

A “Small Vessel of Brisk Bostoneers”: The Life and Times of the Massachusetts Province Sloop *Mary*, c. 1688-1693

Benjamin Schaffer*

*In the late seventeenth century, the Massachusetts Bay Colony's government built its own provincial navy of several vessels to secure its coastline from French, Indigenous, and piratical threats. While the creation of provincial navies would become a regular hallmark of English colonization throughout the Atlantic world, this fleet's flagship – the sloop *Mary* – and its crew would become major players in various transatlantic dramas ranging from the Glorious Revolution to the Golden Age of Piracy to the Salem Witchcraft Trials. Overall, *Mary's* short service history not only gives us a novel maritime lens through which we can examine traditionally-well studied events in early American history, but also highlights the long-ignored role of Anglo-American provincial naval forces in shaping the first British Empire.*

À la fin du dix-septième siècle, le gouvernement de la colonie de la baie du Massachusetts a construit sa propre marine provinciale de plusieurs navires pour protéger ses côtes contre les menaces posées par les Français, les Autochtones et les pirates. Alors que la création de marines provinciales allait devenir une caractéristique de la colonisation anglaise dans le monde de l'Atlantique, le navire

* Dr. Schaffer was awarded the North American Society for Ocean History's Clark G. Reynolds Student Paper Award for this article. The award is provided each year to the author of the best paper by a graduate student or students delivered at the society's annual conference.

***The Northern Mariner / Le marin du nord* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2023), 1-26**

amiral de cette flotte – le sloop Mary – et son équipage allaient devenir des acteurs importants dans divers drames transatlantiques, y compris la Glorieuse Révolution, l'Âge d'or de la piraterie et les procès des sorcières de Salem. Dans l'ensemble, la courte histoire de service maritime du Mary nous offre non seulement une nouvelle optique maritime à travers laquelle il est possible de considérer les événements traditionnellement bien étudiés des débuts de l'histoire américaine, mais elle souligne également le rôle longtemps ignoré des forces navales provinciales anglo-américaines dans la formation du premier Empire britannique.

Introduction

In April of 1689, Bostonians revolted and overthrew their governor, Sir Edmund Andros.¹ James II had recently appointed Andros to govern the short-lived Dominion of New England in 1686. During his short jurisdiction over this mega-colony (which included the vast territory between modern day Maine and New Jersey), Andros's connection to the king and his own abrasive governing style particularly infuriated Puritan leaders in Massachusetts. Andros's transgressions included his strict military leadership style on the Maine borderlands as fighting broke out with the Wabanaki nation there, his tendency to disregard local provincial legal customs, and his numerous connections to the Catholic James II. When news arrived that English rebels had invited the Dutch Protestant ruler William of Orange and his English wife Mary to dethrone James II, Protestant rebels led revolts against James II's officials throughout many of England's American colonies. Boston authorities themselves led over 2000 militiamen in a coup against Andros, imprisoning him and other Dominion officials before sending them to England in early 1690.²

During the chaos of this transatlantic "Glorious Revolution," over-eager Boston rebels not only imprisoned their former overlords, but also disbanded or disabled the province's vital naval defense forces. Insurgents dismantled the

¹ Much of the background information on the Glorious Revolution and King William's War in this paper has been adapted from the first chapter of *Self Defense and Sea Power: The Provincial Navies of British America, 1689-1763*. This book manuscript, based on my dissertation, is in review at the University of Alabama Press.

² Mary Lou Lustig, *The Imperial Executive in America: Sir Edmund Andros, 1637-1714* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002), 134-139 and Richard S. Dunn, "The Glorious Revolution and America," in *Origins of Empire: British Overseas Enterprise to the Close of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 445-457.

Royal Navy station ship, the frigate HMS *Rose*, when they came to suspect its captain, John George, of plotting with Andros to bombard the town.³ The following year, the Lords of Trade and Plantations – later known as the Board of Trade – complained to King William that, “The severall Sloops Imploy’d by S^r Edmond Andros for the Security of that Coast and the Fishery [have] been dismissed from that Service, and your [Majesty’s] Frigate the *Rose* hindered from going out of the Harbour to Secure the Coast from Privateers and



irregular Traders....”⁴ While *Rose* was a Royal Navy guard vessel, the sloops mentioned in this complaint were actually local war vessels commissioned in New England that served both independently and under the auspices of the Royal Navy station captain. This article investigates the multifaceted and complicated story of one of these vessels: the sloop *Mary*.

The fact that Massachusetts – and many other coastal English colonies in the New World – had their own provincial navies in the century preceding the American Revolution is a significant fact, but one that has not been taken seriously by historians in some time.⁵ Throughout the twentieth century, historians wrote a few monographs and articles about New England and Nova Scotia provincial guard ships and fleets that played significant roles in the sundry colonies’ wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, the most recent example is Philip Chadwick Foster Smith’s 1980 article “*King George*, The Massachusetts Province Ship,” which focuses on the journey of

The fact that Massachusetts – and many other coastal English colonies in the New World – had their own provincial navies in the century preceding the American Revolution is a significant fact, but one that has not been taken seriously by historians in some time.⁵ Throughout the twentieth century, historians wrote a few monographs and articles about New England and Nova Scotia provincial guard ships and fleets that played significant roles in the sundry colonies’ wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, the most recent example is Philip Chadwick Foster Smith’s 1980 article “*King George*, The Massachusetts Province Ship,” which focuses on the journey of

³ William R. Miles, *The Royal Navy and Northeastern North America, 1689-1713* (MA thesis, Saint Mary’s University, 2000), 107-108.

⁴ “New England patents and grants, 1690,” CO 5/905 1690/01/03-1690/06/12, The National Archives, Kew (TNA), http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk.unh.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/CO_5_905_003.

⁵ I adopted the term “provincial navy” from William Roy Smith’s monograph *South Carolina as a Royal Province, 1710-1776* (New York: Macmillan, 1903), 187.

one provincial warship during the Seven Year's War.⁶ In essence, for more than forty years, scholars have devoted little attention to the fact that Anglo-American governments maintained their own semi-permanent naval forces more than a century before the birth of the United States Navy.

Much of this scholarly inattention may be the result of the vague parameters of the term "privateering." Early twentieth century historian Howard Chapin's description of privateers as "privately-owned armed vessels, which sailed under the flag and commission [i.e., a letter of marque] of some recognized government" best represents the colonial understanding of the term "privateer." Nevertheless, for over a century, historians have never come to a consensus over whether warships that American colonial governments funded, commanded, and fitted out themselves should be classified as navies or "privateers." Chapin himself suggested that Andros's provincial vessels, including the sloop *Mary*, were not "privateers in the strictest sense of the word, but rather the beginnings of a colonial navy."⁷

While some later scholars have echoed Chapin's categorical differentiation between privateers and provincial naval forces, other historians have gone further to suggest that colonial governments did not have significant naval forces at all. For example, in his 2012 monograph *American Naval History, 1607-1865*, historian Jonathan R. Dull wrote that while colonial governments employed privateers – "privately built, owned, and manned but government-sanctioned armed vessel used chiefly to capture enemy merchant ships" – they "did not have permanent armies or navies, and there was not even a maritime equivalent to the rudimentary military training provided by colonial

⁶ These studies include Waldo Lincoln, *The Province Snow "Prince of Orange"* (Worcester: Charles Hamilton, 1901); Harriet Silvester Tapley, *The Province Galley of Massachusetts Bay, 1694-1716: A Chapter of Early American Naval History* (Salem: Repr. Historical Collections of the Essex Institute, Vol. LVIII, 1922); Howard M. Chapin, *The Tartar: The Armed Sloop of the Colony of Rhode Island, in King George's War* (Newport: Rhode Island Society of Colonial Wars, 1922); W.A.B. Douglas, "The Sea Militia of Nova Scotia, 1749-1755: A Comment on Naval Policy," *The Canadian Historical Review* 47, no. 1 (March 1966): 22-37; and Philip Chadwick Foster Smith, "King George, The Massachusetts Province Ship, 1757-1763: A Survey," in *Collections of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Vol. 52: Seafaring in Colonial Massachusetts*, ed. Frederick S. Allis, Jr. (Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1980), 174-197, <https://www.colonialsociety.org/node/1989#ch08>.

