

Rhode Island Historical Society
110 Benevolent Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02906

The Examination of Aaron, a Mulatto, upon Oath, taken this
14th Day of January, A. D. 1773. — — — — —
Aaron Biggs, ^{aged} eighteen years, or thereabouts, declares. That
at ~~at~~ the Age of Five years, he was bound, by Town of Portsmouth,
an Apprentice to Captain Samuel Tompkins, of Providence Isl-
and until he should arrive at the age of Twenty Four Years, -
from which time until he went on board the main of War, he
was constantly in the Service of the said Captain Tompkins,
as a labourer on his farm: that his Master kept a two Mast
Boat to transport his farm produce to ~~the~~ Market, which was the
only Sail Boat within five Miles of his Master's Farm, at the
time the Gaspee was burnt. - That at that time one Penning-

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The Gaspee Affair: From Namquid Point to Botany Bay

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Fourth of July flag (1826), RIHS COLLECTIONS AN 1826.2.1, RHI X17317.

Introduction

During the Fourth of July celebrations held in Providence, Rhode Island in 1826, the commemoration of the Gaspee Affair focused on the four surviving "captors." Their names featured on the Fourth of July banner that depicted the burning of the *Gaspee*: E. Bowen, T. Smith, J. Mawney, and B. Page.

Ephraim Bowen's firsthand account recorded that Benjamin Page, who had just turned 19, was in the group that met at the Sabin tavern on the evening of the incident and was one of his "youthful companions" who boarded the *Gaspee* when it ran aground off Namquid Point.¹

It stands to reason that Page was one of the *Gaspee* raiders. Its instigator, the Providence merchant John Brown, was directly connected to the Page family as Brown's wife, Sarah, was the sister of Benjamin's mother. The Whipple and Page families were close, so Benjamin Page would have already known Abraham Whipple when he approached the *Gaspee* in the early hours of June 10, 1772 and, announcing himself as the "sheriff of Kent County," demanded that its captain surrender.² Benjamin and his father can be confidently placed in the ranks of the Rhode Island traders disaffected by the imperial customs regulations and resentful of the heavy-handed methods of Lt. William Dudingston, master of the *Gaspee*, the British navy's cutter assigned to enforce the revenue laws in Narragansett Bay.³

The Gaspee Affair can be seen from many dimensions: this article explores how it contributed to the emergence of American maritime commerce as a distinct offshoot of global capitalism by the early nineteenth century. The period between 1760 and 1810 was significant in many respects, notably for the extension of European imperialism into the furthest corners of the globe, including the southern Pacific and Indian Oceans. It also marked a major shift in international trade, whereby Britain's North American colonies were transformed from an adjunct to the home country's economy into Britain's major maritime competitor.⁴

It is scarcely remarkable to observe that the Gaspee Affair was a step on the path leading to the Revolutionary War. More surprising, however, is how it contributed to Rhode Island's part in America's post-colonial emergence as a major maritime trading power. The incident itself, and the way the subsequent Royal Commission of Inquiry was frustrated, reflected and, I contend, reinforced the tight community of merchants and mariners who later became protagonists in America's postcolonial transformation into a global maritime trading power.

The article argues that the Providence traders and mariners who attacked the *Gaspee*, in some cases the same individuals but more broadly the economic interests they personified, were to become the "merchant adventurers" who played the leading role in developing a distinct branch of the

US-China trade using the Eastern Passage to stage through the British penal colony of New South Wales (NSW). The context for this engagement with Port Jackson in the period before the War of 1812 is the evolution of global capitalism in this period, including as a factor in the colony's precocious integration into the Pacific economy.⁵ The article's explication of Providence's "Sydney trade," drawing on both Australian colonial records and the remarkable business and customs archives in the Rhode Island Historical Society and the John Carter Brown Library, adds to our understanding of the cultural and commercial drivers of the Young Republic's remarkable maritime projection into the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Focusing on the role played by two of the *Gaspee* raiders, we can better understand the influence of local factors, in particular a business culture built on shared economic and family bonds, and a commercial tradition, notably for John Brown and many other Rhode Island merchants founded in the Atlantic slave trade, which, given the prospect of substantial profit, had engendered a high propensity for risk and trading beyond the boundaries of regulations and jurisdictions.

British Mercantilism, Colonial Trade Interests and the Gaspee Affair:

*"I know that government and people to be the most piraticall in the King's dominions" — Earl of Bellemont, Governor of New England, on Rhode Island in 1699*⁶

The Gaspee Affair features in the history of rising tensions over tax and trade restrictions that fomented the revolutionary struggle. It also was, however, decidedly the result of factors specific to the experience of the colony of Rhode Island. The trigger for the attack on the *Gaspee* was the direct threat to the colonists' long-established trade, licit and otherwise, from intensified customs patrols, including cargoes seized and vessels detained, following Dudingston's arrival in Narragansett Bay in February 1772. More fundamentally, however, the incident was the expression of mounting frustration in the preceding decade at the increasingly aggressive imposition of duties and other constraints on trade that, in the colonists' view, qualified their rights under Rhode Island's 1663 Royal Charter to govern their own internal affairs, including commerce. To appreciate the extent to which this was, in essence, a struggle to assert economic interests and understand more fully the business culture that underpinned Providence's postwar

success in maritime trade, the following reviews the historical background to the Gaspee Affair. John Brown's resistance to the imperial policies that stood to suppress or curtail the molasses trade is a recurrent theme in this period.

The British authorities had long regarded Rhode Island as a particular problem for smuggling and illicit trade conducted by the colonists. This may have stemmed in part from the colony's origins and the independent character of the settlers there, who, among the Atlantic littoral colonies, relied most extensively on the ocean for their livelihoods. Certainly, the nature of Narragansett Bay, with numerous inlets, islands, and estuaries and its commercially strategic location, connecting New England to the Eastern Seaboard's relatively protected sea routes and allowing ready access to the Caribbean, meant that the colony had a strong maritime orientation—and a vocation for smuggling.

British taxes on colonial trade provided inducements and opportunities to deal in contraband and to find profitable ways to trade on the fringe of, if not outside, the law. From the 1733 Molasses Act, which levied a sixpence-per-gallon duty on imported molasses from non-British sources, those in the Caribbean trade found ways of avoiding British imposts, which they regarded as discriminating in favor of plantation owners in the British West Indies. Similarly, the Board of Trade's ruling that all tobacco grown in the American colonies be sent directly to Britain was widely disregarded by the Rhode Island merchants exporting tobacco grown in Rhode Island or Connecticut.

For much of the eighteenth century, irritation with such taxes and restrictions was contained, in part because enforcement was generally limited and inconsistent but mostly because they did not impede the growth of Rhode Island's maritime trade. In contrast to much of the colonial economy, the maritime sector, concentrated in the New England seaports and the ports of Philadelphia and New York, was integrated into the vibrant Atlantic economy that developed in the second half of the eighteenth century. Following the Seven Years' War, the Royal Navy dominated the North Atlantic, which provided protection for enterprising colonials expanding their business range from ports such as Philadelphia, Boston, Salem, and Providence. American merchants carried cargoes for British interests and supplied many of the needs of the British West Indies.⁷

A feature of this Atlantic integration was that the North American British colonies profited from the slave trade from

West Africa, most notoriously through the "triangle trade." After the English Royal African Company's monopoly ended in 1696, the opportunity to join the "Africa trade" opened to smaller merchants in the colonies. Rum was the key to the Americans' involvement.⁸ Guns, gold, and spirits were the commodities on which slave traders depended to fill their vessels with their grim human cargo. By the 1720s, rum had eclipsed brandy as the preferred "tradeable" and became a commodity of exchange in the broader West African economy.⁹ The Browns were the first Providence merchants to join the triangle trade. In 1736, James Brown sent his sloop *Mary*, with his brother Obadiah on board to oversee trade, with a cargo of rum, hoping to realize a tenfold return on his outlay. Despite finding "a poor market" for the transported captives in the Caribbean, the *Mary* returned to Providence with a profitable cargo.¹⁰

Over the next thirty years, James Brown's four sons developed a thriving family business specializing in exporting commodities and some goods, such as spermaceti candles, and importing molasses.¹¹ During the Seven Years' War, they had profited from trading under "flags of truce" with neutral and enemy ports, such as Monte Christo on northern Hispaniola, often returning with molasses and other contraband cargoes. This approach came at a risk, with some of their vessels seized by the Royal Navy for engaging in "clandestine and prohibited trade." The Browns owned or had a major interest in more than 80 vessels actively engaged in trading along the Eastern Seaboard by the mid-1760s, across the Atlantic and in the Caribbean, including with the French West Indies ports, Suriname, and the Dutch entrepot port of Saint Eulalia.¹²

In the period after 1763, Rhode Island consolidated its leading role among the Atlantic colonies in the slave trade. Around two-thirds of the human cargo carried by Americans on the Middle Passage sailed from Newport. The city grew wealthy from the resulting stimulus for its maritime business and associated trades and industries.¹³ Rhode Island's role was only made possible, however, by its molasses imports from the slave plantations of the West Indies and Suriname. Distilleries proliferated, with twenty-two in the colony by 1772.¹⁴

Analyzing slavery's role in colonial Rhode Island, Christy Clark-Pujara highlights that trade and political power "went hand-in-hand." Some early governors supported, or were themselves active in, the slave trade. By the 1760s, many leading families such as the Jenckeses, Hopkinses, and

Wantons had invested in slaving ventures or even owned vessels in the trade.¹⁵ The Hopkinses had close ties with the Browns through marriage and business.¹⁶ In 1763, when John Brown mounted his first Africa venture using the sloop *Sally*, Joseph Wanton (subsequently Rhode Island governor during the Gaspee Affair) pressed his son's qualifications as captain. Brown preferred Esek Hopkins, brother of Stephen Hopkins, who had been elected to his third term as governor in 1762. Captain Hopkins was given broad discretion to transact business during the voyage.¹⁷ More than half the 196 captive Africans died during the transatlantic crossing, some slaughtered to quell an onboard revolt. Hopkins sold the much-weakened survivors in the Antigua slave market at low prices.¹⁸ The experience seemed to discourage the Browns from direct participation in the Africa trade.¹⁹ While their subsequent direct involvement in the slave trade was relatively slight, importing sugar and molasses from the West India slave societies and supplying provisions and other goods that supported slavery represented the core of their business in the decades up to the 1790s.²⁰

The slave trade conducted out of colonial Rhode Island had several features that influenced how its maritime trade would develop after the Revolution. One was merchants' propensity for high-risk ventures that promised high returns; their ruthless human trafficking "needed less time to garner returns than all other forms of possible investment in the eighteenth century."²¹ To limit potential losses, many owners used smaller vessels for their African voyages, and, while relying on rum as their trading staple, also loaded tobacco and readily sold provisions such as flour, coffee, rice, and onions to enhance their bartering options. Owners also typically gave their ships' captains and supercargoes considerable discretion on commercial decisions once in the slave ports. As these voyages typically were protracted with long delays in transmitting letters back to the American Atlantic coast, merchants usually knew little about the success of their ventures until they reached the Caribbean from Africa. This arm's-length relationship, at least during the voyages to Africa and on the Middle Passage, demanded commercial patience. It also afforded owners a certain distance from their captains' legal transgressions and a convenient ignorance of the brutal treatment intrinsic to the slave trade. Many of the elements of this mode of trade were to be replicated in the pattern of trade through the penal colony in Port Jackson in the 1790s.

The dynamics of transatlantic relations changed in the 1760s as governments under George Grenville and William Pitt the Elder sought to increase revenue from the colonies. In 1763, the Royal Navy deployed twenty-seven Men-of-War off the American coast to enforce the Molasses Act.²² With His Majesty's vessel *Beaver* anchoring off Newport Harbor in December 1763 as a visible expression of this more aggressive presence, several concerned Rhode Island merchants, including John and Nicholas Brown, worked through the winter of 1763–64 to produce *An Essay on the Trade of the Northern Colonies* with the support of the colony's governor, Stephen Hopkins. This conciliatory appeal to respect the colonists' legitimate interests in trade became a step toward the more politically charged Remonstrance addressed to the British Lords of Trade in January 1764.

