



Oliver Cromwell

(1) Captain William Coit

Frigate

11 July 1776-14 April 1777

Connecticut Navy Ship

(2) Captain Seth Harding

11 April 1777-6 December 1777

(3) Captain Timothy Parker

6 December 1777-5 June 1779

Commissioned/First Date:

13 June 1776/launched

Out of Service/Cause:

5 June 1779/captured by HM Frigate *Daphne*

Tonnage:

300, 319

Battery:

Date Reported:

Number/Caliber Weight Broadside

20/6-pounder 120 pounds 60 pounds

Total: 20 cannon/120 pounds

Broadside: 10 cannon/60 pounds

Crew:

(1) 5 June 1777: 150 [total]

(2) 1 October 1777: 35 [estimated]

Description:

(1) 80' on the keel, with a 27' beam and 12' depth in the hold; (2) 82'5" length on the keel, 27' beam, and 7'8" depth in the hold

Officers:

(1) First Lieutenant Timothy Parker, 11 July 1776 (did not accept appointment)

(2) First Lieutenant Michael Melally, 27 August 1776-14 March 1777

(3) First Lieutenant Timothy Parker, 11 April 1777-6 December 1777

(4) First Lieutenant John Chapman, 6 December 1777-5 June 1779

(5) Second Lieutenant David Hawley, 11 July 1776-9 August 1776

(6) Second Lieutenant John Chapman, 27 August 1776-6 December 1777

- (7) Second Lieutenant John Smith, 6 December 1777-
- (8) Second Lieutenant Caleb Frisbie, December 1777-

- (9) Third Lieutenant Samuel Champlin, Jr., 31 July 1776-
[August] 1776
- (10) Third Lieutenant John Smith, 27 August 1776-6
December 1777
- (11) Third Lieutenant John Tillinghast, 6 December 1777-

- (12) Master Azariah Whittlesay, 31 July 1776-23 October
1776
- (13) Master Levi Young, 23 October 1776-14 April 1777
- (14) Master Josiah Burnham, 11 April 1777-
- (15) Master Caleb Frisbie, 24 April 1777-14 October 1777
- (16) Master Benjamin Jones, December 1777-
- (17) Master Andrew Morris, December 1777-

- (18) [First Mate Levi Young], [-23 October 1776]
- (19) First Mate Thomas Chatfield, [present 25 February
1777]
- (20) First Mate Thomas Rice, 3 May 1777-14 October 1777
- (21) First Mate Andrew Morris, December 1777- (promoted
to Master)
- (22) First Mate Curtis Reed, December 1777 (promoted from
Third Mate)

- (23) Second Mate Nathaniel Wilson, [present 25 February
1777]
- (24) Second Mate Stephen Lee, 31 May 1777-14 October
1777
- (25) Second Mate Joseph Hubbard, December 1777-
- (26) Second Mate Ralph Hoadley, December 1777- (promoted
from Midshipman)

- (27) Third Mate Thomas Whelden, 1 June 1777-22
September 1777
- (28) Third Mate Curtis Reed, December 1777 (promoted to
First Mate)
- (29) Third Mate Samuel Stowe, December 1777 (promoted
from Midshipman)

- (30) Pilot Thomas Jones, [present 25 February 1777]
- (31) Pilot Nathan Daggett, 19 May 1777-14 October 1777
- (32) Pilot John Chatfield, 14 April 1777-26 September 1777
- (33) Pilot George Hillman, 1 June 1777-22 September 1777



- (34) Surgeon Albegence Waldo, [10 October] 1776-
 (35) Surgeon Benjamin Ellis, 14 April 1777-14 October 1777
- (36) Surgeon's Mate Thomas Gray, 10 September 1776-
 (37) Surgeon's Mate Timothy Rogers, 28 April 1777-14 October 1777
 (38) Surgeon's Mate Gideon Chapman, December 1777-
- (39) Captain of Marines Eliphalet Roberts, 31 July 1776-
 [June] 1777
 (40) Captain of Marines James Day, December 1777-18 April 1778 (promoted from First Lieutenant of Marines; killed)
- (41) First Lieutenant of Marines John Prentice 2nd, 31 July 1776-
 (42) [First] Lieutenant of Marines James Day, 14 April 1777-14 October 1777
- (43) Second Lieutenant of Marines Joab Beebe, 31 July 1776-
 [21 August] 1776
 (44) Second Lieutenant of Marines Bela Elderkin, 21 August 1776-
- (45) Midshipman John Bailey, [7 August] 1776-[14 April] 1777
 (46) Midshipman Allen Christophers
 (47) Midshipman Jonathan Woodworth, 14 April 1777-14 October 1777
 (48) Midshipman Sherman Lewis, 14 April 1777-14 October 1777
 (49) Midshipman Sylvanus Pinkham
 (50) Midshipman Giles Hollester
 (51) Midshipman Curtis Reed, 14 April 1777-14 October 1777
 (52) Midshipman Ralph Hoadley, 27 April 1777-14 October 1777 (promoted to Second Mate)
 (53) Midshipman Andrew Morris, 28 May 1777-14 October 1777
- (54) Midshipman Robert Alsop James, 9 June 1777-14 October 1777
 (55) Midshipman Samuel Stowe, December 1777- (promoted to Third Mate)
 (56) Midshipman Sanuel Bidwell, December 1777
 (57) Midshipman Isaiah Cahoon, December 1777
 (58) Midshipman Samuel Buffam, December 1777

1777



Cruises:

- (1) Saybrook, Connecticut to New London, Connecticut, 18 August 1776-20 August 1776
- (2) New London, Connecticut to Bedford, Massachusetts, 22 May 1777-23 May 1777
- (3) Bedford, Massachusetts to Kennebec River, Massachusetts [Maine], 5 June 1777-3/4 September 1777
- (4) Kennebec River, Massachusetts [Maine] to Boston, Massachusetts, [7] September 1777-10 September 1777
- (3) Boston, Massachusetts to Charlestown, South Carolina, [1] April 1778-30 May 1778
- (4) Charlestown, South Carolina to New London, Connecticut, 24 July 1778-6 September 1778
- (5) New London, Connecticut to New London, Connecticut, 1 May 1779-24 May 1779
- (6) New London, Connecticut to sea, 3 June 1779-5 June 1779, with Connecticut Privateer Sloop *Hancock*

Prizes:

- (1) Brigantine *Honor* (John Jackson), 8 July 1777, at 45°12' N, 34°W.
- (2) Ship *Restoration* (Robbins), 18 July 1777, off the Azores Islands.
- (3) HM Packet Ship *Weymouth* (Captain Charles Flynn), 28 July 1777, off the Azores Islands.
- (4) Snow *Admiral Keppel* (Abraham Brown), 15 April 1778, with Connecticut Navy Ship *Defence*
- (5) Ship *Cyrus* (Christopher Deake), 15 April 1778, with Connecticut Navy Ship *Defence*
- (6) Brig *Medway*, 30 August 1778
- (7) British Privateer Schooner *St. George* (James Carew), May 1778



(8) Schooner [unknown], May 1778

(9) Sloop Tender *York* (Francis Gardiner), May 1778

(10) Schooner *Dove* (Henry Blight) [recapture], May 1778

(11) British Privateer Sloop *Ariel* (Hagins [Hagir]), 4 June 1779

Actions:

(1) Action of 28 July 1777 with HM Packet Ship *Weymouth* (Captain Charles Flynn)

(2) Action with *Admiral Keppel* and *Cyrus*, 15 April 1778

(3) Action with HM Frigate *Daphne*, 6 June 1779

Comments:

Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell* was authorized by the General Assembly on 31 January 1776. She was to have a length of 80' on the keel, with a 27' beam and 12' depth in the hold. She was to be built at Saybrook, Connecticut, in Essex County.¹ Master builder Uriah Hayden of Saybrook was selected to build the ship. Her construction was under way by 16 May 1776 when Hayden drew £500 from the Council of Safety and the Governor for the work.² The overseer of the work was Captain Ephraim Bill,³ and the general supervisor was Captain Seth Harding.⁴

On 7 June 1776, Bill was authorized to put materials aboard the Connecticut Navy Galley *Shark* (Captain Theophilus Stanton) for delivery at Saybrook. The Council of Safety ordered Bill paid £200 for work on the *Oliver Cromwell* at the same time.⁵ *Oliver Cromwell* was to be launched on 13 June 1776.⁶ On 19 June Hayden received another £400 on his account for the *Oliver Cromwell*.⁷ During the entire period of construction the various vouchers paid amounted to £1750, the vouchers running from 2 April 1776 to 23 October 1776. These payments included provision for rigging which was furnished by Ephraim Bill; William Lax for making the gun carriages; Nathaniel

¹ Middlebrook, *History of Maritime Connecticut*, 1:80

² NDAR, "Order on Connecticut Committee of the Pay Table for Building the Ship *Oliver Cromwell*," 5:121

³ NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 5:409-410

⁴ Middlebrook, *History of Maritime Connecticut*, 1:80

⁵ NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 5:409-410

⁶ NDAR, "*Connecticut Gazette*, Friday, June 7, 1776," 5:410 and note

⁷ NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 5:624-625



Wales for muskets and gun locks, and Capt.. Benjamin Williams for iron and blacksmith work.⁸

The *Oliver Cromwell* was launched at Saybrook on Thursday, June 13, 1776.⁹

On 11 July 1776 Captain William Coit called on the Council of Safety and requested the appointment as Captain of the *Oliver Cromwell*. Coit was a veteran of the Continental Army Squadron at Boston (Washington's Navy) and had participated in several widely publicized captures. His request stirred a large debate in the Council as to whether it was time to appoint officers and who those officers might be. Finally Coit was appointed Captain, Timothy Parker was named as First Lieutenant, and David Hawley as Second Lieutenant. Coit was then called in by the Governor who "gave him advice, instruction and admonition as to his conduct &c." The date of these men's commissions was deferred for further consideration, and their pay was to begin when commissioned.¹⁰

Timothy Parker was a good choice, as he was then serving as First Lieutenant on the Connecticut Navy Schooner *Spy*. Parker did not, however accept the appointment, choosing to remain in the *Spy*.¹¹ Hawley was another good choice, but before he could take up his duties he was appointed to raise a company of sailors for service on Lake Champlain, and command a galley there.

