

RISKY BUSINESS

SQUARE-RIGGED SHIPS AND SALTED FISH



Fitz Henry Lane, *Close Hauled in a Gale*, c. 1850
Oil on canvas; 22 1/4 x 36 inches
Courtesy Peabody Essex Museum
Gift of Mrs. Marjory K. Hatch. (M18980)
Photo by Mark Sexton and Jeffrey Dykes

Almost two centuries ago Castine shipbuilders, merchants, fishermen, sailors, and families forged the maritime economy that shaped this town. The enterprise grew and prospered for forty years but not without risk, hardship, and tragic loss.

Immerse yourself in the stories, letters, charts, artwork, and more saved by families in the business of moving cargo around the world in Castine-built sailing ships. Be prepared, however, to set aside sentimental notions of the age of sail in New England.

Funding for this project was made possible through the sponsorship of:

Majabigwaduce Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, located in Brooksville, Maine

Maine Humanities Council

Thomas Adams and Nancy Marto

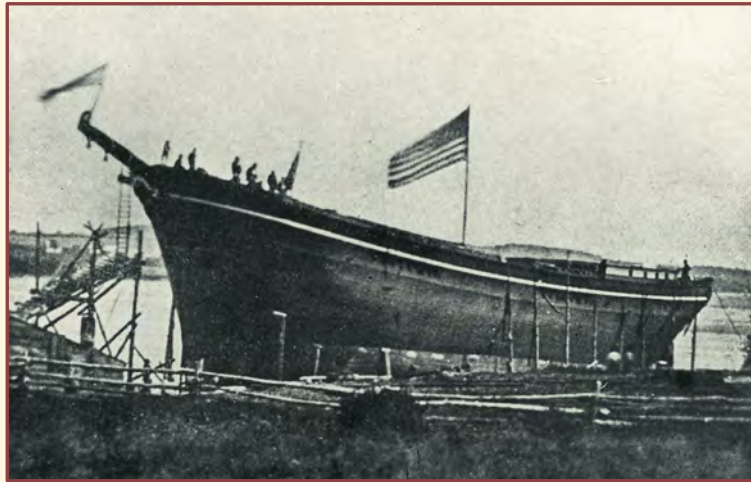
With thanks and recognition for Guest Curator Richard M. Ames, interns Sarah Laventure and Hannah Kintzel, and Castine Historical Society Exhibit Volunteers.

Exhibit design by C.A. Good Museum Services

Castine's Working Waterfront 1820-1870

Have you heard of the “golden age of sail”? Early 20th century New Englanders had. The phrase recalled the hard work, ancient wind-driven technology, and profits of a disappearing era when every coastal village relied on the sea and maritime commerce.

Here is a coastal Maine version of that story, uncovered through the history of Castine's waterfront and the people who made it work.



Sailing Days on the Penobscot, George Wasson and Lincoln Colcord, 1932

The ship *Hezekiah Williams* on launch day in 1856, at the Noyes and Perkins shipyard in Castine, Maine. This image is believed to be the earliest photograph of a shipyard in Maine.

It is more than material success that the sea has brought to us. The ocean is an educator...and the touch of the ocean trains our youth in courage and skill and adventure...The communication with other countries which belongs to a seaboard town has a broadening influence. Seafaring men get larger views, and learn to look on more than one side of a question.

Excerpt, *Castine Sixty Years Ago: A Historical Address* by Rev. George Moulton Adams, August 12, 1900



Fitz Henry Lane, *Castine from Hospital Island 1855*. Photograph Courtesy Boston Athenæum



Ship carpenters in Castine
Collections Castine Historical Society

Ships Built at Castine

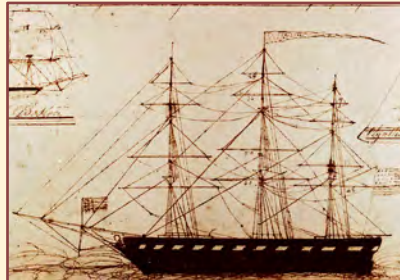
Castine shipyards built over 120 sailing vessels in the nineteenth century and each type of craft met a different need. Two-masted schooners fished both inshore and offshore and hauled goods and passengers on coastal routes, often to and from Boston. Barks and brigs with square sails worked the international markets along with the 18 full-rigged ships highlighted in this exhibit. Below are the Castine ships that images are known to exist for.



