

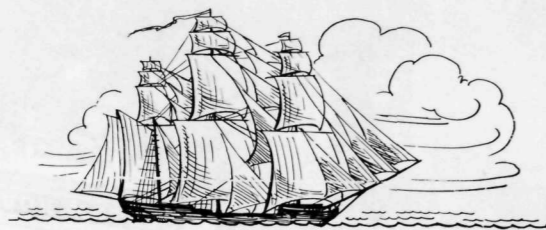
# SALEM MARITIME

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE • MASSACHUSETTS



# Salem Maritime

## NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



*American maritime greatness, the outgrowth of pioneering enterprise upon the sea and a pillar of strength to the young Nation, is memorialized in this site*

UNTIL the great West was opened and began to yield to the pioneer after the Revolution, most Americans lived within reach of the ocean and naturally turned to it for adventure, a livelihood, and even riches. The sea, indeed, provided the first frontier as well as the first highway. From the beginning, colonists were dependent upon the ocean for communication with the homeland and with other colonies. New England literally grew up on the sea and for more than two centuries aggressively followed its calling.

### *Historical Background of Maritime Salem*

FOUNDED in 1626 by Roger Conant as the plantation of Naumkeag and established 2 years later as the first town in the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, Salem owed its early start to a seaboard location. From the start her colonists engaged in maritime pursuits and soon made fishing and shipping 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, for the most part 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 and that with the West Indies thrived until 1763 when the long struggle between France and England for the mastery of the American Continent finally came to an end and the government in 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 all 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 Revolution, important aid was given 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 continental 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 possi-

ble for Salem to provide more men and ships for privateering than any other port in the United Colonies. From the beginning of 1776 to the end of 1782, Salem averaged 50 vessels continually at sea preying on enemy shipping and engaging enemy ships.

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 shipmasters 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 to achieve for Salem the reputation of a “New World Venice.” On some of these voyages, vessels were away as long as 2 years and might take on and dispose of several cargoes before returning to their home port from the Far East.

The embargo imposed on American shipping by President 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. However, during the War of 1812, 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. However, the great increase in the size of vessels which came with the decade of the clipper ship, 1850–60, brought Salem’s maritime cycle abruptly to a close. Her landlocked harbor was too shallow to accommodate the large new ships, and as a result her commerce was rapidly absorbed by the deep-water ports of Boston and New York.

### *Derby Wharf*

DERBY WHARF, which extends nearly 2,000 feet into Salem Harbor, is one of the most important survivals from the great days of Salem shipping. It was begun by Capt. Richard Derby soon after 1762, and during the Revolution was used by his son, Elias Hasket Derby, as a base for fitting out privateers. After the war, the wharf became one of the great mercantile centers of the young republic, as Elias Hasket Derby took the lead among American merchants in developing an extensive trade with Europe, the East Indies, and China. In 1784, Derby’s ship *Light Horse* visited Russia during the first voyage of an American vessel into the Baltic Sea.

The Derby House



The same year the *Grand Turk* was dispatched to the Cape of Good Hope and upon her return, in 1785, was started on a voyage that took her through the Indies and across the China Sea to Canton. These were but the first of a succession of voyages made into distant seas before 1800. After this period of glory there followed a century of neglect, until the sea walls of Derby Wharf were reconstructed by the National Park Service in 1938.

Warehouses for the storage of cargoes from overseas formerly stood in a long row on the wharf, which was also used briefly for shipbuilding. The first six warehouses were erected by the Derbys between 1767 and 1799 on the portion of the wharf now nearest Derby Street. Two Derby vessels, the second *Grand Turk* and the brig *Henry*, were built here in 1790–91. The second *Grand Turk* was the largest ship launched in Salem up to that time.