Before the decision of Parker and Hawley was known the Council of Safety appointed additional officers. On 31 July Samuel Champlin, Jr. (of New London) was appointed as Third Lieutenant, Azariah Whittlesay (of Saybrook) as Master, Eliphalet Roberts (of Hartford) as Captain of Marines, John Prentice 2nd (of New London) as First Lieutenant of Marines, and Joab Beebe (of New London) as Second Lieutenant of Marines. Six midshipmen were authorized. As to the crew they were to be enlisted until 1 May 1777, the Council giving Coit £250 to begin recruiting. Coit was to post a bond as security for the advance and his performance of duty as pay-master.¹²

Samuel Champlin, Jr. was a resident of New London,¹³ a former merchant master. Unfortunately, he departed before 27 August to command a privateer.¹⁴ Not much is known of the others. Joab Beebe's entry in the Journal of the Council of Safety indicates the name was crossed out later,

⁸ Middlebrook, *History of Maritime Connecticut*, 1:80

⁹ Middlebrook, *History of Maritime Connecticut*, 1:80

¹⁰ NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 5:1027

¹¹ NDAR, "Muster Roll of the State Schooner *Spy*," 6:1160-1161; "Disbursements Made by Captain Robert Niles of the Connecticut Schooner *Spy*," 6:1162

¹² NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 5:1303-1304

¹³ NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 5:1303-1304 and 1304 note

¹⁴ NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 6:316

perhaps indicating that Beebe declined the appointment, or that the Council reconsidered.¹⁵ Azariah Whittlesay was one of the men recommended by Brigadier General Benedict Arnold to raise a company of sailors in Connecticut and command a galley on Lake Champlain (24 July 1776).¹⁶

The Council also directed Richard Law to draw up a set of Navy rules and regulations for the Connecticut Navy, following as closely as possible the Continental rules and regulations, except where those were in conflict with Connecticut law. Nathaniel Shaw, Jr. was ordered to provide all necessary supplies to the *Oliver Cromwell* and Coit was ordered to bring her around to New London from Saybrook as soon as possible.¹⁷

On 1 August 1776, during the night, a thunderstorm raged over the ship and she was struck by lightning, damaging her mainmast and mizzenmast.¹⁸ On Sunday, 18 August 1776, the *Oliver Cromwell*, commanded by Captain Coit and piloted by James Harris, sailed out of the Connecticut River and arrived at New London on Tuesday, 20 August. She was the largest craft that had ever come over Saybrook bar.¹⁹

The minor officers were arriving at New London in early August 1776. As they arrived at New London they were roomed and boarded at public expense, pending the arrival of the ship. By 7 August 1776, two midshipman, John Bailey and Sylvanus Pinkham, had arrived.²⁰

On 21 August the Connecticut Council of Safety appointed Bela Elderkin (of Windham) as Second Lieutenant of Marines aboard the ship.²¹ On 27 August the Council undertook to fill the lieutenantcies vacated by Parker, Hawley and Champlin. John Chapman, a resident of New London, was appointed as Second Lieutenant and John Smith, a resident of East Hartford, was appointed as Third Lieutenant. Smith was commissioned on 30 August.²² Michael Melally, a merchant marine master who was highly recommended to the Council of Safety by Nathaniel Shaw, Jr., the Connecticut Agent at New London, was appointed as First Lieutenant. Melally's past services were trivial: in April 1776 he escorted the high ranking prisoners from Commodore Hopkins's New Providence Expedition (Governor Montfort Browne and James Babbage) to their place of

¹⁵ NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 5:1303-1304 and 1304 note

¹⁶ NDAR, "Brigadier General Benedict Arnold to Major General Philip Schuyler," 5:1197-1198

¹⁷ NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 5:1303-1304

¹⁸ NDAR, "*Connecticut Gazette*, Friday, August 9, 1776," 6:129-130 and 130 note; *Connecticut Courant*, Monday, August 12, 1776," 6:154 and note

¹⁹ Middlebrook, *History of Maritime Connecticut*, 1:80

²⁰ NDAR, "Michael Melally's Bill Against the State of Connecticut," 7:459

²¹ NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 6:253 and note

²² NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 6:316

confinement.²³

Melally joined the shore living officers at New London, on 28 August 1776. He supervised the cleaning (graving) of the ship during this time.²⁴ Among his minor duties was purchasing a dozen brooms for the ship.²⁵ Thomas Gray was appointed as Surgeon's Mate "and Physician" on 10 September 1776,²⁶ and joined the good living ashore at New London in late September. During his time ashore he had care of one wounded man, two sick and one lame.²⁷

In September recruiting began in earnest. Second Lieutenant of Marines Elderkin traveled up and down the coast attempting to recruit Marines for the ship.²⁸ Levi Young, probably the First Mate, traveled to Martha's Vineyard, and from there to Cape Cod, beginning on 10 September. He returned to New London on 14 October, having recruited three sailors.²⁹ Young was appointed Master on 23 October 1776, when Whittlesay departed.³⁰ On 10 January 1777 he made another recruiting trip to Providence and back.³¹

Dr. Albengence Waldo had joined as Surgeon about 10 October. He was one of those officers who roomed and boarded ashore during the time the ship was fitting out, from about 10 October 1776 to 12 December 1776.³² He treated one of Connecticut Navy Brig *Defence's* crew in February 1777.³³

On 22 October, Titus Hosmer, a member of the Council, gave an order to Mr. Buell for 40 firearms to be delivered to Captain Coit for the use of the ship. The next day James Tilly of Saybrook was allowed £400 for cordage, and Levi Young was appointed Master and warrant as

²³ NDAR, "Nathaniel Shaw, Jr.'s Account Against the Continental Ship *Alfred* for 1776," 7:655-657, "Nathaniel Shaw, Jr.'s Account Against the Continent," 6:1061 and note

²⁴ NDAR, "Michael Melally's Bill Against the State of Connecticut," 7:459

²⁵ NDAR, "List of Stores On Board the Connecticut Ship *Oliver Cromwell*," 7:278-279

²⁶ NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 6:770

²⁷ NDAR, "Michael Melally's Bill Against the State of Connecticut," 7:459

²⁸ NDAR, "Recruiting Expenses of Levi Young, Master of the Connecticut State Ship *Oliver Cromwell*," 7:911-912 and 912 note

²⁹ NDAR, "Recruiting Expenses of Levi Young, Master of the Connecticut State Ship *Oliver Cromwell*," 7:911-912 and 912 note

³⁰ NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 6:1381

³¹ NDAR, "Recruiting Expenses of Levi Young, Master of the Connecticut State Ship *Oliver Cromwell*," 7:911-912 and 912 note

³² NDAR, "Michael Melally's Bill Against the State of Connecticut," 7:459

³³ NDAR, "Nathaniel Shaw, Jr.'s Account Against the Connecticut Brig *Defence*," 7:1220-1221

such issued by the Governor.³⁴

Oliver Cromwell was armed with 6-pounders.³⁵

On 23 October Coit also received two months cruising orders and Nathaniel Shaw of New London was directed to supply the ship with whatever it needed. On 15 November 1776, Coit was allowed £1,000 for the use of the ship and Mr. Shaw £2,000 for public use. Dr. Samuel Lee of Windham was appointed Surgeon of the *Cromwell* on the same day. On 14 December 1776 Shaw was authorized to draw a letter of credit in favor of Coit, for use when necessary, for repairs or supplies while in any foreign port, and Dr. Albigeance Waldo was appointed Chief Surgeon of the ship, as evidently Dr. Lee had resigned.³⁶

About 5 December Lieutenant Smith joined the officers who roomed and boarded ashore during the time the ship was fitting out. All went aboard ship about 12 December 1776.³⁷

On 24 February 1777 Elderkin was sent to Lebanon with a crew list requested by Governor Jonathan Trumbull and a letter from Captain Coit. Elderkin was especially to inform Trumbull of First Lieutenant Samuel Smedley's (Connecticut Navy Brig *Defence*) attempts to recruit *Oliver Cromwell's* crew.³⁸ He is shown as being on furlough on the crew list, dated 25 February.³⁹

Roberts is shown as on furlough on 25 February 1777, in the ship's crew list.⁴⁰ He traveled to Hartford and was there on 24 February, where he wrote a private history of the ship to Governor Trumbull. Roberts noted that Coit was capable "for a seaman," and that it was not Coit's fault that the ship was still in port. Roberts reported that the officers seemed unacquainted with handling the ship under sail, and that First Lieutenant Michael Melally in particular, had an arrogant, obstinate attitude. On another occasion during a sailing trial Coit and his lieutenants handled the ship "very porly indeede." Roberts would have spoken up to Coit, but if he had done so "I should offended." When the ship seemed about to sail Roberts had reported aboard but "was Leetle wanted." The Marine lieutenant and sergeant were "plenty for Comand as they nor my selfe have aney onboard." The officers from New London had done "nomor'd than just past time," the petty officers and crew doing the work. Roberts had heard "sum one gentleman has Drank

³⁴ Middlebrook, History of Maritime Connecticut, 1:80

³⁵ NDAR, "Nathaniel Shaw, Jr.'s Account of Receipt and Distribution of Goods from Commodore Esek Hopkins," 6:117-120

³⁶ Middlebrook, History of Maritime Connecticut, 1:80-81

³⁷ NDAR, "Michael Melally's Bill Against the State of Connecticut," 7:459

³⁸ NDAR, "Captain William Coit, Connecticut Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathon Trumbull," 7:1279-1280

³⁹ NDAR, "A List of the Marines that have and do Belong to the Ship *Oliver Cromwell* William Coit Esqr Commander," 7:1287-1289

⁴⁰ NDAR, "A List of the Marines that have and do Belong to the Ship *Oliver Cromwell* William Coit Esqr Commander," 7:1287-1289



no grog and Dun all the work...but this I am sure that sum one gentleman has Dun all the mischief." Roberts would have come to Lebanon, but the other officers would then have thought he was going to "informe." Roberts asked Trumbull to keep this information to himself, not even showing the Council of Safety the letter. He was going now to recruit Marines and send them down to the ship.⁴¹

Oliver Cromwell's crew list, submitted in response to the Council's request and dated 25 February 1777, shows Second Lieutenant John Smith, Third Lieutenant John Chapman, Second Lieutenant of Marines John Prentice, First Mate Thomas Chatfield, Second Mate Nathaniel Wilson, Pilot Thomas Jones, Surgeon Albegece Waldo, Surgeon's Mate Thomas Gray, Midshipman John Bailey, Allen Christophers, Luther Elderkin, Giles Hollester, Sylvanus Pinkham aboard⁴²

Melally was obstinate, saying that "he n his bisness & he Did not want aney body to tell him aney thing nor to interfeare with his bisness nither wood he interfeare with aney bodyes Else bisness." In the opinion of Captain of Marines Eliphalet Roberts, Melally didn't know how to handle a big square rigged ship like the *Oliver Cromwell*.⁴³

Melally was discharged by the Council of Safety on 14 March 1777.⁴⁴ This news was brought from Lebanon by Marine Captain Eliphalet Roberts on 17 March and produced "a Vast Confusion on Board...Party will be party," reported Coit.⁴⁵ On 17 March 1777 Luther Elderkin wrote to Governor Trumbull and the Council of Safety, reporting "Uneasiness" among the officers over First Lieutenant Michael Melally's dismissal and that some "inexperienced" person would be appointed to that office. Elderkin reported that Master Levi Young, the boatswain, and several other officers would "decline the service, unless the Ship shall be officer'd agreeable to their Minds." Elderkin requested a discharge from the ship, or appointment to some other service, but noted he had no objection to sailing under Coit.⁴⁶ On 23 March Elderkin and Boatswain Robert Newson wrote to Trumbull, pointing out the lack of experienced officers aboard and the insufficient number of sailors "to sail her in safety." As their time of enlistment was out on 1 May 1777, the officers requested

⁴¹ NDAR, "Marine Captain Eliphalet Roberts of the Connecticut Ship *Oliver Cromwell* to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 7:1277-1279

⁴² NDAR, "A List of Officers & Seamen Belonging & have Belong'd to the Ship *Oliver Cromwell*," 7:1283-1287

⁴³ NDAR, "Marine Captain Eliphalet Roberts of the Connecticut Ship *Oliver Cromwell* to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 7:1277-1279 and 1279 note