Canova built 1823, 344 tons
Dimensions: 111.0 x 25.2 x 13.1
1833 sold in Boston.
F.A. Perkins, watercolor
Courtesy Penobscot Marine Museum



St. Leon built 1835, 505 tons
Dimensions: 134 x 29 x 14
1852 sunk with load of salt on voyage
from Cadiz, Spain to Castine.
John Hughes (1806-1880).
Courtesy Penobscot Marine Museum



Adams built 1840, 592 tons
Dimensions: 143.0 x 31.0 x 15.0
1863 sold abroad, renamed *Saguenay*,
home port of Liverpool until 1872.
Collections Castine Historical Society



William Jarvis built 1848, 688 tons
Dimensions: 142.3 x 32.1 x 16.1
1860 wrecked off Key West, Florida.
Courtesy Hatch Family



William Witherle built 1851, 874 tons
Dimensions: 161.5 x 34.3 x 17.2
1864 sold abroad, renamed *Selma*, home
port of Hamburg, Germany until 1873.
Courtesy Witherle Memorial Library



J. P. Whitney. Built: 1853, 1020 Tons.
Dimensions: 161.1 x 34.3 x 17.2
1869 sold at Calcutta and sunk in the
Indian Ocean the same year.
Courtesy Hatch Family



Hezekiah Williams built 1856, 1030 tons
Dimensions: 163.1 x 34.2 x 17.1
1857 wrecked near Port Joli, Nova Scotia.
On the stocks at Noyes shipyard, Castine,
1856. *Sailing Days on the Penobscot*,
George Wasson and Lincoln Colcord, 1932



Edward Hyman built 1856, 1128 tons
Dimensions: 180.5 x 35.5 x 17.8
1873 sold abroad, home port of Nantes,
France until 1879.
John Hughes (1806-1880)
Collections Castine Historical Society



Castine built 1857, 1032 tons.
Dimensions: 170.3 x 35.0 x 17.6
1884 sold abroad, home port of Bremen,
Germany until 1889.
Courtesy The Butler Institute of
American Art, Youngstown, Ohio



Picayune built 1857, 1081 tons
Dimensions: 172.2 x 35.0 x 17.5
1866 wrecked on Duck Island, Maine.
Attributed to Francis Hustwick (1797 –
1865). Courtesy Louisiana State
Museum, New Orleans, Louisiana

At Sea

Ship captains rule with ultimate authority aboard any vessel. The captain, called master in official documents, held responsibility for the vessel itself, a cargo of merchandise, and a crew of two mates, cook, steward, and a dozen seamen. At sea, he made hundreds of decisions each day affecting the safety, operation, and maintenance of the ship and the crew. In turn, he took instruction from the ship's owners, laws of the United States and his destination country, and ingrained by his masters when a cabin boy, seaman, and mate moving up the ranks.

Mr. Baxter, who wants to have an easier time than standing one half of the time upon the decks, says that I am pounding down the Crew by making them stand watch and watch. He is a real Phoenix of a mate – a Beauty – but damn his principles.

Brig Ann logbook, Thursday, December 24, 1819, excerpt, Captain James Hale, Castine, Maine
Collections Castine Historical Society



Solon Hanson (1838-1858), at left, photographed with a friend in New Orleans. At the time this daguerreotype was made in January 1858, Solon was a seaman on the ship *Picayune* waiting for cargo in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Detail, ship *Picayune*, c. 1850
Courtesy Louisiana State Museum,
New Orleans, LA

I shall strive to make a sailor of myself as fast as i can but i think my chance's [sic] for promotion will not be so good here as they would in some ships. old [captain] brooks thinks that a man ought to go to sea twenty years before he is competent to go second mate he dont [sic] believe in boy officers.

Letter, Solon Hanson, December 21, 1857, ship *Picayune*, New Orleans, to his father, Penobscot, Maine. *Letters Home from Sea, The Life and Letters of Solon J. Hanson*, by L.J. Webster and M.A. Noah, 2006

Mischief and Mayhem

Of all that could go wrong on a voyage, human error in the form of misplaced allegiances or criminal violence may be the most difficult to untangle. The worst, an encounter with pirates at sea, could only be averted by sailing away as fast as possible. In the West Indies (the Caribbean) especially prior to 1830, masters and seaman alike feared the consequences of being boarded by pirates.



Piratical barbarity, broadside, 1825 Courtesy Clements Library, University of Michigan

“I was master of the ship Atticus, sailing out of Castine . . . At that time there were a great many pirates in the West Indian [Caribbean] seas. They were merciless creatures, and killed all whom they captured. In earlier years the pirates were more merciful, but when some had been convicted by chancing to meet persons whom they had spared, the others said, ‘Dead men tell no tales.’”

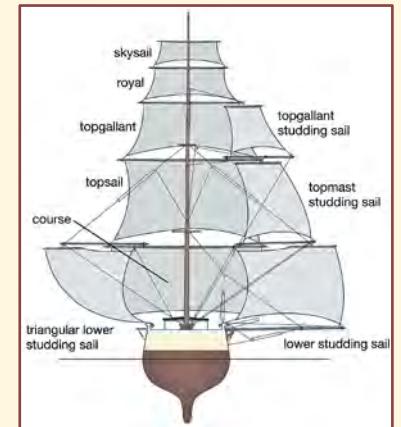
Captain Dunbar told his nieces and nephews the story of events aboard the ship *Atticus* in the Caribbean around 1830. After spying a suspicious schooner on the horizon, he quietly ordered the mate to hoist more sails.