The 1764 Rhode Island Remonstrance insisted that, as British subjects and under the 1663 charter, the colonists in Rhode Island were entitled to the liberties and freedoms enjoyed by the king's subjects in England, including to consent to taxes imposed on them. It emphasized that the Colony of Rhode Island relied greatly on importing molasses, both for the colonial market and to distill rum for export, including for the slave trade, and acknowledged that more than 80 percent of the molasses was imported from non-British colonies. It challenged London to accept that the interests of colonists and Britain were served by this trade as enforcing the punitive tax on molasses sourced from non-British colonies would undermine Rhode Island's ability to import British goods. In short, the 1764 Remonstrance was a considered rejection of a tenet of imperial policy—that Britain would dictate the terms of commerce in, and with, its colonies, and was to be the principal beneficiary of the gains thereof.²³

The Rhode Island remonstrations stoked pre-Revolutionary disaffection, helping “equip an arsenal of ideas with which to justify the stiffest of resistance to the navy.”²⁴ They had little impact in London. The new Sugar Act, passed in April 1764, which targeted imports from non-British colonies for stricter enforcement, soon was followed by the 1765 Stamp Act and the 1767 Townshend Acts, reflecting a continuing disdain for colonial objections to direct revenue duties.²⁵ The British government, concerned that the East India Company's profitability was in jeopardy as the Dutch and others challenged its dominance of tea imports to Europe, thought to boost the company's revenue through an effective

monopoly on supplying tea to the North American colonies, which further agitated popular sentiment and alienated the colonial merchants who profited from illicit imports.²⁶

In Rhode Island, the climate of resentment toward imperial policies that marginalized colonists' economic interests and qualified their civil rights was trending toward hostility by the beginning of 1772. While Rhode Island joined several other colonies in resolving to accept no East Indies tea, for many Narragansett Bay merchants and distillers, the more acute concern was the tougher British approach to enforcing duties on molasses and spirits. This was made manifest in the *Gaspee's* arrival in Newport in February 1772 with orders from the British fleet commander in Boston, Admiral James Montagu, “to prevent breaches of the revenue laws and to stop the illicit trade so long and successfully carried out in the colony.”²⁷

Dudington's aggressive approach directly confronted local interests. Reinforced by the *Beaver*, he extended patrols into the northern reaches of Narragansett Bay, into the inlets and estuaries that had long proved a haven for smuggling. After the sloop *Fortune* and its cargo of West Indian rum and sugar, owned by the respected Greene family, were seized and its captain, Rufus Greene, manhandled, Dudington became the target of public outrage.²⁸ In March, nine Providence merchants, with John Brown clearly the prime motivator, lodged a petition with the colony's deputy governor complaining about the *Gaspee's* operations. Stephen Hopkins, at this stage the colony's senior judge, drew on Rhode Island's charter to conclude that the commander of any vessel operating in the colony could not exercise any authority without previous application to the Governor and being formally sworn into office. On this advice, Governor Wanton wrote to Dudington informing him of the merchants' complaints of his “having, in a most illegal and unwarrantable manner, interrupted their trade” and asked that Dudington present his official orders. While Wanton's assertion of colonial authority was bluntly rejected by Montagu, his unflinching stance was to provide a skein of legitimacy for those disposed to defy Dudington.²⁹

John Brown's role in the *Gaspee* Affair is best understood against his opposition, over almost a decade, to British duties and restrictions on trade that threatened the Browns' molasses trade. The common thread to his role in the 1764 resistance and the March 1772 petition was concern for his business interests and his determined defense of a form of government in Rhode Island that allowed him to adjust and expand his

THE
GRIEVANCES
OF THE
American Colonies
CANDIDLY EXAMINED.

'Midst the low murmurs of submissive Fear,
And mingled Rage, my HAMPDEN rais'd his voice,
And to the LAWS appeal'd.

THOMSON.

Printed by AUTHORITY, at Providence, in
Rhode-Island.

L O N D O N :

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Stephen Hopkins, *The Grievances of the American Colonies Candidly Examined* (London, 1766). RIHS COLLECTIONS, RHI X174524.

“Putting an end to the importation of foreign molasses, at the same time puts an end to all the costly distilleries in these colonies, and to the rum trade with the coast of Africa; and throws it into the Hands of the French.”

“There hath been imported into the colony of Rhode Island only, about one million one hundred and fifty thousand gallons, annually [*of molasses*]; the duty on this quantity is fourteen thousand three hundred and seventy five pounds Sterling, to be paid yearly by this little colony ... This money is to be sent away, and never return; yet the payment is to be repeated every year. – Can this profitably be done? Can a new colony, compelled by necessity to purchase all its cloathing, furniture, and utensils from England, to support the expences of its own internal government, obliged by its duty to comply with every call from the crown to raise money on emergencies; ... charging foreign molasses with this high duty, will not affect all the colonies equally, nor any other near so much as this of RI, whose trade depended much more on foreign molasses, and on distilleries, than that of any others.”

“By supporting, on one hand, the foreign molasses trade is stopped, and with it the opportunity of the colonies to get money; or, one the other, that this trade is continued, and that the colonies get money by it, but all their money is taken from them by paying their duty; can Britain be a gainer by either? Is it not the chief interest of Britain to dispose of, and be paid for her own manufactures? ... Will she find an advantage in disabling the colonies to continue their trade with her? Or can she possibly grow rich by their being made poor?”

maritime commerce as opportunities emerged. In this, he was a steadfast advocate for self-interest and a representative voice for the community of merchants in Providence that had emerged by 1772.

A striking feature of the Gaspee Affair was that the raid was not the spontaneous action of a rabble, or even a stage-managed riot of rum-filled seamen egged on by older heads, but a calculated attack in which several respected denizens of Providence and its surrounds played a prominent role.³⁰ The raiders included a broadly representative group of the leading business families and senior mariners of the day: not only John and Joseph Brown but also Abe Whipple and members of the Hopkins, Smith, Jenckes, Olney, Greene, Tillinghast, Allen, Bowen, and Bucklin families. They were mainly, perhaps exclusively, from the seafaring class—traders, mariners, or in vocations depending on the colony's maritime trade.³¹ Steven Park has described how the Rhode Island community, with the adroit assistance of officials and magistrates from the governor down, managed the Royal Commission of Inquiry to frustrate its purpose of identifying the perpetrators and bringing the ringleaders to England for prosecution. This only was possible, however, because of the silence observed by all of the raid's participants after the *Gaspee* had been destroyed, a discipline that reflected a tight-knit community in which loyalty and shared economic interests were strong enough to rebuff threats and inducements.³²

John Brown, Benjamin Page, and the China Trade

The underlying factors for the Providence maritime community's solidarity and cohesion and the relationships forged or strengthened through the Gaspee Affair can be observed during the Revolutionary War and in the challenging years after independence. One element, common to New England ports in this era, was the degree to which intermarriage and family connections consolidated business partnerships.³³ Another was the extent to which sons followed their fathers' profession, including as traders and sea captains. We can see these ties in the long association of John Brown and his nephew Benjamin Page. Benjamin was born in March 1753 to Ambrose Page and Alice Smith, both from long-standing Rhode Island families established in the maritime trade.³⁴ Ambrose was a sea captain who owned land in North Providence and a member of the Rhode Island Assembly.

He had an interest in seven vessels engaged in the coastal trade, in partnership with other traders including Nicholas Brown and James Lovett (both of whom, like Ambrose, signed the March 1772 *Gaspee* petition).³⁵ As a Quaker, Ambrose appears not to have been a party to John Brown's ventures into slaving, and there is no evidence suggesting Benjamin was directly engaged in Brown's Africa trade.³⁶

Before the Revolutionary War, Benjamin Page appears to have made trading voyages to the British West Indies and Suriname and became co-owner of at least one of his father's vessels. In October 1774, sources in Amsterdam informed the British government that the *Smack*, which had left Providence in August under a Captain Benjamin Page without the required British approval, was loading a cargo of 40 small cannons, firearms, and gunpowder. The evidence suggests the captain was Benjamin, son of Ambrose. Despite British measures to interdict transatlantic gunrunning, arms smuggling to Rhode Island and other colonies intensified from this time. While the *Smack's* expedition appears to precede the Browns' involvement in this trade, its backers may well have been *Gaspee* colleagues.³⁷

Page's *Gaspee* associations came to the fore during the Revolutionary War.³⁸ Page, given a commission in Rhode Island's navy in August 1775, became a lieutenant in the US Navy in October 1776. He served under Commodore Abraham Whipple on several occasions, notably when the *Providence* broke through the blockade of Narragansett Bay in April 1778 taking official dispatches on the proposed treaty with France to Nantes and in May 1780 when the small Continental Navy fleet was destroyed at Cooper River attempting to relieve Charleston, and on the *Warren* under another *Gaspee* raider, Captain John B. Hopkins. Page was a prisoner of war at least twice, after Penobscott and later in South Carolina, but he was released, probably through prisoner exchanges, and returned to the conflict in the western Atlantic. In September 1782, he was given command of a 20-gun sloop, the *Regulator*.³⁹

John Brown emerged from the war with his standing as a political and business leader in Rhode Island enhanced. He and Nicholas had profited from privateering and supplying cannons from the Hope Furnace to the Rhode Island and Continental Navies. As early as 1783, John Brown engaged Benjamin Page as master of his eighty-ton brig, the *Providence*. Page was recorded as ship's master for trading voyages to Jamaica, Martinique, Amsterdam, and Saint Petersburg in the following years.⁴⁰



Portrait of John Brown (1736-1803), 1794, by Edward Greene Malbone (1777-1807). Watercolor on ivory. Overall: 3 3/16 x 2 1/2 inches. Purchase, The Louis Durr and Arthur Jones Funds. NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 1948.469.

This was the period when Providence emerged as the major center for Rhode Island's maritime trade, overtaking Newport as the major Narragansett Bay port by 1790. Providence also displaced Newport as the center for distilling rum and other spirits, with seventeen of the state's twenty-eight distilleries located there by 1798. By 1802, its commercial fleet was the largest in Rhode Island.⁴¹

For the Browns, as with many other New England merchants in the postwar years, the economic downturn and dislocation of the "critical period" presented many challenges. The protracted conflict had damaged much of the colonial maritime sector, disrupting once profitable forms of trade, notably with the British West Indies. This meant finding alternative markets and adapting their commerce away from the previous reliance on goods from their iron foundry and candle production. The margins for domestic sales of rum were squeezed by competition from grain-based spirits from Pennsylvania and elsewhere, exacerbated by the Whiskey Tax introduced by Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton in 1791.⁴² John and Nicholas Brown also faced substantial debts as a result of overextending on the credit offered to fund their British imports.

John Brown confronted these difficulties with characteristic enterprise and determination. Of his various initiatives, the most successful was to seize the opportunity for trade with the East Indies following Robert Morris's 1784 venture with the *Empress of China* that opened the US-China trade. He was one of the first to recognize that, while the terms of peace in 1783 removed the benefits of trading in the Atlantic under Britain's auspices, Americans also were no longer bound by restrictions on trade by British subjects, most notably the East India Company's jealously guarded monopoly on all British trade with China.

Initially, most American merchants faced difficulties in obtaining silver coin, the means of exchange preferred by merchants in Canton. The lack of Chinese demand for almost all commodities that could be carried from American ports meant that many ventures depended on intermediate trade on the voyage to China to acquire coin, convertible bills accepted by the Chinese merchants, or goods that could be sold profitably in Canton, including furs, spices from the East Indies, cotton goods, and, particularly after 1820, opium from India. As sea-otter pelts became harder to acquire from America's Pacific Northwest, many traders relied on fur

sealskins from the southern oceans. Robert Hellyer has labeled this search for trade staples as a “silver-substitute century,” a useful framework for understanding the different models of trade that emerged from various American ports after 1790.

