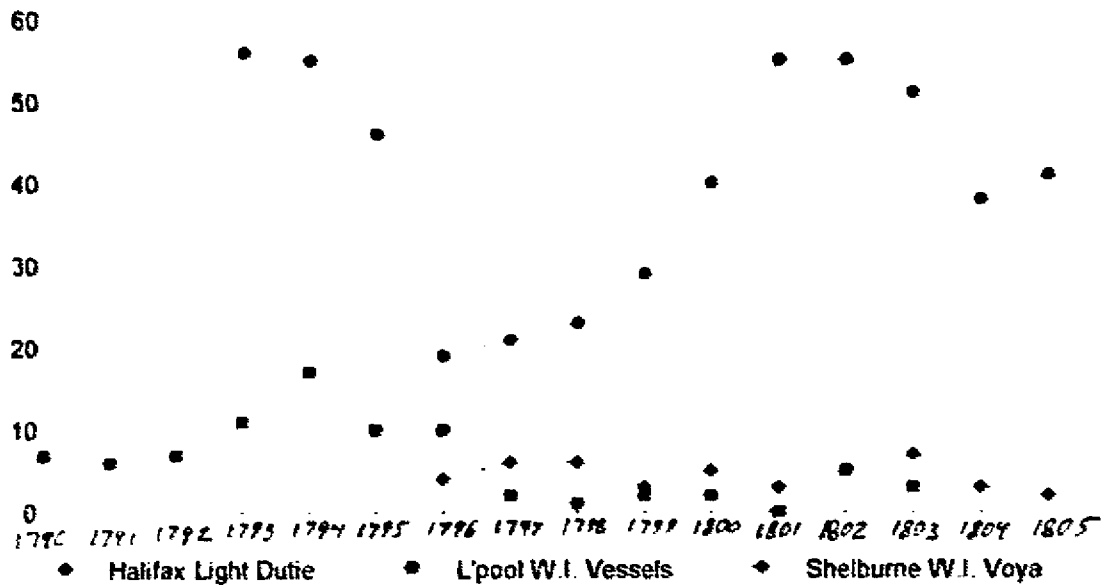
Year	Vessel	Cruise	Start Date	End Date	Length	Prize
1798	C. M. Wentworth	1st	August 15	Dec. 16, 1798	4 months	2
1799	C. M. Wentworth & Fly	2nd	February 3	May 11, 1799	3 month	5
1799	C. M. Wentworth	3rd	June 19	Sept. 11, 1799	3 month	3
1799	Duke of Kent	1st	June 29	Oct. 2, 1799	3 month	2
1799	Nelson	1st	July 14	Sept. 26, 1799	2 5 month	2
1799	Nelson	2nd	November 24	May 5, 1800	6 month	1
1799	C. M. Wentworth	4th	November 27	May 24, 1799	6 month	1
1799	Duke of Kent	2nd	November 27	June 7, 1800	6 month	4
1799	Lord Spencer	1st	November 27	Sinks March 1	3 month	2
1800	Frances Mary	1st	March 5	Captured July	3 month	0
1800	Eagle		June 1			1
1800	Rover	1st	June 4	July 4, 1800	1 month	3
1800	Duke of Kent	3rd	July 1	Oct. 4, 1800	3 month	0
1800	Rover	2nd	July 17	Oct. 16, 1800	3 month	2
1800	Earl of Dublin		August 1	September	2 month	3
1800	Nelson	3rd	September 1			2
1800	Nelson	4th	October 4	Sept. 2, 1800	1 month	2
1800	Nymph	1st	November 24	Mar. 25, 1801	4 month	3
1800	Nymph			May		2
1800	Eagle			Captured-Sep		
1801	Rover	3rd	January 27	May 8, 1801	3 month	3
1801	Nelson	5th	February 22	May 5, 1801	2 month	1
1801	General Bowyer		May 1			1
1801	Nymph	2nd	May 6	Aug. 7, 1801	3 month	1
1801	Rover	4th	June 7	Sept. 5, 1801	3 month	0
1801	General Bowyer		July 1	September	3 month	3
1803	General Bowyer		July 12	August	2 month	3
1803	Rover	5th	August 18	Nov. 7, 1803	3 month	2
1805	Duke of Kent	4th	April 17	Aug. 16, 1805	3 month	2