“The pirate was only three or four miles astern. We could see her decks crawled with men. And presently up went the black flag! Yes, there it was, and now if we could out sail the pirate, we lived; if not, we died . . .

I had never in my life, perhaps, had so much canvas on in so heavy a blow, but we must spread more. ‘Set the topgallants.’ You should have seen the men fly to obey . . . ‘Set the royals.’ . . . the pirate still gained upon us, though slowly at last. ‘Get on the studding sails,’ I said . . . [the sailors] sprang up the shrouds like cats. . . I stood turning my eye now aloft at the bending, groaning masts, then astern at our fierce pursuer. ‘Courage, boys,’ I cried; she no longer gains. What a hurrah! . . .

A plunged into the sea a quarter of a mile astern. The cannon-ball men quailed a little, but I said, ‘Good Boys! they begin to see that they cannot catch us’ . . . By this time the gale was too much for her, and her great square sail was taken in. She fell astern rapidly . . . I now had the studding-sails and royals taken in, and ordered dinner, for as yet no man had tasted food.”

Excerpt, “Chased by a Pirate” a true story by Captain David Dunbar, *Golden Argosy*, v 3, New York, August 20, 1885

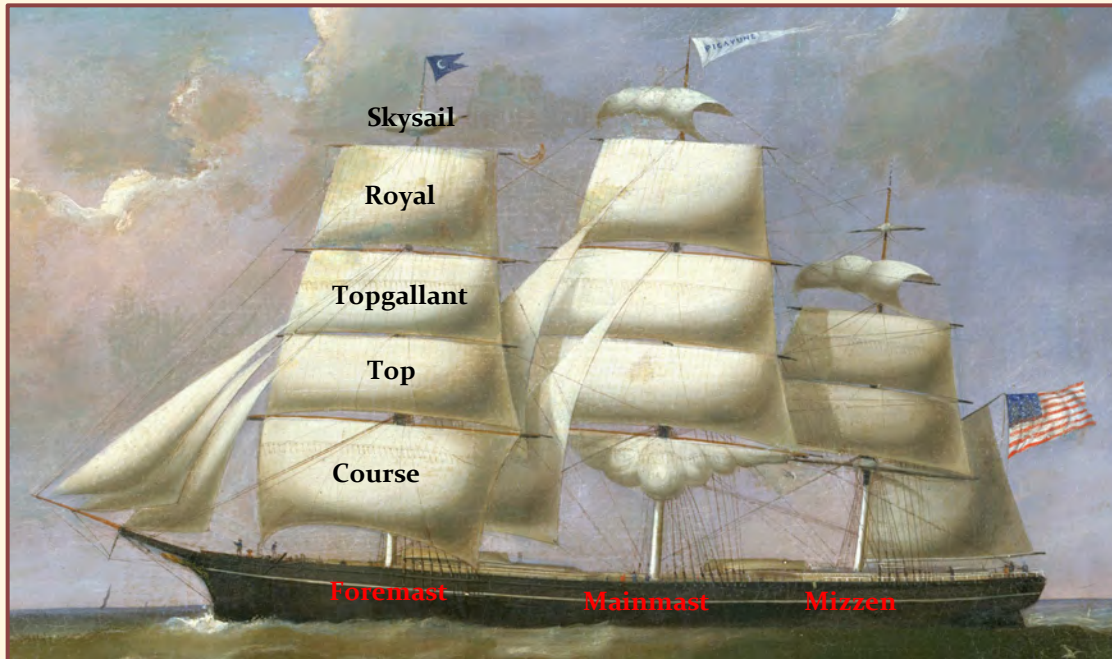


Chance and Misfortune

To guard against known risks, ship owners and captains ran well-ordered and disciplined operations both at sea and ashore. Yet an element of chance accompanied every voyage. Dire consequences loomed in the endless list of trouble from deadly storms and hidden ledges to human error and the outbreak of war.

Ship Samuel Adams, [Captain] Mead, from Liverpool, reports 14th inst., at 6 A.M. off the light ship, John Jones, seaman, of Liverpool, Eng., aged 16 years, while chasing a bird, and when in the mizzen chains, lost his balance, fell overboard, and was lost. A boat was immediately lowered, in order to save him, but it swamped. Life preservers were thrown to him, but he failed to reach them.

The New York Times, May 17, 1861



Ship Picayune, Courtesy Louisiana State Museum

The artist did not label the rigging of the *Picayune* in his painting! However, the terminology in the ship *Caroline* story calls for an illustrated explanation.

