BLUE WATER PATRIOTS

The American Revolution Afloat

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PRAEGER

Westport, Connecticut
London

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Volo, James M., 1947–
Blue water patriots : the American Revolution afloat / James M. Volo.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-275-98907-0 (alk. paper)
1. United States—History—Revolution, 1775–1783—Naval operations. 2. United States. Continental Navy—History. 3. Great Britain. Royal Navy—History—Revolution, 1775–1783. I. Title.
E271.V65 2007
973.3′5—dc22 2006026031

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data is available.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2006026031
ISBN: 0-275-98907-0

First published in 2007

Praeger Publishers, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881
An imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.
www.praeger.com

Printed in the United States of America

The paper used in this book complies with the Permanent Paper Standard issued by the National Information Standards Organization (Z39.48–1984).

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Introduction

> In peace, in war, united still they move;
> Friendship and Glory form their joint reward . . . .
> "What god," exclaimed the first, "instills this fire?"
> Or, in itself a god, what great desire?
>
> —Lord Byron

> We will put to hazard the fortunes of war in America to insure the safety of the British Isles.
>
> —John Montagu, Lord Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty, 1775–1782

Soon after the end of the Seven Years War (called the French and Indian War in America, 1754–1763), Anglo-American colonials began to revitalize those maritime activities that had been threatened by the French during the eighteenth century. Technically at peace with France and most of Europe for the first time in decades and protected from pirates, corsairs, and raiders by the demonstrated might of the British Royal Navy at sea, American trading vessels, whalers, and slavers soon inundated the trading ports of the world, especially those among the rich islands of the West Indies. The British government in London, and especially the Board of Trade that was given oversight of the economic life of the colonies, noted the increase in this activity with some apprehension.

Although Americans shared a common history, culture, and religious tradition with England, they nonetheless began evidencing a general

dissatisfaction with British rule and the Royal Navy almost before the ink on the Treaty of Paris (1763) had dried. Many areas of contention existed between the colonies and the ministry in London at the time including disagreements over expanding the boundaries of the provinces, strained relations with the Indians, political control of the provincial governments, illegal levels of trade with the French and Dutch islands of the West Indies, and the avoidance of taxes by smuggling. The home government viewed each complaint with growing annoyance and increasing frustration passing legislation that closed the frontiers to settlement, dispatching new governors to the colonies, and enforcing the trade regulations with a new-found vigor.[1]

The Anglo-American colonies were generally restricted to a thin strip of settlements along the sea, and a considerable portion of the population lived by the sea, were at home upon the sea, or worked in the maritime trades. Of the twenty largest cities in Anglo-America in 1775, only one (Lancaster, Pennsylvania) was not a port, and it flourished as a feeder city for goods and produce from the interior destined for the largest colonial port, Philadelphia. Lacking both improved roads and an adequate bridge building technology, inter-colonial communications, trade, and travel were best carried out by water in small coasting vessels. New England provided almost half of British shipbuilding capacity worldwide. In Maine and New Hampshire more people were engaged in shipbuilding than in agriculture, and in Massachusetts it was estimated that there was one ship for every one hundred inhabitants.[2]

Until challenged by the Americans, the British trading empire was a closed and highly profitable economic system that reached halfway round the earth, and if not highly efficient in modern terms, at least its lawful side seemed so at the time. The foundation of the British economy and the Empire itself was based on a form of regulated trade known as *mercantilism*. Colonial shippers and merchants supposedly made their profits by moving raw materials to England and returning finished goods to the colonial markets, while the British government took its part of the wealth generated by this activity in the form of taxes, port fees, and customs duties. By law the colonials were denied the privilege of partaking in many forms of manufacture or in any trade practiced extensively in England and specifically protected by Parliament in order to maintain a moderate level of employment in the home islands. However, in the 1760s colonial trade with foreign markets in the Mediterranean and West Indian was growing faster than that with British ones. The stockholders of legitimate trading and manufacturing companies in Britain were apprehensive at the loss of a large proportion of their profits to the colonials, and they complained bitterly to the ministers of government whenever the colonials skirted the regulations through illegal manufacturing, clandestine trading, or outright smuggling.

As the colonies grew so did the volume of their trade with foreign nations, and it became obvious to the Crown that its colonies were slowly approaching economic independence. Yet many Americans were fearful of making an irrevocable break with Britain. During three-quarters of a century of wilderness warfare the colonists had demonstrated their ability to stand against both European and Native American enemies on the frontiers, and many cast dispersions on the role played by the red-coated regulars, considering each wilderness victory to be their own personal triumph. Yet whenever matters of economic independence were discussed by reasonable men, it was pointed out that the colonies needed the protection of Britain at sea, specifically that of the Royal Navy. The colonies were thought too weak at sea to maintain independent merchant or fishing fleets in the face of French, Spanish, or Dutch pirates and commerce raiders should the newly won peace fail. Britain had waged an almost continuous naval war with one or more of these aggressive nations since the 1580s (and would continue to do so until 1815). Moreover, if the colonies left the orbit of the trading empire, London merchants might press the passage of domestic legislation closing the empire's ports to American tobacco, grain, fish, slaves, and naval stores. This, it was thought, would ruin the mainland colonial economy and plunge most Anglo-Americans into poverty.[3]

Britain was jealous of its trade with America and had attempted to reassert its authority over the colonies by imposing heavy duties on foreign imports as early as the 1730s. Some form of trade regulation had existed since 1660, but the ministers in London began to strictly enforce them for the first time in 1764. It was the vigorous enforcement of the principles underlying the collection of the duties rather than the actual financial burden that the taxes imposed that was the cause of much of the colonial alienation. London deployed a small army of customs and revenue officers to most major American ports displacing the authority of the local agents of government. The colonials viewed new regulations such as the Sugar Act (1764) and Townsend Revenue Act (1767) as violations of fundamental political principles rather than as simple instruments of revenue collection or trade regulation. Violation of the acts was no longer considered a mere breech of the law drawing a small fine, but was now considered a crime punishable by seizure of both ship and cargo or by fines that represented a full year's profit.

Hostility quickly grew towards the representatives of the Crown, especially in the New England ports, where enforcement was most vigorously prosecuted. In the 1760s and 1770s Boston underwent the greatest number of customs seizures among major American port cities, which may help to explain the depth of the radicalism that flourished there. Spontaneous demonstrations erupted at the sight of a revenue cutter, and Royal Navy press gangs looking to man a shorthanded vessel met with

unprecedented levels of non-cooperation and even violence among the people. The colonials made no distinction between the vessels and officers of the Revenue Service and those of the Royal Navy. Although most of the references to arrogant and intrusive officials before 1764 actually concerned the deputies of the customs and not naval officers, the colonists "considered both pirates and dealt summary justice to both."[4]

As relations deteriorated between New England and Britain, the Crown repeatedly responded with the worst possible moves, inexplicably further restricting export trade to English ports and barring New England mariners from the rich fisheries of the Grand Banks. It is not surprising, therefore, that the centers of the American revolutionary movement should be found in northern port cities such as Newport, Providence, and Boston. Moreover, the signal acts of overt rebellion against British authority were carried out by colonial mariners and seafarers on the blue waters of the Atlantic many years before colonial militias faced down redcoats on town greens or over intervening gray stonewalls.[5]

Initially, the maritime conflict seems to have centered on Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay, while the land war simmered in nearby Massachusetts. Every school child knows that the American Revolution began on Lexington Green in 1775, but how many are aware that in 1764 a Royal Navy cutter, *St. John*, engaged in the suppression of smuggling, was fired upon by Rhode Islanders; that in 1769 the revenue sloop

The peacefully busy colonial port of Boston in 1722 with its "long wharf" protruding into the harbor. A half century later the city was to be the scene of hostility to government, mob action, and open violence.