TOTAL Prizes:

56

APPENDIX F

West Indies Trade Record Halifax Light Duties PANS RG 31-105 Vol 1; Shelburne Custom Register, Simeon Perkins Diary



APPENDIX G

Prizes in Halifax: Vice Admiralty Price case Inventory PANS RG 1 Vol. 378 Mfm 15440

This is an incomplete registry, missing both navy and privateer cases, but provides an rough measure

	Navy	Privateer	Total
1793	15		15
1794	29		29
1795	20		20
1796	17		17
1797			
1798	27	1	28
1799	12	12	24
1800	28	20	48
1801	?	10	10?
1802	0	0	0
1803	8	3	11
1804	8	0	8
1805	26	5	31
1806	42		42
1807	26		26
1808	12		12
1809	3		3
1810	6		6
1811	15		15

Royal Navy Vessels with Prizes in Halifax. 1798-1805

National Archives Finding Aid RG 8 Series IV

St Albans	Hinde	Aurora
Prevoyante	Boston	Leander
Viven	Assistance	Cambrian
Thetis	Temegant	Busy
Hussar	Cleopatra	Columbian
Lynx	Andromache	
Driver	Pheasant	
Andromeda	America	
Braake	Swan	
Spencer	Lapwing	

APPENDIX H

Value of Prizes to Nova Scotia Privateers

Note: Values are in provincial currency. Often sources list only the value of the vessel, not the cargo. Estimated values have been derived from vessel tonnage, adjusted for cargo type.