The Caroline

. . . the 8th February [1855], in lat. 2° 53' N., long. 24° 23' W, was marked by a very appalling occurrence. At 3 a.m. on that day a flash of chain lightning struck the [Caroline, Australian emigrant ship], carrying away the fore and main topmasts, and the foretop, foretopgallant yards, fore and mizen [sic] royal yards, mizen-topgallantmast, and topmast-crosstrees, splitting the foretopsail, foresail, topgallantsail, and completely destroying two royals. This sad accident, for the time, completely crippled the ship. Happily however, on the same day, at 9 a.m., the Caroline boarded the American ship Samuel Adams. The commander, Capt. [Leonard] Gay, not only acted in a most seamanlike manner but evinced his kindness and generosity in various ways and presented the master of the Caroline with the only spare topmast he had on board

South Australian Register, April 26, 1855, Adelaide, South Australia

Laws of Land and Sea

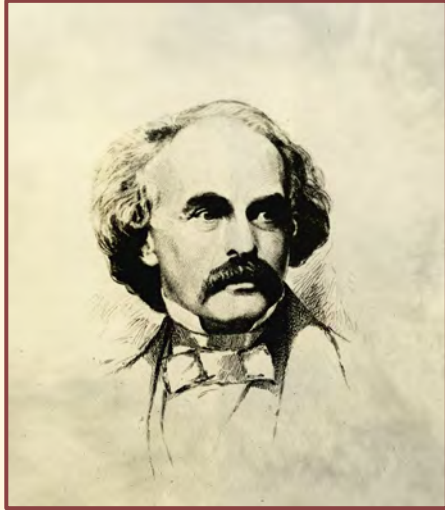
At sea the Master enforced strict rules necessary for the ultimate safety of the ship, the cargo, and the crew. The ship and all aboard were subject to maritime laws and trade policies, which differed from one country to the next and might change even during a single voyage across the Atlantic Ocean.



Built at Castine, Maine and launched in 1857 by Samuel T. Noyes, the ship is here shown outward bound from Liverpool England with Hollyhead Mountain off the port bow and Skerries Lighthouse visible off the stern. Previously attributed to artist Isaac Heard, the *Castine* ship portrait was studied as one of fifty by Francis Hustwick, a British artist who rarely signed his work.

Ship *Castine*, attributed to Francis Hustwick (1797 – 1865), c. 1860
Private Collection

Laws of Land and Sea



Nathaniel Hawthorne, London, 1860
Collections Maine Historical Society

In 1853, President Franklin Pierce appointed Nathaniel Hawthorne, his friend for many years, US Consul of Liverpool. Due to the significant trade volume between the US and the port of Liverpool, the consul role there was considered the most lucrative Foreign Service position at the time.

While in Liverpool, Hawthorne concerned himself with consular duties which frequently involved hearing complaints from American ships.

The dispatch on the right deals with a complaint by George Maudluff, an African American steward on the ship *Castine*, against Capt. James Simpson from Chelsea, Massachusetts.

I forward herewith certain depositions taken before me in the case of George Maudluff steward of the ship "Castine." You will perceive by them that while the ship was lying in the port of Castine in April last the Master Captain James Simpson committed a violent and bloody assault upon the person of the steward without any adequate cause . . .

There appears to have been no other ill treatments of the steward on the part of the Captain until after the ship arrived in Liverpool when in consequence of his making complaint of the above facts to me Captain Simpson again violently assaulted him and the steward deserted from the vessel.

As the first and more desperate assault was committed in one of our ports . . . I might perhaps have felt myself justified in passing the matter over . . . But the second assault appeared to me to imply that the Captain cherished resentment against the steward . . .

I considered that my duty required me to view the second assault in the light thrown on it by the first; and I therefore ordered the discharge of the steward with payment of three months' advance wages . . . Captain Simpson declining to comply with the order . . . I refused to deliver the ship's register . . . The man being colored I could not send him to New Orleans where the vessel has gone and have sent him to Boston.

Excerpt letter, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Consul Liverpool 18 September 1857 to U.S. Secretary of State, *Essex Institute historical collections*, v 113 no. 4

Time and Tide

Tides, the ocean's ebb and flow following the phases of the moon, were predictable but differed around the world based on latitude and weather. Timely arrival of news and mail, changes in weather, and availability of cargoes were rarely predictable. The need for speed was ever-present.

Since I write you last freights have improved. I have this day engaged a full cargo of cotton for Liverpool at 11/16 of a penny, which is the best that has been given and I do not think they will go over this for the season. The cargo is all ready and I hope to get full in ten days. The Antioch got to sea on the 9th after a great deal of trouble as there is but 12 feet to be found on the bar and still going shallower, the Washington and Splendid is outside the bar and it is that they can not get over which I hope will be the case.