⁴⁴ NDAR, "Captain William Coit, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 8:310-311 and 311 note

⁴⁵ NDAR, "Captain William Coit, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 8:133-134 and 134 note

⁴⁶ NDAR, "Midshipman Luther Elderkin, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to the Governor and Council of Connecticut," 8: 134-135

a discharge. They noted that Melally had always behaved as an experienced officer should.⁴⁷

Oliver Cromwell lay at New London in early March, fitted out and provisioned for sea except for bread, rum and wood. However there was great discontent in the officers and crew. The acceptance of Lieutenant Michael Melally's resignation stirred things to near the crisis point. Captain William Coit heard the news from Captain Eliphalet Roberts, who brought word that the Council expected Coit to nominate a successor. Coit took the occasion to "Illucidate the Scituation of the ship" to the Council on 17 March 1777. He had used every means in his power, he said, to engage a good crew, but the men had been lured away, nearly one hundred of them. Now the dismissal of Melally "makes a Vast Confusion on Board Party will be party." Many men who were just at the point of doing their duty now again made excuses to avoid service, others were going away for increased pay in other services, making "their own discharge," and Coit knew not how to act or stop them. He thought it would be best not to appoint a replacement for Melally at this time. He plead his own "Honest" heart to the Council and hoped that "Vile representations" would not prejudice the Council against him. Coit asked for £1000 from the Council to pay the men and settle them down, and also asked for directions concerning the boat traffic in and out of New London.⁴⁸

No sooner had news of Melally's dismissal spread through the ship than Midshipman Luther Elderkin took pen in hand to promote himself into Melally's place. Elderkin noted there was an "Uneasiness not only among the Officers, but also among the Seamen on board, lest some inexperienced Person may be appointed in his place...in Consequence thereof, the Master, Boatswain, and several other Officers will decline the Service, unless the Ship shall be officer'd agreeable to their Minds." Although he had already requested a discharge, Elderkin would accept a promotion and be willing to sail under Coit, if the Council of Safety so chose.⁴⁹

On 19 March Lieutenant John Smith brought down a letter from Trumbull requesting that Coit submit his accounts. Coit replied on the same day. He would bring his accounts, but must stay on the ship just now as there was great danger. The British had threatened to cut out the ship and were under orders to blockade the port because the *Oliver Cromwell* was there. The inhabitants looked upon her as the chief defense of the port, the militia being not being present. Further many people were trying to get his sailors, bidding "Forty Dollars...for any of my smallest Men." He had received no orders or rules to guide himself by. As soon as he could leave, Coit promised to present his accounts, which were ever ready for "the most critical examination."⁵⁰

By 23 March the situation aboard the *Oliver Cromwell* was getting from bad to worse. Elderkin

⁴⁷ NDAR, "Midshipman Luther Elderkin and Boatswain Robert Newson, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 8:184-185

⁴⁸ NDAR, "Captain William Coit, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 8:133-134

⁴⁹ NDAR, "Midshipman Luther Elderkin, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to the Governor and Council of Connecticut," 8: 134-135

⁵⁰ NDAR, "Captain William Coit, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 8:153-154



and Boatswain Robert Newson addressed a joint letter to the governor asking for a discharge. They had now been aboard six months and, when they enlisted, had expected to sail soon. Now the ship appeared to be stuck in port until 1 May, which was the expiration date of their enlistments. The two requested a discharge because the ship had no experienced officers, and there were not enough sailors to “sail her in safety. Elderkin and Newson categorized Melally as a good officer: “he all ways behavd himself as well Expearent ofser On Bord.” They denied any dislike of Coit, but preferred more active and useful employment.⁵¹ *Oliver Cromwell* was at New London about 24 March 1777, with about ninety men aboard.⁵²

On 26 March he reported a farce that had been performed in his absence. On the day that Captain Elisha Hinman’s (Continental Navy Ship *Alfred*) marriage was celebrated in New London the officers of the *Oliver Cromwell* decided to fire a salute. “A mischevious Ladd when the Guns were loaded told as mischievous a Boy to put a Shot in it which he did, entirely unknown to any of the Officers...the Boy mistook, and for a Shot took a Hand Granado.” The guns were fired and the hand grenade sped whistling through the air, alarming all and sundry in its path. The two were clapped in irons. Coit didn’t know what to do and wondered if the Continental regulations should apply, or some other. He begged directions from the governor.⁵³

On 10 April Coit dispatched Captain Eliphalet Roberts and Lieutenant John Chapman to Governor Trumbull with their accounts and a letter. As his crew’s enlistment was nearly out Coit suggested one settlement, on 1 May. He requested recruiting orders for a new crew, and the terms of enlistment. Coit said he had many men who would sail if they knew the terms, further, there were seventy good men at Wood’s Hole, waiting to join the ship. As he feared there was great confusion aboard and many people trying to recruit his crew as their time of discharge approached. Perhaps he could call on the governor in ten days or so.⁵⁴

Smith returned to New London from Lebanon on 19 March 1777, bringing the Council of Safety’s request for Coit’s accounts.⁵⁵ On 10 April 1777 Chapman was sent by Captain Coit, along with Marine Captain Eliphalet Roberts to present his accounts to the Council of Safety at Lebanon.⁵⁶ Among the officers who probably left the ship were midshipmen John Bailey and Luther Elderkin.⁵⁷

⁵¹ NDAR, “Midshipman Luther Elderkin and Boatswain Robert Newson, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull,” 8:184-185

⁵² *The New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Monday, March 24, 1777

⁵³ NDAR, “Captain William Coit, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull,” 8:205-206

⁵⁴ NDAR, “Captain William Coit, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull,” 8:310-311

⁵⁵ NDAR, “Captain William Coit, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull,” 8:153-154

⁵⁶ NDAR, “Captain William Coit, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull,” 8:310-311

⁵⁷ NDAR, “Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety,” 8:319



By now Trumbull and the Council of Safety had had quite enough of Coit's pipe dreams. On 11 April he was discharged from the *Oliver Cromwell*, as of 14 April. Captain Seth Harding was selected to replace Coit. A full set of officers was selected to the ship: First Lieutenant Timothy Parker, Second Lieutenant John Chapman, Third Lieutenant John Smith, Captain of Marines Eliphalet Roberts, First Lieutenant of Marines John Prentice 2nd, and Second Lieutenant of Marines Bela Elderkin, and Master Josiah Burnam. Harding was to enlist a new crew until 14 October.⁵⁸ Trumbull immediately notified Coit and ordered him to make up his accounts, discharging the officers and crew. Trumbull noted that the Council of Safety had been "Mortified...to find it out of their Power to push the Ship out on a Cruise." The Council realized that Coit had been "greatly Ebarrassed" and had labored under difficulties. The Council concluded these "difficulties" were "Insurmountable," at least to Coit.⁵⁹

Of course the Council of Safety was not yet finished with Coit. On 22 April he managed to finally attend the Council, "complaining of hard treatment, in being dismiss'd from said ship &c," and demanding a settlement of his accounts. The Council appointed John Deshon, Ebenezer Ledyard and Joseph Hurlbut as a committee to examine the accounts. They also ordered Nathaniel Shaw, Jr., as agent for the state, to attend the sessions and act on behalf of the state.⁶⁰

Josiah Burnham, the appointed master,⁶¹ was a past veteran of the Connecticut Navy, having served aboard the Connecticut Navy Brig *Defence* as Master from 1 April 1776 to 10 January 1777.⁶² Reappointed were Chapman, Bela Elderkin, Roberts, and Smith. Parker had thus evidently been exchanged by 11 April.⁶³ Not all these people resumed or accepted their appointments. According to the pay roll of the *Oliver Cromwell*, the master was Caleb Frisbie, who entered on 24 April. None of the Connecticut Marine officers entered the ship. The only Marine officer was Lieutenant of Marines James Day, who entered on 14 April. Three midshipmen entered on 14 April, Jonathan Bloodworth, Sherman Lewis, and Curtis Reed, as did Surgeon Benjamin Ellis. Also aboard was Pilot John Chtfield. Thirty-one sailors and six marines also entered the same day: a fine nucleus of a crew.⁶⁴

Harding wasted no time getting started. A recruiting rendezvous was opened at the Golden Ball Tavern in New London, and advertisements taken out in the local newspapers for sailors, starting

⁵⁸ NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 8:319

⁵⁹ NDAR, "Governor Jonathan Trumbull to Captain William Coit of the Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*," 8:320

⁶⁰ NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 8:402-403

⁶¹ NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 8:319

⁶² NDAR, "Pay Roll of the Connecticut State Brig *Defence*," 7:170-177; NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 7:914

⁶³ NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 8:319

⁶⁴ NDAR, "Pay Roll of Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*," 10:154-160

18 April.⁶⁵ By 28 April twenty men had entered, including the new master, Midshipman Ralph Hoadley, and Surgeon's Mate Timothy Rogers. Three of those enlisted were Marines. From 1 May 1777 to 13 May, Harding enlisted forty men, including eighteen Marines. The only officer who joined was First Mate Thomas Rice (on 3 May).⁶⁶

By 13 May he was so far along that he planned to sail about the 20th. However Harding needed some small cordage from Nathaniel Shaw, and needed the governor's order to get it.⁶⁷ The governor readily agreed on the next day, and forwarded the commissions for the officers with the letter.⁶⁸

A crisis seemed to arise on 16 May when it appeared there was British activity down the Sound. Governor Trumbull ordered *Oliver Cromwell* out to intercept a ship and sloop detected by Captain David Hawley in the Continental Army Sloop *General Schuyler*. Hawley had devised signals and was then off the western part of the state. Harding was to take the Connecticut Navy Schooner *Spy* (Captain Robert Niles) with him if she was available, and the old Connecticut Navy Brig *Defence* (Captain Daniel Deshon) if she was in condition for service. He could also take Commander Asa Palmer (Connecticut Privateer Sloop *America*) at Stonington if he was available.⁶⁹

Harding received this message at 1000 on 17 May. The old *Defence* wasn't armed and Palmer and Niles were not in port. Further, a ship and sloop had passed New London in the morning, some firing being heard before the forts saw them sail by. Nevertheless, Harding was preparing for sea, planning to sail to the west in the night. Harding had ordered the boat traffic stopped but had not made public his orders, planning to ask for volunteers in the evening.⁷⁰ If *Oliver Cromwell* sailed nothing was found. In fact, from 16 May to 19 May five more men were recruited, including one Marine.⁷¹

On 22 May Harding conned *Oliver Cromwell* out of New London and set sail for Bedford, Massachusetts.⁷² At his side was Pilot Nathan Dogett (Dodget), hired to take the ship to Bedford for £18.⁷³ Daggett, as the name is spelled in the pay roll, was shown as enlisting on 19 May, and

⁶⁵ NDAR, "Connecticut Gazette, Friday, April 18, 1777," 8:366; "Connecticut Gazette, Friday, May 9, 1777," 8:936

⁶⁶ NDAR, "Pay Roll of Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*," 10:154-160

⁶⁷ NDAR, "Captain Seth Harding to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 8:962

⁶⁸ NDAR, "Governor Jonathan Trumbull to Captain Seth Harding," 8:964

⁶⁹ NDAR, "Governor Jonathan Trumbull to Captain Seth Harding," 8:978-979

⁷⁰ NDAR, "Captain Seth Harding, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 8:986