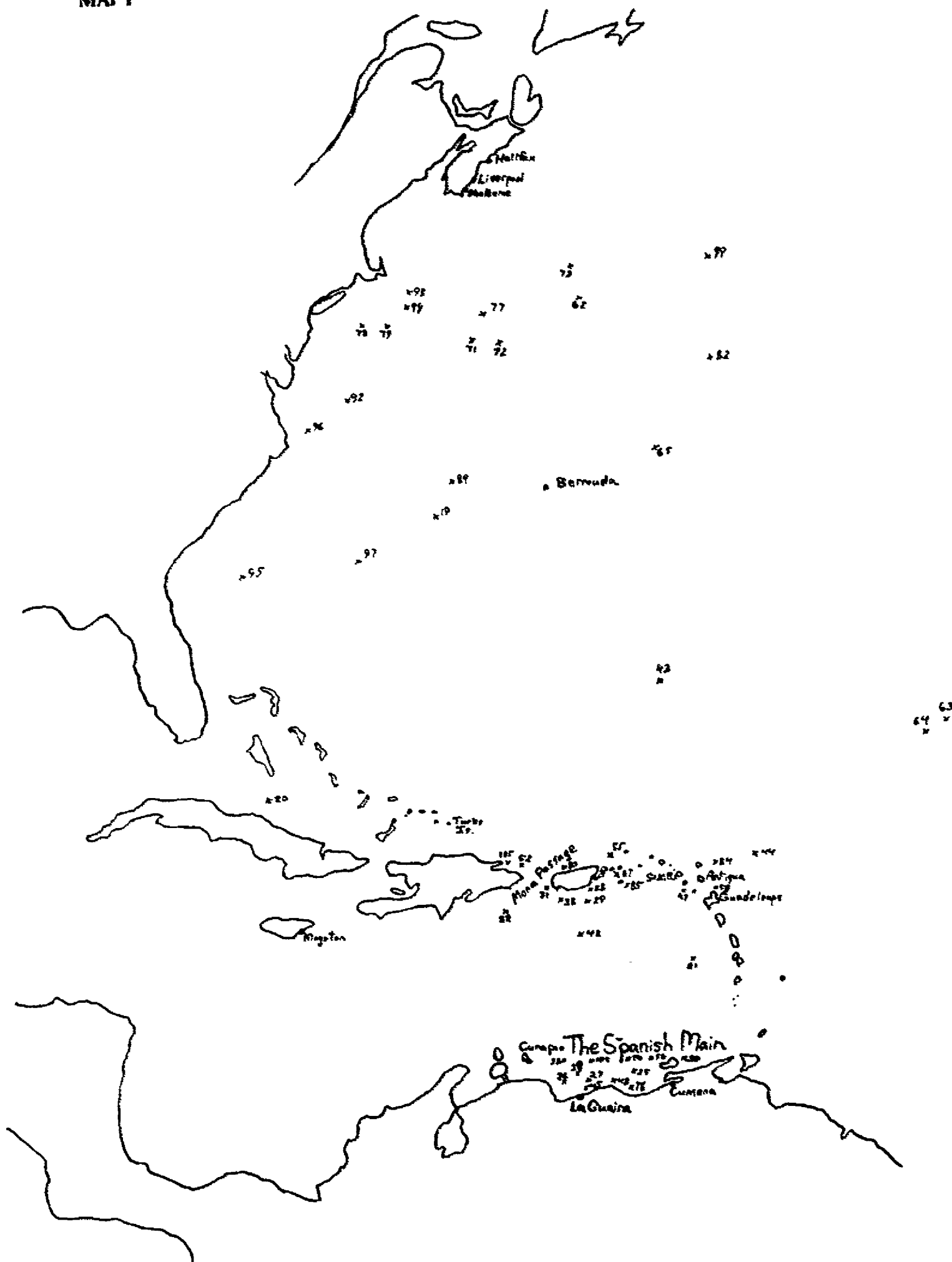
Ship	Year	Rig	Tons	Recorded Value	Estimated Value
Nostra Señora Del Carmen	1798	brgtn	145	7460	7460
Morning Star	1798	brgtn			2500
French Privateer -	1798	schnr			500
Nostra Señora Del Carmen	1799	brgtn	160	10000	6000
Diligence	1799	schnr	40	1000	1500
La Liebre	1799	brig	120		6000
Fortuna	1799	schnr	50	350	400
Casualidad	1799	schn	140	2339	7000
Josephina	1799	schnr	90	66	650
Nostra Señora Del Carmen	1799	Schnr			2000
Nostra Señora Del Rosiana	1799	Schnr	80		3000
Lady Hammond	1799	schnr		22000	5500
Spanish Sloop	1799	sloop			1000
St. Cristo del Gaz	1799	Xebec	65	88 (ship) \$2700 cash	1000
Sally	1799	brgtn	79	3288	1644
Santo Christo del Grace	1799	Xebec	60		2220
Betsy	1799	schnr		1078	1078
La Conception	1799	schnr			500
Nostra Señora del Carmen	1800	schnr	28		500
schooner	1800	schnr			500
Hazard	1800	schnr	38 sch	\$8000, cargo \$13000	4200
St. Michael	1800	Brgtn/Polaca	50		1850
French Schooner	1800	Schnr			recaptured
Eagle	1800	schnr	148		5476
Two Sisters	1800	schnr			2000
Union	1800	sloop	50		1800
Nostra Señora DeLa Concept	1800	brgtn	100		4400
Fly	1800	schnr	105	6900	6937
Moses Myers	1800	brgtn	160	7092	1182
Rebecca	1800	ship		875	6250
General Greene	1800	sloop	68	4977	Released
Brutus	1800	ship	135	3444	3444
Little Charlotte	1800	sloop	63	2319	2319
Berkley	1800	brgtn	143	2093	Released
Nostra Señora Del Carmen	1800	schnr	60	schnr £238	2200
Santa Rita	1800	schnr	120	850	1000
Howard	1800	ship	165	372-15	372

Sally	1800	Brgtn	147		Released
Austria	1800	brgtn	140	4674	Released
Fabius	1800	ship	223		Released
schooner with coffee	1800				3330
Nostra Seignora Del Carmen	1801	schnr	60	2253	2253
Industry	1801	sloop			Released
La Fame	1801	schnr		schnr £235	500
Adams	1801	schnr	50	\$800 + \$11225 72	2405
Columbus	1801	ship	152		Released
Nostra Senora Del Carmen	1801				2000
Eliza	1801	schnr	83		Released
Abigail	1801	brig	115		Released
Argus	1801	ship	212		Released
Maria	1801	schnr	90	205	1939
Peggy	1801	schnr	73	\$6000+coffee	1200
Nancy	1801	schnr	72		3240
Batt	1801				1369
Trois Freres	1803	brgtn	160		7200
Lazarotte	1803	brgtn			Released
Spanish Schooner	1805	Schnr			Recaptured
L'Hirondelle	1805	schnr	30	schnr 200	1110