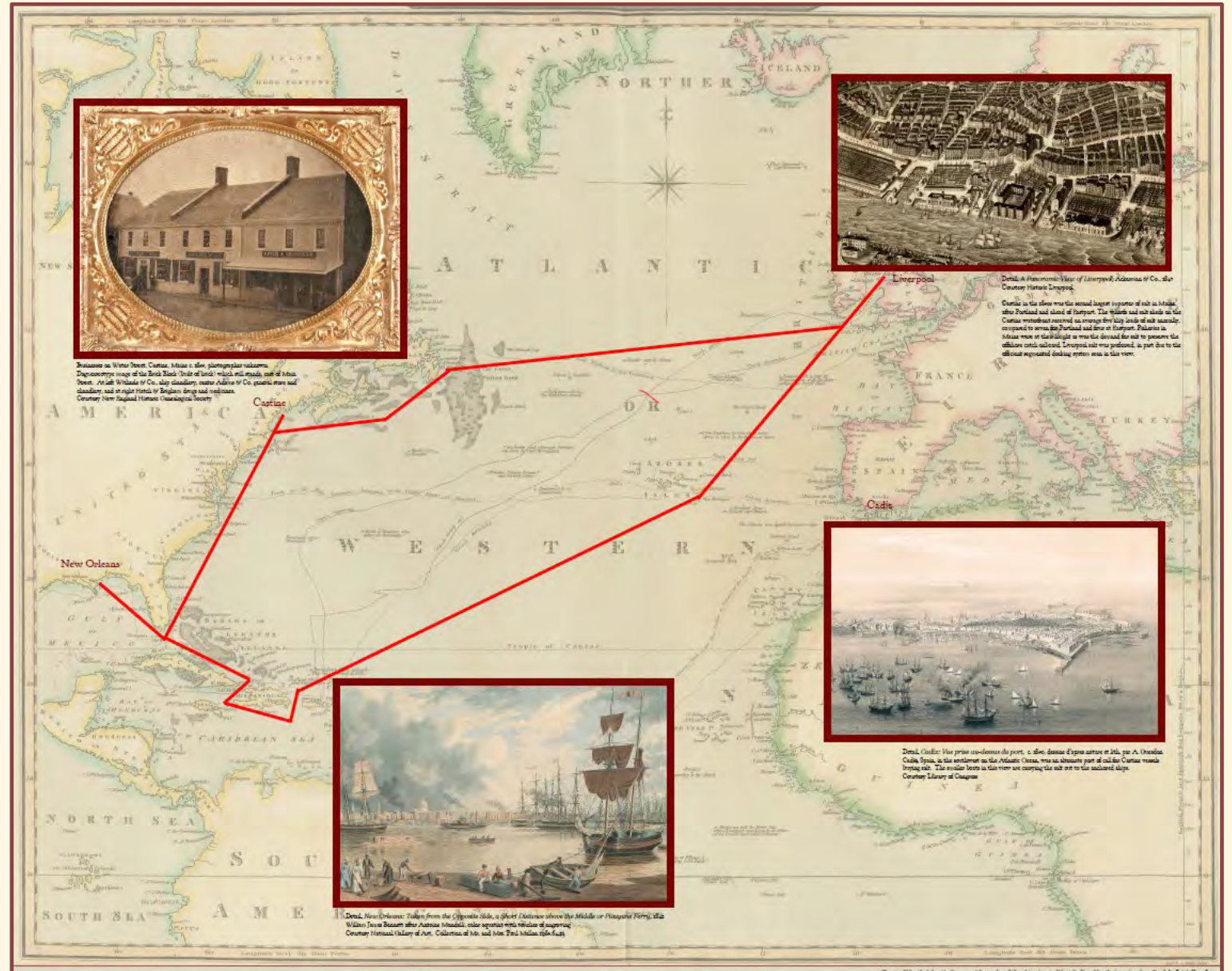
Letter, Henry Whitney, February 11, 1830, ship *Canova*, New Orleans, Louisiana to Witherle & Jarvis Co. and Thomas Adams, Castine, Maine
Collections Castine Historical Society
Anonymous gift



Details, *Reconnaissance of the passes of the Delta of the Mississippi, Louisiana showing the changes since 1839*, published 1852, U.S. Coast Survey, A.D. Bache, Superintendent

Castine's Triangle Trade: Fish, Cotton, Salt

Castine merchants entered into a profitable trade independent of Boston or New York around 1820. Their ships carried salt-cured fish to southern U.S. ports and sold it to cotton planters as inexpensive food for enslaved workers. Captains there negotiated for cotton freights at the best price for speed to European markets. Loose salt needed at home for the fishing industry made up the final leg of the route.



Castine's Triangle Trade: Fish, Cotton, Salt

Capt. Henry Whitney.

Dear Sir __ The Ship Canova under your command being now laden and ready for Sea _ You will proceed by first favorable wind for New Orleans . . . Our object is to employ the Canova in the freighting business and you have liberty to proceed in her to any part of the world you may think for our Interest avoiding all illegal and contraband trade . . .