⁷ Howard Chapin, *Privateer Ships and Sailors: The First Century of American Colonial Privateering, 1625-1725* (Toulon: Imprimerie G. Mouton, 1926), 7-8, 96-8. Chapin's use of the term "provincial navy" in this book best defines the sort of naval service *Mary* was a part of. For eighteenth century definitions of privateering, see Edward Phillips, *The New World of Words: Or Universal English Dictionary* (London: King's Arms, 1720), no page number given; and Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language: A Digital Edition of the 1755 Classic* (1755, Reprint., Johnson Dictionary Online, 2012), 1573.

militias.”⁸ With such variegated understandings of the ways in which colonial governments managed their naval defenses, it is no surprise that the concept of provincial navies has largely been ignored by scholars in recent decades.

In this article, I take seriously Chapin’s suggestion that *Mary* was part of the “beginnings of a colonial navy,” and contend that “privateering” is an inappropriate term for colony-operated vessels during this era and beyond. On the surface, there were certainly similarities between provincial government-operated war vessels and the largely privately-run commerce raiders of the era. For instance, both forces typically emerged in colonial American ports, both typically operated under commissions from provincial governors or legislatures, and – as was the case with the Royal Navy – crews of both forces could keep a fair share of prizes captured from their enemies.

The main categorical difference we must draw between provincial navies and privateers is the level of provincial governmental support and direction. A perfect illustration of this dichotomy comes to us from the other side of the English Atlantic empire – Barbados. In 1703, the Barbados Assembly lamented the “inconveniences of granting Commissions to privateers at this time, for that the vessels taken up for the service of this Island and defending our coasts do want sailors.” Those “vessels taken up” were merchant ships that the island government had either impressed or hired and later designated as “vessels of war.” In essence, those provincial legislators worried that their own centrally controlled flotilla would be limited by giving too much operational independence to privateers.⁹ Of course there was categorical haziness between provincial navies and privateers, but mainland Anglo-American governments – and, in particular, Massachusetts – generally drew similar distinctions between state-sponsored naval forces and privateers.

For a span of five years between 1688 and 1693, the various captains, officers, and sailors on *Mary* carried out the typically routine duties of provincial guard vessels: they hunted pirates, supported Massachusetts’s military campaigns during King William’s War, took part in colonial diplomatic missions with Indigenous Peoples, and protected merchant ships from French privateers. At the same time, the crew of *Mary* weathered far

⁸ For an example of a late twentieth century scholar who differentiated between colonial navies (which he called “coast guards”) and privateers, see Carl E. Swanson, *Predators and Prizes: American Privateering and Imperial Warfare, 1739-1748* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), 50. See also John R. Dull, *American Naval History, 1607-1865: Overcoming the Colonial Legacy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 2-10.

⁹ Minutes of Council in Assembly of Barbados, 8 September 1702 in *Calendar of State Papers*, Vol. 20, 1702, ed. Cecil Headlam (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1912), 581-588, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/colonial/america-west-indies/vol20/pp581-588>.

larger storms than any other provincial warship would ever face in colonial America: transatlantic and intercolonial battles over the ownership of the sloop, social crises such as the Salem witchcraft trials, and regional fallout from the criminal behavior of its officers. Overall, *Mary's* story not only gives us a unique maritime "porthole" through which we can revisit familiar events of early American history, but also offers us an opportunity to examine the considerable and oft-ignored role that provincial naval warfare played in the formation of the English Atlantic world.¹⁰

The Origins of the Sloop *Mary*

The story of *Mary* can only be understood within the wider context of Governor Andros's military planning during his short tenure. When King James II commissioned Andros as the governor of the Dominion of New England in 1686, he hoped to centralize royal power in what had been a traditionally rebellious and autonomous region of English America. Andros eradicated local colonial legislatures and privileges, ensured the establishment of the Church of



Sir Edmund Andros. Portrait by Frederick Stone Batcheller. (Rhode Island State House Collection)

England in the traditionally Puritan Massachusetts, and used English, red-coated regulars and his Crown-appointed authority over local militia troops to secure his hold over the government.¹¹

While the red-coated garrison bolstered Andros's rule on land, the Royal Navy station ship *HMS Rose* and other Royal Navy ships that were occasionally in the area, such as the *HMS Kingfisher*, served as symbols of expanding royal power on the New England coastline. Massachusetts Puritans had long tolerated smuggling in violation of the Navigation Acts. These imperial laws dating back to Oliver Cromwell's rule in the 1650s required Anglo-American colonists to use English intermediaries to trade with other European empires. While Bostonians and other coastal New

¹⁰ In her book *Warship Under Sail* – a study of the mid-19th-century US Navy Sloop of War *Decatur* – historian Lorraine McConaghy explores how the vessel's "sailors, marines, deserters, and officers played their parts" in various antebellum cultural movements ranging from the "Young America" movement to shifting ideas of American nationalism and manhood. Using this same microhistorical technique, I will use experiences of the officers and sailors aboard *Mary* to highlight the role of local colonial naval defense on the regional and world stage during the tumultuous final decade of the seventeenth century. See Lorraine McConaghy, *Warship under Sail: The USS Decatur in the Pacific West* (University of Washington Press, 2009), 4.

¹¹ Lustig, *The Imperial Executive*, 134-139, 160-161.



The Dominion of New England. (Wikimedia Commons)

Englanders had long violated these acts, they had also been frequent sponsors of peacetime piracy against Spanish shipping. With pressure from both the Spanish government and King James II himself, Andros – bolstered by his ally, customs official Edward Randolph – ordered Captain George of *Rose* to clear both smugglers and pirates from the region.¹²

Dominion authorities must have realized that these goals were too arduous for George to accomplish alone, for in the spring of 1687 Edward Randolph suggested that “itt is necessary a Small vessell be provided for his Majesties Service On the Coasts....” Andros’s council agreed with the suggestion and purchased the provincial ketch *Speedwell* soon thereafter. Dominion authorities employed *Speedwell* for tasks that would become routine for provincial navy vessels on the New England coasts: transporting soldiers, supplies, and government officials to the contested borderlands on New England’s northern frontier.¹³

¹² Lustig, *The Imperial Executive*, 49, 167-169; and Mark Hanna, *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire, 1570-1740* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 144-181.

¹³ “Proceedings of the Council of the Dominion of New England from 4th May to 28th July 1687,” CO 5/785 1687/05/04-1687/07/28, TNA, http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk.unh.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/CO_5_785_003. See also Edmund Andros to John Cooke, 6 August 1687, v. 127, p. 420, Massachusetts State Archives,

This latter task was especially important as tensions were rising with the French and their Indigenous Wabanaki allies on the Maine borderlands. Wabanaki forces, angered by years of abuse and expansion by New England colonists, had already begun to raid Anglo-American villages there in early 1688. Although the English and French empires were technically at peace, these territorial disputes, coupled with French aggression against the English-aligned Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) of New York, made an all-out colonial war a very real threat. In response to the escalating crisis and in an attempt to centralize military resources, in the spring of 1688 the English government added the colonies of New York and New Jersey to the Dominion of New England. As war clouds loomed on the horizon, Andros himself traveled to Maine to oversee military defense preparations and to construct fortifications.¹⁴

While the popular imagination has long treated colonial warfare with Indigenous Peoples as an entirely terrestrial affair, historians such as Andrew Lipman and Matthew Bahar have recently brought attention to the fact that Indigenous mariners were a major threat to the imperial pretensions of European colonizers on the northeastern coastline of North America. During the disastrous King Philip's War of the 1670s, Wabanaki sailors seized New England vessels, forced Anglo-Americans to labor on Indigenous small craft, and disrupted the region's vital coastal trade and fisheries.¹⁵ The new Wabanaki naval onslaught likely inspired Andros to expand his own provincial navy in the spring of 1688. This force employed several vessels including the sloop *Resolution*, the brigantine *Samuel*, the sloop *Sarah*, the sloop *Speedwell*, and the sloop *Mary*.¹⁶

The ability for provincial governments to create such forces had at least some basis in imperial law. In his 1629 instructions to the earliest Massachusetts settlers, King Charles I empowered provincial officials to:

<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9Y5-GVMW?i=226&cat=1055547>; and "Orders for John Cooke..." v. 127, p. 266, Massachusetts State Archives, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9Y5-GVXB?i=698&cat=1055547>.

