

Dolphin

Corvette

Massachusetts Privateer Schooner

(1) Commander Richard Masury

[15] November 1775-

(2) Commander Samuel Waters

14 August 1776-October 1776

(3) Commander John Leech [Leach]

30 September 1776-December 1776

Commissioned/First Date:

15 December 1775/22 November 1775

Out of Service/Cause:

Owners:

(1) Bartholomew Putnam, Joseph Sprague, Henry Rust, and Joshua Ward, all of Salem, Massachusetts; (2) Samuel Waters, Joseph Sprague, and Samuel Ward, all of Salem

Tonnage:

17-18

Battery:

Date Reported: 14 August 1776

Number/Caliber Weight Broadside

Total:

Broadside:

Swivels: six-eight

Date Reported: 30 September 1776

Number/Caliber Weight Broadside

Total:

Broadside:

Swivels: eight

Crew:

(1) 14 August 1776: 26 [total]

(2) 30 September 1776: 26 [total]

Description:

Officers:

Cruises:

(1) Salem, Massachusetts to sea and return, [15] November 1775-22 November 1775

(2) Salem, Massachusetts to sea and return, [January] 1776-[January] 1776

(3) Salem, Massachusetts to sea and return, [April] 1776-[April] 1776

(4) Salem, Massachusetts to sea and return, [May] 1776-[May] 1776

(5) Salem, Massachusetts to sea and return, [August 1776-September 1776]

(6) Salem, Massachusetts to sea and return, [October 1776-November 1776]

Prizes:

(1) Sloop *Fisher* (John Moodie), [22] November 1775

(2) Sloop *Success* (John Hitch), [15 January] 1776

- (3) Sloop *Dispatch*, [15 April 1776]
- (4) Schooner *Friendship*, [15 May 1776]
- (5) British Transport Brigantine *Royal George* (Dennis Doyle), 31 August 1776, with Massachusetts Privateer Schooner *Hannab and Molly*
- (6) Sloop *Halifax* (John McGregor), [15] September 1776
- (7) Ship *Sally* (John Burrows), [15 October] 1776
- (8) Brigantine *Diana* (William Bound), [August] 1777
- (9) Sloop *Betsey* (Robert Grant), [September] 1777, with Massachusetts Privateer Schooner *Cutter*
- (10) Schooner *Edward* (Ralph Taylor), [September] 1777
- (11) Brigantine *Salisbury* (John Mudge), [October] 1777

Actions:

Comments: Massachusetts Privateer Schooner *Dolphin* (Commander Richard Masury) was at sea before she was commissioned, in mid-November 1775. Sailing out of Salem, Massachusetts, *Dolphin* was almost certainly the first Massachusetts privateer at sea and made the first privateer capture of the war before 22 November 1775.¹ The 50² or 55-ton³ sloop *Fisher* (John Moodie [Moody])⁴ was en route from Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia to Broad Bay with a cargo of cattle, hay, wood, butter, fish and sundries when Masury captured her. *Fisher* was taken into Salem.⁵ Moodie claimed that the sloop had been captured by the British and forced to sail to Boston from Broad Bay, where her cargo of wood and potatoes was purchased for the British army and the sloop released.⁶ Moodie and his crew of four men were forwarded to the Massachusetts Council where they were examined. The Council released the crew on 6 December 1775 and put Moodie on a sort of parole, requiring he give bond before he was released.⁷ No one really believed Moodie's tale. The sloop was eventually libeled on 26 February 1776 with trial set for 21 March 1776.⁸

Dolphin's owners, Bartholomew Putnam, Joseph Sprague, Henry Rust, and Joshua Ward, all of Salem, now petitioned for a commission, on 1 December 1775,⁹ and the Massachusetts Council approved the petition on 8 December.¹⁰ Although *Dolphin*

¹ NDAR, "Extract of a Letter from Salem, Nov. 22, 1775," II, 1098 and note

² NDAR, IV, 666-667 and 667 note

³ NDAR, IV, 81-82 and 82 note; 1174-1176

⁴ NDAR, IV, 666-667 and 667 note

⁵ NDAR, IV, 666-667 and 667 note

⁶ NDAR, "Extract of a Letter from Salem, Nov. 22, 1775," II, 1098 and note

⁷ NDAR, II, 1303-1304 and 1304 note

⁸ NDAR, IV, 81-82 and 82 note; 666-667 and 667 note

⁹ NDAR, "Extract of a Letter from Salem, Nov. 22, 1775," II, 1098 and note; "Petition for Commission for the Massachusetts Privateer Schooner *Dolphin*," II, 1217. In Claghorn, *Naval Officers of the American Revolution*, 198, it is stated that Masury presented a petition for a commission on 1 November 1775, which is believed to be the first one presented in Massachusetts.