⁷¹ NDAR, "Pay Roll of Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*," 10:154-160

⁷² NDAR, "Captain Seth Harding, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 8:1027

⁷³ NDAR, "Nathaniel Shaw, Jr.'s Account Against the Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*," 8:1022-1023

stayed aboard the ship.⁷⁴ Aboard were 102 men,⁷⁵ which meant that three men had deserted.⁷⁶ Harding was pleased with the ship (she “proves a very good Sailer”). He arrived at Bedford on 23 May and promptly began recruiting more men.⁷⁷

From 26 May until 31 May forty men were enlisted at Bedford. Among these were two Marines and Midshipman Andrew Morris (28 May) and Second Mate Stephen Lee (31 May). From 1 June 1777 to 6 June fourteen more men were recruited, including Third Mate Thomas Whelden on 1 June.⁷⁸

On 3 July 1777 the committee (Matthew Griswold, Daniel Sherman, and Benjamin Huntinton) examining the accounts of the *Oliver Cromwell* while under Coit’s command rendered their report. Coit had lived the high life without doubt. Item: “That the Quantity of Provisions taken and used on board said Ship during Capt Coits Command would Much Exceed the Rations & allowance Established in the army & Navy.” Coit had sent some of the people from the ship to Long Island to collect timber and spars, for which they were awarded additional pay. Officers had been boarded ashore while the ship was with provisions a plenty. The men were fed ashore until the camboose was finished. Coit had boarded ashore at New London. In excess of £591 had been spent for for enlisting expenses.⁷⁹ After considering this report the Connecticut Council of Safety disallowed all board wages to officers and men of the *Oliver Cromwell*, for the period when adequate provisions were aboard, before 14 April 1777, except men who were sick. The accounts were to be adjusted accordingly.⁸⁰

On 11 July 77 the account was settled. Coit was paid in excess of £787 in settlement of his accounts, including as a final touch a bill for 46 bottles of wine used to “Made Merry with at Discharge.”⁸¹ And so he was finally gone.

The *Oliver Cromwell* had completed her refit by early June 1777. With her crew recruited to 150 men, Harding was ready to sail. *Oliver Cromwell* sortied from Bedford, Massachusetts on 5 June 1777,⁸² and headed out into the broad Atlantic. Harding was taking her out to cruising grounds off the Azores Islands.

⁷⁴ NDAR, “Pay Roll of Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*,” 10:154-160

⁷⁵ NDAR, “Captain Seth Harding, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull,” 8:1027

⁷⁶ NDAR, “Pay Roll of Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*,” 10:154-160

⁷⁷ NDAR, “Captain Seth Harding, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull,” 8:1027

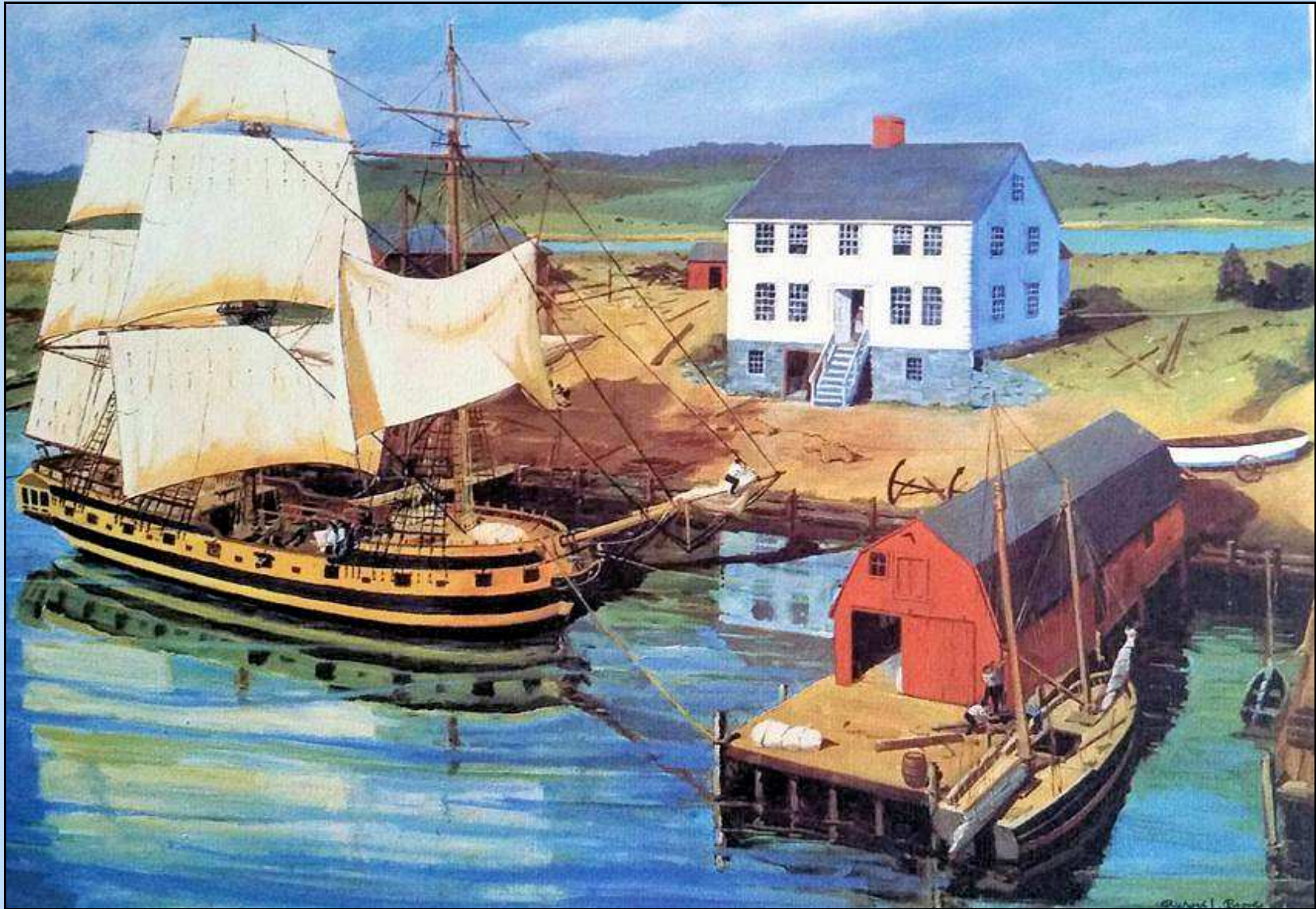
⁷⁸ NDAR, “Pay Roll of Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*,” 10:154-160

⁷⁹ NDAR, “Report of the Committee Appointed to Examine the Accounts of Captain William Coit, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*,” 9:211-212

⁸⁰ NDAR, “Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety,” 9:215

⁸¹ NDAR, “Account of Captain William Coit, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*,” 9:261

⁸² NDAR, “Captain Seth Harding, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull,” 9:22



The *Oliver Cromwell*, seemingly fitting out at Saybrook. Modern painting by Richard Brooks.

Harding perhaps did not sail until 13 June. He had added seven men to the crew on 6 June, and three more from 9 June to 13 June, including Midshipman Robert Alsop James (9 June). Perhaps he lay off the port for a few days before sailing. Presumably thirteen men deserted during this same time period. Sixteen are recorded as deserting in all during the cruise. One man was discharged on 1 June.⁸³

On 8 July 77, *Oliver Cromwell* was at 45°12' N, 34°W. Here she fell in with and captured the brigantine *Honor*⁸⁴ (John Jackson).⁸⁵ *Honor* was bound from Cork⁸⁶ or Dartmouth⁸⁷ to Newfoundland,⁸⁸ with a cargo of beef, pork, butter, bread, cheese,⁸⁹ cordage, clothing, wine, pitch, tar, and tea⁹⁰ and had sailed in company with a convoy of twenty sail, from which *Honor* parted on 4 July. The prize was dispatched to Bedford, Massachusetts,⁹¹ consigned to Samuel Eliot, Jr., the Connecticut agent in that state,⁹² with Midshipman Jonathan Woodworth as prize master.⁹³ At least one member of *Honor*'s crew entered the *Oliver Cromwell*.⁹⁴

Harding set out to find the convoy,⁹⁵ and find them he did, fifteen sail with a weak escort,⁹⁶ but was unable to cut out any additional prizes.

Honor arrived at Bedford a little before 20 August 1777, and Eliot was notified. Since the cargo

⁸³ NDAR, "Pay Roll of Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*," 10:154-160

⁸⁴ NDAR, "Captain Seth Harding, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Samuel Eliot, Jr.," 9:242

⁸⁵ NDAR, "Governor Jonathan Trumbull to Samuel Eliot, Jr., Boston," 9:786-787. *Honor* was an 80-ton brig built in New England in 1767 and owned by C. Oliver & Co. *Lloyd's Register of Shipping* 1776.

⁸⁶ NDAR, "Captain Seth Harding, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Samuel Eliot, Jr.," 9:242

⁸⁷ NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 9:786

⁸⁸ NDAR, "Captain Seth Harding, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Samuel Eliot, Jr.," 9:242

⁸⁹ NDAR, "Samuel Eliot, Jr., to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 9:772

⁹⁰ NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 9:786

⁹¹ NDAR, "Samuel Eliot, Jr., to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 9:772

⁹² NDAR, "Captain Seth Harding, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Samuel Eliot, Jr.," 9:242

⁹³ NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 9:786

⁹⁴ NDAR, "Pay Roll of Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*," 10:154-160

⁹⁵ NDAR, "Captain Seth Harding, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Samuel Eliot, Jr.," 9:242

⁹⁶ NDAR, "Governor Jonathan Trumbull to Samuel Eliot, Jr., Boston," 9:786-787

was needed by the Continental Army, Eliot suggested sending the cargo directly from Bedford to New London. While awaiting directions he sent his brother to take charge of the brig.⁹⁷ Meanwhile, Woodworth had traveled to Hartford and met with the Governor and Council of Safety on 23 August.⁹⁸ The cargo was too valuable to leave at Bedford the Council decided, and ordered six wagonloads of the most valuable items to be transported into Connecticut. On 23 August Trumbull ordered Eliot to assist in the transshipment.⁹⁹ Eliot traveled down to Dartmouth (Bedford) and examined the brig in early September. By the 10th he reported she was nearly unloaded. He had also ordered the cables and cordage up to Boston, to be used in refitting the Connecticut Navy Brig *Defence*.¹⁰⁰ Shoes were found aboard the *Honor* and they were distributed to the crew of the *Oliver Cromwell* in September.¹⁰¹

Meanwhile, *Oliver Cromwell* and Harding had struck again. Ship¹⁰² *Restoration* (Robbins), in ballast, was en route from Quebec to Oporto, Portugal in July 1777.¹⁰³ Off the Azores Islands, on 18 July,¹⁰⁴ Robbins fell in with an American privateer of ten guns which he fought off, even though he only had a crew of fourteen to man his ten guns.¹⁰⁵ The next day,¹⁰⁶ *Restoration* was captured by the *Oliver Cromwell* (Captain Seth Harding). Robbins was removed and placed aboard a French ship, which landed him at Bordeaux in August.¹⁰⁷ *Restoration* was ordered to America, under Midshipman Sherman Lewis as prizemaster¹⁰⁸ but never made it. HM Frigate *Ambuscade* (Captain John Macartney) was on patrol 117 miles southwest Sambro Lighthouse on 3 September 1777, when the *Restoration* was seen, chased and captured. The prizecrew of seven men were removed, and a mate and four men put aboard to take her to Halifax. *Restoration* was condemned