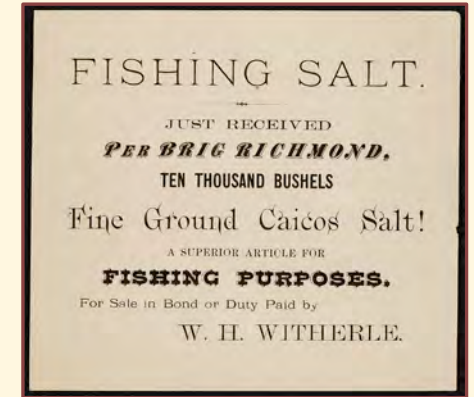


Capt. Henry Whitney

The price of Cotton in Europe we expect will bring this article forward earlier than usual in N.Orleans and the excellency of your Ship we hope will insure you the first freight. . . It would be convenient for us to receive a Cargo of Salt from Liverpool on your return next fall_ But we do not wish this subject to affect any arrangements which you think will be for our Interest . . . pay particular attention to the market at N.Orleans and see what articles of the produce of this Country will do best_ Especially learn what can be done with Pickled Codfish.

Excerpt, letter, ship Canova owners Thomas Adams and Henry Whitney, [April 28, 1823], to Captain Henry Whitney, ship Canova, Castine, Maine
Courtesy Penobscot Marine Museum, Witherle Collection

Castine in the 1850s was the second largest importer of salt in Maine, after Portland and ahead of Eastport. The wharfs and salt sheds on the Castine waterfront received on average five ship loads of salt annually, compared to seven for Portland and four at Eastport. Fisheries in Maine were at their height as was the demand for salt to preserve the offshore catch onboard. Liverpool salt was preferred, in part due to the efficient segmented docking system seen in the image below.



W. H. Witherle Advertisement for Fishing Salt, c. 1860
Courtesy Penobscot Marine Museum, Witherle Collection



Detail, A Panoramic View of Liverpool, Ackerman & Co., 1847. Courtesy Historic Liverpool

Castine's Triangle Trade: Fish, Cotton, Salt

The New Orleans trade preserved a modicum of regional economic autonomy and did much to encourage the growth of an independent fishing industry in eastern Maine.

It was a unique expression of economic independence . . . In its purest form (pre-1850), [Castine's triangular trade via New Orleans] was totally self-contained: . . . the exported commodity (fish) went straight to its ultimate market with no detours; needed imports, such as salt, came directly into Maine; the means of transportation were locally owned; and the profits were not shared by outside economic interests . . .

Maine Sea Fisheries: the Rise and Fall of a Native Industry, 1830-1890 by Wayne O'Leary, Northeastern University Press, 1996



Detail, Union Wharf showing activity loading loose salt on a schooner, c. 1870
Collections Castine Historical Society, purchase

Fishermen from Penobscot Bay to Frenchman Bay east of Mt. Desert were known to depend on merchants in Castine for salt, gear, and provisions between 1825 and 1860. The *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier* newspaper reported in 1846 that over 300 vessels were outfitted annually at Castine, the hub for the Penobscot Customs District.



Detail, Sail loft and salt dock wharf, highlighting fishing schooner in foreground loading barrels of salt at W.H. Witherle Fishing Outfits, c. 1873, photographer A.H. Folsom
Courtesy New England Historic Genealogical Society

Who Shares The Risk?

To succeed, Castine's maritime economy required the skill of local tradesmen, the expertise of mariners and fishermen, and the determination of investors. The profits earned by owners and captains are seen today in many of Castine's early nineteenth century homes. Financial risks, however, led to unpredictable income for everyone from owners to sailors, skilled laborers, and independent fisherman. Wives and widows ran their farms and small businesses to make ends meet.



Ship J.P. Whitney, at the port of Malta, 1864.
Courtesy Custom House Maritime Museum,
Newburyport, Massachusetts

We are going along well with the new ship . . . The Whitney [ship J.P. Whitney] had arrived safe in New Orleans & freights are first rate. She will make a first-rate trip of it and the European will soon be there. My part will be from 4 to 5 thousand dollars. That is better than railroad stocks or Ill. [Illinois] land.

Letter, Leonard Jarvis Whiting, September 19, 1855, Castine to his brother Samuel Kidder Whiting, Boston
Collections Castine Historical Society, Gift of the Ames Family

Who Shares The Risk?



Ship *William Witherle*
Courtesy Witherle Memorial Library

The Noyes shipyard at Castine built the ship *William Witherle* in 1851 for \$46,787, that's \$1,550,000 in today's dollars. Several merchants, the shipyard, and often the ship's captain and his family divided the cost to build and fit out the ship by owning shares. Original owners were:

William Witherle, merchant, 3/8th share; Isaiah Wescott, Master, Joseph Wescott, and David L. Stevens, merchant, 1/8th share each; Charles Atherton and Hezekiah Williams, congressman, 1/16th share each; Samuel Noyes, builder, Joshua H. Noyes, and Samuel T. Noyes 1/24th share each.

Frances Whiting inherited shares in two ships after her husband, Leonard, died in late 1855, as well as bills for expenses toward a new ship then being built in Castine. Living at home in Castine with their two young children, Frances received a letter from New Orleans in early January, 1856 regarding her accounts:

Dear Mrs. Whiting,

We now hand you our accounts made up to Dec 31st 1855 – shewing a balance due you that day of \$1088.33. This does not include your part of the earnings of the J.P Whitney and European on their present voyages which we expect will be (your part) at least \$2500 & perhaps more.