Brown organized the first ventures from Rhode Island to China, sending a 340-ton ship, the *General Washington*, a former privateer, through India to Canton three times between 1787 and 1793, trading mainly for tea.⁴³ The results were

mixed, although the cargo landed in Providence in 1791—valued at approximately \$200,000 (\$5.7 million in present value dollars)—would have encouraged Brown to persevere.⁴⁴ As the table below shows, Page played a prominent part in Brown’s China trade. Page’s Pacific career tells us a good deal about the way Providence merchants managed to establish, at least in the decade after 1792, a lucrative new trade and about the subsequent success of Brown & Ives in the China trade.

Benjamin Page’s Voyages to India and China, 1789–99

Departed/ Arrived Providence	Vessel Name/ Tons Burden	Ship’s Master/ Supercargo Owner(s)	Destination/ Other Ports	Sydney Trade/ Recorded Payments (British £)*	Return Cargo	Estimated Value Of Return Cargo USD
1789 – July 1791	<i>Hope</i> 208 tn.	B. Page <i>Brown & Francis</i>	India Ostend	N/A	From Ostend: coal 100,000 lbs. glassware From India: muslin and cotton	\$35 Duties Assessed (no tariff on coal)
March 1792 – September 1793	<i>Hope</i> 208 tn.	B. Page <i>Brown & Francis</i>	Canton Port Jackson, December 1792	December 1792, Sold 54,000 lbs. salt meat, flour, 7,600 gallons of rum to colony Treasury bills for £2,957/6/6	From Canton: tea, (1,000 chests); brown sugar; silk, 1080 lbs.; nankeens, chinaware, lacquer, gum	\$233,000 Brown & Francis assessed duties of \$21,802
February 1794 – June 1795	<i>Halcyon</i> 177 tn.	B. Page/ Wm. Megee <i>Clark & Nightingale, Megee, B. Page</i>	Canton Port Jackson, July 1794	July 1794, Sold 154,400 lbs. salt meat; 5,000 gallons of rum, sugar, calicoe to colony Treasury bills for £4,391	From Canton: tea; 100,000 lbs. nankeens (1,000 bales); pepper; arrack; silk; lacquer; chinaware; jellies, candy	\$96,400 Clark and Nightingale assessed duties of \$23,275
February 1796 – May 1797	<i>Zenobia</i> 296 tn.	B. Page <i>Clark & Nightingale, J. Munro, B. Page</i>	Canton	N/A	From Canton: tea, 280,000 lbs.; silk, 50 boxes; nankeens, 250 bales; chinaware	c.\$350,000 Total duties, \$56,110
July 1798 – June 1799	<i>Ann and Hope</i> 455 tn.	B. Page/S. Snow <i>Brown & Ives</i>	Canton Botany Bay, October 1798	Stopped to rest and refresh, bartered for pilotage, minor repairs and fresh livestock	From Canton: tea, 520,000 lbs.; brown sugar; silk; candy; diverse China goods	\$314,917 Total duties, \$83,929; Owners assessed duties of \$40,212

Sources: David Collins, *Account of the English Colony 1804*; *Historical Records of Australia*, Series 1, Volumes 1–3; *Historical Records of New South Wales* Vol. 2, 348–49; Pamela Statham, *A Colonial Regiment*, Appendix A: Paymasters Bill Series 1792–1820, 367–76, Appendix B: Treasury Bills Series, 1791–1810, 377–385; Rhode Island Historical Society US Custom House (Providence RI) Records 1789–1940, MSS28 SG 1 Series 4: Inward foreign manifests, Series 6: Imposts on merchandise imported into the district, Vol. 3.

* Between 1792 and 1800, the exchange rate between the pound sterling and the US dollar fluctuated between \$4.10 and \$4.75 to the pound.



Map from the *Oriental Navigator* (London: Robert Laurie and James Whittle, 1800). Pictured is the Eastern Passage route along the east coast of Australia/ New Holland. The *Oriental Navigator* was used by American China traders before Bowditch’s *The New American Practical Navigator* (1802). The log of the American ship the *Alliance* under Captain Thomas Read recorded that it passed Port Jackson only a few weeks before the arrival of the First Fleet in January 1788, the earliest instance of an American vessel taking this route to trade in Canton. COURTESY OF THE MITCHELL LIBRARY, STATE LIBRARY OF NSW.

John Brown chose Benjamin Page to take charge of his first venture using a new route to Canton pioneered by Robert Morris's Alliance in 1787.⁴⁵ Leaving the South Atlantic to cross the Southern Ocean and follow Australia's eastern coast before sailing into the South China Sea, the Eastern Passage ruled out using Indian ports or Batavia as intermediate ports for the China trade but avoided both the risks of piracy or seizure by European naval ships in the East Indies straits and, between May and October, the typhoon season. Port Jackson, from 1788 the site of a British penal colony, represented a convenient haven on the voyage to Canton, a safe English-speaking port for reprovisioning and repairs.

Silver-Substitution and British Bills of Treasury

In November 1792, the first "neutral" vessel to trade in Port Jackson, Captain Thomas Patrickson's *Philadelphia*, imported a substantial cargo of provisions.⁴⁶ Only weeks later, a Brown & Francis brig, the *Hope*, arrived from the Falkland Islands with sealskins destined for Canton. Page declared that he had stopped for wood and water. However, his returns from trade with the colony's commissary, paid in Treasury bills approved by the lieutenant governor and bills of payment from the "officer-traders" of the NSW Corps, exceeded £3,000 (then around \$14,000, see table on page 34 for details).⁴⁷

If Page was hedging about his intentions, it may have reflected some caution about how his visit, and his cargo, would be received in the British colony.⁴⁸ Unlike Patrickson's visit, which had been encouraged by Governor Phillip, there is nothing to suggest any overt invitation to trade. Nevertheless, the possibility of opportunistic trade in Sydney likely influenced John Brown to use the Eastern Passage. The *Hope's* cargo of salt meat, flour, and what the governor's secretary, David Collins, described as "7,597 gallons of raw American spirits," seemed tailored for the colony. The markup (or "advance") for rum was substantial.⁴⁹ And Page would have been keen to sell his large cargo of spirits before arriving in Canton because of John Brown's expectation that the brig's storage for its return cargo be maximized.

The colony's new lieutenant governor, Major Grose, was willing to pay handsomely to augment the commissary's supplies. Grose also allowed the corps officers to buy liquor and tobacco directly from visiting vessels to sell within the colony, which he argued to London would boost the colonial

economy.⁵⁰ This accommodating approach opened the way for a mutually convenient commerce, sustained for more than a decade, between Providence traders who could use British Bills of Treasury as a favorable medium of exchange in Canton and the commissary and the NSW Corps, the only colonial entities able to pay in this form.⁵¹

On return to Providence in September 1793, the *Hope's* cargo was valued at \$233,000, one of John Brown's most profitable China ventures.⁵² He quickly resolved to send the *Hope* on another venture through Port Jackson, although with a new master. Benjamin Page combined with the established firm of Clark & Nightingale and William Megee to fund a venture on the *Halcyon*. Despite leaving Providence well after the *Hope*, the *Halcyon* arrived in Sydney in mid-June, weeks ahead of Brown's brig. David Collins wrote that Page "made his passage from Rhode Island in one hundred and fifteen days, and without touching any port," suggesting that Page's motive for such a rapid outward voyage was to beat his uncle to the marketplace.⁵³ Page's sales of provisions, textiles, and spirits to the Commissary and the NSW Corps in Sydney made a substantial input into returns from the *Halcyon's* voyage.⁵⁴ A further China venture on the *Zenobia*, under Page's command and again backed by Clark and Nightingale, returned to Providence in May 1797 with an exceptional China cargo including more than 280,000 pounds of tea.⁵⁵

Benjamin Page in the Service of Brown & Ives: "a voyage of serious consequences to us"

After 1795, John Brown's role in the China trade diminished, following his son-in-law and partner's death. A further consideration was that Brown was the first US citizen prosecuted under the 1794 Slave Trade Act, which led to the *Hope* (a second vessel of this name, not the brig that visited Port Jackson) being confiscated in 1797.⁵⁶ His nephew Nicholas Jr. was, however, increasingly active. Nicholas Jr. had inherited his father's maritime business in 1791 when he became a partner in Brown, Benson and Ives, which became Brown & Ives in 1796 when Benson left the firm. By 1800, the firm's network extended across the Atlantic, the Caribbean, and the Baltic, generating imports and silver dollars that could be used in their Pacific ventures.

The maiden voyage of the *Ann and Hope* in 1798 marked a significant change in Brown & Ives's approach,



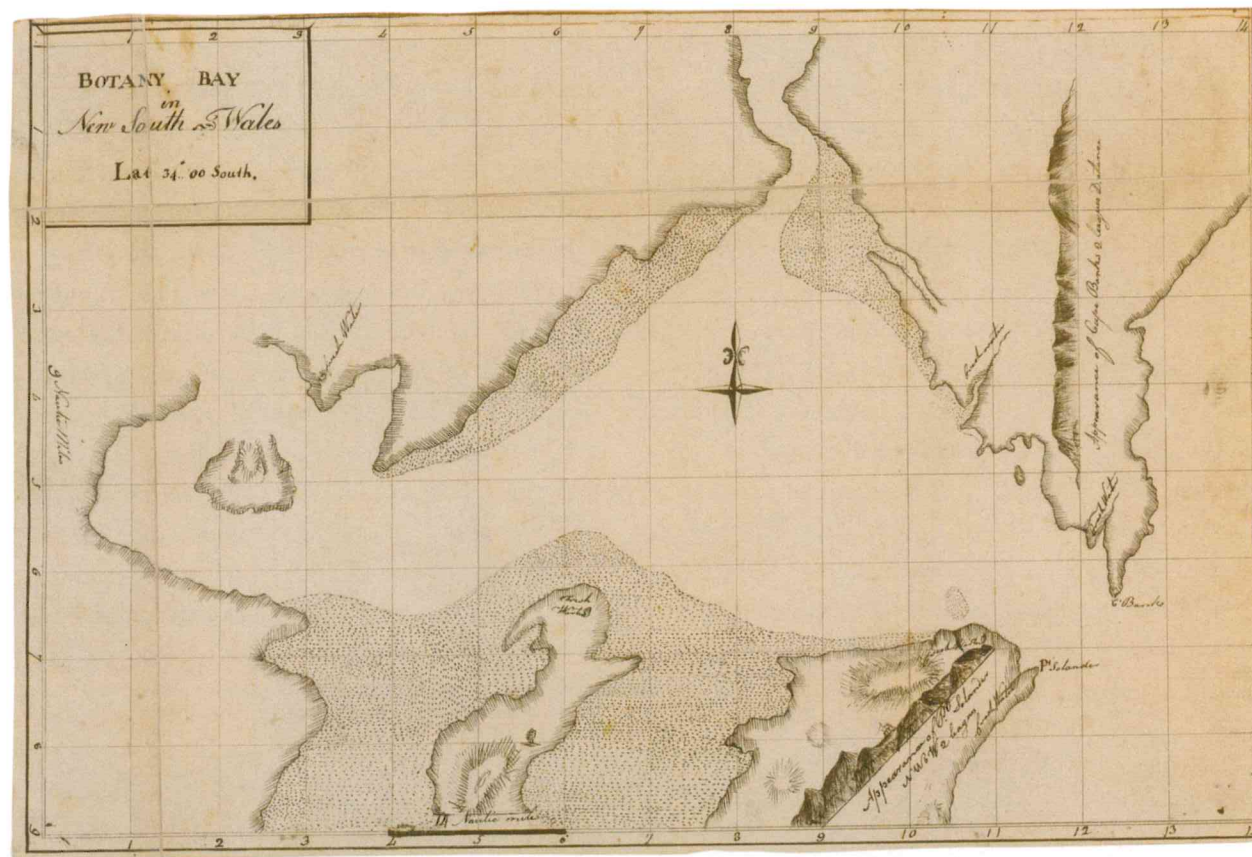
Marine painting of the schooner *Ann and Hope* of Providence, oil on canvas [ca. 1920], by the artist Charles Torrey (1859–1921). RIHS COLLECTIONS 1973.136.1, RHI X173648.

which included using Port Jackson as an intermediate port. Nicholas Brown and his partners had taken only a modest share in John Brown's initial ventures to Canton. From 1792, however, they tackled the China trade with greater intent. Their difficulties trading in India to obtain cargoes for Canton saw them reconsider both their mode of trade and their route to China.⁵⁷ Their transatlantic trade had put the firm in a position to rely more on specie and credit to trade in Canton. It also meant that goods from the Baltic ports and Russia, such as bar iron, canvas, and sailcloth, made their way into cargoes landed in Port Jackson, where essential naval stores were in short supply.