¹⁴ Lustig, *Imperial Executive*, 171-175.

¹⁵ Andrew Lipman, *The Saltwater Frontier: Indians and the Contest for the American Coast* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 4-5; and Matthew R. Bahar, *Storm of the Sea: Indians & Empires in the Atlantic's Age of Sail* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 106-110.

¹⁶ This list did not include the province sloop *Resolution*. While historian John Henry Edmonds claims that the vessel went into private hands by 1689, the colony still sold the vessel at profit the following year. No easy solution exists for this omission. See John Henry Edmonds, *Captain Thomas Pound* (Cambridge: John Wilson and Son, 1918), 34. "Sir Edmund Andros' account of the forces raised in the year 1688 for the defence of New England against the Indians," CO 5/855 1690/05/29, TNA, http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk.unh.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/CO_5_855_098; and Chapin, *Privateer Sloops*, 96-8.

at all Tymes hereafter for their special Defence and Safety, to ...resist by Force of Armes, as well by Sea as by Lande, and by all fitting Waies and Meanes whatsoever, all such ... Persons, as shall at any Tyme hereafter, attempt or enterprise the Destruccion, Invasion, Detriment, or Annoyance to the said Plantation or Inhabitants, and to take and surprize by all Waies and Meanes whatsoever, all and every such Person and Persons, with their Shippes, Armour, Municons and other Goodes....¹⁷

While such instructions demonstrated royal approbation of the colony setting up its own militia, they also heavily implied that New Englanders were well within their rights to create naval forces.¹⁸

Although provincial authorities such as Andros and his successors considered Massachusetts's provincial navy to be an extension of the colony's defense forces, historian John Henry Edmonds's description of *Mary* serving as a "consort" to Royal Navy station ships raises questions about whether or not provincial vessels were subordinate to imperial officers during combined operations. Contemporary evidence does seem to indicate that provincial authorities occasionally deferred to Royal Navy authority during major expeditions. Take for instance a 1687 record of "Cash [paid] for ye Hyre of the Brigantine Deliverance employed in [their] Majesties Service by direction of [Royal Navy] Capt. Jno [sic] George."¹⁹ It is also telling that after Massachusetts replaced *Mary* with the larger warship *Province Galley* in 1694, Governor Phips's first choice for a commander was Thomas Dobbins – a previous Royal Navy station captain in Boston.²⁰ In this instance and in so many future cases throughout the English Atlantic world, provincial authorities consistently insisted on the right to build and operate provincial navies, but also deferred to the authority of the Royal Navy when Crown forces were present.²¹

While the Massachusetts provincial navy's command structure is clear, the date and construction details of its longest-serving vessel, *Mary*, have proven

¹⁷ "The Charter of Massachusetts Bay: 1629," Yale University, The Avalon Project, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/mass03.asp.

¹⁸ For more on the Massachusetts militia system of the seventeenth-century, see Kyle F. Zelter, *A Rabble in Arms: Massachusetts Towns and Militiamen During King Philip's War* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

¹⁹ Edmonds, *Pound*, 28; and "Disbursements for ye Governmt, 1686," v. 127, p. 370, Massachusetts State Archives Collection, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9Y5-GV9V?i=143&cat=1055547>.

²⁰ Tapley *Province Galley*, 3.

²¹ For another later example of this sort of deference, consider the Royal Navy's command of South Carolina ships in an assault on Spanish St. Augustine in the 1740s. See Major James P. Herson, *A Joint Opportunity Gone Awry: The 1740 Siege of St. Augustine* (Fort Leavenworth: United States Army Command and General Staff College, 1997), 42, n. 32.

extremely difficult to locate. Indeed, as will be seen below, *Mary's* exact origins would become a major point of debate in the legal proceedings that followed Massachusetts's revolt against Andros. What is certain, however, is that it was actively employed by Dominion officials as early as March of 1688. Its price tag is a little easier to estimate, as different sources in subsequent years claimed that *Mary's* construction cost between £360 and £450. It is likely that the Dominion of New England's treasurer, John Usher, disbursed some of the money for the building of the sloop – a fact that would drive him to continuously petition the Massachusetts government for compensation for decades to come.²²

While little is certain about the order that led to the construction of *Mary*, reasonable assumptions can be made as to its appearance. If the sloop was anything like New England merchant sloops of the time, it would have been a single masted vessel, fore-and-aft rigged. Surviving records contain more details about its sister sloop, *Speedwell*, which was a 40-ton vessel – it is possible that *Mary* had similar tonnage.²³ The fact that contemporary English merchant sloops with similar tonnage sometimes ranged between 45 and 60 feet long may also hint at the potential dimensions of *Mary*.²⁴

While educated guesses must be made about *Mary's* appearance, we have much more information on its armaments and crew size. For instance, during a 1689 pirate hunt, *Mary* was reportedly “man'd with twenty able seamen for their Majesties Service.”²⁵ In a subsequent 1690 expedition against French Port Royal, *Mary* had a complement of three officers and nine sailors and was armed with “8 gunns besides small Armes.” Two years later, *Mary* had more than fourteen

²² “Account of moneys disbursed and paid for a new sloop built by John Cooke for their majesties service,” CO, 5/856, 1691/05/08, TNA, http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk.unh.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/CO_5_856_041; and “Petition of John Usher, esq., October 1706,” in *The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay, Vol. VIII: 1703-1707* (Boston: Wright and Potter Printing Co., 1895), 704-706. Howard Chapin's claim that the sloop *Mary* belonged to Usher may be based on these claims, but Chapin never substantiated this claim (or many of his other statements) with sources (See *Privateer Ships*, 96-8).

²³ William Avery Baker, “Vessel Types of Colonial Massachusetts,” in *Collections of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Vol. 52: Seafaring in Colonial Massachusetts*, 18, <https://www.colonialociety.org/node/1977>; and “Account of moneys disbursed and paid for a new sloop built by John Cooke for their majesties service,” CO 5/856 1691/05/08, TNA, http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk.unh.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/CO_5_856_041.

²⁴ Michael J. Sarvis, *Cedars, Sloops and Slaves: The Development of the Bermuda Shipbuilding Industry, 1680-1750* (MA thesis, Williamsburg: College of William and Mary, 1992), 24-25, <https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-j5qa-2a98>. For a more recent treatment of British merchant vessels in the Atlantic world, see Phillip Reid, *The Merchant Ship in the British Atlantic, 1600-1800: Continuity and Innovation in a Key Technology* (Boston: BRILL, 2020).