⁹⁷ NDAR, "Samuel Eliot, Jr., to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 9:772

⁹⁸ NDAR, "Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety," 9:786

⁹⁹ NDAR, "Governor Jonathan Trumbull to Samuel Eliot, Jr., Boston," 9:786-787

¹⁰⁰ NDAR, "Samuel Eliot, Jr. to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 9:906-907 and 907 note

¹⁰¹ NDAR, "Samuel Eliot, Jr. to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 9:972 and note

¹⁰² NDAR, "Captain Seth Harding, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull." 9:879 and note

¹⁰³ NDAR, "*Daily Advertiser*, Thursday, August 28, 1777," 9:609; "Captain Seth Harding, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull." 9:879 and note

¹⁰⁴ NDAR, "Journal of H.M.S. *Ambuscade*, Captain John Macartney," 9:869-870 and 870 note

¹⁰⁵ NDAR, "*Daily Advertiser*, Thursday, August 28, 1777," 9:609

¹⁰⁶ NDAR, "Journal of H.M.S. *Ambuscade*, Captain John Macartney," 9:869-870 and 870 note

¹⁰⁷ NDAR, "*Daily Advertiser*, Thursday, August 28, 1777," 9:609

¹⁰⁸ NDAR, "Captain Seth Harding, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull." 9:879 and note



at Halifax on 1 October 1777.¹⁰⁹

Harding persuaded no less than eight men from *Restoration's* crew to enter aboard the *Oliver Cromwell*, seven on 22 July and one on 26 July.¹¹⁰

Just a few days after capturing the *Restoration*, on 28 July, Harding found a bigger prize. HM Packet Ship *Weymouth* (Captain Charles Flynn) was built in 1776 as a sloop of war, a three masted ship with one gun deck. She was pierced for eighteen guns, but mounted fourteen 6-pounders,¹¹¹ (or sixteen guns)¹¹² with swivel guns. *Weymouth* was taken up by the British post office as a packet.¹¹³ and her part-owner, Flynn, was commissioned as her commander.¹¹⁴ She sailed from Jamaica bound for London, and thus came to meet the *Oliver Cromwell* off the Azores Islands.¹¹⁵

Weymouth chose to fight before striking, giving Flynn enough time to destroy his mail before surrendering. Among the passengers was Captain William Judd of HMS *Antelope*, returning home.¹¹⁶ Third Lieutenant John Smith was assigned as prizemaster.¹¹⁷ Apparently there was one man mortally wounded in the fight with *Weymouth*, for the payroll notes one man as having died on 1 September 1777. With his usual persuasiveness, Harding managed to get two members of *Weymouth's* crew to enter the *Oliver Cromwell*, but not until 22 August, while en route home.¹¹⁸ The *Oliver Cromwell* escorted her prize into the Kennebec River, Massachusetts (Maine) on 4 September 1777. The prisoners were landed here, and sent to Samuel Eliot, Jr. at Boston.¹¹⁹ *Oliver*

¹⁰⁹ NDAR, "Journal of H.M.S. *Ambuscade*, Captain John Macartney," 9:869-870 and 870 note

¹¹⁰ NDAR, "Pay Roll of Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*," 10:154-160

¹¹¹ NDAR, "Captain Seth Harding, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull." 9:879 and note

¹¹² NDAR, "Samuel Eliot, Jr. to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 9:906-907 and 907 note

¹¹³ NDAR, "Samuel Eliot, Jr. to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 9:906-907 and 907 note; "Samuel Eliot, Jr., to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 9:947 and note

¹¹⁴ NDAR, "Samuel Eliot, Jr., to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 9:947 and note

¹¹⁵ NDAR, "Captain Seth Harding, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull." 9:879 and note

¹¹⁶ NDAR, "Samuel Eliot, Jr. to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 9:906-907 and 907 note, "Lieutenant Timothy Parker, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 9:907-908 and 908 note

¹¹⁷ NDAR, "Samuel Eliot, Jr. to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 9:906-907 and 907 note

¹¹⁸ NDAR, "Pay Roll of Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*," 10:154-160

¹¹⁹ NDAR, "Captain Seth Harding, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull." 9:879 and note, "Samuel Eliot, Jr. to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 9:906-907 and 907 note, "Lieutenant Timothy Parker, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 9:907-908 and 908 note



Hand carved model of the *Oliver Cromwell*. Made circa 1800's. Hand carved and painted model made by Samuel Chapman of the Connecticut Navy, 2nd Lieutenant on the ship *Oliver Cromwell*. Picture from [Bidsquare](#).

Cromwell and *Weymouth* sailed down to Boston and arrived there on 10 September 1777.¹²⁰ Agent Samuel Eliot, Jr. took charge of her, but immediately saw a problem. The officers and crew of the *Oliver Cromwell* would libel her as a warship, which would give them all of the prize money upon condemnation and sale. Agent Eliot thought she was not a warship, thus giving Connecticut half of her proceeds. He proposed retaining attorneys to fight the case in court to Governor Trumbull on 10 September.¹²¹ Trumbull approved Eliot's measures on 16 September.¹²² The ship was libeled on 25

September 1777, and she was tried in late October 1777. The court awarded the whole of the prize to the crew.¹²³

When *Oliver Cromwell* made port in the Kennebec River, Harding was ill with a "dangerous fit

¹²⁰ NDAR, "Samuel Eliot, Jr. to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 9:906-907 and 907 note, "Lieutenant Timothy Parker, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 9:907-908 and 908 note

¹²¹ NDAR, "Samuel Eliot, Jr. to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 9:906-907 and 907 note

¹²² NDAR, "Governor Jonathan Trumbull to Samuel Eliot, Jr.," 9:931-932

¹²³ NDAR, "Samuel Eliot, Jr., to Governor Jonathan Trumbull," 9:947 and note

of Sickness,” and had to be landed and tended to ashore.¹²⁴ Harding was improving¹²⁵ by the time Second Lieutenant Chapman¹²⁶ took the ship round to Boston on 10 September. Eliot took charge of her and, with the assistance of Captain John Deshon, began preparations for another cruise.¹²⁷

The lieutenants of the *Oliver Cromwell* were unsure of how long Harding would be detained. First Lieutenant Parker wrote to Governor Trumbull on 10 September, asking for instructions and sent Third Lieutenant Smith with the letter.¹²⁸

While Harding was recovering he received a letter from John Langdon, the Continental Agent in New Hampshire. Langdon wanted Harding to exchange one of his prisoners from the cruise for Langdon’s brother Woodbury, a prisoner of the British at New York. Langdon begged Harding to spare no expense or trouble. Langdon would be “Accountable” for both to Harding.¹²⁹ The Council, on 25 September, ordered the prisoners transferred to Connecticut: they were only to be used in exchange for Connecticut men.¹³⁰

Meanwhile Harding had discharged part of his crew, a step the Council approved of.¹³¹ This discharge of about half the crew took place on 22 September. Seventy-four men were released, including twenty-five Marines and Third Mate Thomas Whelden.¹³² The Council ordered further discharges, leaving only a care taker crew until the ship was ready to sail again. The Council, on 25 September, urged Trumbull to get the *Oliver Cromwell* back out to sea, fitted, cleaned, and provisioned.¹³³

Harding had arrived at Norwich, Connecticut by now, where he was recuperating. On 26 September he ordered Lieutenant Chapman to strip and refit the *Oliver Cromwell*.¹³⁴ Harding

¹²⁴ NDAR, “Samuel Eliot, Jr., to Governor Jonathan Trumbull,” 9:906-907

¹²⁵ NDAR, “Lieutenant Timothy Parker, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull,” 9:907-908 and 908 note

¹²⁶ NDAR, “Captain Seth Harding to Lieutenant John Chapman,” 9:966-967 and 967 note

¹²⁷ NDAR, “Samuel Eliot, Jr., to Governor Jonathan Trumbull,” 9:906-907

¹²⁸ NDAR, “Lieutenant Timothy Parker, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*, to Governor Jonathan Trumbull,” 9:907-908 and 908 note

¹²⁹ NDAR, “John Langdon to Captain Seth Harding, Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*,” 9:926

¹³⁰ NDAR, “Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety,” 9:962-963

¹³¹ NDAR, “Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety,” 9:962-963

¹³² NDAR, “Pay Roll of the Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*,” 10:154-160

¹³³ NDAR, “Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety,” 9:962-963

¹³⁴ NDAR, “Captain Seth Harding to Lieutenant John Chapman,” 9:966-967 and 967 note



ordered Lieutenant Timothy Parker to forward the prisoners to Connecticut and discharge the crew, retaining only thirty men or so to refit the ship.¹³⁵ The main discharge took place on 14 October 1777. Three men had been dismissed between 26 September and 8 October. The remaining eighty-three were dismissed on 14 October. Presumably a new muster roll would be started soon after that date.¹³⁶

By 17 October 1777 Harding was on the way to recovery. He had gone up to Boston and “getting affairs in the greatest forwardness . . .” The majority of the crew were discharged. The masts were removed from the *Oliver Cromwell* and were found to need repair. She was soon ready to go on the ways for cleaning. According to Samuel Eliot the surgeon of the ship had claimed the “Doctors Medicines and Stores” from the *Weymouth* as his perquisite. Eliot refused, after consulting the Massachusetts Board of War. The surgeon had gone to see Governor Trumbull on this matter.¹³⁷

On 5 November 1777 the Council of Safety ordered Harding paid for his payroll. Settlement of the account was to take place later, as there were other accounts to also settle with Harding.¹³⁸ Harding received the £2217.14 to pay his crew on 11 November, with the account to be settled later as there were minor errors in it.¹³⁹

Oliver Cromwell lay at the wharf at Boston on 12 November. The only officer aboard was Second Lieutenant John Chapman, and only one sailor was with him. Many sailors and officers were ready to enter the crew, and eager to get to sea, but enlisting papers had not arrived, nor was there enlisting articles known.¹⁴⁰

An interesting sidelight of the *Oliver Cromwell*'s late cruise came to light on 21 November. When the *Weymouth* was captured, among the prisoners found aboard was a twenty-five year old black woman named Cuba. She was brought into Boston along with the prize. As Cuba put it “She is rejoiced She is in this Land of Liberty where she hopes to Spend her life in Comfort and freedom . . .” This seems to indicate that Cuba was a free woman and not a slave. The usual fate of most black people captured in prizes was to be condemned as property and sold. This was to be Cuba's fate. As she said “the Officers of the *Oliver Cromwell* want to make her their own property, and the Lieut, (one Chapman) of the sd Ship after abusing the Council and all Concerned for her in a most Scurrilous manner, Swore that he did not Believe God ever made a Negro and that in Spite

¹³⁵ NDAR, “Captain Seth Harding to Lieutenant Timothy Parker,” 9:967

¹³⁶ NDAR, “Pay Roll of the Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*,” 10:154-160

¹³⁷ NDAR, “Samuel Eliot, Jr. to Governor Jonathan Trumbull,” 10:189-190 and 190 notes

¹³⁸ NDAR, “Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety,” 10:402; “Order to Settle and Adjust the Pay Roll of the Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*,” 10:434

¹³⁹ NDAR, “Captain Seth Harding's Receipt for General Account of the Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*,” 10:465

¹⁴⁰ NDAR, “Samuel Eliot, Jr., to Governor Jonathan Trumbull,” 10:471 and note

of all Courts and Persons whatsoever, he would have her Sold as a Slave and Sent to the Jamaica . . .” Evidently, some officials had intervened for Cuba. Chapman took her to a house in Jamaica Plains and confined her there. But Cuba found someone to help, for a nice petition was drawn up, addressed to the Massachusetts Council, and asking that her case be considered to be within the meaning of an act of the Massachusetts General Court of 16 September 1776; an act forbidding the sale of two black men captured on the sea. The petition was presented to the Council on 21 November. On 3 December 1777 the Council determined that Cuba did indeed, fall with that act, and ordered her furnished with a copy of that resolve. The Council also ordered the judge of the Maritime Court to “certify that the Said Negro Woman comes within the meaning & intent . . .” of the resolve.¹⁴¹ It is to be hoped that Cuba enjoyed her freedom as much as she expected she would.

