

# THE PRIVATEER TRAIL

## Beverly's Revolutionary Era Maritime History

### 1. John Cabot House, 1781– 117 Cabot Street

This house was constructed by merchant ship owner John Cabot in 1781, the first brick residence to be built in Beverly. During the Revolution, John Cabot and his brothers Andrew and George and brother-in-law Joseph Lee were part owners of 40 privateer vessels sailing from the Cabot Wharf. *From the Cabot House, turn south on Cabot Street toward Salem; walk to Bartlett Street.*



### 2. Bartlett Street

Bartlett Street is named for Captain William Bartlett who was active in town affairs and was a merchant and wharf owner. In the summer of 1775 General Washington named Captain Bartlett as the Continental prize agent for Beverly. He was responsible for selling captured vessels and their cargos and received a percentage of each sale. His house was later moved to Pleasant Street. Several houses on this street were occupied by men connected to privateering, including the **Gage House** at #13 and the **Jacob Thompson House** (1770) at #19. Zachariah Gage commanded the letter of marque (LM) brigs *Success* (1778) and *Chance* (1781). The *Chance* was one of the many vessels owned by John and Andrew Cabot. Jacob Thompson served in Captain Moses

Brown's seacoast company in 1775 and was later a seaman aboard the privateer ship *Resource*, first under Captain Richard Ober and later Captain Israel Thorndike. *Continue on Bartlett, turn right onto Front Street. (1<sup>st</sup> right after Cottage Lane.)*

### 3. Hugh Hill House, ca 1789 – 50 Front Street

This is the late Georgian home of Beverly's most successful privateer, Captain Hugh Hill. The house was built with funds garnered from the proceeds of dozens of privateer auctions which earned Hugh Hill's employers – the Cabot brothers – and the captain himself a huge fortune. Hill, as commander of the famous privateers *Pilgrim* and *Cicero*, captured seventeen vessels between 1776 and 1783, and ranked as one of the Bay State's greatest privateers. In one cruise in 1779 Hill and his crew took eight prizes in just six weeks. *Continue down Front Street.*

### 4. Josiah Batchelder, Jr. 1770 – 23 Front Street

Josiah Batchelder, Jr was a fervent patriot. He was a member of the Committee of Correspondence and Safety, served six terms in the legislature and was a member of the Provincial Congress.



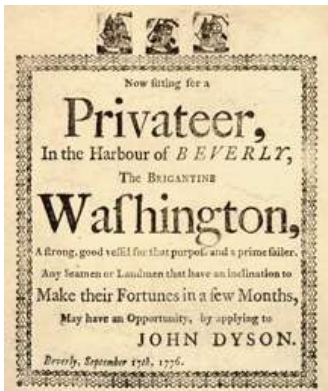
### 5. Dixey's Tavern – 20 Front Street and Stone's Inn 1734 – 8-10 Front Street

There were numerous inns and taverns which catered to privateer crews and Continental soldiers who frequented Beverly. These buildings are two that have survived.

### 6. Robert Briscoe's Warehouse 1701 – 7 Front Street

In 1701, Robert Briscoe built this warehouse into the bank along Front Street; this building has been a commercial building for over 300 years. During the Revolution Captain Thomas Davis owned the warehouse and he outfitted privateers from here. *Walking towards the water, cross the street to the sign "Please Enjoy this Public Way" – walk toward the water.*

### 7. Ellingwood's Wharf and Ferry Landing



From 1636 to 1788 this was the landing for the Beverly/Salem ferry. Ebenezer Ellingwood, Jr. was in charge of the ferry during the Revolution. He also ran a tavern and owned a large wharf which served as the base for nine privateers. The buildings that you see here today are built on fill – this is where the wharves and warehouses once stood. *Walk east away from the bridge along the wharf.*

### 8. Batchelder's and Lovett's Wharves

In the mid-eighteenth century there were twenty wharves lining the harbor side. A hundred years later, the days of sail over, the spaces between were filled in. Josiah Batchelder held a part interest in the LM schooner *Driver* and three privateers: *Fish Hawk*, *Retaliation*, and *Warren*. The latter two were unusually successful, bringing eleven prize vessels into Beverly during 1776 and 1777. James Lovett served as senior officer or commander of three privateer vessels sailing

Beverly Historical Society 117 Cabot Street, Beverly, MA 01915



from this wharf. *Return to Water Street and turn right.*

#### **9. Samuel Herrick's House and Inn, 1764** – 56 Water Street

Samuel Herrick's house is one of the few 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings still standing on Water Street. Herrick rented rooms in this building to ship captains and Continental army officers during the war, a practice continued by his family after his death. Tragically, he went down with his ship in 1773. The property also included a wharf across the street. *Continue along Water Street. Watch for the walkway on the right with the sign: "Please enjoy this harborside".*

#### **10. Glover's Wharf and the *Hannah*, Cabot's Wharf, Bartlett's Wharf, and Union Wharf**

To the right from the harbor-end of the boardwalk is the location of Glover's Wharf. Colonel John Glover of Marblehead purchased his Beverly wharf in 1774. In 1775 General George Washington ordered Glover to outfit a small fleet of schooners to prey upon British shipping bound into occupied Boston. On September 5<sup>th</sup> the 68-foot schooner *Hannah* sailed as the first official armed vessel of the United Colonies. The harbor became Washington's Naval Base during 1775 and 1776.