Liberty was seized and burned by the people of Newport; or that in 1772 the navy cutter *Gaspee* stationed near Providence was attacked and burned in the night by armed men in small boats for no ostensible reason beyond their apparent distaste for the arrogant attitude of the cutter's commanding officer.

The government in London was outraged by these attacks on its vessels, by isolated acts of violence carried out against its taxing agents in the streets, and by resistance to the proclamations of its governors and officials. Yet it was not the burning of British vessels by a few disgruntled radicals but the massive public demonstrations like the Boston Tea Party of 1773 that drew the ire of the politicians in London. The ministry closed the entire port of Boston as a punishment for destroying £18,000 worth of tea belonging to the influential lords and members of Parliament who were stockholders in the East India Company.

It is of no little consequence to history that the first retaliation taken by the Crown against Americans was to suspend their fishing and shipping rights. These actions led directly to an enhanced support for the Bostonians throughout the colonies, and it unified the Americans as never before save during the Stamp Act crisis of 1765. The "Child Independence" may have been born during the Stamp Crisis, as John Adams once proposed, but it was drawn forth from the coastal waters of North America in 1775 just as surely as Moses was taken from a floating basket in the Nile in Biblical times.[6]

In 1770 a few Bostonians, deemed radical street demonstrators, were killed in a club-swinging clash with British regulars known as the Boston Massacre, but as the day-to-day situation worsened, the outbreak of more serious and widespread violence became increasingly likely. The Americans felt that they were being treated as second class citizens by a group of peevish ministers and their deputies, and they rightly resented it. Ultimately, the colonials took the stance that conciliation was impossible and that open warfare was necessary to maintain their liberty. The incidents on Lexington Green, at Concord Bridge, and on the roads to Boston on April 19, 1775, immediately led to a real shooting war that resulted in a continuous effusion of blood throughout the colonies from which there was no honorable retreat.

These circumstances led the Continental Congress to provide immediately for an army based on the existing provincial militia structure, but the colonial representatives doubted the practical value of forming a colonial navy. Not even the shadow of such a force existed in the colonies beyond a few scattered privateers left over from the French wars. It was inconceivable that America could deploy a fleet with any chance of matching the sixty warships that the Lords of the Admiralty promised to post to its shores. Nonetheless, the chairman of the embryonic Naval Committee of Congress in 1775 could visualize a half dozen American

cruisers sweeping the colonial coastline and the Caribbean of British merchant vessels while the battleships and frigates of the Royal Navy were busy blockading Boston harbor.[7]

The Continental Congress, therefore, adopted a strategy that would defend the deep-water ports of America from intrusion by the Royal Navy. To this end they envisioned cordons of armed boats, floating batteries, row galleys, and land-based fortifications guarding cities like New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Norfolk, Charleston, and Savannah. Yet the enterprising Americans were not prone to miss an opportunity to embarrass the ministers in London or to profit from a little "blue water" privateering. They quickly planned to begin their naval war, therefore, as commerce raiders on the sealanes they knew the best, those connecting Europe, North America, and the West Indies.[8]

Colonial consciousness of the military value of prosecuting a war at sea was fueled largely by necessity. The rebel army was woefully short of gunpowder and arms, and it was hoped that American ships could run to Europe or the islands of the West Indies to procure a supply. Both George Washington, as commander-in-chief of the Army, and the individual colonies, in the guise of local committees of safety, commissioned a number of cruisers to act in the cause of American independence before the Congress stirred itself to action. These vessels, and others ultimately commissioned or built by the Congress, were active in both American and European waters, and they captured hundreds of British merchant vessels (valued at tens of millions of pounds sterling by war's end). They also defeated several British vessels of war in single ship encounters.[9] Serious consideration must be given to the proposition that the American rebellion would have collapsed without the timely intervention of these events at sea.[10]

Notwithstanding their joint desire for independence from Britain, the colonies initially deemed themselves nothing more than a loose confederation of discrete political states united only for protection from a common enemy. This led each to act independently during 1775 and early 1776. The immediate result was the establishment of eleven separate state navies. Only New Jersey and Delaware of the thirteen united states were excepted. The state vessels were usually smaller than those of the Continental Navy, being composed mostly of boats, barges, and row galleys adapted for work in shallow waters. They varied widely in quality and number, and were under orders from the several local committees of safety rather than a more comprehensive national agency. Although a few state ships were vessels of considerable size, the main effect of the state navies was to deny the scant supply of cannon, gunpowder, shipbuilding facilities, and crews to the Continental Navy.

At the same time the pressing logistical demands of the rebel army investing Boston caused George Washington to undertake a quick remedy to the problem of military supplies in the form of a handful of private cruisers

sent to raid British provision transports. This ad hoc naval force was deemed an immediate success, and the Congress, elated by the consequences of Washington's efforts, quickly appropriated money to buy or build additional warships. The Congress' new found commitment to a naval war can be measured by the fact that a total of almost $1 million was appropriated for the Naval Committee to provide for a Continental Navy.

Yet the committee quickly found itself waging a war at sea with an empty treasury, an exhausted credit, and a depreciated currency. Shortages of experienced officers, seamen, and supplies dogged the American naval effort throughout the war. In part, this was due to its inability to attract available cash and able seamen away from the potentially more lucrative privateers. Moreover, the committee had to invent a naval command structure and an administration—providing for not only vessels, officers, and crews, but also for food, cannon, gunpowder, rope, sails, repair facilities, chandlery, medical services, and a legal system for processing captured vessels and cargoes, securing prisoners, and dealing with the needs and complaints of its own naval personnel.

Unlike the Americans, who needed to invent the whole administration of both their army and their navy from the outset of the Revolution, the British had an established and experienced administration in the Board of War for its army and the Board of Admiralty for its navy. The whole scheme of British strategic thinking emphasized the prevalence of the naval arm making the Board of Admiralty the most powerful administrative office in the empire. The Lords of the Admiralty controlled the lion's share of all military expenditures, and they directed the world's greatest fleet of warships. The Admiralty Board had established procedures for promoting offices and rating seamen. It controlled everything from arms, ammunition, and rations provided to both soldiers and sailors, to the production and repair of warships, the detention of prisoners of war, and the functioning of military hospitals. The Ordnance Department at Woolwich provided all the artillery and gunpowder for both the army and the navy. More importantly, the men of the Royal Navy cherished a tradition of victory that had been reinforced several times during the wars of the eighteenth century. With such a formidable organization arrayed against them, it is a wonder that America's "blue water patriots" attempted to fight a naval war at all.