On 29 November the Council of Safety directed Colonel Joseph Trumbull to ask Samuel Eliot about his account and advise him “relative to the two vessels of war, the *Oliver Cromwell* and *Defence* . . .”¹⁴² At some time in December 1777, perhaps at Trumbull’s request, Eliot drew up an account of his expenditures on the *Oliver Cromwell*. These indicated that he was owed some £1690.18.8 by the state of Connecticut.¹⁴³ An additional account shows sums expended for repairs on the *Oliver Cromwell*, but also includes money spent on repair work for the *Defence*. The amount for both vessels was £9016.3.13.¹⁴⁴ Eliot was this in advance for Connecticut for over £10500.

The Connecticut Council of Safety met on 5 December. The Council of Safety directed David Trumbull to exchange beef and pork at Boston for salt, to allow him to provide sufficient provisions for “our navy there.” The governor was instructed to draw on Samuel Eliot for more salt, provided the barter previously approved produced an insufficient amount. The Council of Safety then resolved to send *Oliver Cromwell* and *Defence* to sea. The captains were to enlist their crews, and the vessels were to be under the “rules, orders and regulations prescribed by Congress for the continental navy.” As for prize money, the amount due the crew would be limited to one half the value of the captures, whatever their classification. There was to be no repeat of the questions arising from the capture of the *Weymouth*.¹⁴⁵

The next day the Council of Safety met and approved the promotion and appointment of Timothy Parker of Norwich to command of the *Oliver Cromwell* as Captain. John Chapman of New London was promoted from Second Lieutenant to First Lieutenant, and John Smith of Hartford was promoted from Third Lieutenant to Second Lieutenant.¹⁴⁶ Parker’s commission was filled out

¹⁴¹ NDAR, “Petition of Cuba, a Negro Woman, to the Massachusetts Council,” 10:556-557 and 557 notes

¹⁴² NDAR, “Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety,” 10:630-631

¹⁴³ NDAR, “Account of Samuel Eliot, Jr., for Connecticut Navy Ship *Oliver Cromwell*,” 10:639-641

¹⁴⁴ NDAR, “Accounts of Repairs of the Ship *Oliver Cromwell* and the Brig *Defence*,” 10:638-639

¹⁴⁵ NDAR, “Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety,” 10:668

¹⁴⁶ NDAR, “Journal of the Connecticut Council of Safety,” 10:674 and note

the same day and he received it on 8 December. Along with the commission came a form for enlisting the crew and the shipping articles.¹⁴⁷

There is another report that the *Oliver Cromwell* was at Boston on 23 March 1778, with *Defence*. *Oliver Cromwell* was armed with 20 9-pounders. She sailed late in March.¹⁴⁸

A partial pay list for the *Oliver Cromwell* exists for the period from December 1777 to September 1778. This list has sixty-five names on it, twenty-three of whom are listed as Marines. Five sailors and one Marine are listed as deserters. [Find orig]

A recruiting advertisement appeared in the Norwich, Connecticut paper on 19 January 1778. Parker was seeking a few good men to complete his crew. The *Oliver Cromwell* was said to mount twenty 9-pounder cannon and be a notably fast sailer. She was bound on a voyage to France. Men were to report to Lieutenant James Day at Norwich Landing or to Lieutenant John Chapman, at New London.¹⁴⁹

The *Cromwell* had been incidentally ordered to Charlestown, South Carolina, for a cargo including indigo, to be taken to France., but on account of smallpox, kept to sea while inoculations were being made, and to assist the *Defence*, which also was similarly stricken. [middlebrook]

According to the journal of Timothy Boardman, the *Defence* had five men break out with smallpox on 7 April and one die from it the next day. On 10 April the *Oliver Cromwell* conducted musketry and cannon fire drills. The next day the two ships sighted a sail. The *Defence* spoke her: a French vessel out of Bordeaux.¹⁵⁰

On 13 April the two ships crossed the Tropic of Cancer, which produced the usual revelries aboard the *Oliver Cromwell*. Boardman noted "Shavd & Duck About 60 Men." The next day at 1600 a sail was seen in the ESE and chased. She was a large French ship. The master informed the two Connecticut Navy vessels that he had seen two English vessels just before he was stopped.¹⁵¹

At daybreak on 15 April¹⁵² the *Oliver Cromwell* "saw two Sail Bareing SEbS Distance 2 Leagues We Gave Chase Under a Moderate Sail at 9 oClock P. M. Came Up with them they at First Shew

¹⁴⁷ NDAR, "Captain Timothy Parker's Commission as Captain in the Connecticut Navy," 10:674 and note

¹⁴⁸ Allen, *Naval History*, 1:321-322

¹⁴⁹ *The Norwich Packet*, Monday, January 19, 1778

¹⁵⁰ Boardman, Timothy, *Log Book of Timothy Boardman*. Albany: John Munsell's Sons, 1885, p. 51. Hereafter, *Boardman Journal*.

¹⁵¹ *Boardman Journal*, 51

¹⁵² Other sources indicate the fight was on 1 April. *The Royal Gazette* [New York], Saturday, August 15, 1778, from The Pennsylvania Evening Post, datelined Kingston, May 16

French Colours to Decoy us . . . when we Came in About half a Mile of us the Ups with English Colours We had Continental Colours Flying.”¹⁵³

The two sail were British letters-of-marque: the snow *Admiral Keppel* (Abraham Brown) and the ship *Cyrus* (Christopher Deake). *Admiral Keppel* was a 300-ton vessel, built at Bristol in 1772 and owned by Davis & Co. of Bristol. She was armed with eighteen 6-pounder cannon. *Cyrus* was a 350 ton vessel, built at Bristol in 1778 and also owned by Davis & Co. *Cyrus* was armed with six 6-pounder and eight 4-pounder cannon.¹⁵⁴ Both vessels carried highly assorted cargoes of beans, butter, beef, oatmeal, pots and kettles, iron, tin, pewter and copper ware, saddles, and numerous other items.¹⁵⁵ *Admiral Keppel* was bound to St. Christopher’s and thence to Jamaica; *Cyrus* to Nevis and then to Jamaica.¹⁵⁶ The *Admiral Keppel* had a crew of thirty-seven men. The *Cyrus* had a crew of thirty-five men.¹⁵⁷ The two vessels, owned by the same company, had sailed together.

According to their records they were at 19°N, 47°W, when they fell in with the *Defence* and *Oliver Cromwell*.¹⁵⁸ The *Admiral Keppel* had a crew of thirty-seven men. The *Cyrus* had a crew of thirty-five men.¹⁵⁹ The British later reported that *Oliver Cromwell* mounted fourteen 9-pounder and six 6-pounder cannon and had a crew of 145. The *Defence* mounted twelve 6-pounder and six 4-pounder cannon and four cohorns, with 122 men.¹⁶⁰

Boardman says “We Engaged the Ship Admiral Kepple as Follows When We Came in About 20 Rods of her We Gave her a Bow Gun She Soon Returned us a Stern Chaise & then a Broad Side of Grape & Round Shot Cap’ Orders Not to fire till we Can See the white of their Eyes We Got Close Under their Larbard Quarter they Began Another Broad Side & then We Began & held Tuff

¹⁵³ *Boardman Journal*, 51-52

¹⁵⁴ *Lloyd’s Register of Shipping 1778*

¹⁵⁵ *The Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, Monday, July 27, 1778

¹⁵⁶ *The Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, Monday, May 25, 1778

¹⁵⁷ These figures are from *The Royal Gazette* [New York], Saturday, August 15, 1778, from The Pennsylvania Evening Post, datelined Kingston, May 16. There is much variation among the reports concerning the battery and crews of all four vessels engaged. *Admiral Keppel*: Mounted eighteen 6-pounder guns and had a crew of forty-seven men. *The Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, Monday, May 25, 1778; Eighteen 6-pounders. *Lloyd’s Register of Shipping 1778*; Eighteen 6-pounders. *Cyrus*: Mounted sixteen 6-pounder and 4-pounder guns and had a crew of thirty-seven men. *The Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, Monday, May 25, 1778;

¹⁵⁸ *The Royal Gazette* [New York], Saturday, August 15, 1778, from The Pennsylvania Evening Post, datelined Kingston, May 16

¹⁵⁹ These figures are from *The Royal Gazette* [New York], Saturday, August 15, 1778, from The Pennsylvania Evening Post, datelined Kingston, May 16. There is much variation among the reports concerning the battery and crews of all four vessels engaged.

¹⁶⁰ *The Royal Gazette* [New York], Saturday, August 15, 1778, from The Pennsylvania Evening Post, datelined Kingston, May 16

& Tuff for About 2 Glasses & Then she Struck to Us . . .” Meanwhile the *Defence* had engaged the *Cyrus*. Boardman: “at the Same time the Defence Engaged the *Cyrus* who as the *Kepple* Struck Wore Round Under our Stern We Wore Ship & Gave her a Stern Chase at which She Immediately Struck.”¹⁶¹

Boardman reported the aftermath:

“The Loss on our Side was One Kiled & Six Wounded one Mortally Who Soon Died Our Ship was hulld 9 Times with Six Pound Shott Three of which Went through Our Birth one of which wounded the Boatswains yoeman the Loss on their Side was two Kiled & Six wounded their Larbourd quarter was well filld with Shott one Nine Pounder went through her Main Mast. Imploy in the Afternoon Takeing out the Men & Maning the Prise The *Kepple* Mounted 20 Guns 18 Six Pounders & two Wooden D^o with about 45 Men, the *Cyrus* Mounted 16 Six Pounders with 35 Men Letters of Marque Bound from Bristol to Jamaica Laden with Dry Goods Paints & C.”