### *The Custom House*

DIRECTLY opposite Derby Wharf is the Custom House, built in 1819 for the officers of the customs revenue. Nathaniel Hawthorne worked here as Surveyor of the Port of Salem from 1846 to 1849. During these years he gathered material for his greatest novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, including the famous introduction in which the Custom House and its occupants and surroundings are inimitably described. The desk and other objects used

by Hawthorne as a customs officer have been preserved. In the southeast room of the Custom House are exhibits and panels which illustrate and interpret for you the fascinating history of Salem’s oceangoing commerce.

### *The Derby House*

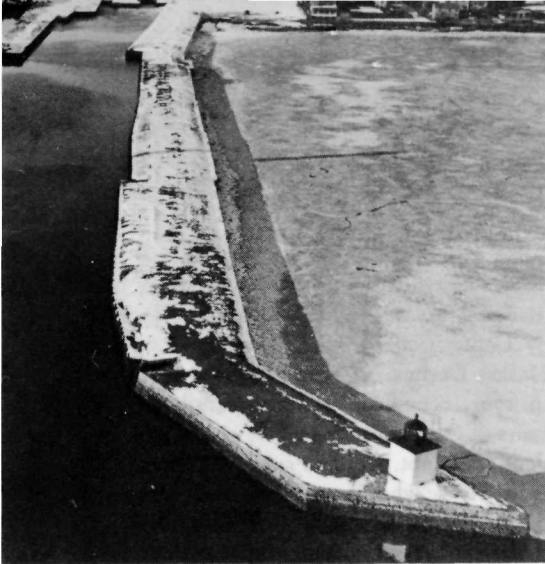
THE Derby House, now the oldest brick dwelling in Salem, was erected in 1761–62, by Capt. Richard Derby for his son, Elias Hasket Derby. The latter, who was married in 1761, occupied the house until the early years of the Revolutionary War. A later resident was Capt. Henry Prince, a master in the Derby fleet, who, in 1796, sailed to Manila on the first voyage made to the Philippines by an American vessel. Some interior restoration of this historic structure has been necessary. The original paint colors of the various rooms and the ornate staircase in the front hall are of unusual interest. Among the furnishings are objects associated with the Derbys, including some family portraits.

### *Other Structures*

THE Rum Shop, a building probably erected in 1800 or soon after, stands on the corner east of the Derby House. The Hawkes House, just west of the Derby House, was originally designed about 1780 by Samuel McIntire, Salem’s great architect, as a sumptuous mansion for Elias Hasket Derby. Capt. Benjamin Hawkes, a shipbuilder and merchant, bought



An interior view of the Derby House



Derby Wharf with Central Wharf in upper left

the structure in 1801 and completed it in its present form.

Extending into the harbor, parallel to and west of Derby Wharf, but only one-third as long, is Central Wharf, first constructed in 1791-92 by Simon Forrester, captain of a Derby privateer in the Revolution and subsequently a prominent merchant. John Bertram, the last of the great Salem merchants to engage in worldwide trade, and his partners were in business at Central Wharf, 1840-59, occupying a brick warehouse built by the Forrester family before 1832. The Bertram-owned bark *Eliza* was among the first vessels to round Cape Horn and to reach California in the Gold Rush of 1849. The walls of the warehouse were reduced and stabilized in 1948.

### About Your Visit

SALEM Maritime National Historic Site is on Derby Street, Salem, Mass., about 20 miles

northeast of Boston. From Boston and points south, Salem is reached by automobile over State Routes 1A and 107 through Lynn and also by State Route 129 along the shore from Lynn through Marblehead.

The Boston & Maine Railroad, 5 minutes' walk west of the site, provides frequent service to and from North Station, Boston. Buses, operated by the Eastern Massachusetts Street Railway, stop on Essex Street, one block north of the Custom House.

Groups can receive special service if advance arrangements are made with the superintendent. The site is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day except Thanksgiving, December 25, and January 1.