²⁵ “Commission to Captain Samuel Pease, 30 September 1689,” in Edmonds, *Pound*, 61-2.

guns at its disposal.²⁶ It seems that the size of the crew and the number of guns onboard fluctuated on an as-needed basis throughout *Mary's* service history. If the number of men and guns onboard shifted constantly, so too did the commanding officers of the colony's guard sloop. Throughout *Mary's* five years in service, the colony's government appointed various leading figures in the New England merchant and shipping community as captains of the vessel. For instance, Captain Samuel Pease had previously served as a merchant captain for the Duke of Courland in northern Europe.²⁷ Captain John Alden, the man most frequently employed as *Mary's* captain on her cruises, was a well-known trader and merchant captain with extensive experience navigating the waters on the region's northern borderlands.²⁸

Sadly, as is the case for most sailors throughout the Age of Sail, less is known about the common seamen on *Mary* than the sloop's commanding officers. The Massachusetts government in this period, like the Royal Navy itself, often "impressed" or drafted sailors into provincial service.²⁹ Some of these men's names are found amidst various legal depositions and disputes, including Daniel Langley, Colburn Turell, John Frizell, Abraham Addams, and John I.P. Pane. The latter sailor was almost certainly illiterate – a court official followed the mariner's name with the note "his mark," an indication that an individual was unable to write their name. These men undoubtedly numbered among the tens of thousands of poor and transient merchant mariners throughout the English Atlantic who regularly faced low pay, abuse from captains, and disease.³⁰

How *Mary's* small crew was treated by its officers – and by extension the Massachusetts government – is an open question. If the Massachusetts agents in London who defended their colony's revolt against Andros can be believed, provincial sailors "who served with [Andros's provincial navy]

²⁶ "A journal of the proceedings in the late expedition to Port Royal, on board Their Majesties' Ship, the Six Friends, the Honourable Sir William Phips," CO 5/859 1690/04/23-1690/05/11), TNA, p. 15, http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk.unh.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/CO_5_859_055; and "Commission for Captain Nathanael Hatch, 22 January 1691/2," vol. 37, p. 247, Massachusetts State Archives Collection, Colonial Period, 1622-188, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9YP-TQVH?cat=1055547>; and Bahar, *Storm of the Sea*, 127.

²⁷ Edmonds, *Pound*, 35.

²⁸ Louise A. Breen, *Transgressing the Bounds: Subversive Enterprises among the Puritan Elite in Massachusetts, 1630-1692* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2001), 200-203.

²⁹ "Massachusetts Documents, 1689-1692," ed. Robert Moody, 252-255, Colonial Society of Massachusetts, <https://www.colonialociety.org/node/1786#rpt02>

³⁰ Edmonds, *Pound*, 37; Chapin, *Privateer Ships*, 100; and Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh, *The Many-Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 160-162.

were never payed which made Sr. Edmonds Government more uneasy.”³¹ Whatever the truth of this claim, provincial service could certainly have significant benefits for sailors. For instance, when *Mary*’s crew captured the pirate Thomas Pound—ironically a former commander of *Mary* himself—they were granted one of the pirate’s captured merchant vessels and its contents as a reward after its owners failed to pay salvage fees.³² While provincial navy sailors could receive “salvage payments,” they were also able to claim occasional “prize” money for enemy vessels captured in battle.³³



A period piece shows how *Mary*’s crew may have been dressed. (Author’s collection)

Even though no surviving paintings or drawings exist of *Mary*’s crew, we can make reasonable assumptions as to how they may have appeared (see image above). Late seventeenth century paintings and engravings of Royal Navy crews, for instance, demonstrate myriad woolen and linen clothing articles unique to sailors of the era including airy “petticoat breeches,” neckerchiefs, utilitarian short jackets referred to as “waistcoats,” and close-brimmed work caps. The English Admiralty had not yet adopted uniform standards for its sailors, but these items were mass-produced as “slop” clothing for personnel on Royal Navy ships.³⁴ One 1720s engraving by Massachusetts provincial navy captain Cyprian Southack shows civilian Nova Scotia fishermen dressed in identical clothing.³⁵ Based on what we know of the appearance of Jack Tars in both

³¹ “An answer to Sir Edmund Andros’s account of the forces raised in New England for defence of the country against the Indians etc in the year 1688,” CO, 5/855, 1690/05/30, TNA, http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk.unh.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/CO_5_855_100.

³² Edmonds, *Pound*, p. 81.

³³ Swanson, *Predators and Prizes*, 51-52; and Thomas Franklin, *Ipswich in the Massachusetts Bay Colony* (Ipswich, Mass.: The Ipswich Historical Society, 1905), 305.

³⁴ G.E. Manwaring, “The Dress of the British Seaman: From the Revolution to the Peace of 1748,” *The Mariner’s Mirror* (January 1924): 31-48.

³⁵ Cyprian Southack, “The Harbour and Islands of Canso, part of the Boundaries of Nova



“Andros a Prisoner in Boston” illustrated by F.O.C. Darley, William L. Shepard or Granville Perkins, 1876. (Wikimedia Commons)

England and North America during this era, therefore, it is reasonable to assume that *Mary*’s crew dressed in this manner as well.

While it is likely that most of *Mary*’s crew were from English or Anglo-American backgrounds, rosters from other contemporary provincial navy and privateer vessels indicate at least some racial diversity amongst similar crews. For instance, *Province Galley* – the early eighteenth-century successor to *Mary* – had several crew members listed in various rosters as “Indian” or “Indian [servant].” Seamen of African descent were also known to have joined contemporary crews in Boston, including at least one enslaved man on the Boston privateer *Swan*.³⁶

Throughout Andros’s last year in office, *Mary*’s revolving cast of captains and crew members played an important role in securing the region’s northern coastline against Franco-Indigenous assaults. For instance, one of *Mary*’s earliest assignments came on 26 March 1688 when Governor Andros ordered Captain John Cook to sail *Mary* to the English fort at Pemaquid, Maine and “[deliver] y^e Stores putt on board for y^e use of his Ma^{ties} Garrison” there.³⁷ Despite its utility, *Mary*’s service for the Dominion would come to a swift end in April of 1689 when New England dissidents – having just received news that the Protestant William of Orange had invaded England and overthrown

Scotia,” in Sinclair Hitchings, “Guarding the New England Coast: The Naval Career of Cyprian Southack,” in *Collections of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Vol. 52: Seafaring in Colonial Massachusetts*, 59.

³⁶ Tapley, *Province Galley*, 26-29; and Chapin, *Privateer Ships*, 83.

³⁷ Sir Edmund Andros to John Cook, 26 March 1688, in *Documentary History of the State of Maine, Vol. VI*, ed. James Phinney Baxter (Portland: The Thurston Print, 1900), 467. Note: In the seventeenth century, the English Atlantic world still used the Julian calendar. The ‘new year’ began on 25 March each year (as opposed to 1 January with the modern Gregorian calendar). Thus, dates mentioned in this paper will maintain this system. If this commission to John Cooke was from a few days earlier, it would have read “23 March 1687/8.”

Catholic King James II – rebelled and imprisoned Andros, Captain George, and other representatives of the king throughout the city.³⁸ While the major events that rocked the English Atlantic world would put the colony's Royal Navy guard ship out of service, *Mary* would soon become a pawn in the larger fight between advocates and opponents of the Glorious Revolution.

Revolution, Pirates, and Imperial Drama, 1688-1690

For much of 1689 and 1690, Massachusetts – like much of the rest of the English Atlantic world – faced political uncertainties and social unrest in the wake of revolution and regime change. As revolts broke out against King James in London, Boston, New York, and other major metropolitan areas throughout the English empire, James II's apologists and his detractors debated over theology, the power of the monarchy, and the proper political makeup of the empire. After Andros's imprisonment and James II's forced abdication, the Dominion of New England was dissolved, and a provisional government led by Governor Simon Bradstreet took the reins of power in Massachusetts. Puritan leaders, such as minister Increase Mather, believed that Andros had been an agent of a global Catholic (and by extension, demonic) conspiracy to destroy Protestant Christianity and English liberties. Aside from hoping that the new king William II would lead the English empire against these threats, Massachusetts leaders prayed that the new monarch would also restore their colony's charter – the legal basis for the Massachusetts Puritan theocracy that predated the 1686 creation of the Dominion of New England.³⁹

While they awaited the king's decision about the constitution of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Massachusetts officials faced two immediate military threats: Franco-Indigenous incursions on the Maine borderlands and a wave of piracy closer to home. While military tensions with the Wabanaki and French had existed during Andros's reign, King William's declaration of war against the Catholic French King Louis XIV in 1689 plunged the entire English Atlantic world into a global conflict known as the Nine Years War in Europe, and as King William's War in America.⁴⁰ In the weeks and months following the April 1689 Boston uprising against Andros, Franco-Indigenous forces took advantage of the political chaos to launch numerous raids against the weakly-defended English villages in Maine.⁴¹

³⁸ Edmonds, *Pound*, 27-28.