Among the wounded was Captain of Marines James Day, who died on 18 April.¹⁶²

Both were taken after an “obstinate” fight of forty-seven minutes. *Oliver Cromwell* had fifty-nine of her crew sick with smallpox at the time of the fight, and lost eleven killed in the action.¹⁶³

The British report is substantially similar. After a “close engagement of two hours” both ships surrendered. Two men were wounded on the *Cyrus*, and eight on the *Admiral Keppel*, three of which were thought to be mortally wounded. The Captain of Marines on the *Oliver Cromwell* was killed and seven men wounded. The *Defence* had three wounded. All four vessels were so damaged in their sails and rigging that they had to lay to for four days to refit. Deake was given his boat upon his request, and he and Brown and some passengers got to St. Kitts and then to Jamaica. They reported that the Americans behaved with the “utmost complaisance and humanity to their prisoners, not permitting any of the baggage to be taken from the Captains, passengers, or men.” Shirley and Paul Phipps, Jr., stayed with the *Admiral Keppel*.¹⁶⁴

Boardman noted the last episode as “Cap’ Brown of The Ship Adral Kepple & Capt Dike of the *Cyrus* with Three Ladies & 8 Men Sett off in a Long Boat for St Kitts on Capts Parker & Smedleys Perimition.” The next day the Americans removed certain items from the two prize vessels. On 21 July the parting took place: “At Three oClock Afternoon we wore Ship to the Southward

¹⁶¹ *Boardman Journal*, 52

¹⁶² *Boardman Journal*, 52

¹⁶³ *The Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, Monday, May 25, 1778

¹⁶⁴ *The Royal Gazette* [New York], Saturday, August 15, 1778m from The Pennsylvania Evening Post, datelined Kingston, May 16

The Prises Made Sail to the Northward we Lost Sight of them at Six.¹⁶⁵

The British prizes arrived at Boston before 25 May 1778. The agents libeled the ship *Cyrus* (Christopher Drake), 280 tons, on 15 June 1778, in the Massachusetts Maritime Court of the Middle District, with trial to be held on 8 July 1778. At the same time the 200-ton *Admiral Keppel* was libeled.¹⁶⁶

Among the prisoners was the Hon. Henry Shirley, his wife, family and suite, en route to Jamaica as His Majesty's Governor, etc., and there was prolonged correspondence on his account, with respect to his being allowed to charter a vessel, after giving his parole, for the purpose of reaching his destination. After much consideration by Governor Trumbull and Council, he was finally permitted to carry out his desire, together with Mr. Paul Phipps of Kingston, Jamaica, to proceed to that island, under a flag of truce, at his own expense, provided he arranged for an equal exchange for his party, which was accordingly done. [middlebrook]

Part of the cargoes of the two ships were advertised for sale on 27 July 1778, with the sale to be held on 30 July. The items mentioned were beans, butter, beef, oatmeal, pots and kettles, iron, tin, pewter and copper ware, saddles, and numerous other items.¹⁶⁷ *Admiral Keppel* and *Cyrus* were advertised for sale in Boston on 3 August 1778. *Cyrus* was said to be a "fine new Ship, well found, built in Bristol and launched in February last. She was said to measure 500 tons. The *Admiral Keppel* was said to be about four years old, well found and frigate built. She was said to measure 400 tons."¹⁶⁸

Meanwhile, the two Connecticut ships headed north for Charlestown, South Carolina. The trip was uneventful until 2 May, when the foretopmast was sprung. As he was the carpenter Boardman would have been in charge of replacing it. On 8 May, at 17.39°N, the *Oliver Cromwell* stopped a French slaving vessel, bound to Môle Saint-Nicolas in Saint-Domingue and put six prisoners aboard her.¹⁶⁹

Boredom ended on 11 May, at 19.82°N. At 0500 the lookouts sighted a sail to windward, bearing down toward the *Oliver Cromwell* at a distance of six miles. The Connecticut captains lay too until she had gotten within half gunshot range. Just then the lookouts called out four more sail sighted to leeward. After a brief consultation among the officers they concluded the ship in chase was a British frigate of thirty-six guns. "We Made Sail We Left as Fast as we wanted She Gave

¹⁶⁵ *Boardman Journal*, 52-53

¹⁶⁶ *The Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, Monday, October 12, 1778

¹⁶⁷ *The Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, Monday, July 27, 1778

¹⁶⁸ *The Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, Monday, August 3, 1778

¹⁶⁹ *Boardman Journal*, 53, 54

Over Chase at two o’Clock Afternoon She was the Seaford of 28 Guns.”¹⁷⁰

All reverted to boredom. On 22 May the main topsail yard was sprung, another job for the carpenter. On 28 May the *Oliver Cromwell* made the land off Port Royal and turned north to Charlestown. In the approach to Charlestown she hit bottom three times on 29 May, and got over the bar the next morning into the harbor, with the *Defence*.¹⁷¹

At Charlestown the two Connecticut vessels replenished and refitted. Carpenter Boardman attempted to resign the *Oliver Cromwell*, but Parker convinced him to stay by increasing his share allowance. On 24 July the *Oliver Cromwell* crossed the bar outbound, in company with the South Carolina Navy Brig *Notre Dame* and two sloops.¹⁷²

The following days were uneventful until 6 August 1778. That day the *Oliver Cromwell* stopped a Spanish brig, bound from New Orleans to Cap François, Saint-Domingue. She had a cargo of furs and lumber, and also several English speaking people aboard. Parker was suspicious and detained the brig until the next day. At 1700 on the 7th the *Oliver Cromwell* made the land at Abaco Island in the Bahamas.¹⁷³

For the next several days the Connecticut vessels sailed about Harbor Island in the Bahamas. Here they encountered the “Rice Thumper” fleet, vessels exporting rice from Georgia and Carolina. On 12 May the *Oliver Cromwell* caught a large turtle. It was cooked the next day and no less than thieteen “Gentlemen” from the fleet came aboard and dined. On 14 August the *Oliver Cromwell* sent her boat ashore, as did the *Notre Dame*. They returned with four men in a two masted boat from New Providence.¹⁷⁴ Presumably they were later released.

On 16 August the fleet began crossing the Bahama Banks, anchoring on the banks that night. The next day they arrived at Abimenes Island (probably the Bimini Islands). Here the water was refilled and some minor repair work done. At dawn on 18 May the fleet got underway. *Oliver Cromwell* and *Defence* fired thirteen gun salutes. They were answered by the *Notre Dame* and a ten gun sloop (Robberts) and a twelve gun sloop (John Crappo or Petweet). *Oliver Cromwell* stood west across the Gulf Stream.¹⁷⁵

At dawn on 19 August the crew could see the “Cape of Floriday” to the west and stood for it across the gulf. “. . . we Came out of the Gulf in five fathom of Water & Within 30 Rods of a

¹⁷⁰ *Boardman Journal*, 53, 54

¹⁷¹ *Boardman Journal*, 53

¹⁷² *Boardman Journal*, 63

¹⁷³ *Boardman Journal*, 63

¹⁷⁴ *Boardman Journal*, 64

¹⁷⁵ *Boardman Journal*, 64

Rieff in the Space of 15 Minutes in About a League of the Shore Which Surprisd the Capt, & Other Officers we have the Ship in Stays & beat off the wind being moderate.” The next day a Spanish polacre was stopped. The Spanish informed Parker that the British Jamaica fleet had passed Havana ten days before. There could be no interception of the convoy “Which made us Give over the Hopes of Seeing them.”¹⁷⁶

An interesting incident happened on 23 August. “Just at Night A Large Jamaica Puncheon Floating we hoisted out our Boat' & went in Pursuit of it but Could not Get it we Supposed it was full of Rum.” In the afternoon “a Large Swell brok & Soon after A fine Breese Which Inceasd harder in the Mornng.”¹⁷⁷

On 24 August began a day full of danger. It is best described in Boardman’s words:

“Sun about two hours high we Saw white water in About a Mile Under our Lee Bow we Saw the Breakers which was on the Bahama Banks which Surprisd our Officers & Men Greatly we Put our Ship About & had the Good Fortune to Clear them the wind Blew harder we Struck Top Gallant Yards & Lanchd Top Gallant Masts Lay too Under one Leach of the Four Sail Got 6 Nine Pounders Down in the Lower hold & Cleard the Decks of unecessary Lumber The Wind Continued veriy hard The air was Verry Thick Just before Night the Sea Came in Ov’er our Larboard Nettens on the Gangway. All the officers Advisd to Cut away the Main Mast which we Did, Just at Dusk, All the hope we had was that it would not Blow harder, but it Continued harder till After Midnight About one o’Clock it Seemd to Blow in whirlwinds which obligd us to Cut away our Four Mast & Missen Mast. Soon after the Wind Changd to the Eastward which Greatly Encouragd us Being Much Affraid of the Bahama Banks the fore Mast fell to the windward & Knockd our Anchor off the Bow So that we Cut it away for fear it would Make a hole in the Bow of the Ship our Fore Mast Lay along Side for two hours After it fell, it Being Impossible to Get Clear of it We Bent our Cables for fear of the Banks that we Might try to Ride it out if we Got on.”¹⁷⁸

The weather moderated somewhat the next day, but was still to rough to work. On 26 may Boardman got up a jury mast on the mainmast, and the next day got up jury masts on the foremast and mizzenmasts.¹⁷⁹

On the morning of 30 August, at 0800, a brig was sighted on the weather bow, about six miles away. *Oliver Cromwell* held her course, as did the brig, until nightfall. Parker fired two guns at her but the brig continued on and was lost to sight. The next day, at 0500, the brig was seen aghead. *Oliver Cromwell* chased and came up with her about 1200. “. . . we hoisted our Colours

¹⁷⁶ *Boardman Journal*, 64-65

¹⁷⁷ *Boardman Journal*, 65

¹⁷⁸ *Boardman Journal*, 65-66

¹⁷⁹ *Boardman Journal*, 66

She hoisted English Colours, we Gave her one gun which made them come Tumbhng Down.” The brig was kept in company.¹⁸⁰

After refitting and before the winter set in Captain Parker made another dash to sea and early in October, 1778, fell in with and. captured the Brig *Medway*, with a cargo valued at ££3,969, and sent her into Hyannis, Cape Cod. (See Inventory, Vol. IX, Rev. War.)