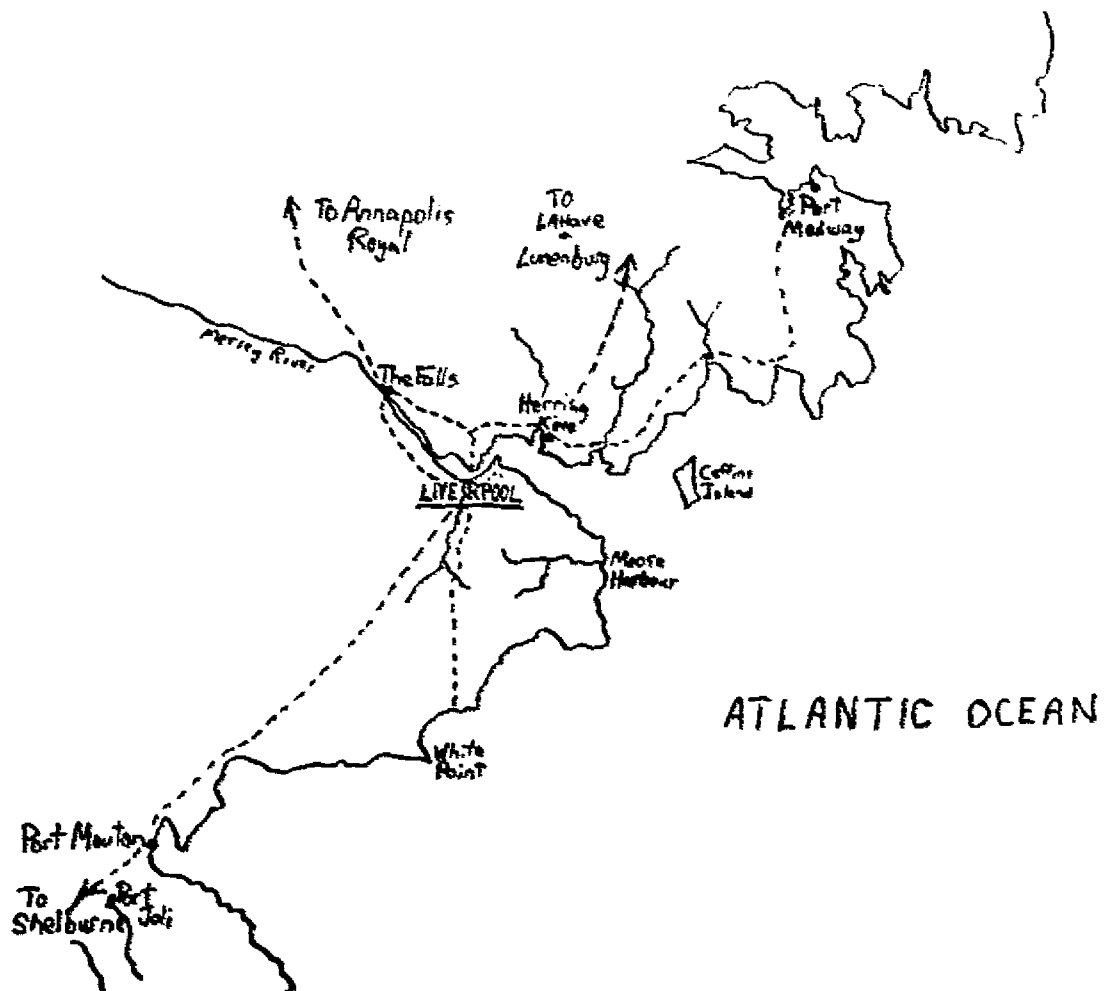
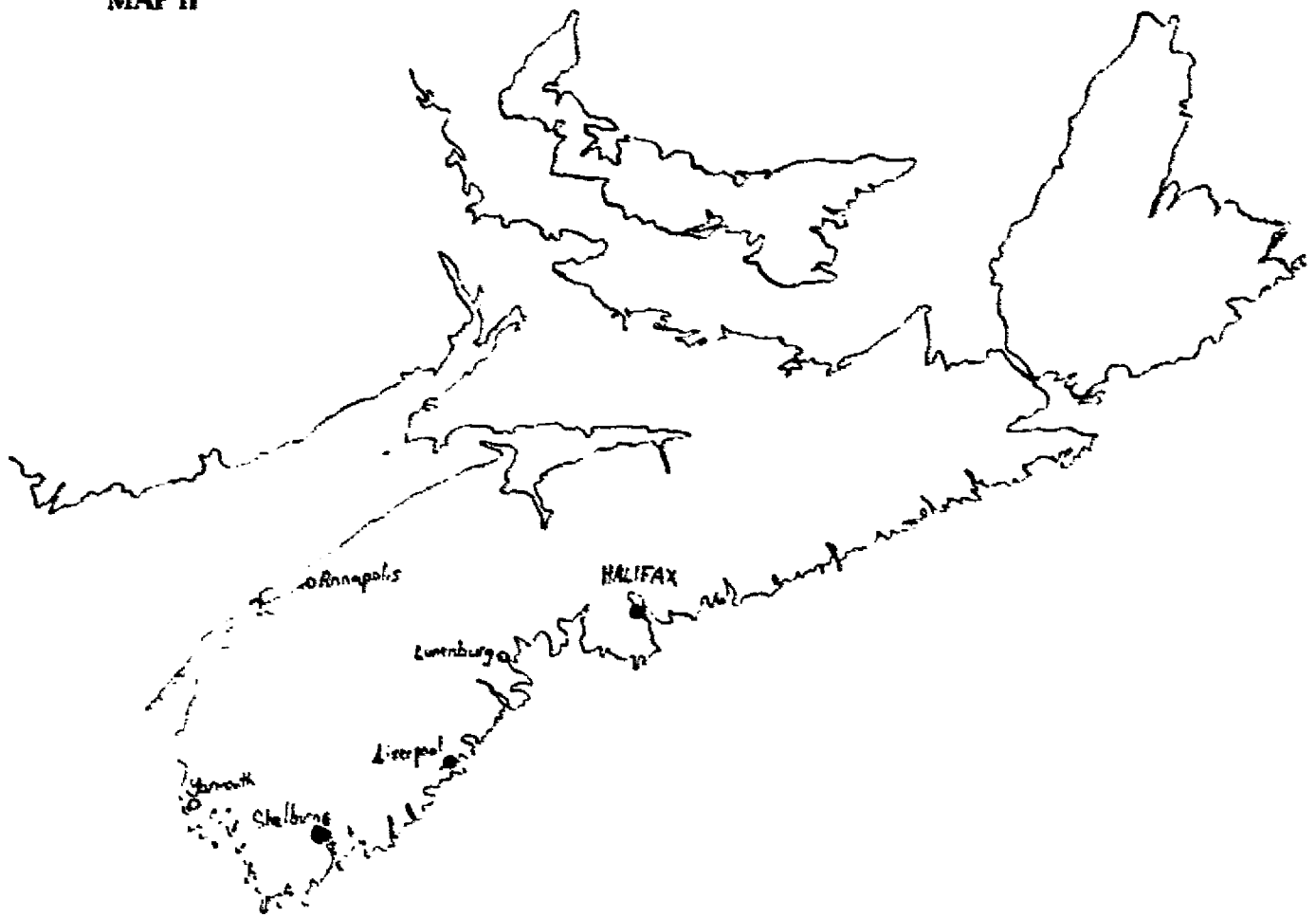
TOTAL Est. Value: 119559

SOURCE: Prize files NA RG 8 IV, Diary of Simeon Perkins

MAP I



MAP II



(Outlines from Ships and Seamen of the American Revolution Jack Coggins)

Diagram illustrating the layout of a sailing ship, showing the main deck, berth deck, and hold. The ship is divided into sections labeled 1 through 9, corresponding to the legend:

- 1. MAIN OR GUN DECK
- 2. BERTH DECK
- 3. QUARTERDECK
- 4. FORECASTLE
- 5. PUMPS
- 6. MAIN HATCH
- 7. FORE HATCH
- 8. GALLEY
- 9. HEAD

The ship's structure includes the Main Mast, Fore Mast, and Mizzen Mast. The deck areas are labeled CAPT., POWDER, OFFICERS, CREW, and BRIG. The hold is labeled HOLD. The ship's hull is labeled 3. and 9.

**Based on a New England privateer design in The History of American Sailing Ships
Howard Chappelle**