³⁹ Owen Stanwood, *The Empire Reformed: English America in the Age of the Glorious Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 112-130.

⁴⁰ Howard Peckham, *The Colonial Wars, 1689-1762* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 22-24.

⁴¹ Lustig, *Imperial Executive*, 204-205.

In response to the Wabanaki offensive, officials from Massachusetts and the neighboring colonies of Plymouth and Connecticut ordered the veteran ranger, Benjamin Church, to lead an expedition into the northern borderlands of Maine in September of 1689. To better assist Church with the “discovering, pursuing, and subduing and destroying the said common enemy... [the commissioners] ordered two men of war sloops [*Mary* and *Resolution*], and other small vessels for transportation” to attend upon Church’s forces. Despite Church’s temporary use of *Mary* for transportation northward, both provincial sloops returned to Boston within a few weeks.⁴² If the men on *Mary* thought they would find respite, they were sorely mistaken.

In August of 1689, a month before Church’s expedition, Thomas Pound – one of the former captains of *Mary* and a pilot for HMS *Rose* – and his associate Thomas Hawkins began a brief, but destructive campaign of piracy against New England shipping that has puzzled historians for generations.⁴³ Although Pound initially declared his intention to go privateering against French targets, he began to raid English shipping soon thereafter, and even recruited some of Andros’s former soldiers in Maine to his crew. While twentieth century historian John Henry Edmonds made the broad claim that Pound’s piracy may have been a ruse to force the colony into more proactive naval defense measures, subsequent historians have generally concluded that his motives for turning to piracy are murky and uncertain.⁴⁴

Whatever drove Pound and Hawkins to piracy, the sudden maritime robberies caught the Massachusetts government off guard as they now fought a two-front war against Franco-Wabanaki forces and pirates. After the crew of *Resolution* failed to capture Pound, Governor Bradstreet sent Captain Samuel Pease, Lt. Benjamin Gallop, and twenty volunteers on *Mary* on a quest to hunt down the sloop’s former commander. In early October, Pease spotted Pound and his pirate sloop at Tarpaulin Bay, near Martha’s Vineyard. When Pound and his men refused to surrender, both sloops engaged in what would be the bloodiest battle of *Mary*’s history. Both crews fired cannon, muskets, and

⁴² “Instructions for Major Benjamin Church...,” 18 September 1689, in Benjamin Church, *The History of King Philip’s War; Also of Expeditions Against the French and Indians in the Eastern Parts of New-England, In the Years 1689, 1690, 1692, 1696 And 1704...* (Repr., Boston: Howe & Norton, Printers, 1825), 127-128.

⁴³ Chapin, *Privateer Ships*, 96-98.

⁴⁴ Edmonds, *Pound*, 36-41. For an example of a modern historian who has avoided speculating on his motives, see David F. Marley, *Pirates of the Americas, Vol. I* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 740-741. It is worth noting that Pound’s own journey from pirate hunter occurred a few years before the more famous – and legally controversial – journey of Scottish privateer William Kidd from pirate-hunting privateer to infamous pirate. For more on this subject, see Hanna, *Pirate Nests*, 297-298.

pistols, and the climax of the engagement occurred when *Mary*'s crew boarded Pound's vessel and overcame the pirates in a vicious melee. By the end of the battle, four pirates had died and twelve more were wounded. While *Mary* only had four wounded men, Captain Pease himself died from wounds he received during the battle. Even this small number of casualties meant that *Mary*'s small crew faced a roughly twenty percent casualty rate in the battle with the pirates. After having the wounded treated onshore in Rhode Island, Lt. Gallop brought *Mary*'s survivors and fourteen pirate prisoners to Boston in mid-October.⁴⁵

While pirate trials in this era usually ended in swift convictions and hangings, the circumstances of the trial for Thomas Pound, Thomas Hawkins, and the others were anything but ordinary. Out of all the prisoners only one was executed. Governor Bradstreet pardoned Pound, Hawkins, and the rest of the survivors. Historian Emerson Baker has made the case that Pound and Hawkins may have been spared because of their social and familial connections to the Boston elite. After all, Hawkins was an in-law of Boston Judge Wait Winthrop. Baker contends that the Boston court's pardoning of the pirates was one of many controversial decisions in the early 1690s that aroused public anger and fears of Divine retribution – an environment perfect for events such as the Salem witch craze two years later.⁴⁶

Whatever controversy there was over the pirate trials, the colony had come to truly appreciate the importance of the officers and sailors of the sloop *Mary*. Provincial officials awarded the crew salvage rights to a vessel they had rescued from the pirates and in a pamphlet defending the colony's recent revolution, New Englander Increase Mather bragged about the "small Vessel of Brisk Bostoneers, who in Their Majesties Name and under Their Colours, maintained a Bloody Fight with the Rogues and took them...." This paean to the crew of *Mary*'s bravery stood in stark contrast with Mather's allegation that Royal Navy Captain George of HMS *Rose* had covertly supplied the pirates with ammunition. In the worldview of Mather and the rest of the Puritan elite of Massachusetts, the New England men on *Mary* stood as an important local counterweight to the demonic "evils" of Andros and his allies.⁴⁷

As it would happen, *Mary* would soon become a major pawn in the larger battle between the supporters and opponents of the Glorious Revolution in America. While the Puritan government in Boston hoped that their revolt would find support in London, numerous allies of Andros and the colony's

⁴⁵ Marley, *Pirates of the Americas*, 740-741.

⁴⁶ Emerson W. Baker, *A Storm of Witchcraft: The Salem Trials and the American Experience* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2014), 178-179.

⁴⁷ Increase Mather, "A Vindication of New England," in *The Andros Tracts: Being a Collection of Pamphlets and Official Papers... Volume 6*, ed. William Henry Whitmore (Boston: Prince Society, 1869), 37.

critics alleged that Bradstreet's provisional government had allowed chaos and pandemonium to reign by dissolving the Dominion of New England. While their critics decried their uprising, Massachusettsans repeated their cries for a restoration of their old charter, reiterated their far-fetched belief that Andros was a French Catholic agent, and insisted that he had engineered the war with the Indians on the Maine frontier to ruin the colony. After King William ordered the colony to send Andros to London in the summer of 1689, both factions' representatives met to settle their differences before the king's Privy Council in April of 1690.⁴⁸

While Andros and his New England opponents debated their respective viewpoints of his administration's actions before the April 1689 revolt, the subject of coastal defense came up numerous times. Andros complained that the rebels had dissolved his military forces, which led to Franco-Indigenous incursions that endangered the lives of New Englanders and the vast woodlands of northern New England that supplied masts for the Royal Navy.⁴⁹ In turn, Massachusetts's agents argued that one of Andros's military captains at Pemaquid, Maine was a Catholic that "had [been] suspected to be in a Plott for deserting and runing [sic] over with the Sloop *Mary* to the French." The agents also claimed that Andros himself had mismanaged provincial naval and land forces during his tenure, having impressed two private ships for inane military tasks without plans to use his naval forces to defend the coastline. Andros also allegedly refused to pay the sailors in his provincial navy, which added to the larger disorders in the colony.⁵⁰ These accusations displayed New Englanders' growing fears of a Franco-Catholic conspiracy to destroy their region and religion. *Mary* was just one of many tools that the Puritans' enemies could wield against them.