If so you will have about \$3500 to \$4000 in our hands after the Ships get back towards paying for your part of the New Ship if you conclude to keep it . . . The Insurance on the Whitney is all paid up & we insure the European by the Voyage . . .

The European did not do much last year It cost a good deal to repair her & her last voyage to Boston was unfortunate as we lost on the corn she carried on Ships account, however, it was a bad year for nearly all Ships – this season they have got a good start & I hope will both of them make another good voyage . . . The accounts of the “Whitney” are all sent to Mr. Johnston who will show them or explain them to you any time you may wish.

Yrs truly, J.P. Whitney & Co

Cargo of Emigrants

Castine vessels annually made two trips on the cotton run if possible before returning home with European salt. Ideally the first run back to North America was chartered for profit with freight bound for Atlantic ports. Although human cargo was less convenient for the Captain and crew, passage fares paid by emigrants leaving Ireland or England for Boston or New York added up quickly for the owners.



Ship William Jarvis

The Castine-built ship *William Jarvis* was specifically designed to carry emigrants from Europe to the United States. One feature of her construction was “the provision made for securing the thorough ventilation of the whole vessel - thereby promoting the health of passengers and crew.” American ships were preferred by agents and passengers alike as they had a reputation for being larger, better built, and sailed by more skilled and humane captains and crews.

Republican Journal, Belfast, Maine, “Marine List,” August 24, 1848



Below deck on the *St. Vincent*, Emigrants at Dinner, *The Illustrated London News*, April 13, 1844. Courtesy Ill, London News Ltd/Mary Evan

The following is a description of travel onboard the ship *William Jarvis* carrying emigrants from Ireland via Liverpool to the United States.

We arrived at Liverpool about three o'clock, and proceeded at once to secure our passage on board the ship, William Jarvis, commander William Jarvis, to Boston, to sail in three days... Saturday September 1st, the ship cleared out of dock . . . and next day when the bells were chiming for worship a steam tug towed us into the channel . . .

The 12th the sea was high and violent . . . The main top mast, yielding before the blast, broke, and caused great consternation among the passengers . . . In spite of the storm, the crew toiled bravely until every part was repaired. . . During the intense excitement among the passengers, a poor woman was robbed of her money and other valuables; another who was most ardent in her devotions in the time of danger, I heard swearing, a few hours after, because she could not cook her supper.

Excerpt, *Autobiography and Reminiscences of William Beebey Lighton*, Albany, 1854

Family Matters

Seafarers in Maine faced what guest curator Richard Ames refers to as “the confounded Captain’s family dilemma – head out to sea together or live separated lives.” Castine’s Lucy Perkins grew up aware of the risks of marrying a ship captain. Her father, John Perkins, and other relatives had been seafarers, masters, and shipbuilders in Castine for thirty years before the Whitneys and Witherles moved to town.



Lucy Perkins (left) and Henry Whitney met in Castine, married in 1807 and had eleven children, the last born in 1829. Childhood deaths due to illness were more common two hundred years ago than today, but Lucy’s experience of tragedy is striking. She lost eight of her children, her husband, and two sons-in-law before her own death in 1866. Several of these deaths were directly related to the risks of illness, weather, and chance in the shipping business.

Captain Henry Whitney, Lucy Whitney’s husband, commanded the Castine-built ship *St. Leon* (right) at the time of his death at Le Havre, France in 1837. Henry was so ill in 1836 that he was carried off and on his ship at New Orleans and died at age 54 at Le Havre in 1837. Ten years later her daughter Lucy died from smallpox, also at Le Havre, while accompanying her husband, Captain Moses Gay, onboard the ship *Adams*. At her request she was buried there beside her father.



Sam Whitney (right) has gone out with Capt. [Leonard] Whiting again. [Sam’s] wife did not go this time. His health is better at sea, but he is a very sick man and his poor wife feels very bad to have him go without her. She is so kind to him that the Dr thinks he will do better to wait on himself. It is very hard to part man & wife - but so it is."

Letter, Thomas Brown Hooke, October 31, 1848, Belleville near New Orleans, Louisiana, to his wife Hannah Dyer Hooke, Castine, Maine



My dear Mother, Niece & Sister

I am happy to acknowledge the receipt of a good family letter – it was indeed a good treat for me – first I would laugh and then cry when I read it – when I come to Ma’s postscript – I could not help having a good crying spell – she made such an effort I know to write, and she wrote so well too . . . I fancied that I were home – with you all in our snug little sitting-room – but oh! my how far I am from you. I wonder sometimes how I can keep away from home so long – when I used to be such a home-body – but after one is married they must be content to remain where it is for the husbands interests – and I am so, for I have got one of the best husbands in the world.