The purpose of this book is to document the naval operations that took place during the American Revolution. These can be divided into two parts: those that took place before the French intervention of 1778, and those that took place thereafter. From spring 1775 to summer 1778, the Americans undertook to engage the Royal Navy with a handful of frigates, schooners, privateers, and whaleboats. The Royal Navy quickly found that if it did not take steps to curb these activities, the rebels would appropriate the colonial sealanes to their own use and interfere with their

strategy for the land war. Although a few British vessels fell to American "seapower" at the onset of hostilities, the Royal Navy was never really threatened by the rebel effort at sea. By the end of 1778 all the major warships of the Continental Navy had been driven from the sealanes. Only the privateers remained active.

After the alliance with France in 1778—and then Spain (1779), and finally Holland (1781)—the American war became a worldwide naval conflict with campaigns carried out on a grander scale than the Americans could muster. The war at sea spread from the Atlantic Coast, to the West Indies, to the Straits of Gibraltar, to the West African coast, and even to the Indian Ocean. After 1778 the land war in America also shifted its focus from New England, New York, and Pennsylvania towards the south. Thereafter major land operations moved to the Carolinas, Georgia, and Virginia, and the French and Spanish threatened the Gulf coast and the islands of the Caribbean with invasion. In fact, the last major land battle of the Revolution north of the Mason-Dixon Line was fought at Monmouth, New Jersey, in June 1778, almost at the exact moment that France declared its alliance with America.

America's new-found allies at sea endeavored to draw out the British fleet, meet it in formal line of battle, and generally put it on the defensive; yet the Americans were anxious that the French, in particular, concentrate their naval strength on the Atlantic coast of North America, thereby supporting the rebel armies on the seaboard. Moreover, French naval assistance was valued as much for commercial reasons as for military ones. The revolutionary economy could not continue to function with British cruisers intercepting more than 40 percent of American merchantmen and commercial fishermen that left port. Congress believed, perhaps incorrectly, that the continuing decline in the value of Continental currency was directly linked to this drag on the maritime commerce of the country, and it spent several months in 1776 debating what the ideal model of American trade with Europeans other than the British should look like.[11]

Throughout the war the major gateway ports of America were the target of British strategy, to be seized in an effort to strangle the colonial economy. True to form, whenever a regional port fell to British arms, the economy of the local hinterland collapsed for a brief time, but water-based transportation and trade never completely ceased. The resilience of the American maritime economy lay in its secondary port cities. The city of Providence "leapt to the forefront of Rhode Island's trade" in the place of British-held Newport; and Baltimore and Wilmington replaced Philadelphia and Norfolk as destinations for cargoes to the middle states. The inland water routes between Philadelphia and the upper Chesapeake and Delaware bays remain relatively safe, and the short stretch of land between Head of Elk and Christiana Bridge posed no great obstacle to

the movement of trade goods or military supplies between the bays. The Patriot hold on Boston and on the many ports on Long Island Sound throughout the war years offset to a great extent the eight-year-long British occupation of New York with New London and New Haven providing river transportation to interior Connecticut and Massachusetts with good land connections to the Hudson highlands of Westchester, Albany, and the rest of the state. Tertiary seaport towns like Salem, Gloucester, Plymouth, Bridgeport, Westport, Norwalk, Egg Harbor, Chester, New Castle, and others provided safe havens for small cargoes carried in shallow draft schooners and sloops bypassing the risk entailed in trying to land in major cities.[12]

Much of the naval effort after the 1778 alliance consisted of months of boring vigilance as both the French and British fleets rode quietly at anchor in American bays and estuaries truculently eyeing each other. The Americans, outclassed by the size of the European naval establishment, held their breath expectantly, but the fleets rarely came out to fight. Meanwhile the European powers planned a series of baffling combined arms operations in the southern colonies and the West Indies. Most of the ensuing naval battles between the Allied and British fleets were indecisive. Nonetheless, it must be remembered that it was the French fleet commanded by Francois Jean Paul Comte de Grasse that sealed the fate of America in the War for Independence by winning the Battle of the Chesapeake in 1781.

The primary focus of this work is the period before 1779, when the Americans confronted the Royal Navy alone, but a wider period is considered in terms of the consequences of the war for France, Spain, and Britain. Due to the overlapping nature of events during the Revolution, the author has provided a short account of the organization and effectiveness of the American naval effort in comparison to that of Britain and France in order to orient the reader. Moreover, the author has decided to place events under common categories related by topic rather than by chronology, as in a chapter concerning Washington's efforts in forming a fledgling navy, or another dealing with the European operations of John Paul Jones and Nathaniel Fanning. The author hopes the reader will find the resulting history useful, comprehensive, and precise.

1

The Enforcement Crisis

> The . . . militia drums beat to arms, not to quell the mob collected in defiance of all law and allegiance to their sovereign, but to increase it.
>
> —Capt. James Hawker, RN[1]

> For they, 'twas they unsheathed the ruthless blade,
> And Heaven shall mark the Havoc it has made!
>
> —Lt. Nathaniel Fanning, CN[2]

Parliament under George II, the grandfather of King George III, had attempted to reassert its authority over trade practices in Anglo-America with the Molasses Act of 1733. Protection of British sugar interests in the Caribbean drove many of London's dealings with Anglo-America, and the restrictions and heavy duties levied on molasses from non-British sources should have eliminated the illegal trade. Instead the practice flourished because it remained extremely lucrative, surviving even the colonial wars of the mid-eighteenth century. The prevailing winds and currents made anything other than a clockwise transit of the North Atlantic very difficult for sailing ships. Stops along the bulge of Africa and in the West Indies were almost always on the most practical, if not the most direct, route from Britain to Anglo-America, and shippers from both sides of the Atlantic traded in the islands and along the coast of Africa on their way from Europe.

The three-way traffic in molasses, rum, and slaves, which historians call the Triangular Trade for its stops in the Caribbean, New England,

and Africa, was fundamentally supported by the fisheries of the Grand Banks of the coast of the Canadian Maritimes. The fisheries provided the less-than-romantic dried cod used to feed the plantation slaves who produced sugar and molasses in the West Indies. Half the molasses brought into New England was used in cooking or food preservation, and the other half was distilled into a very satisfying rum. Distillers in New England made tidy profits changing the molasses into liquor, yet only about 5 percent of the rum was exported to be bartered for slaves, ivory, palm oil, or other items from Africa. The simplicity of the molasses, rum, and slaves concept makes it popular with historians, but it is somewhat misleading. Only a tiny fraction of colonial trade actually followed the pattern suggested by the trading triangle, and coastwise trading among the colonies and with the Caribbean was certainly more significant both in terms of its volume and value. Profits were to be had with every exchange, and each transaction helped the Americans to offset an annual deficit in commodity trading with Britain that amounted to nearly £1.5 million before the Revolution.[3]