While the sloop *Mary* became a talking point in the Massachusetts delegates' battle against Andros, it also became the subject of another bitter and confusing battle between Massachusetts and a sister colony that had also been part of the now-defunct Dominion of New England: New York. Around the same time as the battle for the Massachusetts charter, King William appointed a new royal governor, Henry Sloughter, to take command of New York.⁵¹ Sloughter insisted that either *Speedwell* or *Mary* should be given to his colony. He justified this request by noting that Andros's provincial navy had

⁴⁸ Lustig, *Imperial Executive*, 210-212.

⁴⁹ "Sir Edmund Andros' account of the force raised in the year 1688 for the defence of New England against the Indians," CO 5/855 1690/05/29, TNA, http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk.unh.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/CO_5_855_098.

⁵⁰ "An answer to Sir Edmund Andros's account of the forces raised in New England for defence of the country against the Indians etc in the year 1688," CO, 5/855, 1690/05/30, TNA.

⁵¹ Lustig, *Imperial Executive*, 222-223.

served the entire Dominion and not Massachusetts alone.⁵² In April of 1690, King William himself ordered that “one of the sloops lately built there at ye publique Charge of all the late united Colonies” be sent to New York.⁵³ What ensued was a transatlantic paper war between Massachusetts authorities and Governor Sloughter over who had the best claim to the remnants of Andros’s provincial navy.

Regrettably, the full extent of this dispute is impossible to unpack as many of the existing sources from the period contradict one another to the point of incomprehensibility.⁵⁴ What is certain, however, is that the Massachusetts government sold the sloops *Speedwell* and *Resolution* (even though *Resolution* did not seem to have garnered much attention in the ongoing dispute), retained *Mary* as the colony’s sole guard ship, and denied that New York had any claim to the vessel.⁵⁵ In May of 1691, more than a year after King William ordered Massachusetts to surrender one of the provincial navy sloops, Bradstreet

⁵² What is confusing about this request is that Massachusetts had at least three sloops in its service after Andros’s capture: *Mary*, *Speedwell*, and *Resolution*. “At the Court at Whitehall, the 26th: April 1690” in “New England patents and grants, 1690,” p. 229-30, CO 5/905 1690/01/03-1690/06/12, TNA, http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk.unh.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/CO_5_905_003.

⁵³ “New England patents and grants, 1690.”

⁵⁴ In *Privateer Ships and Sailors*, 95-96, Chapin claims that Bradstreet refused to surrender *Mary* and sent *Speedwell* to London. After significant investigation of the primary sources (which often omit the names of sloops being discussed), I was struck by the numerous internal logical inconsistencies that prevent easily unpacking the dispute. For instance, none of the sources from the dispute mention the fact that there were *three* provincial sloops in service at the time. For some of these sources, See “Letter concerning a sloop of war,” CO 5/856 1691/05/08, TNA, http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk.unh.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/CO_5_856_040; and “Account of moneys disbursed and paid for a new sloop built by John Cooke for their majesties service,” CO 5/856 1691/05/08, TNA, http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk.unh.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/CO_5_856_041; “Exceptions to the Province Acco^t of John Phillips Esq^r Late treasurer” in *The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay, Vol. VII* (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1892), 409-410; and *The Andros Tracts: being a collection of pamphlets and official papers issued during the period between the overthrow of the Andros government and the establishment of the second charter of Massachusetts, Vol. III*, ed. William Henry Whitmore (Boston: The Prince Society, 1874), 62.

⁵⁵ “Letter concerning a sloop of war,” CO 5/856 1691/05/08, TNA, http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk.unh.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/CO_5_856_040; and “Account of moneys disbursed and paid for a new sloop built by John Cooke for their majesties service,” CO 5/856 1691/05/08, TNA, http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk.unh.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/CO_5_856_041; and “A Bill past for empowering Mr. Steven Mason Merch. for Sale of the Sloop Resolution for the Services of this Colony,” in *Massachusetts Documents, 1689-1692*, ed. Robert E Moody. *Collections of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Vol. 64: The Glorious Revolution in Massachusetts, Selected Documents, 1689-1692* (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1988), 299.

informed the government in London that, “his Majesty has been misinformed, for we are not advised that there was any Sloop built at the Publick Charge while the Colonys of New England and New Yorke were united, neither is there more than one here [*Mary*], and that built some considerable time before New York was annexed to these Colonys....”⁵⁶ This explanation clearly did not satisfy Governor Sloughter, who accused the government in Boston of intentionally ignoring the Royal order to provide him one of the province sloops.⁵⁷ Even though Sloughter died in July of 1691, it seems that his immediate successor Richard Ingoldsby also believed that the Massachusetts government was disobeying the royal order to give New York a provincial sloop. Ingoldsby even planned to order the Royal Navy ship HMS *Archangel* to sail to Boston and seize *Mary* by force if necessary.⁵⁸ While it seems that Ingoldsby never committed to sending a warship to seize the sloop *Mary*, this intercolonial battle over the ownership of a provincial navy vessel very nearly led to bloodshed between New York and Massachusetts.

The confusion and debate over who owned *Mary* also points to the larger political and military misunderstandings that existed on both sides of the Atlantic as the dust settled from the Glorious Revolution. While the small crew of *Mary* continued to patrol the New England coastline in the early years of King William’s War, the vessel itself became a pawn in larger battles over the future of the English Empire in America. Even though the Massachusetts government would employ the sloop for several years to come, *Mary*’s participation in wider controversies shaping the English Atlantic world were far from over.

Witch Trials and Military Politics, 1692-1694

While Massachusetts agents and colonial governors battled over *Mary*’s future, it continued to be an instrumental part of the Bay Colony’s ever-expanding war against Franco-Indigenous forces on the Maine borderlands. While *Mary* was a frequent presence on Benjamin Church’s punitive raids against the Wabanaki, it also bolstered Massachusetts’s attempts to conquer New France in 1690. In January of 1689-1690, numerous Massachusetts merchants petitioned the colony’s government to help them capture the French settlement at Port Royal, Nova Scotia. Although Nova Scotia’s capture would provide Anglo-Americans with a strategic military base in the heart of New

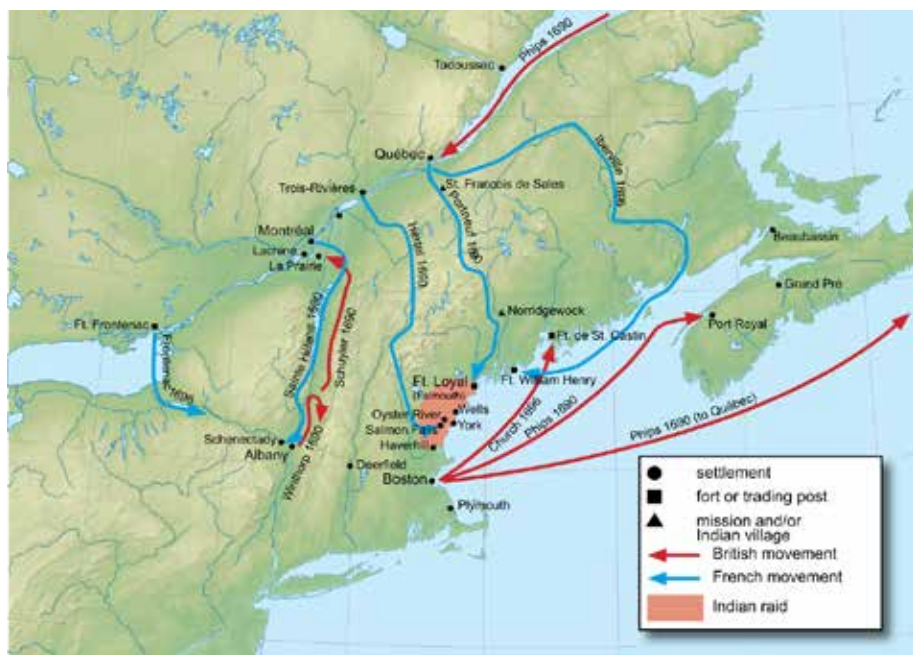
⁵⁶ “Letter concerning a sloop of war,” CO 5/856 1691/05/08, TNA.

