

Salem Maritime

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE • MASSACHUSETTS

Salem was founded in 1626 by Roger Conant and in 1628 became the first town in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Her seaboard location gave impetus to maritime pursuits and soon fishing and shipping became the leading industries of the community. As early as 1643, fish, lumber, and provisions were being sent to the West Indies in exchange for sugar and molasses—staples that were brought home and made into rum. Gradually the orbit of trade was extended to Europe, most particularly to Portugal and Spain which offered a ready market for dried fish, and supplied salt, wine, fruit, iron, and Spanish dollars in return.

This trade thrived until 1763, when England began to enact and enforce new measures which stringently limited the commercial intercourse of the American Colonies. Under these conditions the economic life of Salem, like that of most continental ports along the Atlantic seaboard, was brought to a standstill, engendering a discontent which grew into resistance and eventually resulted in rebellion.

During the American Revolution, important aid was given by Salem to the colonial cause through privateering. Swift and formidable ships were built, mounted with guns, heavily manned, and directed against British commerce. Salem was the one American port of significance that did not fall into the hands of the British at one time or another during the course of the war. Consequently, it was possible for Salem to keep an average of 50 vessels continually at sea and in search of the enemy.

At the end of the war, the energy that had been shown in privateering found an outlet in a worldwide search for new markets. Pioneering voyages were made by Salem ships into the Baltic and beyond the Cape of Good Hope to the fabulous East Indies and China—voyages which helped to usher in the first golden age of American foreign trade and achieved for Salem a reputation as one of the world's famous ports.

The embargo imposed on American shipping by President Thomas Jefferson in 1807 and the War of 1812 were severe blows to Salem and were the first of several factors which led to the decline of her commerce. During the War of 1812, however, privateering took the place of trade as it had in the Revolution, and at the end of hostilities the pioneering instinct that had been shown at the close of the War of Independence was again in evidence. New channels of trade to Africa, Australia, and South America were explored. After the discovery of gold in California, Salem shipowners were among the first to reap profits from the trade around Cape Horn to San Francisco. Salem's landlocked harbor was too shallow to accommodate large new ships, however, and as a result, her commerce was rapidly absorbed by the deepwater ports of Boston and New York.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

Salem Maritime National Historic Site is on Derby Street, Salem, about 20 miles northeast of Boston. From Boston and points south, Salem is reached by Mass. 1A and 107 through Lynn and also by Mass. 129 along the shore from Lynn through Marblehead. From a westerly direction, Mass. 114 brings traffic from Mass. 128 in Peabody and U.S. 1 in Danvers.

Groups may receive special service if advance arrangements are made at the site.

ADMINISTRATION

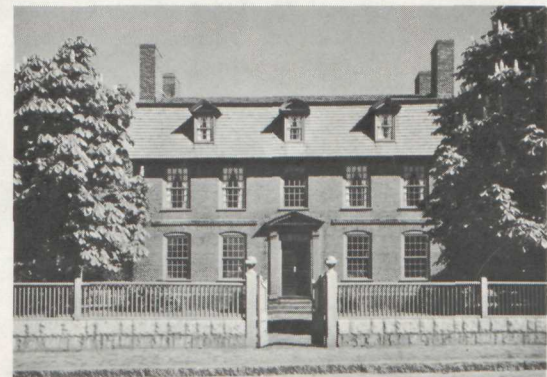
Salem Maritime National Historic Site is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Box 847, Salem, MA 01970, is in immediate charge.



CUSTOM HOUSE



INTERIOR, DERBY HOUSE



DERBY HOUSE