There remains, moreover, a common misconception that all colonial Americans lived in log homes cut from the standing forest, ate from wooden bowls fashioned by hand from the living tree, or ran about in animal skins or homespun produced before the kitchen hearth. As one historian of the period has noted, "Life in those days was not so simple as is sometimes imagined." The American colonials exhibited a great liking for sophisticated imports of all kinds. Among these they consumed annually 75 tons of pepper and more than 1.5 million bushels of salt. They imported each year more than fifty different fabrics, a quarter million hats, and an untold number of shoes, boots, silk garters, laces, and fans. Almost one hundred different drugs and medicines have been identified among the most common imports as well as fine china, wallpaper, dyes, pigments, files, saw blades, tools, hinges, cutlery, gun parts, and manufactured items of many descriptions.[4]

The most lucrative profits to be realized through this trade, however, proved to come from the genial addictions, "a quiet smoke, a nice cup of tea, a sweet tooth . . . exotic rarities converted into cravings."[5] The consumption of alcohol, in particular, had not yet taken on the negative associations commonly voiced by temperance advocates in nineteenth century America. Besides domestically produced rum and beer, there were imported wines, brandies, and liqueurs of many types. Whiskeys, gins, and other distilled beverages were not particularly popular except as home brews intended to deny import duties to the Crown for the mere privilege of enjoying a temporary intoxication. Imported coffee and chocolate, especially from the Dutch, were also highly valued. Better homes stocked a fairly generous supply of these items, and business establishments such as taverns and coffeehouses that catered to the "addicted"

were common sights in most towns. Colonials willingly spent a fair penny for their favorite extravagances, but they greatly resented paying import duties on them. They therefore depended in large part on smugglers to provide low cost, high quality products. Ironically, the disputes that would result in the American Revolution would revolve to a great extent around these luxury items, while coffeehouses and taverns would become the seedbeds of discussion, dissention, and rebellion.[6]

EVADING THE CUSTOMS

Before 1764 the Royal Navy had been of little service in suppressing smugglers, although it was often suggested in Parliament that it should have taken a more active roll. The Customs Service of the Exchequer, the department of government that levied taxes and duties, was the only governmental agency directly charged with their collection, but the colonials had a long and successful history of evading customs officials. Customs houses were generally established only in major ports, and the agents had only a few small vessels with which to patrol the coastlines. In fact, customs vessels were required to focus their patrols to within two leagues (approximately four miles) of the coast, while naval vessels were generally restricted to patrolling out of sight of land. Nonetheless, both services could seize a vessel in blatant contravention of the law wherever it was found.

Shippers were required by law to report their cargoes for inspection at the customs' wharf before unloading in the colonies. Of course, this regulation could easily be ignored by simply landing contraband elsewhere along the coast before reporting to the customs wharf. A common ploy of smugglers was to load with a small cargo of enumerated goods in Holland or France destined for a legitimate port in the West Indies, and then stop in some out-of-the-way British port such as the Orkney or Shetland islands and compound the cargo with legitimate, duty-free British goods for which they received proper clearance papers and manifests. Upon arrival in America they would openly unload some of the items, pay any duties on the landed cargo, and then depart, seemingly in accordance with all the procedures of the law. With no authority to inspect the holds of legally licensed vessels, the best the customs agents could do was to carefully supervise the unloading of the cargo. Having run the gauntlet of the customs once and having the clearance papers to prove it, the vessel was virtually no longer suspect, and the smuggled items could be covertly landed elsewhere. It was often not worthwhile for an officer of the customs to seize these small batches of contraband because of the generous bonds demanded by the courts and because of the personal liability to which the arresting officer was placed if the case was not proven. Smugglers often used the threat of lawsuits for supposed damages in such cases to avoid prosecution.[7]

The ministers of government in London considered every colonial seaman and shipper a potential smuggler, and the natural coastline of New England with its many small coves and shallow inlets made enforcement of customs very difficult.

It became clear to the government in London that if customs revenues were to be collected with regularity, the Royal Navy would have to help enforce the law. In 1764 Parliament passed legislation that was meant to assist the shore-based customs officials with the enforcement of the decades old Molasses Act. Written by George Grenville, the Sugar Act (or Revenue Act of 1764) served as an immediate occasion for giving the Royal Navy a more active roll in enforcement. All commissioned officers of the Royal Navy were made deputy customs officials, and they were empowered to search through the cargo of suspicious trading vessels at sea. They were encouraged to vigorous enforcement of the law through a system of generous rewards in the form of a part of the value of the cargoes and vessels forfeited. In a single year, Lt. Abraham Crespin received as his share of reward money £231; Lt. William Dudingston garnered £88; and Capt. Thomas Jordan collected £61. This was a great deal of added income for a serving naval officer. A captain's nominal salary, depending on grade, was at best £360 per year and a lieutenant's only £110. Moreover, the admiral commanding the station received one-eighth of the value of all seizures made in his area of operation, making the position of station commander highly profitable.

Unfortunately, the involvement of the navy in customs enforcement seems to have engendered more competition than cooperation between the two services, and it placed the station commanders at odds with the colonial governors over just who deserved to collect the monetary rewards for enforcing the law.[8] Previously the colonial governors received a third part of all seizures made by the customs agency in their colony. Up to one-quarter of this was now claimed by the navy. The legislation itself carefully defined the share that went to the king, but it was sufficiently vague about the governors' rights to cause a controversy. The dispute was ultimately resolved in favor of the navy, yet as late as 1771 Governor William Tryon was still pleading with the crown for shares of the navy's seizures for the colonial governors.[9]

Under the Sugar Act, enforcement was extended to almost all coastwise traders including the smallest inter-colonial mariners who might move cargoes only a few miles along the shoreline in sailing skiffs. The skippers of vessels greater than 10 tons were required to obtain documentation of their cargoes at the customs before shipping out and to do likewise when they landed even if going from one colony to another. "If any goods are shipped without such sufferance ... the officers of the customs are empowered to stop all vessels ... which shall be discovered within two leagues of the shore of any such British colonies or plantations, and to seize all goods on board."[10]

An accused shipowner or master was not allowed to present a defense until he had posted a cash bond of £60 (or equivalent in colonial money). Then, presumed guilty from the outset, he was required to prove his innocence in a Vice Admiralty court. This was somewhat like defending a present-day parking ticket before a military court martial. Even when acquitted the defendant was required to pay all the court costs if the court decided that there was probable cause for the original seizure.[11]

It has been estimated that American ships brought 4 million gallons of molasses into the colonies annually. Half of this total was smuggled. From 1764 to 1766, when the tax was reduced, the three penny tax per gallon of molasses was high enough to make smuggling profitable. Thereafter, with the tax reduced to one penny, the revenues actually increased because the smugglers abandoned the trade in molasses for more highly taxed items. Whereas in the previous year it was estimated that half a million gallons of contraband molasses had been seized, in 1767, the first year of the tax decrease, not a single vessel was libeled by the West Indian Squadron for smuggling molasses out of the Caribbean. Moreover, there is little evidence of smuggling into the major colonial ports in this period. The Royal Navy libeled only two vessels as smugglers in Massachusetts Bay in two years, and only four were libeled in the port of Philadelphia in the same period.[12]