The trigger for Brown & Ives's decision to use the Eastern Passage was the East India Company's rejection, in February 1798, of its application to load cotton in Bombay to trade in Canton. The growing threat posed by French "raiders" also was a consideration.⁵⁸ The partners' change in approach was, however, a more strategic shift toward more direct trade and a greater reliance on carrying large amounts of specie to guarantee a large return cargo.

The *Ann and Hope* was built to purpose and larger (550 tons burthen) than most Providence vessels previously sent to Canton.⁵⁹ As it carried more than \$80,000 in silver coin, security was paramount; the ship also carried a letter of marque signed by Secretary of State Pickering, a relatively large, well-armed crew, and twelve nine-pound cannons.

Benjamin Page, who by 1798 was one of the most experienced Rhode Island sea captains on the China run, was engaged on generous terms.⁶⁰ Page stopped in Botany Bay in October 1798 to take on water and step the masts to equip the ship for the lighter winds on the northward run across the equator.⁶¹ After five days, the *Ann and Hope* left the colony and reached Whampoa (Canton's outpost) by December 15. Within six weeks, Page oversaw loading a considerable cargo of tea, chinaware, nankeens, and silk and arranged to join a convoy protected by three Royal Navy ships to ensure safe passage through the East Indies straits into the Indian Ocean.⁶² On return to Narragansett Bay in June 1799, the Customs estimate for the return cargo was more than \$300,000.⁶³



The map of Botany Bay from the journal of the *Ann and Hope's* 1798 voyage kept by Benjamin Page Jr., the teenage son of Captain Page. Benjamin Jr. may have copied the map from a chart made during James Cook's visit to Botany Bay in 1770 on the *Endeavour* that appeared in the 1773 edition of Hawkesworth's *Voyages*. The author first came across the map in the State Library of NSW's microfilm copy of the journal. MAP REPRODUCED COURTESY OF THE JOHN CARTER BROWN LIBRARY AT BROWN UNIVERSITY.

The *Ann and Hope's* short stay in Botany Bay was not as significant commercially as it was for the insights it provides us into the standing and access of the Rhode Island traders through the observations in the journal kept by the ship's surgeon, Benjamin Bowen Carter, a brother-in-law of Nicholas Brown. His detailed description of the state of the ten-year-old colony, the natural environment, and its indigenous occupants is remarkable for its time.⁶⁴

Captain Page sent a party of four, comprising Carter, his son, Samuel Snow (the supercargo and consul-designate for Canton), and Thomas Thompson, to call on several officers and colonial officials in Sydney, some ten miles from the ship's anchorage in Botany Bay. After lunch with the colony's then-senior military official, Major Joseph Foveaux, who had administered the NSW Corps finances during Page's previous visits, they had tea with the military quartermaster (Thomas Laycock), met the provost general and other senior officials, and stayed overnight with the colony's principal surgeon,

William Balmain. On his last night in Botany Bay, Page hosted Laycock and other officials to a shipboard dinner.⁶⁵

The group also called on Governor Hunter, a veteran of the British blockade of Narragansett Bay during the War of Independence. There is a certain irony in this apparently convivial conversation between an elderly Scottish naval officer, who, as a loyal servant of King George III, played an active role in suppressing Rhode Island trade in the early years of the Revolutionary War, and a youthful group from the new American republic, which included the son of one of the *Gaspee* raiders.

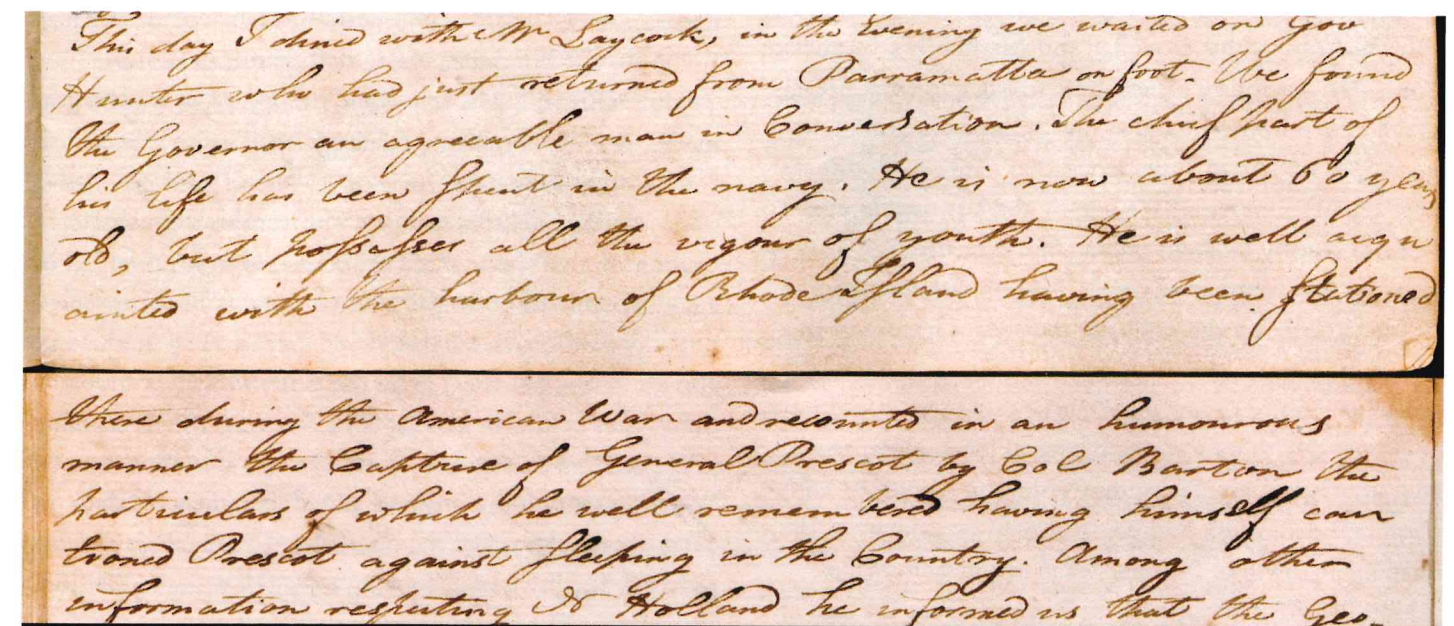
The *Ann and Hope's* initial voyage was an important step for Brown & Ives in establishing a pattern of trade that saw the firm become one of the five leading US-China traders by the middle of the following decade. The partners clearly regarded the venture as a major success; as Ives advised Page, it was "a voyage of serious consequences to us."⁶⁶ While the strategy evident in the *Ann and Hope's* maiden voyage was

maintained, Brown & Ives decided to trade in Sydney in its subsequent ventures on the *John Jay* (1800–01) and the *Arthur* (1802–03).⁶⁷ In both cases, this made a substantial contribution toward buying large cargoes in Canton.⁶⁸

The combined value of the return cargoes of Brown & Ives's three voyages staging through Port Jackson between 1798 and 1802 was in the order of \$850,000 (approximately \$20 million, in 2020 dollars), among the most profitable, to that point, for the Providence merchants engaged in the China trade.⁶⁹ By the period 1804–07, Brown & Ives was competing with John Jacob Astor, James and T. H. Perkins of Boston, and the major Philadelphia firms of Stephen Girard and Willing & Francis for total number of China ventures, total tonnage, and specie used for the Canton trade.⁷⁰

The growth of trade from the United States to China was of historical consequence, both for America's economic

development in the decades after independence and for the direction of nineteenth century global capitalism. Within twenty years, the United States became Britain's main commercial competitor in the Pacific.⁷¹ The China trade entailed many risks but was extraordinarily profitable, particularly when combined with the lucrative opportunities for transatlantic commerce exploited by "neutral" traders during French and Napoleonic wars. While this impelled the rapid growth of the United States' foreign commerce after 1790, its larger significance was through the wealth it generated and hence to the capitalist model that emerged in nineteenth-century America. Earlier work demonstrating the impact on capital formation and the nation's industrial takeoff has been complemented by recent studies that highlight the overlap between leading maritime trading companies and the first generation of investors in manufacturing, banking, railroads, and land.⁷²



Excerpt from Dr. Benjamin Bowen Carter's journal for October 22, 1798. RIHS SHIPS' LOGS COLLECTION, MSS 828, BOX 1. RHI X17 4527.

"We found the Governor an agreeable man in conversation. The chief part of his life had been spent in the navy. He is well acquainted with the waters of Rhode Island having been stationed there during the American War, and recounts in a humorous [sic] manner the Capture of General Prescott by Col. Barton the particulars of which he well remembered having himself cautioned Prescott against sleeping in the country. Among other information respecting Dr. Holland he informed us that the Geo-

Evaluating the Legacy of the Gaspee Affair: "Trade with Revolutionary Roots"

In *So Great a Proffit*, James Fichter writes of "trade with revolutionary roots," linking the global expansion of American maritime commerce with the dynamics and relationships forged in the revolutionary period.⁷³ The dominant focus of the historiography of the revolutionary period has been on the impact of British policies on colonial militancy in Massachusetts. Acknowledging Rhode Island's distinctive experience, we not only should situate the Gaspee Affair in the climate of rising tensions in Narragansett Bay but also consider how it influenced the commercial culture that was to propel John Brown, his nephew, and other Providence merchants into extending their trade beyond the Atlantic.

John Brown, in resisting British attempts to restrict the colonists' molasses trade in the pre-revolutionary period and pioneering Rhode Island's branch of the China trade, displayed a combination of decisiveness, a propensity for risk-taking and tackling challenges frontally, and the single-minded pursuit of his personal and his family's business interests. His patriotism came with a strong parochial streak; he acted from self-interest and as the leader of the community of maritime traders in Providence that came to dominate Rhode Island's international trade by the last decade of the eighteenth century, when its trading fleet exceeded New York's in tonnage and number of vessels.⁷⁴ As an entrepreneur, he depended greatly on the expertise that was a feature of this community. The *Gaspee* raid, and the management of the subsequent inquiry to protect the attack's leaders, could not have occurred without a strong degree of local solidarity and shared interests. A similar pattern of loyalty combined with professional dedication and competence was evident in the postcolonial growth of Providence's maritime commerce.

John Brown's association with Benjamin Page is a case in point. The financial backers of transglobal ventures after 1785 had to put extraordinary confidence in the ships' masters they chose to take responsibility for these extended expeditions. As in comparable ports such as Boston or Salem, this trust was reinforced by business and family relationships and intermarriage; in Providence, for John Brown and others, the shared experience of June 1772 created another dimension to a tightly knit community.

