Marblehead’s Maritime History
The Ship’s Pass
by
Standley Goodwin
Marblehead’s Merchant Fleet

• From the 1720’s until the late 1830’s Marblehead had a merchant fleet.

• The cured fish from the fishing fleet made a good starter cargo for trading.

• Marblehead owners made the profits which mostly stayed in Marblehead.

• They were reinvested and fueled Marblehead’s economy.

• In the early 1800’s the merchant fleet varied from fourteen to thirty seven vessels.
### Rough Estimate of Marblehead Fleet

From: “Old Marblehead Sea Captains and the Ships in Which They Sailed

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<th>Vessel Type</th>
<th>1800</th>
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Model of Schooner Friendship; 1815
Dangers of the Sea

• Storms and Shipwrecks were always dangers.
• Pirates have always been a problem.
• In the late 1700’s and 1800’s war was an additional danger for the neutral U. S.
  – In wars Navies of Britain and France
    • Seized Vessels.
    • Impressed Crews.
• Privateers given Letters of Marque by France.
• The fledgling US government did what little it could to protect it’s Merchant Marine.
US Ship’s Pass

- Ship’s pass was document to avoid ship and crew seizure by Barbary Coast Pirates.
- Signed by President and Secretary of State.
- Issued by Collector of Port.
- Top cut in pattern by hand.
- Top piece sent to Consul in Pirate State.
- In case of question, top piece could be matched with Ship’s Pass
- Treaty with Pirate State had to be in place for Ship’s Pass to be effective.
The Ship’s Pass

Also Called Mediterranean Pass
Change of Command

- Captains of vessels changed frequently.
- Captain dies at sea.
- Voyages were long. Captains wanted time at home with families.
- New Captain generally assigned for new voyage.
- Whenever Captain changed an endorsement was added to the back of the Ship’s Pass.
- Pirates were suspicious people!
Change of Command; Ship Java
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Vessel Type/Name</th>
<th>Captain</th>
<th>Men</th>
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## MM&HS Ship’s Pass Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Ship Type/Name</th>
<th>Captain</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Tons</th>
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Barbary Coast Pirates

• The Pirate States of Tripoli, Tunis, Algiers, and Morocco captured ships in the Mediterranean and Eastern Atlantic.

• Captured crews were either held for ransom or sold into slavery. Ships and cargo were sold.

• Slave raids also made on southern European coast and captives sold in slave markets.

• Most European countries found it cheaper to pay states tribute than maintain a naval squadron to suppress them.
Barbary Coast

TIME Map by Joe Lertola
U. S Pirate Protection

• Colonial shipping was protected from Barbary Pirates by British Ships Pass.
• During Revolution France provided protection.
• After Revolution US had no Navy and could offer no protection.
• Barbary Pirates captured first US vessel in 1785.
• Treaties with pirate states negotiated. Morocco 1786; Algiers 1795; Tripoli 1797; and Tunis 1797
• US paid tribute. 20% of 1800 government income paid to Barbary Pirates.
British Ship’s Pass
First Barbary War

• In 1801 Pasha of Tripoli wants more tribute. Jefferson refuses. Pasha declares war on US.
• Jefferson sends squadron of new US Navy to Mediterranean.
• Navy learns how to fight. Some actions heroic, others abysmal.
• In 1805 second Treaty negotiated.
• By 1807 Algiers back to taking ships.
• US unable to respond. Difficulties with British dominate Naval affairs.
Burning of Philadelphia
Second Barbary War

• After war of 1812 over, in 1815 US sent Naval squadron to suppress Barbary Pirates.

• On way to Algiers, squadron captured Algiers 46 gun Flagship and 20 gun Brig. 500 captured.

• After persistent demands for recompensation and threats of Destruction, Dey of Algiers capitulated. Treaty accepted.

• Captured ships returned, captives exchanged, and $10,000 paid. NO MORE TRIBUTE.
1816 British Response

• After seeing success of US, British negotiated treaties with Tunis, Tripoli, and Algiers in 1816.
• Algerian troops massacre 200 Sicilian and Corsican fisherman under British protection.
• British send diplomat backed by squadron containing five Ships of the Line, Frigates, and six Dutch warships.
• Severe Treaty proposed and rejected.
• Squadron bombards Algiers for Nine Hours.
• Next day Algiers accepts Treaty.
• Treaty signed on Sept. 24, 1816.
• 1083 slaves freed, British Consul released, US ransom money repaid. Over 3000 slaves eventually released.
• British presence in Mediterranean and advances in warship design ended reign of Barbary Pirates.
• Algiers became Colony of France in 1830.
Bombardment of Algiers
The Sea Letter

• Another document to protect neutral US ships.
• Sea Letter was issued in time of war to identify country of ship, cargo and destination.
• Congress authorized issuing Sea Letters in 1796 in response to Napoleonic wars.
• Sea Letter issued for one voyage only.
• Signed by President, Secretary of State, and issued by Collector of port.
• Letter provided some level of protection if ship stopped by warship or privateer.
Congress Authorizes Sea Letter

[PASSPORT for SHIPS of the UNITED STATES. By an act of congress passed on the first of June 1796, it was made the duty of the secretary of state to prepare a form, which when approved by the president, was to be deemed the form of a Passport for ships and vessels of the United States. Sec. 1.

The following is the form thus prepared and approved.

THOMAS JEFFERSON,
President of the United States of America,
To all who shall see these presents, GREETING:

BE IT KNOWN, That leave and permission are hereby given to ——, master or commander of the —— called ——, of the burthen of —— tons or thereabouts, lying at present in the port of Philadelphia, bound for ——, and laden with sundries

(As per Manifest)

to depart and proceed with the said —— on his said voyage, such —— having been visited, and the said —— having made oath before the proper officer that the said —— belongs to one or more of the citizens of the United States of America, and to him or them only.

In witness whereof, I have subscribed my name to these Presents, and affixed the Seal of the United States of America thereto, and caused the same to be countersigned by John Graff, D. Collett. at Philadelphia, the ——day of —— in the year of our Lord Christ, 18—.

John Graff, D. C.
W. Tilton, D. N. Off.

THOMAS JEFFERSON.
By the President.
James Madison, Sec. State.
Sea Letter for Schooner “Success”
Famous Signatures

• Ships Passes and Sea Letter in MM&HS contain signatures of many important figures of US history.

• Signatures in MMHS collection include:
  – Secretary of State: Henry Clay
Presidential Signatures

By the President.

James Madison, Secretary of State.

Massachusetts

Marblehead and Lynn

Countersigned by

Joseph Wilson, Collector.

State of Massachusetts

District of Boston, Charles E. Smith Collection.
Presidential Signatures (Cont.)

James Monroe

By the President

John Quincy Adams Secretary of State

Massachusetts

Marblehead

Countersigned by Joseph Wilson, Esquire

J Q Adams

By the President

H Clay Secretary of State

State of

District of

Countersigned by Archibald Thompson

Colusa
Presidential Signatures (Cont.)