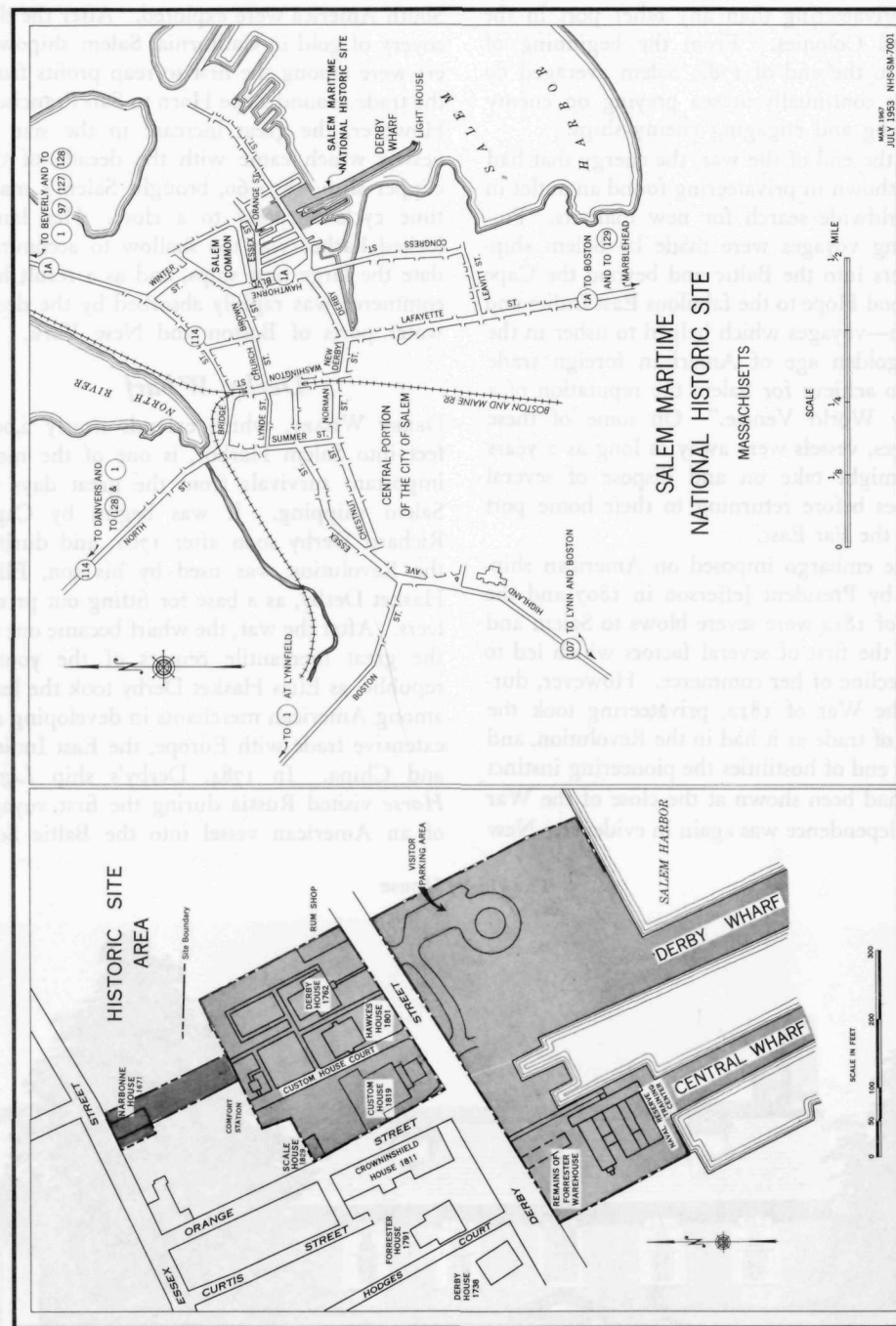
### Administration

Salem Maritime National Historic Site, 9 acres bordering Salem Harbor, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

The National Park System, of which this site is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the great historical, natural, and recreational places of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of all the people.

A superintendent, whose address is Custom House, Derby Street, Salem, Mass., 01970, is in immediate charge of the site.

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR—the Nation's principal natural resource agency—has a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that our renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.



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UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