We can identify several areas in which the Browns' ventures and Page's success as a mariner and trader contributed to American commerce in the Pacific and in turn played a part in the way global capitalism developed in the first decades of American independence. A major reason for the extraordinary growth of American trade in Canton was that, in contrast to the British and Dutch, a high proportion of the American vessels engaged were relatively small craft, in many cases 200 tons or less. Underlying this phenomenon was the Young Republic's laissez-faire approach, reflecting the popular aversion to large state-backed trading enterprises influenced by colonial experience with the East India Company, which allowed for diverse forms of trade out of America's major ports. Colonial officials in Port Jackson observed with unqualified admiration the seamanship and "economy" of the American traders.⁷⁵ Overall, the American model was better organized, leaner, and more adaptable and opportunistic than its competitors; ultimately, this became the form of entrepreneurial capitalism that eclipsed and displaced the state-based trading corporations that had dominated European trade in the Pacific in the eighteenth century.⁷⁶

John Brown's 208-ton *Hope* was closer to the Boston model of a China trader, a relatively small vessel expected to combine a sealskin cargo from the Falklands with speculative trade in Port Jackson to boost the venture's prospects in Canton. Brown's hope that Page could sell much if not all of a considerable cargo in the isolated, infant colony reflected not only a willingness to take risks in an untested market but also the extent he relied, as he had done with Esek Hopkins thirty years before on his first Africa venture, on his captain's judgment and initiative to steer through uncertain waters. Page's voyages on the *Hope* in 1792–93 and the *Halcyon* in 1794–95 demonstrated that the Eastern Passage was a viable route for smaller traders looking for a fast route to Canton. Page also was the first to demonstrate that a direct passage was feasible from the American East Coast to Port Jackson, which became increasingly relevant as the security of the East Indies straits became more uncertain.⁷⁷ Significantly, whereas John Brown sent the *Hope* back to Sydney through the Falklands, Page already had the confidence to take a full cargo of rum and tradeable provisions to the colony directly to sell before proceeding to Canton.

As Lloyd Churchward's seminal 1948 article on the Sydney trade in *Rhode Island History* suggested, Page's trade in Sydney, especially the handsome advances for spirits, provisions, and naval stores, created a greater sense of opportunity among the Rhode Island merchant community, and more widely among those who could only fund transactions in Canton by relying on intermediate trade or other means of "silver substitution."⁷⁸ After 1802, American sealers frequently used their passage around Australian coasts to hunt for sealskins or to buy them from colonial sealers to take to the China market. Some of these visitors traded with the colony. But the scale of the commerce developed by John Brown and intensified by Brown & Ives's ship visits was of a different order and much more significant in contributing to the success of their China ventures. An additional incentive for larger trading firms, many of which had an interest in Rhode Island distilleries, was the ability to obtain the necessary certificates demanded by the Customs House to apply offsets (or "drawbacks") against excises on domestic production of spirits.⁷⁹ This rum factor applied to almost all the Rhode Island merchants who sent trading ventures through Port Jackson after 1795, including Clark and Nightingale, the Jenckeses, Phillip and Zachariah Allen, John Corlis and William Megee from Providence, and the Vernons from Newport; the other common element is that all of these, other than the Vernons, Corlis, and Megee, had family links to the Gaspee Affair.

Brown and Page established that there was a surprising degree of complementarity between the Rhode Islanders' trade specialization and the British colony's needs in a period when the British government's attention was devoted to the French wars and most British firms were discouraged from trading by the restrictions imposed by the East India Company. As well as supplying much of the demand for rum, the quantities of salted meat imported by American traders in the decade after 1792 were remarkable.⁸⁰ Even after Rhode Island's trade with Port Jackson fell away after the 1807 Embargo Act, other American China traders, some with strong Rhode Island links, such as Peter Amidon of Boston and the Champlins of New York, followed a similar approach to trade in Sydney before the War of 1812.⁸¹

Page's success in exchanging his cargo for British Bills of Treasury established a model for trade in Port Jackson in the decade after 1792, one that featured in the Brown & Ives ventures in 1800 and 1802. In its early years, the

remote penal colony produced no obvious goods of value in the Chinese market. Obtaining Treasury bills that, unlike commercial paper, readily were accepted in Canton changed the commercial calculus. To supplement commissary stocks, the early governors authorized these payments out of necessity.⁸² The prospects of trading profitably in Sydney were increased by the willingness of the "officer traders" who controlled imports from visiting ships to pay generously using bills of payment on London. As a result, most of the sixty or so American vessels that visited Sydney before the War of 1812 were traders or sealers with an interest in speculative trade. British merchants railed against their own government's mercantilist policies that cut them out of such a lucrative market.⁸³ As a dimension of Hellyer's "silver substitution" century, the American use of the British colony of NSW for intermediate trade warrants greater attention as an aspect of the China trade and for its impact on the evolution of global capitalism in the early nineteenth century.

Much of the literature on Western capitalism in the Pacific in the nineteenth century emphasizes the significance of Anglo-American mercantile cooperation. Fichter has argued that, even as British officials in London became more concerned about American maritime competition, cooperative arrangements often prevailed, both between British firms and investors who partnered willingly with American traders and in the field.⁸⁴

It was, however, by no means a matter of course that this would occur in the colony of NSW. Its governors were instructed not to permit any trade that would threaten the East India Company's trading monopoly in Canton.⁸⁵ Almost all the naval officers who administered the colony in its first two decades and many of the NSW Corps officers had served in the 1776–1783 war. Yet the warm welcome given to the party from the *Ann* and *Hope* seems genuine and without any note of adversarial rancor. The mutual benefits of commerce provide a plausible explanation for this hospitality. Naval officers such as Hunter and Collins surely would have known about the Gaspee Affair. Even so, this does not appear to have qualified their treatment of the visitors—or constrained the trade that developed after Page's arrival in December 1792.

To understand the Gaspee Affair within the context of the development of global capitalism, one could ask how Rhode Island's trade would have developed *without* the June 1772 attack. Indulging in this hypothetical exercise, we can

speculate that if John Brown and his colleagues had not resisted British efforts to suppress the illicit molasses trade and deter imports from non-British sources, the specialization developed in Newport and Providence in the molasses trade, and in distilling rum, may not have continued to flourish. A substantial part of the Providence's maritime trade, one that supported associated activities such as shipbuilding, iron foundries, and cordage, might not have prospered to the point that, in the postwar period, it was strong enough to become a significant branch of the US-China trade.

If Montagu and Dudingston had succeeded in stifling Rhode Island's molasses and rum trade, American trade with the colony after 1792 may never have occurred or at least not

in the way shaped by the Providence traders. In this sense, we can draw a line from Namquid Point to Botany Bay, a line that takes us from the teenage Benjamin Page at the oars making for the British cutter stranded on a sandbank in the gathering June night in 1772 to Page's arrival in Port Jackson, twenty years later on a blazing December morning, as John Brown's captain on the *Hope*, as well as a connection between John Brown's dogged resistance to the imperial assertion of British mercantile interests and the unlikely twist in the US-China trade that saw the Browns and others from the *Gaspee* generation profiting from replenishing the penal colony's supplies in a period of imperial neglect and selling "raw New England rum" to British veterans of the Revolutionary War.

Endnotes

- 1 Ephraim Bowen's account is in William R. Staples, *The Documentary History of the Destruction of the Gaspee* (Providence, RI: Knowles, Vose, and Anthony, 1845), republished by the Rhode Island Historical Society (RIHS) in 1990, 14.
- 2 For the events of June 9 and 10, 1772, I have relied mainly on the accounts in Steven Park, *The Burning of His Majesty's Schooner Gaspee: An Attack on Crown Rule before the American Revolution* (Yardley, PA: Westholme, 2016); Charles Rappleye, *Sons of Providence: The Brown Brothers, the Slave Trade and the American Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007), and the contemporary documents from Staples, *Documentary History*, and J. R. Bartlett (ed.) *Rhode Island Colonial Records* (RICR) (Providence, RI: 1865).
- 3 All conversions between Pounds Sterling and US dollars and into approximate current US dollars (2020) in this article use the Purchasing Power Calculator for price indexation (CPI/RPI) in <https://www.MeasuringWorth.com>.
- 4 The following is informed by a wide range of writing about the changes in trade patterns and routes in the period from 1770 until the 1820s, spanning global history studies including Robert Hellyer, "The West, the East and the insular middle: trading systems, demand, and labour in the integration of the Pacific, 1750–1875" *Journal of Global History* 8(3) (2013), 391–413; to work on the decline of the East India Company [James Fichter, *So Great a Proffit: How the East Indies Trade Transformed Anglo-American Capitalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010)]; economic and historical works on the Pacific [David Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds: a History of Seas, Peoples and Cultures* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012); and David Igler, "Exploring the Concept of Empire in Pacific History: Individuals, Nations and Ocean Space Prior to 1850," *History Compass* 12(11) (2014), 879–887]; and recent publications on the U.S.-China trade including J. R. Haddad, *America's First Adventure in China: Trade, Treaties, Opium, and Salvation* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013) and Eric Jay Dolin, *When America First Met China: An Exotic History of Tea, Drugs, and Money in the Age of Sail* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2012).
- 5 See D. R. Hainsworth, *The Sydney Traders: Simeon Lord and His Contemporaries 1788–1821* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1981); D. Stuart, "American trade with the British colony of New South Wales, 1792 to 1816—A reappraisal" *History Compass*, Vol. 18 (12) December 2020, DOI: 10.1111/hic3.12641.
- 6 Quoted in Rappleye, *Sons of Providence*, 30. The imperial view of Rhode Island seemed to remain consistent through much of the eighteenth century. For example, comments on the "piratical proceedings of the people of Providence" made by Admiral Montagu in his letter to Governor Wanton of June 11, 1772, in Staples, *Documentary History*, Section 21, "A Proclamation."