Nonetheless, the ministers in London were convinced that every American afloat was a potential smuggler, and hundreds of vessels were needlessly searched annually. Passage of the Sugar Act resulted in more rigid enforcement along the coasts of New England than elsewhere because it was thought that it was there that most cargoes of molasses were destined. It has been estimated that there were sixty rum distilleries in Massachusetts alone. The southern colonies with their sparse populations and isolated plantation economies imported very little molasses by comparison to the vast amounts used in New England.[13]

The taxes collected on legitimate shipments of molasses remained the single greatest source of revenue from the American colonies, yet they were insufficient to cover the cost of the establishment needed for their collection. The Office of the Exchequer estimated the cost of enforcement at almost £40,000 each year. Ironically, the additional effort employed in collecting duties from the Americans may have been misapplied. Not only did it sour the relations between London and the colonies, but in the 1780s, after a great reform of the revenue service, the British government estimated that the empire was still losing over £1 million a year to smugglers worldwide.[14]

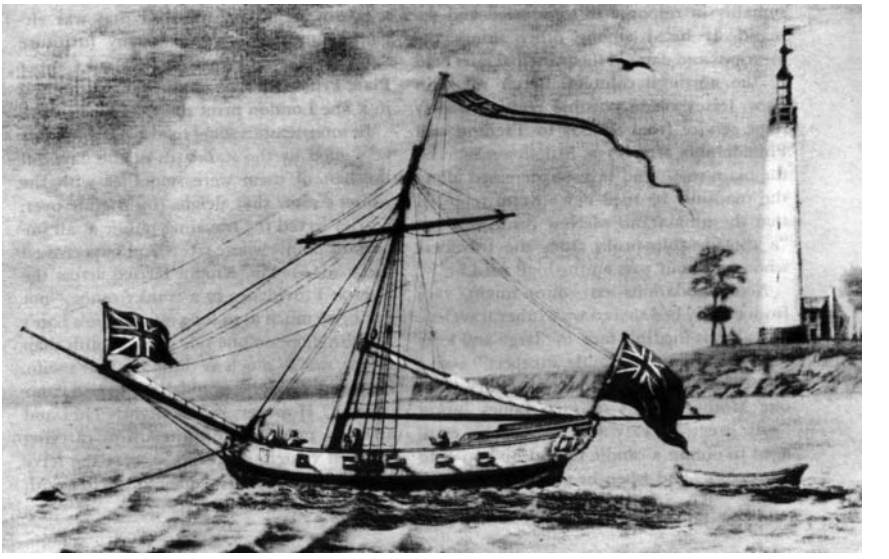
THE NORTH AMERICAN SQUADRON

In 1764, Rear Adm. Alexander Lord Colvill was posted to Halifax with a North American squadron of twelve naval vessels. Colvill had previously served at this post from 1759 to 1762 as Commodore. Halifax was not the most desirable posting for a lord, but the port had the only Royal Navy dockyard and naval supply storehouse in North America and was thought a fitting command for an officer only recently raised to Admiral of the Blue. Ships on the North American Station went there when in need of a refit, thereby saving an arduous crossing and recrossing of the Atlantic. Halifax would remain the primary base for the Royal Navy in North America throughout the remainder of the century.[15]

Colvill's area of responsibility on the North American Station stretched from Nova Scotia to Florida. The sugar islands were generally protected by the ships of the West Indian Squadron, which had been formally divided into a Leeward Island Station and a Jamaica Station in 1742, and the fisheries of the Grand Banks and Newfoundland were considered a separate station because of continuing disputes with France and Spain over colonial fishing rights. Colvill subdivided his command into nine separate postings along the Atlantic coast each with at least a frigate under a senior captain in the most active American ports. Capt. Archibald Kennedy, the senior naval officer at New York in HMS *Coventry*, was second-in-command of the squadron under Colvill.

All the ships of the North American Squadron came out from Britain in 1764 with Colvill. Those previously assigned there were returned home. Ultimately Colvill requested a number of additional armed cutters to be used along the generally peaceful but rugged Atlantic coastline. These diminutive vessels promised to be more useful than men-of-war in apprehending smugglers who were the main focus of the station's responsibilities. Their fore and aft rig enabled them to sail close to the shore in weather too severe for square-rigged warships, and their shallow draft allowed them to get into coves, inlets, rivers, and creeks impossible to navigate in larger vessels. Ironically, the Admiralty approved the purchase of six sloops and schooners built in America for this purpose. Each was provided with a crew of British Jack-tars, a file of Royal Marines, and a cadre of young Royal Navy officers. The cutters were named *Chaleur, Hope, Magdalen, St. John, St. Lawrence*, and *Gaspee*.

Colvill stationed his largest ships at New York City, New London, and in the Chesapeake where the waters usually remained open in winter. Norfolk, Virginia, was the northernmost port that was free of winter ice on the Atlantic coast. Colvill deployed a number vessels to sea off the



This is a typical Royal Navy cutter as portrayed in a period illustration. Note the long bow sprit and square top-sail yardarm that distinguished the type from a simple single-masted sloop. The Union Jack at the bow was the British national flag. The flag astern, mostly red with the Union Jack in the quarter, was the Royal Navy ensign of the period replacing a white naval ensign with the red cross of St. George from earlier times.

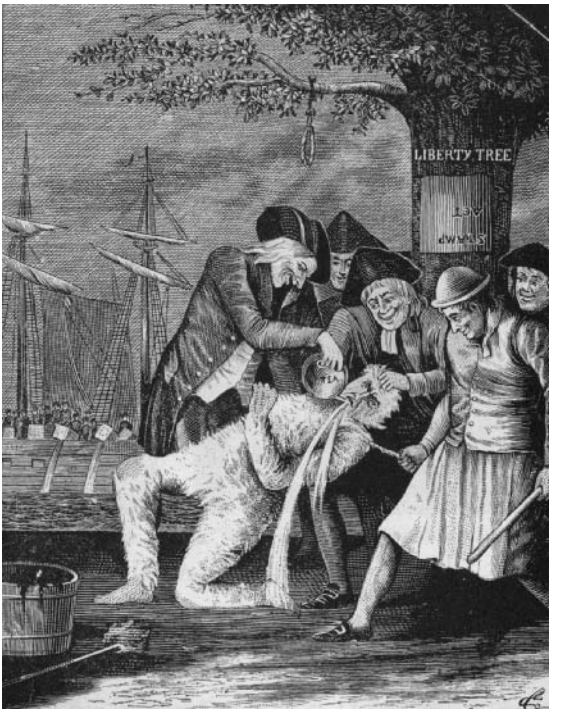
coast of Maine because he knew from experience that many American rivers, bays, and inlets were difficult to navigate and would be frozen over or filled with floating ice in winter leaving his vessels stranded. HMS *Rainbow*, with Walter Sterling as senior captain, was posted to patrol the coasts of Virginia and Maryland; HMS *Squirrell*, Capt. Richard Smith, and *Sardoine* (pronounced sardine) to cruise from the Delaware Capes as far north as Sandy Hook, New York; and HM sloop-of-war *Hornet*, Capt. Jeremiah Morgan, and *Viper* to cruise from the mouth of the Cape Fear River off the coast of North Carolina south to Georgia. The remainder of the squadron were posted to Long Island Sound and Massachusetts Bay.