¹⁰ NDAR, "Petition for Commission for the Massachusetts Privateer Schooner *Dolphin*," II, 1217

was refitting at Salem on 11 December,¹¹ her £5000 Massachusetts bond¹² was not posted until 15 December.¹³ *Dolphin* was one of the "Spider Catcher" type of privateers, being only armed with a few swivel guns and measuring seventeen tons.¹⁴

Dolphin sailed again and captured at least one other prize during December 1775 and January 1776. This was the 50¹⁵ or 70-ton¹⁶ sloop *Success* (John Hitch).¹⁷ *Success* was libeled on 26 February 1776, with trial set for 21 March 1776.¹⁸ She was condemned and advertised for sale at Salem on 13 and 18 June 1776, the sale to take place on 26 June.¹⁹

Dolphin also captured the 45-ton sloop *Dispatch* and the 60-ton schooner *Friendship*,²⁰ presumably during April and May 1776.²¹ These prizes were in the hands of the *Dolphin*'s agent and were advertised to be sold at Salem on 26 June 1776.²² Nothing further is known about these prizes. Masury left the *Dolphin* during the spring or summer of 1776.

The *Dolphin* was recommissioned under Commander Samuel Waters on 14 August 1776. Her owners were listed as Waters, Joseph Sprague, and Samuel Ward. *Dolphin* was reported to be a tiny schooner of eighteen tons²³ armed with six²⁴ or eight swivel guns and having a crew of twenty-five men.²⁵ Her \$2000 Continental bond was signed by Waters, Sprague and Ward.²⁶

On 31 August 1776 the *Dolphin* and the Massachusetts Privateer Schooner *Hannah and Molly* (Commander Abner Crabtree) took the British Transport Brigantine *Royal George* (Dennis Doyle) and sent her into Frenchman's Bay. *Royal George* had a cargo of provisions and was en route to Halifax, Nova Scotia, having sailed from Waterford, Ireland in mid-June 1776.²⁷

Dolphin's next prize was the 95-ton sloop *Halifax* (John McGregor²⁸ or M'George),²⁹ sent into Salem on 25 September 1776.³⁰

¹¹ NDAR, III, 49-50 and 50 note

¹² Allen, *Massachusetts Privateers of the Revolution*, 116

¹³ NDAR, "Extract of a Letter from Salem, Nov. 22, 1775," II, 1098 and note; "Bond of Owner and Sureties of the Massachusetts Privateer Schooner *Boston Revenge*," II, 1316 and note

¹⁴ NDAR, "Petition for Commission for the Massachusetts Privateer Schooner *Dolphin*," II, 1217

¹⁵ NDAR, IV, 81-82 and 82 note. The note says the captors of the *Fisher* and the *Success* were unknown, but both were captured by the *Dolphin*. See NDAR, IV, 1174-1176

¹⁶ NDAR, V, 508 and note; 596

¹⁷ NDAR, IV, 1174-1176; V, 508 and note, 596

¹⁸ NDAR, IV, 81-82 and 82 note; V, 508 and note

¹⁹ NDAR, V, 508 and note, 596

²⁰ NDAR, V, 508 and note, 596

²¹ NDAR, IV, 1174-1176

²² NDAR, V, 508 and note, 596

²³ NDAR, VI, 178-179 and 179 note

²⁴ NDAR, VII, 139-141 and 141 note

²⁵ NDAR, VI, 178-179 and 179 note

²⁶ Allen, *Massachusetts Privateers of the Revolution*, 116

²⁷ NDAR, VI, 1001-1002. In Maclay, *History of American Privateers*, 62-63 and 71, this capture is attributed to *Dolphin*'s next commander, John Leach, and is dated in September 1776.