- 7 On the degree of integration of the American colonies into British Atlantic trade, see Edwin J. Perkins, *The Economy of Colonial America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) and Jeremy Atack and Peter Passell, *A New Economic View of American History* (New York: North and Co., 1994). One of the few significant manufactured exports from the colonies was shipbuilding, which became competitive with the major shipbuilding nations across the Atlantic. Almost half the seagoing vessels built in colonial America were sold to foreigners, with Britain being the leading market, see Perkins, 84.
- 8 "Rum completely overshadowed every other item on the cargo manifests of Rhode Island slavers," typically accounting for 85–90 percent of the cargo by value, Jay Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 86–87, quote from 86.
- 9 Christy Clark-Pujara, *Dark Work: The Business of Slavery in Rhode Island* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 19; Rappleye, *Sons of Providence*, 12.
- 10 Rappleye, *Sons of Providence*, 11–17; Gertrude Selwyn Kimball, *Providence in Colonial Times* (New York: De Capo, 1972), reprint of Houghton and Mifflin original publication of 1912, 245–248; the estimated value of the *Mary's* return cargo landed in Providence was £2,601, G. Kimball, 248.
- 11 Obadiah Brown established the manufacture of spermaceti candles in the early 1850s as a trading commodity, in Obadiah Brown (1712–62) Papers, RIHS MSS 315, Historical comments.
- 12 For details of the Browns' trade with neutral and enemy ports, see James B. Hedges, *The Browns of Providence Plantations: Colonial Years* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), 22–70. Trade under "flags of truce" was conducted by applying to transport French prisoners of war to French ports for exchange with British prisoners. Given such permission, colonial traders could profit by exchanging goods needed in the French ports for commodities such as molasses and sugar. Even though their brig *Prudent Hannah* was seized by the British navy off Virginia in 1758 and two of their vessels were later condemned in the Bahamas, the Browns were able to sustain this trade for the duration of the war, Rappleye, *Sons of Providence*, 31–33.
- 13 Christy Clark-Pujara calculates that between 1751 and 1775, 383 of the 515 American vessels in the slave trade were from Rhode Island and that they carried more than 40,000 of the almost 60,000 slaves carried by these vessels, Clark-Pujara, *Dark Work*, 17; see also Eric Kimball, "'What have we to do with slavery?' New Englanders and the Slave Economies of the West Indies" in *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development*, Eds. Sven Beckett and Seth Rockman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), 181–194. Rhode Island was the largest supplier of candles to West Indian sugar plantations, where they were used so mills could operate around the clock during the harvest season, Kimball, 186.
- 14 Only Massachusetts made more rum; in per capita terms, Rhode Island was the largest producer, see Kimball, "What have we to do with slavery?" 185; by 1769, 13 distilleries in Newport produced rum, Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle*, 81.
- 15 Clark-Pujara, *Dark Work*, cited from 13, 13–16 on colonial governors' involvement in slave trading.
- 16 Stephen Hopkins was a co-owner of the Browns' iron foundry at Scituate, where his eldest son, Rufus, was manager for almost 40 years, Rappleye, *Sons of Providence*, 95. John Brown's brother Nicholas and Stephen Hopkins were cousins through marriage. The Browns' and Hopkinses' "social and business connections were close and constant. Their business interests were in many respects identical, and their political views were ever sympathetic." Kimball, *Providence in Colonial Times*, 283.
- 17 The Browns' instructions of September 10, 1763, to Esek Hopkins are described in Rappleye, *Sons of Providence*, 59–60; Obadiah Brown also attempted to send a vessel to Africa in 1759, the schooner *Wheel of Fortune*, but this was seized by French privateers after reaching the African coast, Hedges, *The Colonial Years*, p.72; Clark-Pujara, *Dark Work*, 23.
- 18 108 of the 196 captives died, Clark-Pujara, *Dark Work*, 23. Esek Hopkins's problems began from the *Sally's* arrival near Bissau (the modern capital of Guinea-Bissau), losing crew to disease during the ten months spent trying to obtain a complete cargo, Rappleye, *Sons of Providence*, 61–72; "What is absent from all the Brown brothers' correspondence relating to the *Sally*, and from any of the letters and journals written by Esek Hopkins, is any reference to the plight and ghastly demise of the captive Africans," 75.

- ¹⁹ On the impact of the *Sally's* 1763 voyage on the Browns' participation in the slave trade, see Kimball, *Providence in Colonial Times*, 275–276. John Brown pursued a second slaving venture with the *Sultan* in 1769 but thereafter concentrated on other branches of his growing maritime trade until sending the *Hope* to West Africa under the Newport slaving captain Peleg Wood in 1795; he invested in slavery ventures and was a leading advocate for the slave trade until his death in 1803, Rappleye, *Sons of Providence*, 226–231, 323–324, 303–305; on the *Sultan*, see Rappleye, *Sons of Providence*, 77–78, and Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle*, 73, 88, 98.
- ²⁰ Kimball, “What have we to do with slavery?” 185–189; Clark-Pujara, *Dark Work*, 22–24, 74.
- ²¹ Herbert Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: New Approaches to the Americas* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 100, cited in Clark-Pujara, *Dark Work*, 20.
- ²² Colonial administration cost the British Crown far more than revenue raised in the colonies; struggling to manage the burden of funding wars on its colonial frontiers, including against First Nation Americans and other European powers, British governments saw taxing colonial trade and consumption of imported goods as preferable to new taxes in Britain. In 1763, with fewer demands on the Royal Navy when conflict with France and Spain ended, a fleet was deployed directed by the Board of Trade to enforce the “suppression of the clandestine trade with foreign nations and the improvement of the revenue,” Rappleye, *Sons of Providence*, 42–43.
- ²³ Rhode Island was the only colony to make a formal statement before the renewal of the Molasses Act. The Remonstrance was endorsed by the Rhode Island General Assembly on January 27, 1764, its passage expedited by John Brown, see *RICR*, Vol. 6, 378–383. Its authors appear to have been Governor Hopkins and a committee that included John and Nicholas Brown, see Frederick B. Wiener, “The Rhode Island Merchants and the Sugar Act,” *New England Quarterly*, Vol. 3 (3) July 1930, 464–500. While overstated in some respects, such as exaggerating the proportion of Rhode Island rum that was exported to Africa, it was significant as an argument that Britain and its colony had a shared interest in supporting Rhode Island's molasses trade, expressly including the slave trade, Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle*, 13–14.
- ²⁴ Nick Bunker, *An Empire on the Edge: How Britain Came to Fight America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 62.
- ²⁵ Although the 1764 Sugar Act, which replaced the 1733 Molasses Act, maintained discriminatory duties on sugar and molasses from non-British sources, the Grenville government later reduced the rate. This only partly mollified colonial merchants including the Browns as other provocative provisions were maintained, notably the provisions that gave jurisdiction on seizures of cargoes by imperial customs officials to the Vice-Admiralty Court in Nova Scotia. The 1768 Vice Admiralty Court Act further extended the Crown's authority by creating three new Vice-Admiralty Courts, in Boston, New York, and Charleston, in which Crown-appointed judges had jurisdiction on all matters on customs violations and smuggling. For the Rhode Island merchants, this challenged their conviction that such commercial matters should be decided within their colony's jurisdiction.
- ²⁶ Tea imported from China into Britain and other company markets constituted 90 percent of the company's profits by 1770, Dolin, *When America First Met China*, 68. However, despite London's efforts, most American tea drinkers obtained their tea from other sources; Table 1.1. “Legal Tea Imported into the Colonies 1770–72” in Fichter, *So Great a Proffit*, 8, shows that Boston was the only major port to accept tea imported by the East India Company. Arthur Schlesinger wrote that by 1771 more than 90 percent of imported tea was smuggled from the continent, mainly the Netherlands, Arthur Meier Schlesinger, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1959), reprint of 1917 original, 107.
- ²⁷ *RICR*, Vol. 7, 59–60; on Montagu's orders to Dudingston, see Park, *The Burning of His Majesty's Schooner Gaspee*, 10.
- ²⁸ This was the subject of editorials and reports in the colonial press railing against the activities of the “piratical schooner” and Dudingston's decision, contrary to the law governing determinations of disputed cargoes, to send the *Fortune* to Boston, *Newport Mercury*, February 20, 1772, and *Providence Gazette*, February 22, March 21 and 28, 1772. Nathanael Greene, later second-in-command under Washington during the Revolutionary War, successfully sued Dudingston for damages, Gerald M. Carbone, *Nathanael Greene: A Biography of the American Revolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 3–5.

- ²⁹ Hopkins's comments and Wanton's letter to Dudingston of March 22, 1772, are in Staples, *Documentary History* (1990 edition), 4–5. The merchants' petition is described in Deputy Governor Darius Sessions's Deposition to the Gaspee Commission, which lists the signatories as John Brown, Nathan Angell, Joseph Nightingale, Job Smith, Thomas Greene, Ambrose Page, Darius Sessions, James Lovett, and Nicholas Brown, *RICR*, Vol. 7, 174–175. Many of these had close business links to John Brown. Sessions had sailed for the Browns on West Indies voyages, see Park, *The Burning of His Majesty's Schooner Gaspee*, 11.
- ³⁰ Steven Park describes the raid as “somewhat surgical” or even “restrained,” although also speculating that the schooner's destruction was not preplanned, Park, *The Burning of His Majesty's Schooner Gaspee*, 101; Park argues that the attack should be placed in the context of “a known formula, a script or agenda of increasing resistance when ordinary channels of redress failed,” Park, 48–50. For another view that the raid was a community action notable for the limited use of violence and the targeted nature of the attack, see P. Messer, “A Most Insulting Violation The Burning of the HMS *Gaspee* and the Delaying of the American Revolution,” *New England Quarterly* 88 (4) December 2015, 582–622, at 585–586 and Note 9.
- ³¹ The total number who participated in the raid on the *Gaspee* has not been reliably established. Although Dudingston later claimed that the cutter was attacked by 17 longboats with some 200 men, less self-interested contemporary accounts indicate a lower number, possibly around 60–70, for example, the Customs Collector in Providence, William Checkley, in a letter written on June 11, 1772, to the Customs collector for the Port of Rhode Island; Park says that eight longboats, with space for ten oarsmen and a sea captain at the tiller, departed from Fenner's Wharf in Providence, possibly supplemented by a longboat from Bristol—of this group, a smaller number, perhaps around 40, boarded the vessel, see Park, *The Burning of His Majesty's Schooner Gaspee*, 16–18, and 124, Note 21, and Rappleye, *Sons of Providence*, 108–109. The identity of some of those who participated in the raid can be drawn from various sources, including reports in *Rhode Island American*, July 4, 1826, and *Newport Mercury*, July 8, 1826, as well as Staples, *Documentary History* (1990 edition).
- ³² See Park, *The Burning of His Majesty's Schooner Gaspee*, 21–27 and chapter four, “Star Chamber”; also Rappleye, *Sons of Providence*, 115–125. The inducements included a reward of £500 for information on any of the raid's participants and an additional bounty of £500 for capture of the leaders, issued by Royal Proclamation on August 26, 1772, Rappleye, 115.
- ³³ Many examples of the network of social and marriage interrelationships between the different Gaspee participants and through their respective professions and business can be found in Kimball, *Providence in Colonial Times*, chapters “The Shipping Trade” and “The Colonial Town”; to list only some instances: James Brown's marriage to Hope Power, daughter of Mercy Tillinghast, 230; his business partnership with Jabez Bowen, 243; the Browns' links through marriage with the Jenckes (272) and Clark families, 262–263, (John Innes Clark of the firm Clark and Nightingale also was Ephraim Bowen's brother-in-law); and the Browns' long-standing business association with Joseph and William Wanton, 273 (see also Note 15 on the Hopkins–Brown family links).
- ³⁴ Key events for the Page family were recorded in the inside cover of Ambrose's copy of the sixth edition of Robert Barclay's *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity, Being an Explanation and Vindication of the Principles and Doctrine of the People Called Quakers*, printed for James Franklin, Newport, RI, in 1729 and now held by the RIHS. Benjamin was the grandson of Mary Soule, descendent of the Pilgrim Father George Soule, see Martin Lawrence, “Sea Trade brings a 'Soule' to Australia,” September 8, 2020 accessed on November 7, 2021, at <https://www.mayflowersociety.org.au/post/sea-trade-brings-a-george-soule-descendent-to-australia>.
- ³⁵ Robert W. Kenny, “The Maiden Voyage of *Ann and Hope* of Providence to Botany Bay and Canton, 1798–99,” *American Neptune*, 1958 Vol. 18 (2) pp.105–136, at 129.
- ³⁶ Based on the author's review of shipping and customs records of Benjamin Page's maritime career and the RIHS's *Papers of the American Slave Trade Part 2: Selected Collections*, Ed. J. Coughtry (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America 2001), Editorial Note v, ix. The Pages did trade with the West Indies slave societies, so in that respect, they participated in the broader slave-based Atlantic economy.