POPULAR RESENTMENT

Prior to 1764 American colonists had generally accepted the doctrine that Parliament could pass acts regulating trade and imposing duties on imports. They had merely nullified any act that proved too irritating by smuggling, by producing enumerated goods clandestinely, or by simply ignoring the law. After 1764 the voice of a new, more radical group of politically active colonials was raised above the normal background of discontent common to the middle classes. These radicals proposed for the first time the idea that only the colonial legislatures could tax Americans because they were not properly represented in Parliament. Clandestine political grumblings quickly became open confrontations with calls for liberty and the rights of Englishmen permeating the air.

The people of the colonial waterfront took an active roll in the increasing public disorder. The natural rowdiness of the waterfront denizens ranged from mere mischief such as tavern brawls to sometimes bruising battles between large groups of men. Flowing rum, loose women, and pent up frustrations from being confined aboard ship for long periods made seamen prime candidates for inclusion in any public demonstration. Repeatedly resistance to British officials and the enforcement of customs regulations included the type of crowd action that commonly appeared on the waterfront. Sometimes the participants thought in terms of the theoretical concept of political "Liberty"; sometimes they acted in terms of their personal freedom to do as they wished; most times there were several ideas about liberty swirling through their heads simultaneously. "Whatever definitions of liberty appeared on the waterfront, the maritime world's understanding of liberty helped to shape the struggle for American independence." Any effort to restrict trade or limit smuggling threatened the livelihood of a whole segment of the waterfront population, and maritime workers of all types provided the mobs for the earliest calls for liberty in America.[16]

American dissatisfaction with the prevailing system of enforcement could also take on more subtle forms. During the three winters on station



Those identified as enemies of American Liberty were often treated to less-than-careful rousting, as shown in this British illustration from the period. Note the prominent place of the sailor in his petticoat-breeches, knows as slops, and round hat in the forefront of the mob.

in New London aboard HMS *Cygnet* British naval officers Charles Leslie and Philip Durell found the citizens disrespectful of their office, disobedient to the law, and discourteous to their persons. Most of the population refused to be seen in public with Royal Navy officers or to attend private functions where they were openly received. Townsmen initiated brawls wherever the British Jack-tars settled down to drink or eat while on shore leave, and many sailors were waylaid and beaten after trying to spark the young ladies of the town. Before there were Sons of Liberty and Liberty trees there were the Sons of Neptune—as the sailors and former privateers called themselves—who rioted in the streets for the rights of Englishmen.[17]

The sea officers and seamen on other stations experienced similar episodes. When Lt. Thomas Allen, commanding the cutter *Gaspee*, put into Casco Bay, Maine with a pair of smugglers in tow in 1764, he was

shocked to be met by a local customs agent who, through fear for his own safety, refused to prosecute the owners or to even hold the vessels. While in port Allen and his press gang were attacked by a mob and made to release the mariners. Lt. Thomas Laugharne of the cutter *Chaleur* received similar treatment in New York in July 1764. *Chaleur* had stopped several vessels off Sandy Hook at the entrance to New York Bay, and Laugharne had pressed five mariners from among the merchantmen in the harbor because he was always short of hands. When he next appeared with his longboat at the city wharf, he was mobbed and made to surrender the men he had pressed. He was then compelled to watch as his own longboat was removed from the water and burned in front of city hall.[18]

Capt. James Hawker sent a boat from HMS *Sardoine* to the wharf at Charleston to inspect a suspicious schooner. He recorded that "a mob collected [that] immediately threw stones, logs of wood, staves, and any other thing they could lay hold of into the boat, wounded the officer and men and obliged two of them to jump overboard to prevent worse." Hawker then armed all of his crew on *Sardoine* save a skeleton watch and made for the merchant schooner in several of the ship's boats standing "in the bow of the foremost myself, with the British flag in my hand." He was met by the mob "armed with cutlasses, axes, stones, clubs, etc. to resist me forcibly." A violent clash was but a heartbeat away when the owner of the vessel, with a cooler head, brought forth the vessel's clearance papers and cargo manifest, which showed that it was "regular" and ended the confrontation.[19]

Notorious among the naval postings was Capt. Jeremiah Morgan of HM sloop-of-war *Hornet*. His activities off the coast of North Carolina caused the legislative assembly to vote that he be arrested if he again set foot in the colony. In February 1767, the *Virginia Gazette* noted of Morgan, "[He] is very assiduous, and lets nothing escape him . . . was he to stay, we should be ruined to all intents and purposes." In September 1767, the people of Norfolk, Virginia, led by the mayor of the town, physically attacked Morgan and his men when they came ashore looking for deserters. The Royal Navy men had to fight their way back to their boat. A warrant was later issued for Morgan's arrest by the local magistrate.[20]

Whether openly brazen, like Morgan, or bravely romantic, like Hawker with flag in hand, these sea officers embodied both the best and worst features to be found among the men of the Royal Navy. Devoted to the best interests of their sovereign and their empire, most Royal Navy commanders stationed in America suffered from a common misconception of the colonials as crude, avaricious, and innately disloyal. In following their instructions concerning the customs in too literal a manner, these naval officers drove the otherwise loyal colonials from private grumbling to active resistance, if not open rebellion. Had every Royal Navy officer

carried out Lord Grenville's legislation to the letter as did Morgan and Hawker, the American Revolution may have begun a decade earlier.[21]

The populations of the port cities of Connecticut and Rhode Island were notorious for their resistance to the customs. As charter colonies rather than royal ones, neither colony exhibited any desire to vigorously enforce the trade regulations. With the support of colonial governors like Thomas Fitch and Samuel Ward, and under the sympathetic scrutiny of judges like Richard Morris and John Andrews, both colonies regularly erected legal impediments to the prosecution of smugglers and the forfeiture of their vessels and cargoes. This was often accomplished through the active interference and contravention of the law by the governors and the judges themselves, who would purposely throw Vice Admiralty cases into the civil courts where they could drag on for months.[22]

Capt. John Brown of HM brig *Hawke*, for example, was thrown into jail by Judge Morris when he tried to libel the merchant ship *New York* but could not post an outrageously large bond of £10,000 imposed by the judge for possible damages to the ship and cargo. Brown, a £30-per-month captain, could not amass such a vast sum, nor would the local customs official, Charles Apthorp, aid him. This set of circumstances resulted in a five-month-long adjournment of the case, a suit brought against Brown by the shipowners, and the ultimate release of the vessel. This case illustrates the lack of cooperation between the services, the hostility of the courts, and the tactics used by American merchants all of which plagued the enforcement mission.[23]

THE STAMP ACT CRISIS

The French and Indian War (1754–1763) created a vast debt for the British, and the Grenville ministry decided to extract at least some of the money from the colonies in the form of a stamp tax on all legal and business papers. Previously any legislation laying *internal taxes* had always come from the colonial assemblies, and the stamp tax was clearly an attempt to levy an internal tax from outside the colonies. Along with the passage of the Stamp Act, Parliament renewed the Mutiny Act, which required the colonial assemblies to house and feed the British army and to provision and water any British naval vessels sent to America.[24]