²⁸ NDAR, VI, 1114-1115

²⁹ NDAR, VII, 809-810

³⁰ NDAR, VI, 1053 and note; 1001 and note. The vessel is misidentified in the note as the schooner *Prosperity* with a cargo of dry fish.

Halifax had sailed from Newfoundland.³¹ She was libeled on 3 October 1776 and tried on 18 October.³²

Waters left the *Dolphin* and she was recommissioned on 30 September 1776,³³ under Commander John Leech³⁴ (or Leach).³⁵ *Dolphin* was listed as having a battery of eight swivel guns and a crew of twenty-five men. Her \$5000 Continental bond was signed by Leach, Ward, and Sprague.³⁶

Under Leach, the *Dolphin* captured the *Sally* (John Burrows), a 200³⁷ or 220-ton ship built in Philadelphia,³⁸ with a cargo of lemons, wine, currants, salt and onions. The prize arrived at Salem on 8 November 1776.³⁹ Her sale was held on 7 January 1777.⁴⁰

[??took 90-ton brigantine *Betsey*, libeled 12/19/76 in MCEastern District, trial 16 Jan 77] [*The Continental Journal*, December 19, 1776]

On 2 December 1776 the Massachusetts Board of War ordered its president, James Warren, to charter or purchase four schooners to proceed to Baltimore to obtain flour, and one to voyage to Charleston to obtain rice.⁴¹ *Dolphin* was one of those chartered at Salem, thus becoming Massachusetts Navy Schooner *Dolphin*.

Dolphin had returned to her privateer status by late 1777. On 18 September 1777 and 2 October 1777 the 100-ton brigantine *Diana* (William Bound) was libeled in the Massachusetts Maritime Court of the Middle District. Trial was set for 7 October.⁴²

In conjunction with Massachusetts Privateer Schooner *Cutter* (Commander Silas Smith) the 80-ton sloop *Betsey* (Robert Grant) was captured. *Betsey* was libeled on 30 October by the two skippers, with trial set for 25 November 1777.⁴³ This was probably the unknown sloop with a cargo of rum and sugar that the Boston newspapers reported as being captured by *Cutter* and Massachusetts Privateer Schooner *Terrible* (Commander John Conway).⁴⁴

During this same cruise Leach captured the 50-ton schooner *Edward* (Ralph Taylor), with a cargo of fish. The fish was removed and taken into Boston, Massachusetts, where it was libeled on 30 October 1777, with trial set for 25 November 1777. It is unclear what happened to *Edward*.⁴⁵

³¹ NDAR, VII, 809-810

³² NDAR, VI, 1114-1115

³³ Allen, *Massachusetts Privateers of the Revolution*, 116-117

³⁴ NDAR, VII, 139-141 and 141 note

³⁵ NDAR, VII, 560-561

³⁶ Allen, *Massachusetts Privateers of the Revolution*, 116-117

³⁷ NDAR, VII, 139-141 and 141 note

³⁸ NDAR, VII, 567-568

³⁹ NDAR, VII, 139-141 and 141 note

⁴⁰ NDAR, VII, 567-568

⁴¹ NDAR, VII, 346-347 and 347 note

⁴² NDAR, "Libels Filed in the Massachusetts Maritime Court of the Middle District," X, 15-16

⁴³ NDAR, "Libels Filed in the Massachusetts Maritime Court of the Middle District," X, 354-355 and 355 notes

⁴⁴ NDAR, "*Continental Journal and Weekly Advertiser* (Boston), Thursday, November 6, 1777," X, 415 and notes

⁴⁵ NDAR, "Libels Filed in the Massachusetts Maritime Court of the Middle District," X, 354-355 and 355 notes

Dolphin, about October 1777, captured the 100-ton brigantine *Salisbury* (John Mudge). *Dolphin* was sent into Massachusetts, where she was libeled in the Massachusetts Court of the Middle District on 6 November 1777, with trial set for 27 November.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ NDAR, "Libels Filed in the Massachusetts Maritime Court of the Middle District," X, 414-415