⁵⁷ Simon Bradstreet to Henry Sloughter, 20 July 1691, in *Documentary History of the State of Maine, Vol. V*, ed. James Phinney Baxter (Portland: The Thurston Print, 1897), 271-272.

⁵⁸ E.B. O’Callaghan, ed. *Calendar of Historical Manuscripts, in the Office of the Secretary of State, Part II* (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company, Printers, 1866), 226.

France, these merchants – including *Mary*'s captain John Alden and his future legal enemy, Bartholomew Gedney – hoped to profit by the capture of the vital French colony. The petitioners suggested that the colony would need several hundred soldiers, should cover most of the expedition's expenses, and should "lend or furnish the two Sloops now in y^e Countrie^s Service gratis."⁵⁹

Much to the chagrin of the merchant investors who merely hoped for some provincial governmental assistance, the Massachusetts government decided to carry out the entire expedition at the public expense and ordered Sir William



Map of the campaigns undertaken during King William's War. (Wikimedia Commons)

Phips to spearhead the invasion in the spring of 1690.⁶⁰ Ultimately, Alden and a dozen sailors on *Mary* joined the rest of Phips's invasion fleet. After the citizens of Port Royal surrendered without a fight, Phips ordered Alden to take *Mary* and "send to all places on the Coast of [Nova Scotia], to parley with the French and Indians, and cause them to Submit & subject themselves to the Crown of England, & to swear Allegiance; and upon refusal hereof, to burn, kill, and destroy them." Alden was also ordered to seize various French

⁵⁹ "Answer to the Council, & C. relating to an Expedition against the French of Nova Scotia, 16 January 1689/90," in *Documentary History of Maine, Vol. V*, 30-31.

⁶⁰ Breen, *Transgressing the Bounds*, 202-203.

officials, ensure that French citizens took an oath of allegiance to King William and Queen Mary, set up English flags at various locations, and to work with the French trader, Baron St. Casten, to arrange for the return of English hostages from Indigenous captivity.⁶¹

It was in his dealings with Franco-Indigenous parties that Alden began to arouse suspicion from his fellow Massachusettsans. Historian Mary Beth Norton has found that between 1688 and 1692, Alden was in charge of no fewer than sixteen voyages with *Mary* and other vessels to the region's



"Captain Alden Denounced." Depiction of Capt. John Alden, Jr. denounced as a witch during the Salem Witch Trials. (Bryant and Gay, *A Popular History of the United States*, 1878)

northern borderlands. While Alden frequently met with Indigenous and French contacts on official orders from Governors Andros and later Bradstreet, some critics – including soldiers stationed on the frontier – began to accuse Alden of profiting off illicit trade with the enemy. By late 1690, the provincial government's suspicions were aroused when Alden asked to use *Mary* to redeem English prisoners in French Acadia and to take supplies to the English garrison in occupied Port Royal. The Assembly agreed so long as Alden paid

⁶¹ "Captt. John Alden's Orders," in Sir William Phips, *A Journal of the proceedings in the late expedition to Port-Royal...* (London: Benjamin Harris, 1690), <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans/N00414.0001.001/1:1?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>.

for the voyage himself and forbade Alden from carrying excessive ammunition. By 1691, Alden's reputation had become so sullied by these accusations that soldiers from the seaside village of Salem risked imprisonment by refusing to accompany him on a military mission.⁶²

Alden's transgressions and poor reputation only seemed to worsen. At one point he ran away with ransom money for captives held by the French and later orchestrated the seizure of a French vessel despite operating under a ceasefire agreement with French negotiators. Alden's self-serving and corrupt behavior led to the continued imprisonment of various New England prisoners including his own son, John Alden, Jr. It is likely that public anger at these actions during his voyages, family ties to Quakers (a much-hated religious minority in New England), and widespread rumors that Alden had aided the Wabanaki in their raids on the Maine frontier all combined to incriminate Alden and lead to his arrest during the Salem witch craze of 1692.

The connection between Alden's controversial naval service on *Mary* and official charges of witchery were made clear during his interrogation before the court at Salem. Luckily for Alden, he chose an opportune moment to escape from imprisonment, and weathered out the worst of the witch trials.⁶³ While his uniquely happy fate is certainly noteworthy when compared with the numerous victims of the trials, the connections between his provincial naval service and the witch trials have only recently been examined in detail. Historians such as Mary Beth Norton and Emerson Baker have connected Alden's military service as captain of *Mary* to wider societal worries over the colony's military performance. For instance, Baker suggests that when teenage girls in Salem accused Alden's specter of attacking them with a sword, that this "badge of his military rank ... reflected not only fear of the war but also anger and disappointment at the failure of the [colony's] militia leadership" in the fight against the French and Indigenous Peoples.⁶⁴

Even Alden's own military comrades testified against him in court. One of the court officials, Bartholomew Gedney (who had also been an initial planner of the colony's expedition against Port Royal) lamented that "he had known Aldin [sic] many Years, and had been at Sea with him, and always look'd upon him to be an honest Man, but now he did see cause to alter his judgment ... Aldin answered, he was sorry for that, but he hoped God would clear up his Innocency."⁶⁵ As captain of the vessel tasked with guarding New England

⁶² Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), 186-189.

⁶³ Breen, *Transgressing the Bounds*, 205-208.

⁶⁴ Baker, *Storm of Witchcraft*, 146.

⁶⁵ "Examination of John Alden, as Published by Robert Calef," Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project, University of Virginia, accessed 20 December

commerce and forces from Franco-Indigenous attacks, it is no wonder that Puritan New Englanders considered Alden a demonic fifth-column agent attempting to bring down their godly society.

With two captains having been accused of piracy and sorcery, and with international battles over its ownership, it is amazing that Boston's deeply spiritual Puritan authorities did not consider the *Mary* sloop to be cursed itself. Nevertheless, relentless Franco-Indigenous attacks necessitated that *Mary* continue its provincial service for as long as it was fit. Yet, even in 1693, its last year in provincial service, *Mary's* officers and crew were doomed to become entangled in one final drama with wider sociopolitical ramifications: rising provincial tensions with the Royal Navy.

When King William appointed Sir William Phips as the new governor of Massachusetts in 1692, he gave the colony two Royal Navy station ships, HMS *Nonsuch*, captained by Richard Short, and HMS *Conception Prize*, captained by Robert Fairfax. For many New Englanders, these Royal Navy frigates may have initially been a welcome site. Aside from the continued political fallout from the Glorious Revolution, the colony's war effort after capturing Port Royal in the spring of 1690 continued to falter, and there was little hope of reinforcements from England. The worst episode came in the summer of 1690 when the colony's forces met a devastating defeat when attempting to capture Quebec. With the new significant Royal Navy presence in the region, Bostonians surely hoped to reverse their previous military misfortunes.

Unfortunately for war-weary Massachusettsans, tensions between Governor Phips and Captain Short would hamper any spirit of amity between provincial and royal forces. In the early months of Phips's administration, Captain Short agreed to work with the governor on a variety of business projects, including providing the governor with extra sailors from his frigate when needed for various private tasks. Short became disillusioned with this business arrangement as it proved to be less than profitable, and both Royal Navy captains grew angrier at Phips's alleged unwillingness to send them supplies or to take their advice on cruising locations.