Grenville sought to minimize the reaction to the stamp tax by appointing American stamp agents rather than English ones. This turned out to be a crucial mistake that insured the failure of the stamp policy. Colonial stamp distributors, their property, homes, and families were simply too vulnerable to the displeasure voiced by their neighbors in the mob to carry out their obligations. This factor caused most of the agents to resign their posts as soon as the level of protest over the stamps rose above tavern mutterings to become street demonstrations. Grenville also

miscalculated both the potential economic effect of the tax and the breadth of the reaction to it. Colonial shippers and merchants were required to take out numerous public documents while conducting their everyday business affairs including bills of lading, clearance permits, insurance policies, rental agreements, mortgages, attachments of property, and all kinds of contracts. The Stamp Act also affected lawyers, newspaper editors, printers, municipal employees, and an army of ordinary persons who signed indentures, produced public documents, or ran licensed businesses. The tax stamp on packs of playing cards was particularly irksome as almost everyone played cards as a form of diversion.[25]

The Stamp Act was designed to take effect on November 1, 1765, and in October, a Stamp Act Congress met in the city of New York with representatives from nine colonies in attendance. The governors of Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia prevented any delegates from attending, and the legislature in New Hampshire simply sent word of its support. The congress prepared a resolution asserting that the basic rights of the colonials had been violated by Parliament's attempt to tax them without their consent. Many merchants pledged not to import British goods until the offending acts were repealed, and those who did not pledge faced open intimidation by the mob, which fashioned itself into a high-sounding Continental Association. Yet even in the face of growing discontent London went forward with the printing of thousands of stamps and dispatched them to the colonies.[26]

Almost everywhere colonists refused to allow the use of the stamps. Those stamp agents who had not already resigned their posts, hid in their homes or aboard ship, and refused to appear in public. In Massachusetts, Andrew Oliver had his home destroyed by the mob, and he fled to the protection of British troops garrisoned in Boston. In Connecticut, Jared Ingersoll was surrounded by more than 500 angry demonstrators. He instantly resigned his post, threw his hat in the air, and cheered for liberty. In New York, violence broke out when a mob gathered to burn the lieutenant governor in effigy and harassed the troops with a surprising lack of regard for their own safety in the face of fixed bayonets. Several homes were invaded and looted. Windows were broken and fires set in the streets. Only the restraint practiced by the regulars and their officers prevented an exchange of gunfire. In March 1766, after being warned of a possible armed revolt, Parliament repealed the Stamp Act.

The Royal Navy played a significant role during the height of the crisis. With the legislatures and many of the governors on the side of the colonials, the ships of the Royal Navy were often the only practical instruments of British authority left in the colonies. The pattern for resistance to the stamps was set in Boston, and it was in Boston also that the Royal Navy attempted to fashion a practical response to the problem. When the local

stamp agent, Andrew Oliver, was intimidated into resigning his office, the governor, Francis Bernard, took steps to save the stamps from the populace. This seems slightly ridiculous to us today, but the governor was aware that the mob had designs on the stamps themselves for the purposes of propaganda. Turning the stamps over to the colonials, or allowing them to be destroyed, would have been "greatly humiliating and derogatory to His Majesty's government."[27]

Bernard asked Capt. Thomas Bishop of HMS *Fortune*, then the senior naval officer in Boston, to take the crates of stamps aboard his ship and secure them until they could be unloaded at Castle William on an island in the harbor. He also asked that the navy intercept any ships from England carrying additional shipments of stamps for other colonies. For this last purpose Bishop deployed *Jamaica* and *Gaspee* to the approaches to Boston, and he sent the sloop-of-war *Tryal* to Halifax to receive further instructions from Admiral Colvill. Several days later *Gaspee*

Vessels like this Royal Navy brig were often the only outposts of Royal authority left in the colonies during the Stamp Act Crisis. Two-masted vessels of 20 guns or less like this one, commanded by junior officers such as lieutenants, were often referred to as Sloops-of-War even though their spar and sail plan had little similarity to the single-masted commercial vessel known as a sloop.

intercepted the ship *John Galley* arriving from London with additional packages of stamps, which were also deposited at Castle William. No one dared to even open the packages for inspection. In a letter to the Admiralty, Bernard highly praised Bishop for his cooperation.

By way of contrast the colonial protests against the stamps and the stamp agents in Rhode Island quickly turned violent, rivaling the armed outbreaks seen against the revenue service. At the time HMS *Cygnet* (Capt. Charles Leslie) was the largest warship in the harbor at Newport. The local stamp agent, Augustus Johnston, the chief customs agent, John Robinson, and several of their friends retreated to the warship in fright when riots broke out. Leslie ran out *Cygnet*'s guns and made a great show of clearing the ship for action and preparing to repel boarders by raising the nettings and distributing cutlasses and pikes to the crew. This ploy kept the rioters at a distance.

Robinson's absence from the custom's office effectively closed the port because no outgoing shipping could leave nor could any incoming vessel unload without his assurance that they had the properly stamped clearance papers. Moreover, Robinson absolutely refused to leave the protective confines of *Cygnet*, and he also refused to issue any documents that were unstamped. He maintained this position for three solid weeks. The governor of the colony, Samuel Ward, was enraged by Robinson's stance, but there was little he could do to force the issue because the customs was independent of his authority. No one seems to have questioned the unstamped papers that began appearing along the coast during the crisis except Captain Antrobus of HMS *Maidstone*, who voiced his concern to Governor Ward in a letter but took no action against shippers.

In late November Robinson yielded. With his income dependent on the volume of trade that passed through his office, and with life aboard an overcrowded ship less inviting than his own warm hearth and home with winter coming, the customs chief resolved his dilemma through the use of a mild subterfuge. He officially requested the stamp agent, Johnston, who was sharing his exile aboard ship, to issue stamps to the customs office for its use. Johnston, in all feigned innocence, denied the request because he had never actually seen the stamps sent to Rhode Island. These had been waylaid in Boston. Yet, it is abundantly clear that HMS *Viper* (Captain Lobb) had arrived at Newport with all of Rhode Island's supply of stamps some time in October. The packages had been transferred to *Cygnet*, but the packages had been left unopened in the expectation that they would never be used. Robinson, thereafter, began issuing customs documents without a stamp but with a clear conscience.