- ³⁷ Bunker, *An Empire on the Edge*, 326–328, concluded that the *Smack* was commanded by Benjamin Page of Providence and that, while the evidence is limited, the voyage probably was backed by a group determined to arm a Colonial Navy. From mid-1775, after Lexington, when obtaining supplies became a pressing priority for the fledgling Continental Army, John and Nicholas Brown were involved in importing gunpowder from Europe and the West Indies, see Hedges, *The Colonial Years*, 215–223. I have seen no evidence that they had any role in the *Smack*'s gunrunning. Given British suspicions about his role in the *Gaspee* attack, it would have been highly risky for John Brown to have done so.
- ³⁸ Much of what we know of Page's military career comes from the surviving record of his 1818 application for a veteran's pension, Page's file, S.3629, *Revolutionary War Records*, U.S. National Archives. See Thomas E. Woodrup, *Captain Benjamin Page. A Forgotten Rhode Island Hero of the American Revolution Rediscovered in Sycamore, Illinois* (United States Copyright Office, 1998), Registration Number TX 4-777-730, Second Edition 2001.
- ³⁹ Page also may have participated in the Battle of Rhode Island on Aquidneck Island in August 1778. His war record included serving as lieutenant under Captains John Manley, John Olney, Hoystead Hacker, and Samuel Nicholson and as first lieutenant on the frigate *Hague* (Captain Hanley) in the final year of the war.
- ⁴⁰ On the registration of the *Providence*, owned by John Brown, master, Benjamin Page, in November 1783, see *RIHS Ships Register and Enrollments of Providence RI 1773–1939* Vol. 2, 874, Entry 2788; on subsequent trading voyages, see Kenny "Maiden Voyage of *Ann and Hope*," 130 and Woodrup, Special Contribution to the *Gaspee* Virtual Archive, accessed on November 7, 2021, at <https://www.Gaspee.org/PageBio>.
- ⁴¹ A review of the Customs House records of cargoes imported into Providence in the 1790s reveals the pattern of external trade developed in the late eighteenth century, *RIHS US Custom House (Providence, Rhode Island) Records 1789–1940*, MSS 28 SG 1 Series 4, Inward Foreign Manifests; Providence's fleet reached 120 vessels, with a total tonnage of 13,000 in 1802, see Peter J. Coleman, "The Entrepreneurial Spirit in Rhode Island History," *The Business History Review*, Vol. 37 (4) Winter 1963, 319–344, at 328; see also Robert G. Albion, William A. Baker, and Benjamin Woods Labaree, *New England and the Sea* (Mystic, CT: Mystic Seaport, 1994), 48–49 which describes Providence's emergence as Rhode Island's leading commercial port. On the number and location of Rhode Island distilleries, see Henry R. Chace, *Owners and Occupants of the Lots, Houses and Shops in the Town of Providence, Rhode Island in 1798* (Providence: Livermore & Knight, 1914).
- ⁴² The 1791 Excise Whiskey Tax Act, the first excise levied in the United States on domestically produced goods, was signed into law by President George Washington on March 3, 1791. Rhode Island merchants had successfully lobbied Congress on the legislation to include an offset on this levy for every gallon of spirits exported. For rum exports, this was increased by three cents per gallon because of the duty on imported molasses, see James B. Hedges, *The Browns of Providence Plantations: Volume 2, the Nineteenth Century* (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1968), 8–10.
- ⁴³ See Hedges, Vol. 2, *The Nineteenth Century*, 17–24; Hedges drew heavily on the earlier work of William B. Weedon, "Early Oriental Commerce in Providence," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 1907–08, Third Series, VI; the Browns' subsequent ventures pioneering trade through Port Jackson in the 1790s were recognized in early studies including Foster Rhea Dulles, *The Old China Trade* (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1930), 29–30, and K. S. Latourette, *The History of Early Relations between the United States and China, 1784–1844* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1917), 45, but often are overlooked in more recent work, e.g. Dolin, *When America First Met China*, 123–124.
- ⁴⁴ Brown declared a narrow loss on the first venture, although he appears to have inflated his costs; Hedges calculated that the voyage returned a profit of around \$20,000, Hedges, Vol. 2 *The Nineteenth Century*, 24. Customs duties assessed for the second voyage, which returned to Providence in June 1791, were much higher at \$51,790, indicating a considerably more valuable cargo, *RIHS Customs House Providence—Entry of Merchandise*, MSS 28 Series 4, Inward Cargo Manifests, 1790–May 1804, Box 1, Folder 14.
- ⁴⁵ The *Alliance*, a 900-ton frigate, was one of the five vessels in the squadron that fought under John Paul Jones at the Battle of Flamborough Head off the English coast in September 1779. For details of its 1787–88 voyage, see Colin Jack-Hinton, "The Voyage of *Alliance*: American Contribution to the Rediscovery and Exploration of the Solomon Islands," *American Neptune*, Vol. 25 (4) October 1965, 248–261.

- ⁴⁶ On the *Philadelphia*'s visit, see J. Wade, "Young America and Young Australia: 200 Years of Trade," *Australiana* Vol. 14, No. 4, November 1992, 89–96.
- ⁴⁷ The *Hope*'s Sydney visit and Page's transactions with the Commissary are recorded in David Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales, from its settlement in January 1788, to August 1801*. (London: A. Strahan for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1804), 193; records of Commissary purchases from Page are in "John Palmer's accounts 1791–97," *Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP) Public Record Office Series 3570 (PRO3570)*, Exchequer and Audit Department.
- ⁴⁸ Using a foreign port to rest and refresh was standard practice, but even at the time, Page's declared intentions were taken with a grain of salt: "An American ship has put in here to wood and water and is bound to China, which I do not believe; she has vast quantities of Spirits on board as well as provisions which Lt Governor has purchased for the use of the Colony." Richard Atkins, entry for December 28, 1792, *Journal of a Voyage to South America and Botany Bay, 1791–1810*, State Library of NSW MLMSS737.
- ⁴⁹ Rum loaded in Providence at three shillings and sixpence (3/6) per gallon, was purchased by the colony's commissary for 4/6 per gallon; for loaded prices, see Manifest of Cargo on Board the Ship *Hope*, March 12, 1792, at RIHS microfilm record of Providence Customs House Inward and Outward Entries Volume, Outward Manifests, 1790–94; Collins, *Account of the English Colony* (1804), 193 describes the amount of salt meat, flour, and spirits purchased, giving prices.
- ⁵⁰ Grose, who had been sent to the colony as commander of the military contingent (the NSW Corps), served as lieutenant governor from Governor Phillip's departure in December 1792 until leaving the colony at the end of 1794. He advised London that he had been obliged to purchase spirits as Page would not otherwise trade his provisions but also argued it was opportune to purchase the spirits as he believed that encouraging trade in liquor and tobacco between the orps officers and visiting ships would boost the colonial economy, Grose to Home Secretary, Henry Dundas, January 9, 1793, *Historical Records of Australia (HRA)* 1.1. 413–414.
- ⁵¹ On the way that bills of payment were used by the military and how they gave the NSW Corps "officer-traders" an effective monopoly on buying from American (and other) vessels, see Hainsworth, *The Sydney Traders* (1981), 15–17 and 25–27, and Statham (Ed.), *A Colonial Regiment: New Sources relating to the NSW Corps, 1789–1810*, (Canberra: ANUTech, 1992).
- ⁵² About \$6.3 million in present value dollars. The *Hope* cleared Port Jackson in January 1793 and traded in Canton for brown sugar, tea, nankeens, 100 pounds of silk, silk shoes, umbrellas, sweetmeats, gum, chinaware, and one keg of "dragon's blood," a dark red resin used as a varnish, dye, incense, or medicine. Nankeen was a buff-colored cotton fabric generally used for inexpensive clothing; nankeens were trousers made from this. The *Hope*'s Canton cargo is listed in the RIHS, Providence Customs House Records, Inward Foreign Manifests, MSS 28, Series 4, Box 4, Folder 62, f.56.
- ⁵³ Quoted from Collins, *Account of the English Colony* (1804), 265, Collins's speculation about Page's motives for his rapid passage is in Collins and Brian H. Fletcher (ed.), *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales, with Remarks on the Dispositions, Customs, Manners, etc., of the Native Inhabitants of that Country Volume 1*, A. H. and A. W. Reed in association with the Royal Australian Historical Society, 1975, 316.
- ⁵⁴ The *Halcyon* left Port Jackson on July 8 and reached China in September 1794. Details of its return cargo, and the Customs estimate of total value, are in RIHS, MSS 28, Series 4, Inward Foreign Manifests, Box 5, Folder 32.
- ⁵⁵ Total duties assessed on the *Zenobia*'s cargo were \$56,110, MSS 28, Series 4, Inward Foreign Manifests, Box 8, Folder 143, "Entry of Merchandise imported by Clark and Nightingale on the *Zenobia*, Captain Benjamin Page master, from Canton," Providence May 15, 1797, shows that more than 80 percent of duties were for the large cargo of teas, much of which was held in bond. The total estimated value of the cargo was approximately \$350,000.
- ⁵⁶ On Brown's prosecution, see Rappleye, *Sons of Providence*, 310, 318–321; Clark-Pujara, *Dark Work*, 84; and *RIHS Papers of the American Slave Trade Part 2 Selected Collections* (Ed.), J. Coughtry, Editorial Note v, ix. A further reason for Brown's declining role as a merchant was his election to the US Congress in 1799.
- ⁵⁷ The firm's setbacks with Indian trade included its 1792–93 venture with the *Rising Sun* when Captain Rogers felt obliged to sell most of his cargo in Bombay under cost to obtain cotton to sell in Canton and the unprofitable voyage of the *Hamilton* in 1795, when its captain also was obliged to sell much of his cargo in India at a loss, Hedges Vol. 2, *The Nineteenth Century*, 32–33 and 61–64, quote from 33.

- ⁵⁸ Thomas Dickason, the firm's London representative, wrote to Ives on February 23, 1798, to advise that his representations to the East India Company on Brown & Ives's behalf for permission to load cotton in Bombay to trade in Canton had been rejected; referring to the threat of hostile French raiders in the Andaman Sea and around the Malacca and Sunda Straits, letter from Dickason to Ives, February 23, 1798, in the Brown Family Business Records (BFBR), Series II CCP64 correspondence with Dickason and Company, London 1790–1800, Box 57. These records are held in the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University, Providence, RI.
- ⁵⁹ John Brown's *George Washington* (624 tn.) and *President Washington* (950 tn.) were the two larger ships sent from Providence to this point, Hedges, *Vol. 2, The Nineteenth Century*, 72. Records of the *Ann and Hope's* voyage, including on building and equipping the ship, are in BFBR, Brown & Ives, Series XV (Maritime Records), Subseries B, *Ann and Hope*, Box 475; at a cost of approximately \$45,000, it was built by Colonel Benjamin Tallman and was registered on July 17, 1798, ten days after it began its maiden voyage, Kenny, *Maiden Voyage of Ann and Hope*, 105.
- ⁶⁰ Page's conditions included eight tons of privilege, an additional ten tons of goods on consignment, and payment of \$8,000 and an additional \$2,000 ninety days after the ship's safe return, Brown & Ives letter to Page, April 2, 1798, BFBR, Brown & Ives, Series XV (Maritime Records), Subseries B, *Ann and Hope*, Box 475, Folder 2. Kenny, *Maiden Voyage of Ann and Hope*, 105, confirms these payments were much higher than was normal for a ship's master engaged in Providence in that period because of the venture's importance and reflecting Page's standing as an experienced China trader.
- ⁶¹ Mindful of the owners' instructions that their insurance required no trading before Canton, Page bartered canvas, timber, and provisions to cover pilotage fees, minor repairs, some livestock, and vegetables; his account for reimbursement of costs at Botany Bay, dated October 21, 1798, recorded expenditure of \$341 paid through the sale of raven's duck (canvas), plankboard wood, 46 barrels of beans, corn, and five barrels of salt pork, BFBR, Brown & Ives, Series XV (Maritime Records), Subseries B, *Ann and Hope*, Box 475, Folder 4.
- ⁶² Of the cargo's total cost of \$121,014, tea was \$95,389, invoice of merchandise shipped from Whampoa, BFBR, Brown & Ives, Series XV (Maritime Records), Subseries B, *Ann and Hope*, Box 475, Folder 5. Page diligently reported the process of loading to the owners' requirements as well as arrangements for securing the return voyage, see letters from Page to Brown & Ives of January 18 and 29, 1799, BFBR, Brown & Ives, Series XV (Maritime Records), Subseries B, *Ann and Hope*, Box 475.
- ⁶³ The cargo's total value was estimated on arrival in Providence at \$314,917, Hedges, *Vol. 2, The Nineteenth Century*, 70, Note 159. The estimate of duties for the *Ann and Hope's* cargo made on June 17, 1799, fills more than four pages of the detailed pro forma used by Customs House officials, exceptionally long for the time; total duties assessed were \$83,929 of which Brown & Ives's assessed duties alone constituted \$40,212, Estimate of Duties, June 17, 1799; "Impost of Merchandise Imported into Providence," June 7, 1799, BFBR, Brown & Ives, Series XV (Maritime Records), Subseries B, *Ann and Hope*, Box 475, Folder 5.
- ⁶⁴ See Brett Goodin, "200-year-old Journals by American Sailors Shed Light on Kidnapped Aboriginal Bennelong," *Newsweek*, February 22, 2019. Carter's "Journal of a Voyage to Canton in the ship *Ann and Hope*," and the journal kept by Benjamin Page Jr. are in the RIHS, Ships' Logs Collection, MSS 828, *Ann and Hope*, Box 1. Copies are in the Australian National University Pacific Manuscripts Bureau's collection; see ANU PMB MSS 769 (Carter) and MSS 540 (B. Page Jr.).
- ⁶⁵ These were among the most significant figures in the colony's trade in the "Rum Corps" period. Foveaux, a leading figure in the NSW Corps through the 1790s who later became the colony's lieutenant governor, was the colony's senior military officer in the absence of Lt. Col. Paterson between August 1796 and November 1799. He had a farm between Botany Bay and Farm Cove, in the modern suburb of Surry Hills, and later became the colony's largest landholder, Henry Pike (ed.) *Australian Dictionary of Biography 1788–1850*, National Centre of Biography ANU 1987, Vol. 1, 407–09; Laycock was both quartermaster and deputy commissary, see Pike (ed.) *ADB*, Vol. 2, 97; Balmain, who was recorded as "Bellamin" in Carter's journal, is better known as the first settler and farmer in what is now the suburb of Balmain, Pike (ed.) *ADB*, Vol. 1, 51–52.
- ⁶⁶ Ives to Benjamin Page, July 7, 1795, BFBR, Brown & Ives, Series XV (Maritime Records), Subseries B, *Ann and Hope*, Box 475, Folder 2.