Letter, Frances Whitney Whiting, December 22, 1848, to her mother Lucy P. Whitney



John P. Whiting
Frances Whitney
Whiting on board
ship, 1852

Waves Of Change

Castine's international maritime trade declined rapidly after 1860 due to fundamental shifts in economics, technology, and politics. A financial panic in 1857 was followed by a Civil War at home. Southern cotton ports closed, Great Britain nearly joined the Confederacy, and War premiums dramatically increased insurance for freight. In 1866, an act of Congress ended decades of financial incentives awarded for offshore fishing. A "perfect storm" of unavoidable risk.

Although merchants and shipowners met the challenges with dexterity and optimism, they no longer had the profitable trade in fish, cotton, and salt to sustain the local economy. Captain John Brooks, ship *Picayune*, was caught on the wrong side of the Atlantic Ocean in early 1861 at the outbreak of the U.S. Civil War. Letters to and from the owners and the captain told of his predicament:

Liverpool June 1st 1861

R B Sumner Esq [New Orleans]

Dear Sir

It seems to me this unnatural war cannot last long, perhaps after they have one good battle they may come to some terms. . .

The ship being here will be ready for any thing that offers . . . There is no danger of a ship drying up here as it rains about half of the time –

Yours Respectfully, John H Brooks



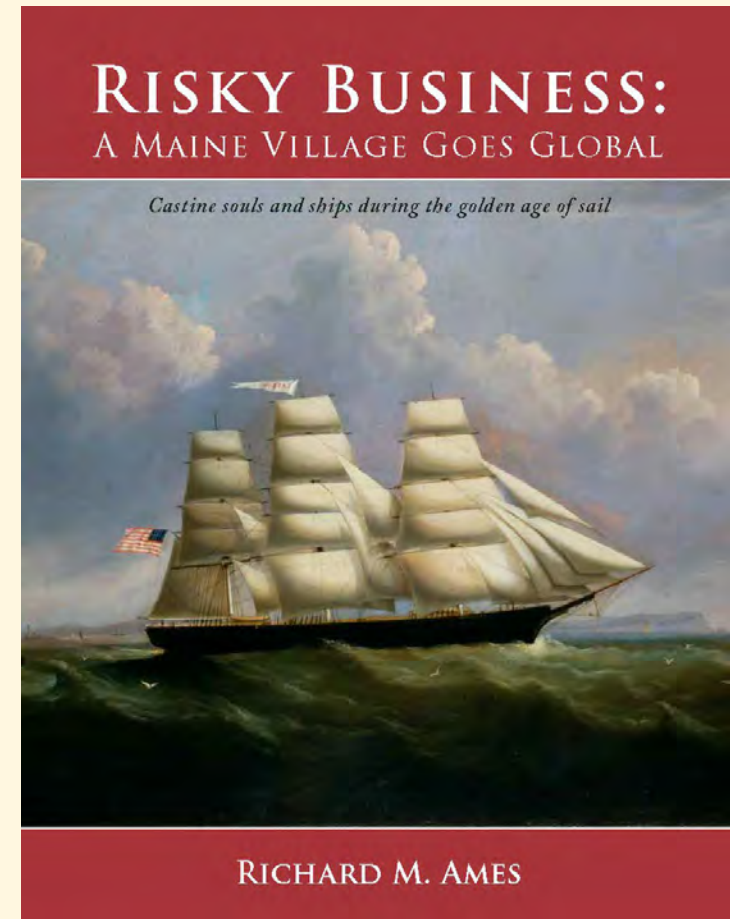
Destruction of the Clipper Ship *Jacob Bell* by the British Pirate *Florida*
Courtesy Hampton Roads Naval Museum, Norfolk, Virginia

Confederate cruisers patrolled international shipping lanes and were successful in destroying some 200 American merchant vessels. A more menacing result of these cruiser's raids was a punishing increase in insurance premiums.

Purchase Exhibit Book To Learn More

Risky Business: Square-Rigged Ships and Salted Fish reveals that severe weather, slow communications, navigational hazards, competition for cargo and crew, illness, war, politics, and even pirates were all too real in the so-called glory days of sail. Castine's captains, seamen, merchants, and their families accepted the risks of the commercial sailing business as they carried fish, cotton, and salt to and from distant ports in Castine-built square-rigged ships. Guest curator Richard M. Ames has spent five years of in-depth research in libraries and archives, including his own family's archives, documenting Castine's maritime trade. He says, "When embarking on this research odyssey, I never expected to uncover so many firsthand accounts related to Castine-built trading ships and the hardships endured on their voyages. Visitors will come away from this exciting exhibit with a new appreciation for the stalwart souls and sturdy ships that empowered Castine's golden era of sail."

Castine Historical Society
17 School Street, Castine, ME 04421
Email: info@castinehistoricalsociety.org
Phone: 207-326-4118



Purchase
Book

Donate to
Castine Historical
Society