Nearby was Cabot's Wharf, owned by Andrew, George and John Cabot, Joseph Lee, and William Bartlett. The Cabots became the second wealthiest family in Massachusetts as a result of their privateering efforts. It was said of them in 1780 that, "The Cabots of Beverly, who we know had but five years ago a very moderate share of property are now said to be by far the most wealthy in New England."

In addition to shares in Cabot's Wharf, the naval agent, William Bartlett, owned his own warehouse/wharf. Here he inventoried and sold goods from captured British ships. In 1777 Bartlett turned to privateering and sent some thirteen armed vessels to sea.



The space beyond Bartlett's Wharf, near the present-day Jubilee Yacht Club, was occupied by Union Wharf, built in 1733. Later owners were involved in the fight against the British. Larkin Thorndike was a part owner of the Massachusetts state navy's *Black Prince* and two privateers, Zachariah Gage captained two large LM vessels, and Elias Smith commanded three privateers and an LM vessel from this wharf. *Return to Water Street.*

#### **11. Women's Protest** – Water Street

During the Revolution a rum distillery and warehouse, owned by the Cabot brothers, stood on Water Street. In November of 1777, a group of about 60 women, protesting the unwillingness of Beverly merchants to accept Continental paper currency, organized a riot. The women broke into Cabot's warehouse and removed two barrels of sugar, then paid for the merchandise in paper money. From that point onward, the newly-enlightened Beverly merchants agreed to sell their goods to Beverly women at the stipulated price in exchange for paper money. *Continue along Water Street and take a left onto Lothrop Street.*

#### **12. Independence Park** – Lothrop Street

October 1775 the British ship *Nautilus* chased the American schooner *Hannah* from the outer harbor, hoping to destroy her. The *Hannah* had been harassing British supply ships trying to enter Boston, occupied by the British. A battle ensued, causing little damage, but causing great alarm among the coastal communities. As a result, Glover's Regiment was stationed here, a coastal watch was organized from the local militia and five fortifications were built in Beverly to guard against enemy attack. On July 17, 1776 Colonel Glover assembled his men and the townspeople to hear the Declaration of Independence. When the Colonel finished reading cannon were fired and church bells rang, signaling the beginning of the new country. *Cross Lothrop Street, turn left on Central Street.*

#### **13. Mrs. Cabot's Homestead, 1773-4** – 7 Central Street

Elizabeth Higginson Cabot moved from Salem to Beverly following her husband's death in 1767 and built this house a few years later. It originally stood on the corner of Cabot and Central and was moved in the 1920s. Three of Elizabeth's sons – Andrew, John, and George – were successful merchants and privateer owners. Daughter Deborah Cabot married Captain Joseph Lee and they occupied this house after her brothers built their own mansions. Joseph Lee was a part-owner the *Revenge*, one of the earliest privateers and was a well-known ship designer. *Continue down Central Street and return to the John Cabot House.*

## Glossary



**Letter of Marque (LM):** A government document authorizing an individual to arm a merchant ship and capture any enemy ships that hindered their voyage or delivery of cargo.

**Privateer:** A privately owned and manned armed ship commissioned by a belligerent government to attack and capture enemy ships, especially merchant ships. Also individuals - commander or crew member of a privateer vessel was called a privateer. Massachusetts owners received more than 1600 government commissions, either LM or Privateer, out of about 4000 granted. About 90,000 men were active in the privateer service, about the same number who served in the Continental army.

**Washington's Fleet:** Need for American sea power was evident to General Washington soon after he took command at Cambridge in July 1775. He ordered the regiments to report names of those expert "in the management of whaleboats." Private ship owners were encouraged to arm their vessels for protection against the enemy and to capture British ships and their cargos.

**Wharf:** A structure built at the shore for ships to lie alongside during loading or unloading a cargo. Wharfage indicated the port facilities, like buildings used for storing goods, as well as the fees charged to use the wharf.

Images, from beginning: John Cabot House; watercolor of William Bartlett's home at 22 Bartlett Street; later moved to Pleasant Street; Josiah Batchelder, Jr. house; privateer broadside; corner of Water and Bartlett Streets, c. 1910; painting, *Beverly Privateer and Her Prize*, **St. Pierre**, 1776.

[Google Map](#)