

## Records of Armed Vessels, 1775-1776

**MSS:** # 019

**Processed by:** Elizabeth Field, 2015

**Volume:** 1 box (20 folders)

**Abstract:**

The Records of Armed Vessels, 1775-1776 collection measures 1 linear foot and actually spans the dates 1775-1778. The collection largely centers on the outfitting of private vessels to be used as armed privateers and the capture and subsequent auctioning of their prizes. During this time, William Bartlett served as the naval agent under General George Washington and oversaw the seizure and auctioning of captured British vessels. The collection contains correspondence between William Bartlett and notable individuals such as Stephen Moylan, Artemas Ward, Thomas Pickering, Colonel John Glover and Captain John Manly.

**Collection Creator:** William Bartlett

**Provenance:** These papers are part of a larger collection referred to as the Records of the Naval Office donated between 1905 and 1913.

**Conservation/Processor's Note:**

Materials were originally pasted and taped into a series of three scrapbooks and were not organized very thoroughly. The collection name as appears on the binding of the scrapbooks were Records of Armed Vessels, 1775-1776, however, a significant portion of the collection covers 1777 and 1778.

After taking an inventory of the records, the materials were divided into three series: correspondence, vessel records, and receipts. After the materials were arranged by series, all items were placed in acid-free folders. Some documents may require additional preservation due to paper deterioration along the seams. In April 1984, a significant portion of this collection was

removed from the scrapbooks to be placed on exhibit and subsequently stored elsewhere.

**Copyright:** Request for permission to publish material from the collection must be submitted in writing to the Curator of Collections at the Cabot House of the Beverly Historical Society & Museum.

**Preferred Citation:**

Title of Document; Records of Armed Vessels, 1775-1776; Beverly Historical Society and Museum; 117 Cabot Street, Beverly, MA 01915.

**Biographical or Historical Note:**

Beverly played a critical role in the war for American Independence. Beverly's expansive harbor and its close location to Boston made it a natural location for early naval activity. William Bartlett (1741-1794) was an important figure in Essex County and served as a naval agent under General George Washington. He was responsible for the outfitting of vessels used in naval operations during the Revolutionary War and oversaw the auctioning of the prizes of such vessels. In some cases, some of the cargo aboard such captured vessels was first distributed amongst notable figures including a gift of wine from General George Washington to Robert Adams of which the note can be found in Series I, Folder II.

The majority of records in this collection center on the hire of private vessels by the United Colonies of America to be used as privateering vessels. The collection also features records concerning the Brigantine Nancy, widely considered to be one of the most valuable prizes of the American Revolutionary War. Captured by Captain Manly in November 1775, the vessel was carrying military stores for British troops in Boston, which proved invaluable to General George Washington's Colonial Army. Other private vessels converted for use of the United Colonies include the schooner Hannah, schooner Lee, schooner Hancock, and the schooner Warren.

**Scope and Content Note:**

This collection features many correspondences, account of sales, and receipts concerning many notable Beverly residents in 1775-1778. The earliest dated record dates to November 1775 and the latest item dates to March 1778. A large portion of this collection consists of William Bartlett's correspondence and records, which detail the expenses taken in outfitting private vessels to be used for privateering.

The largest series is composed of records of outfitting privateer vessels and the administrative details of sale of captured vessels. In addition to records concerning captured vessels, Series III contains a collection of business receipts to and from William Bartlett concerning the outfitting of such vessels. Also present are receipts of wages paid by the United Colonies of America to figures such as Benjamin Waters.

**Related Materials:**

Bartlett Papers

**Series List:**

This collection is arranged into 3 series:

Series I: Correspondence, 1775-1777

Series II: Vessels, 1775-1777

Series III: Receipts, 1775-1778

**Container List:**

Series I: **Correspondence, 1775-1777**

**Series/Arrangement Note:**

This series is arranged chronologically. Materials present contain agreements between the United Colonies of America and private citizens Thomas Grant and John Twisden for the hire of their schooners. Another notable document present in this series is an agreement signed between four men including William Bartlett and Jonathan Glover vowing to equally share the profits of their privateering. This series also contains correspondence noting requests and receipts of artillery and food supplies between Beverly and Cambridge.

<b>Location</b>	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Date</b>
Cabot House	1	1	Correspondence regarding the hiring and outfitting of schooners	1775-1776
	1	2	Correspondence and receipts of supplies to and from Cambridge	1775-1777

Series II: **Vessels, 1775-1777**

**Series/Arrangement Note:**

The folders are arranged chronologically by the first date that appears for each vessel in the collection. The materials inside each folder are arranged by their original collection number. Most folders concerning captured British vessel begin with a letter from Thomas

Pickering to the Sheriff of Essex County regarding the apprehension and auctioning of each vessel. Those folders concerning the outfitting and privateering of private vessels are largely consisted of receipts and fees necessary for the staffing of such vessels. This series also contains account of sales, fees, and receipts of material goods.

<b>Location</b>	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Date</b>
Cabot House	1	1	Ship Concord	November 1775 – May 1777
	1	2	Schooner Hancock	November 1775 – March 1777
	1	3	Schooner Warren	November 1775 – March 1776
	1	4	North Briton	November 1775
	1	5	Schooner Lee	December 1775 - 1776
	1	6	Schooner Franklin	December 1775 – April 1776
	1	7	Brigantine Little Hannah	December 1775 – June 1776
	1	8	Sloop Betsey	January 1776 – June 1776
	1	9	Ship Jenny	January 1776 – October 1776
	1	10	Brigantine Nancy	January 1776 – May 1777
	1	11	Schooner Lynch	March 1776
	1	12	Sloop Sally	April 1776 – May 1776
	1	13	Sloop Polly	April 1776 – June 1776

Series III: Receipts 1775-1778**Series/Arrangement Note:**

Series III is comprised of receipts and wages paid regarding the outfitting of private vessels, court fees and auctioning of captured vessels, and accounts of captured vessels. The first two folders detail expenses paid to and by William Bartlett. The third folder includes materials relating to fees paid by the United Colonies of America, not including transactions to William Bartlett. The fourth folder includes accounts of captured vessels largely concerning schedules of court fees. Because each document contains the name of multiple captured vessels, they could not be housed in a single vessel's folder. Inside each folder, the documents are arranged by their original collection number.

Location	Box	Folder	Content	Date
Cabot House	1	1	Fees Paid by William Bartlett	November 1775 – November 1776
	1	2	Fees Paid to William Bartlett	December 1775 – March 1778
	1	3	Fees Paid by United Colonies of America (Non-Bartlett)	November 1775 – August 1776
	1	4	Accounts of Captured Vessels	October 1775 – May 1776

**Bibliography:**

Howe, Octavius. *Beverly Privateers in the American Revolution* Cambridge, MA: J. Wilson and Son, 1922.

Peabody, Robert E. *Naval Career of Capt. John Manley of Marblehead*. Salem, MA: Peabody Essex Museum, 1901.