- ⁶⁷ See Hedges, *Vol. 2 The Nineteenth Century*, 92–93, Weeden "Early Oriental Commerce," 241–242, 248–253; and Stuart, "American Trade with...NSW" Table 1, "Selected American Cargoes 1792–1800," Table 2, "Payments to American Traders, 1792–1802," and Table 3, "Selected American Cargoes, Port Jackson 1802–11," for details of these voyages. Like the *Ann and Hope*, the *John Jay* carried a large amount of specie, but, unlike Page, Captain Benjamin Dexter was encouraged to trade in Sydney and "procure...Bills on Canton or on London, as you may be able," owners' letter to Dexter to deliver to Samuel Snow, May 10, 1800, and "Instructions for the Commander of the Private Armed Ship *John Jay* bound on a Voyage to Canton and back," May 15, 1800, BFBR, Brown & Ives, Series XV (Maritime Records), Subseries Z, *John Jay*, Box 582, Folder 1.
- ⁶⁸ For the *John Jay*, total payments from trade in Port Jackson converted to more than \$15,700 for trading in Canton, a considerable boost to the voyage's success considering the total cost of the loaded cargo (\$6,319), see "1800 Account of Sails (sic) at Port Jackson of Part of the Goods shipped by Messrs. Brown & Ives, John Innes Clark Esq. Munro, Snow & Munro Merchants Providence, made by Captain Dexter at Canton 25 January 1801," BFBR, Brown & Ives, Series XV (Maritime Records), Subseries Z, *John Jay*, Box 582, Folder 7. For the *Arthur*, payments from Sydney of £6,589/11, which exceeded all previous American visits to the colony, converted to \$22,274, which was one-third of the funds used (supplemented by credit) on purchasing goods in Canton; the other elements of the \$66,000 were \$42,057 in specie and \$3,383 from goods sold in Canton, "The Owners of the Ship *Arthur* in Account Current with Scott Jenckes at Canton," signed by Scott Jenckes on board the *Arthur*, December 1802, BFBR, Brown & Ives, Series XV (Maritime Records), Subseries F, *Arthur*, 1802–later, Box 494, Folder 1.
- ⁶⁹ The estimated value for each of the three returning cargoes can be found in BFBR, Brown & Ives, Series XV (Maritime Records), Subseries B, *Ann & Hope*, Box 475 Folder 5, "Estimate of Duties, 17 June 1799" and "Impost of Merchandise Imported into Providence," June 7, 1799, RIHS MSS 28 SG1 56 V3, 64 for the *Ann and Hope*; in RIHS MSS 28 US Customs House (Providence, RI) Series 4: Foreign Manifests 1790–1896, Sub-Series A: Inward Foreign Manifests, Box 13, Folders 245 and 246 for the *John Jay*; and "Impost on Merchandise Imported from Canton," April 1, 1803, RIHS MSS 28 SG1 S6 V3, 116 and RIHS MSS 28, Box 16, Folder 19, 1 and 2 for the *Arthur*.
- ⁷⁰ Hedges measured Brown & Ives's China trade against these four major trading houses and concluded that the Providence firm carried the largest amount of specie and was second in total tonnage and number of ventures, Hedges, *Vol. 2 The Nineteenth Century*, 103–104.
- ⁷¹ The "Table of American Trade with China, 1784–1844" in Dulles, *The Old China Trade*, 210, listed the number of American ships that traded annually in Canton through this period, peaking for a single trading season in 1805–06 with 42 recorded. As an exceptionally thorough empirical analysis demonstrating the nature and extent of the growth of the US-China trade, including by size of vessel and goods traded, see R. Richards, "United States Trade with China, 1784–1814" *The American Neptune*, Special Supplement to Volume 54, 1994, 9–66.
- ⁷² On the impact of growth in maritime trade on capital formation and industrial investment, see Stuart Bruchey, *The Roots of American Growth 1607–1861: An Essay in Social Causation* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1965); on the consequences for industrial investment through textile factories in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, Daniel Walker Howe, *What God Hath Wrought, the Transformation of America, 1815–48* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 132–135; Fichter, *So Great a Proffit*, 132–148, 279–280 described the "creation of the affluent investor" through the China and East Indies trade. The transformation of the Brown family business from maritime trade to industrial investment is the theme of Hedges, *Vol. 2, The Nineteenth Century*.
- ⁷³ Fichter, *So Great a Proffit*, 17.
- ⁷⁴ At the time when John Brown first fixed on Port Jackson as a place to trade, Providence could claim a larger fleet than New York, in total tonnage of shipping (which reached 12,000 tons in 1792) and number of vessels (110 in March 1790), Coleman, *The Entrepreneurial Spirit in Rhode Island History*, 328, Note 9.
- ⁷⁵ For example, Collins's remarks on the 129-ton *Susan*, under Capt. Nathaniel Pearce, trading in Port Jackson in April 1796, Collins, in Fletcher (ed.) *Account of the English Colony* (1975), Vol. 1, 393.
- ⁷⁶ Igler, "Exploring the Concept of Empire in Pacific History"; Fichter, *So Great a Proffit*, 26–29, 278–279.
- ⁷⁷ Other early American vessels to stop in Port Jackson, including the trader *Philadelphia* (1792) and the Boston sealer *Fairy* (1793), made at least one stop en route. Page's direct passage later was emulated by other Rhode Island mariners including Nathaniel Pearce and William Trotter on the *Susan* in 1796 and Jacob Smith in 1798, from Newport, on the *Semiramis*, Collins in Fletcher (ed.), *Account of the English Colony*, Vol. 1, 393 and Vol. 2, 93–94.

- ⁷⁸ The extent and trajectory of Providence trade in Port Jackson were described in Lloyd G. Churchward, "Rhode Island and the Australian Trade 1792–1812" in *Rhode Island History*, Vol. 7 (4) October 1948, 97–104, including the Appendix, "Rhode Island ships visiting NSW, 1792–1812," at 104. Page's success was not the only encouragement to New England merchants considering trade in Port Jackson; the visits of the *Fairy* (1793) and the *Otter* (1796) sponsored by Boston sealer Ebenezer Dorr encouraged others to see Sydney as an intermediate port, and the 1794 Jay Treaty, which took effect in 1796 provided more assurance that American traders would be welcome in a British port.
- ⁷⁹ Several papers in the RIHS archives and the John Carter Brown Library's BFBR (maritime records) show how much ship owners and other partners valued the ability to use the drawbacks for exported spirits to reduce taxes imposed on domestic production of such items. These tax concessions help to explain the extraordinary cargoes of spirits landed by American vessels in Port Jackson after 1792. Examples from the BFBR archive include: pre-prepared forms for the Certificate of Landing for imports of goods entitled to the US Customs bounty provided to Brown & Ives's ships masters intending to trade in Sydney, Brown & Ives, Series XV (Maritime Records), Subseries Z, *John Jay*, Box 582, Folder 1; certification of trade in Port Jackson dated October 4, 1800, signed by NSW Corps quartermaster Thomas Laycock and merchant Robert Campbell, RIHS, US Customs House (Providence RI) Series 4: Foreign Manifests 1790–1896, Sub-Series A: Inward Manifests MSS 28, Box 13, Folder 246.
- ⁸⁰ For example, the 154,400 pounds of salt meat imported by the *Halcyon* in 1794 was almost twice the total amount of salt beef and pork brought by the First Fleet (300 tierces) when the colony was established, which was intended to provide at least two years' worth of supplies, <https://firstfleetfellowship.org.au/library/first-fleetlist-livestock-provisions-plants-seeds/>; for a more comprehensive account of such imports in this period, see Stuart, "American Trade with...NSW" Table 1, "Selected American Cargoes 1792–1800."
- ⁸¹ See Stuart, "American Trade with...NSW" Table 3, "Select American Cargoes, 1802–11."
- ⁸² "... the fortuitous arrival of American ships has frequently saved this colony from great want." Governor King to Lord Hobart, October 30, 1802, *Historical Records of New South Wales*, Vol. 4, 870–871; Hunter was strongly criticized in London for the amounts he authorized between 1796 and mid-1800 to pay for imported goods, a large part of which went to American traders. His successor, Philip Gidley King, instructed to curtail such transactions, authorized even larger transactions after his arrival in September 1800.
- ⁸³ "The Americans, hearing that New South Wales is considered within the chartered seas of the East India Company, and that no British merchant can send goods to that colony without risqué (sic) of seizure, have at times sent small vessels there with investments of goods on their way to India or the Northwest Coast of America, and have benefitted themselves much thereby..." Letter from C. and S. Enderby and A. and B. Champion to the Earl of Liverpool, August 1, 1800, President of the Board of Trade, *AJCP*, Papers of Charles Jenkinson, First Earl of Liverpool, 1785–1826, M1399–1400, ff. 124–125.
- ⁸⁴ As an example of the inconsistency between the formal British position and business practice, Fichter highlights the relationship of Alexander Baring, from one of London's most powerful merchant families and a member of the East India Company board, with some leading Philadelphia merchants including Girard and Bingham; Baring was even a financial backer for some of the China ventures of Francis and Willing. Fichter, *So Great a Proffit*, 141–145.
- ⁸⁵ Intent on preserving its monopoly over tea imports from China, the East India Company conditioned its agreement to establishing the penal colony in Botany Bay on ensuring that any trade out of the new colony that might compete with its interests would be prevented. This constraint, maintained with little amendment before 1813, expressly required the colony's governors to prohibit trade between the colony and the company's settlements in India and the Chinese coast either by British subjects or visiting "neutral" vessels, see Instructions to Governor Phillip, April 25, 1787 (Colonial Office 201/1), HRA 1.1., 15–16. Nevertheless, pragmatic management of the colony's lack of basic supplies led all governors in the first two decades to interpret their instructions flexibly (see Note 80).