New York was always a hotbed of anti-government protest. The struggle for political dominance in New York, however, was no unevenly matched contest between mobs of like-minded citizens and a few customs officials as it was in Boston or Newport. No place in America was so

evenly split in its loyalties. From first to last, rebel sympathizers and government loyalists were in constant conflict and turmoil. Even the colonial legislature was split between the powerful pro-Loyalist DeLancey and pro-Patriot Livingston families.[28]

Capt. Archibald Kennedy was posted to New York in HMS *Coventry*. He was the son of a customs collector from New York, had lived there most of his life when ashore, and had large property holdings in the city. He had used his equity in these properties to help his brother officers weather financial rough spots or to provide them with bail-bonds when all other sources had been exhausted. Kennedy's familiarity with the population of the city should have better prepared him for the crisis that was about to break over the Stamp Act, but it did not. Instead his property became a pawn in the hands of the mob led by New York radicals like Isaac Sears and Alexander McDougall, former privateers and Sons of Neptune, who now became leaders of the Liberty Boys, or Sons of Liberty.[29]

The New York stamp agent, James McEvers, immediately resigned leaving the colonial lieutenant governor, Cadwallader Colden, responsible for the stamps until the newly appointed governor, Sir Henry Moore, should arrive. Unlike many colonial officials, Colden was openly dedicated to implementing the Stamp Act, and he was sure that the Liberty Boys intended to seize the stamps. He asked Kennedy to intercept the shipments outside New York Bay and convey them to Fort George on the tip of Manhattan. To this end Kennedy deployed *Guarland* (Captain St. John) and *Hawke* (Captain Brown) to patrol off Sandy Hook.

The ship *Edward* was subsequently met and brought to Fort George at the tip of Manhattan Island. Unfortunately, the stamps had been loaded beneath other cargo, which had to be off-loaded before they could be reached. Fort George had no facilities for handling cargo, and the city wharf was filled with protestors waiting to descend on the *Edward* should it be brought near. Kennedy ordered the cutter *Gaspee* to warp alongside the merchantman to serve as a receiving vessel for the cargo, and unloading proceeded at anchor in the bay. Armed boats from the *Guarland* patrolled the bay during the process, and they escorted the stamps to Fort George where they were secured.

Meanwhile, William Franklin, royal governor of New Jersey, requested that Colden also store the stamps for his colony in Fort George. Franklin asked that Kennedy be ordered to send a vessel and a detachment of marines to transport them. Colden blocked the first request claiming that there was no space at the fort to store more stamps, and he also opposed Franklin's subsequent suggestion that New Jersey's stamps be placed aboard Kennedy's ships. The latter decision was completely within the naval vice commander's purview, and Kennedy refused to involve himself with New Jersey's problems. It should be noted that the Admiralty gave

its naval commanders much greater freedom of action than the Board of Trade allowed governors or army commanders. Moreover, the naval and military commanders, the customs officials, the stamps agents, and the governors were not part of a continuous chain of command. This was one of the weaknesses of the empire's bureaucracy with each reporting to his own distinct superior. All that was expected was polite cooperation between the services and the branches of colonial government.

Repulsed at New York, Franklin turned to Captain Hawker of *Sardoine*, who was on station in the Delaware River opposite Newcastle (Delaware) on the western border of the Jersey colony. Hawker accepted New Jersey's stamps on his own responsibility, and he also accepted those of nearby Pennsylvania. When winter ice began to build in the river threatening his ship, Hawker took *Sardoine* from the water, placed it in a cradle above the normal high tide mark, and made a fortress of it bristling with cannon and swivel guns. He let it be known that anyone attempting to take the stamps would be fired upon, and no one tried. Like most other naval officers in the colonies, Hawker made no attempt to close any ports or demand that documents have stamps upon them.

Meanwhile on November 1, 1764, the Liberty Boys in New York staged a particularly effective demonstration massing several thousand protestors and penetrating the outer defenses of Fort George. This gave Colden great concern, and he immediately asked that Kennedy remove the stamps from the fort and place them aboard his own ship, HMS *Coventry*. Kennedy refused fearing, correctly, that his own property in the city would be held hostage to the demands of the protestors. Colden then deliberated with the city council and decided to hand over the stamps to representatives of the mob before their persistence brought on a bloody conflict with the garrison of the fort. The protestors burned ten boxes of stamps as an example to the government of their power and then retired. This incident was a major blow to Royal prestige in New York and elsewhere in the colonies.

In December the customs house in New York began to issue unstamped documents to shippers, but Governor Moore, finally arrived from England, refused to advise Kennedy as to whether or not to honor them. Kennedy took it upon himself to declare the port closed until the Stamp Act should be obeyed or repealed. He kept the port closed for a month. Finally, word came from Admiral Colvill advising his subordinates that the stamps were a "shore matter" and that the navy no longer needed to deal with them. This freed Kennedy at last from his dilemma, and he opened the port for business as usual without the stamps.

The southern colonies also had a strong reaction to the Stamp Act. Captain Sterling, on station as senior captain in Chesapeake Bay, transferred Virginia's stamps to HMS *Rainbow* as soon as they arrived, and the Virginia customs agents avoided violence by immediately issuing

unstamped clearance papers, which Stirling wisely acknowledged. Nonetheless, in May 1765, seven anti-stamp tax resolutions were proposed in the Virginia House of Burgesses. The Virginia resolutions claimed that only the colonial legislature had the right to tax Virginians. "Taxation of the people by themselves, or by persons chosen by themselves to represent them ... is the only security against a burthensome taxation." The first reaction in the colonies to the unprecedented *Virginia Resolves* was one of shock, yet many Americans found themselves in accord with their primary thrust of no taxation without representation. In Virginia, at least, the argument over specific customs regulations and tax stamps had quickly evolved into an all-out battle concerning British constitutional principles.[30]

The people of Maryland immediately requested the resignation of their designated stamp agent, Zachariah Hood. Fearing violence, Hood fled to New York where he demanded that Kennedy order one of his ships to Annapolis as a floating stamp distribution station. Kennedy absolutely refused to sanction the idea, but he sent *Hawke* to Annapolis anyway to insure the peace of the colony and to serve as a place of refuge for loyal colonial officials should they need it. The only violence seen in the colony was a tavern brawl involving a group of Jack-tars from HMS *Hornet* that resulted in the outnumbered sailors being thrown into the Chesapeake Bay after receiving a minor battering at the hands of some local toughs.

In North Carolina, the stamps were delivered to the colony by Lt. Constantine J. Phipps in HM sloop *Diligence*. In compliance with his orders from Stirling as senior captain on station, Phipps placed the stamps into the hands of the governor, William Tryon. In the absence of a stamp agent, who had resigned, Tryon ordered that the stamps be transferred to HMS *Viper*, Capt. Jacob Lobb, who was on station at Wilmington. Lobb accepted the stamps and then unwisely attempted to enforce their use, seizing three vessels for having unstamped papers as they approached the mouth of the Cape Fear River. The people of Wilmington took their revenge by stopping all provisions and water to the Royal Navy ships in the harbor and by jailing a boat's crew from *Viper* that came ashore. In February 1765, a thousand protestors surrounded the customs house to demand the release of the seized merchant vessels. Three days later boats from both *Viper* and *Diligence* combined in a nighttime amphibious operation to secretly infiltrate Fort Johnston that overlooked the harbor and to spike all the colonial cannon found there. With the ships' guns run out of their ports the next morning, Lobb and Phipps released the three merchant vessels thereby diffusing further unrest in the colony.

The stamps for South Carolina and Georgia reposed for some time in the hold of HMS *Speedwell*, Capt. Robert Fanshawe. Thereafter, South Carolina's stamps were permanently deposited at Fort Johnson in Charleston never to be used. Upon receipt of Georgia's stamps, however,