More action came on 1 September 1778. “We Saw a Sail a Head Giving us Chace She hoisted Englis Colours & we & the Brigg hoisted English Colours She Came Down towards us we Put the Ship about & She Came Close too us we up Parts & Our Colours She put about & we Gave her about 12 Guns Bow Chaces & She Got Clear She was a Small Sloop of 6 or 8 Guns.¹⁸¹

Oliver Cromwell made the soundings off Cape May, New Jersey on 2 September 1778 and continued north. On the night of the 3rd the prize parted company. On the 4th a privateer schooner was encountered. She shadowed the *Oliver Cromwell* all day. Parker raised English colors, bur the schooner made off. The next day anchored at Fisher’s Island and got safely into New London on 6 September.¹⁸²

On 14 September 1778 the Boston papers reported the arrival of the prize brig *Medway*, from London to New York, but last from St. Augustine.¹⁸³ *Medway* had gotten into Hyannisport on Cape Cod. She had a cargo of coal, bread, hardware, shoes, hats, and other items. The brig and cargo were offered for sale on 5 October 1778, with the sale to be held on 7 October.¹⁸⁴ The 100-ton *Medway* was libeled in the Massachusetts Maritime Court of the Middle District on 12 October 1778, and tried on 11 November 1778.¹⁸⁵

A recruiting advertisement appeared in the New London paper on 1 April 1779, but dated 16 March, desiring a few men to enlist and the crew on leave to report aboard.¹⁸⁶ *Oliver Cromwell* had sailed on her cruise by 1 May 1779.¹⁸⁷

She returned from her “short” cruise on 24 May. He had taken four prizes, including the British

¹⁸⁰ *Boardman Journal*, 66

¹⁸¹ *Boardman Journal*, 66-67

¹⁸² *Boardman Journal*, 67

¹⁸³ *The Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, Monday, September 14, 1778

¹⁸⁴ *The Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, Monday, October 5, 1778

¹⁸⁵ *The Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, Monday, May 25, 1778

¹⁸⁶ *The Connecticut Gazette and the Universal Intelligencer* [New London, Thursday, April 1, 1779

¹⁸⁷ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* [Philadelphia], Tuesday, May 25, 1779, datelined New London, May 1

Privateer Schooner *St. George* (Carew) of ten guns out of New York. A schooner with a cargo of mahogany was re-captured. Both of these were brought in with the *Oliver Cromwell*. An armed sloop tender to HM Frigate *Renown* was captured and arrived on the evening of 25 May. Sixty prisoners were brought in with the prizes.¹⁸⁸ On 19 May a 30-ton schooner from Baltimore arrived at New London. She had been re-captured from the British on the south side of Long Island.¹⁸⁹

Three of these vessels were libeled in the New London County Maritime Court on 3 June 1779. These were the *St. George* (James Carew), the armed sloop *York* (Francis Gardiner), and the schooner *Dove* (Henry Blight, with Benjamin Hopkins listed as prize master). The prizes were to be tried on 10 June.¹⁹⁰

Parker was back in port by 27 May, when Parker advertised rewards for the capture of nine deserting sailors.¹⁹¹ The New York newspaper reported that the *Oliver Cromwell* was at New London about the end of May, preparing to sail with other privateers and vessels. The privateers were to act as an escort for the convoy. *Oliver Cromwell* was described as a twenty gun ship, 300 tons, with a high stern and a small figure head.¹⁹²

Oliver Cromwell sailed on a new cruise on 3 June 1779,¹⁹³ in company with the Connecticut Privateer Sloop *Hancock* (Commander Peter Richards. About 4 June she captured the British Privateer Sloop *Ariel* (Hagins [Hagir]). *Ariel* was only twelve hours out from Sandy Hook. Although the *Ariel* was rated at twelve guns, she had but six iron guns and four wooden ones when captured.¹⁹⁴ *Oliver Cromwell* put a prize crew of ten men aboard, and took off the prisoners.¹⁹⁵

The two Americans continued on in company, passing Stonington, Connecticut and going around Long Island to steer to the south. On 6 June, about 0600 the *Oliver Cromwell* sighted a sail behind her to the north. Parker turned and began chasing “with all the Other Sail we could make.” At 0630 several other ships were seen to the south southwest, steering in the general

¹⁸⁸ *The Connecticut Courant and the Weekly Intelligencer* [Hartford], Tuesday, June 1, 1779, datelined New London, May 27

¹⁸⁹ *The Connecticut Courant and the Weekly Intelligencer* [Hartford], Tuesday, June 1, 1779, datelined New London, May 20

¹⁹⁰ *The Connecticut Gazette and the Universal Intelligencer* [New London, Thursday, June 3, 1779

¹⁹¹ *The Connecticut Gazette and the Universal Intelligencer* [New London, Thursday, May 27, 1779

¹⁹² *The New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury*, Monday, May 31, 1779

¹⁹³ Allen, *Naval History of the American Revolution*, 2:390, from Parker’s report. *The Royal Gazette* [New York], Wednesday, June 9, 1779, indicates she sailed on 2 June. The difference is likely sea time vs. civil time,

¹⁹⁴ *The Connecticut Courant and the Weekly Intelligencer* [New London], Tuesday, June 15, 1779

¹⁹⁵ *The New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Monday, June 14, 1779

direction of the stranger. Parker thought they were in chase of the same ship he was chasing.¹⁹⁶ Two of the newly sighted ships were large and one a brig.¹⁹⁷

Parker hauled close to the wind and one of the new sighted ships began chasing him. A signal from the first vessel sighted brought all three into the chase. They all showed English colors and were gaining fast.¹⁹⁸ Parker had stumbled into a covey of British cruisers, three Royal Navy frigates and a privateer.¹⁹⁹ The first vessel sighted was HM Frigate *Daphne* (Captain St. John Chinnery),²⁰⁰ one was HM Armed Ship *Delaware*, late of the Continental Navy, and the brig was the British Privateer *Union*. The other ship may have been HM Frigate *Galatea*.

The *Hancock* was still in company²⁰¹ and the obvious strategy was to split up, which was done. The *Delaware* then began chasing the *Hancock*, and the *Union* went after a brig. *Hancock* eventually got away.²⁰²

Daphne sighted the *Oliver Cromwell* at 1000.²⁰³ Parker reported ““We found that Fighting would be Inevitable. Therefore ordered the Ship to be Cleared and all hands to Quarters in good Season. . . Att about half after Ten A.M. we Began to play upon the Enemy with our Stern Chases and as She Closed up with us verry fast, in order the better to make use of our lee guns, we Shortened Sail by halling Down the Stay Sails and keeping before the wind.””²⁰⁴

Parker continued “A pretty warm Action Ensued for about the Space of one hour, in which we had two men killed and one Mortally wounded, Two Slightly wounded. The Consequence of our keeping before the wind while Engaging (a Circumstance that could not be avoided) Brought the Enemies other Ships Close up with us verry fast; and as we found we had Considerably Disabled our Antagonist By Shooting away his main Topmast, we again halled our wind to the Northward, Thinking thereby to out sail him so much, before he could Repair his Damages, as to bring on

¹⁹⁶ “Memorial Day 2018: Remembering a Revolutionary War Hero,” at MyHeritageBlog, [here](#). This is apparently from Parker’s report. Other locations for the action were given as about sixty miles south of Sandy Hook, New Jersey. *The New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Monday, June 14, 1779, and off Sandy Hook, or Long Island. *The Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, Saturday, June 12, 1779

¹⁹⁷ Allen, *Naval History of the American Revolution*, 2:390, from Parker’s report.

¹⁹⁸ Allen, *Naval History of the American Revolution*, 2:390, from Parker’s report.

¹⁹⁹ *The Connecticut Courant and the Weekly Intelligencer* [New London], Tuesday, June 15, 1779

²⁰⁰ *The Royal Gazette* [New York], Wednesday, June 9, 1779

²⁰¹ *The New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Monday, June 14, 1779

²⁰² *The New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Monday, June 14, 1779

²⁰³ *The New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Monday, June 14, 1779

²⁰⁴ Allen, *Naval History of the American Revolution*, 2:390

night and if we could not avoid him, we hoped at least to have Separated him from his other Consorts."²⁰⁵

This was true: *Daphne* was closing until a shot carried away her main top-mast. Repairs were begun immediately, but not completed until 1400, when *Daphne* began to close again.²⁰⁶ This phase of the action lasted two hours,²⁰⁷ but this must include the chase. Parker said

“We were under the Necessity of Shortening our Sail and keeping before the wind again, in order to Enable us to fight our lee guns. The Action began again about 3 P.M. and Continued till a little after 4 Do. In this last action we had two men wounded ; one had his Right arm and Collar bone broke by a Splinter, the other a flesh wound in the thigh by a nine pound shot. The Damages Done to the Ships Hull were Inconsiderable. She had her main and fore Stays Shott away, with one or two of her main & Mizen Shrouds, her main and fore Braces, and a nine pound shot through the head of her Mizen mast.”²⁰⁸

Parker continued

“By which time the Delewar Frigate and Union Privateer were closing up with us so fast, we found no Possibility of avoiding a Contest with Treble our force. Both officers and men appeared to be Brave and undaunted. I had a short Consultation with my Principal Officers. We hoped we had Done our Duty, we hoped we had Done Enough to Convince our Enemies as well as Others that we Dare oppose them and, as we then thought, with Spirit too, though on Disadvantageous Terms.” *Oliver Cromwell* then surrendered.²⁰⁹

According to the British this last fight lasted a half an hour.²¹⁰

The *Oliver Cromwell* had three killed and nine wounded. She was listed as having twenty guns and a crew of 130 men by the Americans.²¹¹ The Americans lost two killed and another was mortally wounded, according to the British. *Daphne* claimed to have had no casualties. The British

²⁰⁵ Allen, *Naval History of the American Revolution*, 2:390-391

²⁰⁶ *The New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Monday, June 14, 1779

²⁰⁷ *The Connecticut Courant and the Weekly Intelligencer* [New London], Tuesday, June 15, 1779

²⁰⁸ Allen, *Naval History of the American Revolution*, 2:391

²⁰⁹ Allen, *Naval History of the American Revolution*, 2:391

²¹⁰ *The Connecticut Courant and the Weekly Intelligencer* [New London], Tuesday, June 15, 1778

²¹¹ *The Connecticut Courant and the Weekly Intelligencer* [New London], Tuesday, June 15, 1778

reported that she had eighteen 9-pounders and two 6-pounders, with 150 men aboard.²¹² Still other accounts give the American casualties as three killed and eight wounded, with three killed on the *Daphne*.²¹³

Oliver Cromwell was sent to New York, arriving on 7 June. She was advertised for sale at New York on 14 June, with the sale to be held on 18 June.²¹⁴ She was purchased by a group of the Loyalist Refugees and turned into a British Privateer Ship under Harris Hatch.²¹⁵ *Oliver Cromwell* was re-named the *Restoration* by 19 July.²¹⁶ *Restoration* was purchased by the Royal Navy at New York on 14 November and became HM Sloop *Loyalist* (Commander John Ardesoif).²¹⁷

John Chapman was exchanged or paroled and arrived at New London on 31 July 1779.²¹⁸ On 22 August Parker arrived at New London in a cartel from New York, graduating from the prison ships with forty-six other prisoners.²¹⁹

The British prisoners were sent to Connecticut. There provision was made at New London for them to be transported by a cartel to New York for exchange. While en route down the Sound, however, they mutinied, overpowering the cartel's crew, and escaped ashore on Long Island. The officers of both the *Weymouth* and the *Honour* set out for Lebanon under the care of Midshipman Curtis Reed of the *Cromwell*, Captain Judd of the British Frigate *Antelope*, and Captain Flynn of the *Weymouth*, were among the prisoners taken.²²⁰

²¹² *The Royal Gazette* [New York], Wednesday, June 9, 1779. The number of men given as in her crew varied from 120 to 160 among many newspapers. It appears that she had 160 aboard at the beginning of the cruise.

²¹³ *The Connecticut Gazette* New London, Thursday, June 24, 1779

²¹⁴ *The New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Monday, June 14, 1779

²¹⁵ *The Royal Gazette* [New York], Saturday, July 17, 1779

²¹⁶ *The New-York Gazette and the Weekly Mercury*, Monday, July 19, 1779

²¹⁷ Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail 1714-1792*, 289

²¹⁸ *The Evening Post and General Advertiser* [Boston], Saturday, August 14, 1779, datelined New London, August 5

²¹⁹ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* [Philadelphia], Sunday, September 5, 1779, datelined New London, August 25

²²⁰ Middlebrook, *History of Maritime Connecticut*, 1:83