The breaking point in the increasingly strained relationship between the governor and the Royal Navy captains came on 1 January 1692/3 when Phips commanded Short to provide four Royal Navy sailors for the sloop *Mary*. While Phips may have been angry at Short for disobeying his orders, he was also likely angered by Short's own recent belligerent search for deserters from *Nonsuch* in Boston. Short had recently broken into a Boston tavern and home, assaulting various local officials and residents while searching for his missing sailors. It was in this heightened atmosphere of mutual prodding that Governor

Phips and Captain Short engaged in a physical fight on the Boston docks. After severely injuring Short, Phips committed him to jail and relieved him of his command.⁶⁶

What ensued was yet another major legal battle that involved the sloop *Mary*. On the one hand, it was Phips's order to Captain Short to send sailors to crew *Mary* that served as the immediate pretext for their physical altercation. On the other hand, *Mary*'s captain, Nathaniel Hatch, the last officer to serve at its helm, was an important witness to the fight. Hatch and another witness, John March, jointly testified that Phips had accused Captain Short of hiring out too many of his crew for private purposes. According to this testimony, Short angrily shook his cane at the governor and provoked the physical altercation that followed.⁶⁷ Whoever was at fault for the altercation, Phips's poor relationship with the Royal Navy captains and sundry cases of alleged corruption and mismanagement led to his recall as governor in the summer of 1694 – a mere two years after arriving in the colony.⁶⁸

The governor's altercation with Captain Short and Short's own violent hunt for deserters in the streets of Boston must be understood within the wider context of the Royal Navy's poor relationship with provincial governments in North America. For much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, colonial governments from New England to Barbados constantly petitioned the Royal government for Royal Navy assistance to deal with pirates and Franco-Spanish privateers. Despite this widespread desire for imperial naval assistance, colonial governors, assemblies, and sailors, in particular, would come to despise what they considered to be unsatisfactory behavior by Royal Navy station captains. Aside from frequently accusing station captains of financial corruption and inaction when enemies were nearby, Anglo-Americans were especially incensed with the Royal Navy's reliance on the impressment of merchant sailors in ports and at sea.⁶⁹ With Bostonians' seizure of the HMS *Rose* during the Glorious Revolution in recent memory, Phips's seemingly minor melee with Captain Short – partly resulting from a disagreement over the manning of the sloop *Mary* – served as yet another stark reminder of the potential for

⁶⁶ Miles, *Royal Navy*, 108-125; and Douglas Edward Leach, *Roots of Conflict: British Armed Forces and Colonial Americans, 1677-1763* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 138-139.

⁶⁷ Captain John March and Captain Nathaniel Hatch Testimony, 4 January 1692/3 in "Material relating to legal proceedings against Sir William Phips, governor of Massachusetts Bay, by the Board of Trade, relating largely to several ships," CO 5/858 1692/07/01-1694/01/19, TNA, http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk.unh.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/CO_5_858_003.

⁶⁸ Emerson W. Baker and John G. Reid, *The New England Knight: Sir William Phips, 1651-1695* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 223.

⁶⁹ Hanna, *Pirate Nests*, 225-227.

violence between Anglo-Americans and their Royal Navy counterparts.⁷⁰ In the next century, similar outbreaks of violence between Anglo-Americans and the Royal Navy would erupt into full-blown riots.⁷¹

Even as the Short-Phips controversy grew in intensity, *Mary*'s service history was coming to a slow end. In September of 1693, Phips and his council concluded that "their Maj^{ties} Sloop the *Mary* is very much out of repair, and otherwise unfit for their Maj^{ties} Service." The governor and council appointed a committee to determine the value of the sloop, and to "dispose of the s^d Sloop and appurtenances ... to the use and benefit of their Maj^{ties} Treasury."⁷² Thus ended *Mary*'s dramatic half-decade long story.

Conclusion

Trying to find one overarching legacy of *Mary*'s eventful service history is difficult. On one hand, *Mary*'s appearance in transatlantic legal battles during the Glorious Revolution, in intercolonial legal disputes, and in the Salem witchcraft trials adds a maritime dimension to major events that historians have largely viewed as terrestrial affairs. On the other hand, the very fact that a small provincial crew and vessel could take part in so many Atlantic-wide and regional events hints at the large role that matters of local naval defense played in the formative years of the English Atlantic world.

While *Mary*'s dramatic story enhances our understanding of the maritime dimensions of the dramatic early decades of English colonization in America, its very existence as one of the earliest known state-funded Anglo-American war vessels is certainly its most important legacy. In the wake of a meek and negligent Royal Navy presence in the American colonies, *Mary* – and many similar provincial vessels from Canada to the Caribbean – would play fundamental roles in securing Britain's ill-defined maritime claims in the New World. The early twentieth century scholar Howard Chapin had reason to claim that the "American Navy did not spring forth full-fledged at the outbreak of the Revolution, like Pallas Athene from the head of Zeus. Its roots go back to the Colonial privateersmen and the naval expeditions against the French and Spanish."⁷³

⁷⁰ Leach, *Roots of Conflict*, 138-139.

⁷¹ Christopher P. Magra, *Poseidon's Curse: British Naval Impressment and Atlantic Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 284-286.

⁷² Massachusetts Council Minutes, 7 September 1693, in "Proceedings of the Council of Massachusetts Bay from 6th June to 27 September 1693," CO 5/785 1693/06/06-1693/09/27, TNA, http://www.colonialamerica.amdigital.co.uk.unh.idm.oclc.org/Documents/Details/CO_5_785_008.

⁷³ Howard Chapin, "New England Vessels in the Expedition against Louisbourg, 1745," *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register* LXXVI (January 1922), 59-60.

Of course, one must be careful not to fall into a Whiggish suggestion that the American navy of the Revolutionary War era was a preordained and natural result of colonial maritime operations. Nevertheless, Andros's provincial navy of the late 1680s – including its longest serving vessel, *Mary* – was the first known multi-vessel regional war fleet in the English colonies of North America. *Mary* would only be among the first of dozens of future New England provincial naval warships. Not long after the Massachusetts Bay Colony disposed of *Mary*, it commissioned *Province Galley*, a light draft warship with ten guns that could pursue French privateers in the shallows off the New England coastline.⁷⁴ With each successive colonial war that Massachusetts took part in, it continued to expand its provincial naval establishment. By the beginning of the Seven Years War in the late 1750s, the colony was able to construct *King George*, a 400-ton, twenty-gun ship captained by Benjamin Hollowell. Among *King George*'s crew were numerous future officers of both the Continental Navy and American privateer fleet of the Revolutionary War.⁷⁵

A Bostonian who played a major role in founding both the United States and the Continental Navy, John Adams, once remarked that “I think a circumstantial history of naval operations in this Country ought to be written even as far back as the province ship under Captain Hollowell, &c., and perhaps earlier still.”⁷⁶ If one were to follow Adams's advice as far back as the seventeenth century, they would find *Mary* as a notable ancestor of those future naval forces of the United States.

Benjamin Schaffer holds a history Ph.D. from the University of New Hampshire. His research focuses on the intersections between maritime conflict and society in the British Atlantic world, c. 1600-1783. His book manuscript, from which this article is based, Self Defense and Sea Power: The Provincial Navies of the British Atlantic World, c. 1630-1776, is currently in review at the University of Alabama Press. He currently teaches as an adjunct history instructor at the College of Charleston. (Contact: schafferbc@cofc.edu)

⁷⁴ Tapley, *Province Galley*, 1.

⁷⁵ Smith, “King George,” 80-86. See John Hattendorf, *Talking About Naval History: A Collection of Essays* (Pittsburgh: United States Government Printing Office, 2012), 188-193 for more discussion on the impact state navies had on the formation of the Continental Navy.

⁷⁶ John Adams to E. Gerry, 11 February 1813, in *Extracts Relating to the Origin of the American Navy*, ed. Henry E. Waite (Boston: The New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1890), 3.