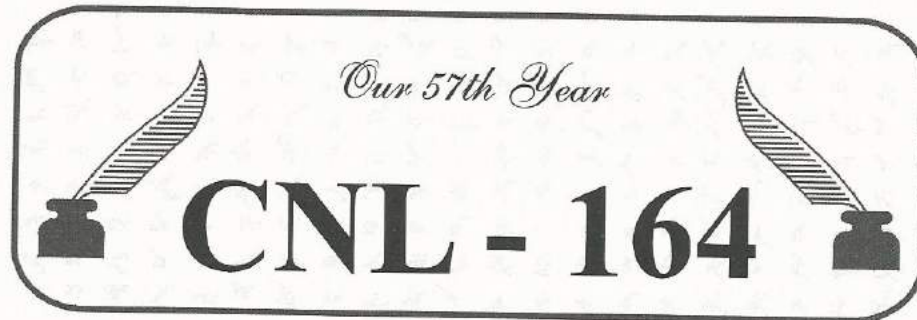


The  
**COLONIAL NEWSLETTER**  
A Research Journal in Early American Numismatics

Volume 57, Number 2

August 2017

Serial Number 164



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US ISSN 0010-1443

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*The Colonial Newsletter (CNL)* is published three times a year by The American Numismatic Society (ANS), 75 Varick Street, 11th Floor, New York, NY 10013. *CNL* is available at the rate of \$45 per year for ANS members and \$60 per year for non-members. For inquiries concerning *CNL*, please contact Emma Pratte at the above postal address: e-mail <membership@numismatics.org>; telephone (212) 571-4470 ext. 117, or FAX (212) 571-4479. One can subscribe to *CNL* online or download a subscription form from the ANS website at <www.numismatics.org/CNL/CNL>.

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We encourage our readers to consider submitting material on early North American numismatics to *CNL* for publication. In general, this includes coins, tokens, paper money, and medals that were current before the U.S. Federal Mint began operations in 1793. However, there are certain pieces produced after the 1793 date that have traditionally been considered part of pre-Federal numismatics and should be included. We cover all aspects of study regarding the manufacture and use of these items. Our very knowledgeable and friendly staff will assist potential authors to finalize submissions by providing advice concerning the text and help with illustrations. Submissions in either electronic or hard copy format, should be sent to the editor via the e-mail address given above or through the ANS at their postal address. Electronic text submissions should be formatted in Word with separate grayscale images.



### Editorial

As a follow up to my editorial in *CNL*-163, the Newman Numismatic Portal "NNP" has renamed the 1788 Connecticut and Federal Mint Account Book to match the name given to that document by Randy Clark and me. By agreeing on a common name to call this document, it is easier for future researchers to locate and use these materials. A copy of the original 1788 document can be found on the internet at <https://nnp.wustl.edu/library/archive/detail/515916?Year=1788&displayAmt=50>

This issue begins the publication of the transcript of the Leavenworth Account Book for 1787. A copy of the original 1787 document can be read on the Newman Numismatic Portal at: <https://nnp.wustl.edu/library/archive/detail/515916?Year=1787&displayAmt=50> or by putting in the search words "Leavenworth Account Book" while in the NNP. If you have not visited the NNP, this is a great opportunity to take a look. The NNP provides researchers a wonderful platform to review periodicals and books concerning numismatic topics. The next issue of *CNL* will feature an article on the NNP.

The Leavenworth Account Book for 1787 is significantly more complex than the 1788 Connecticut and Federal Mint Account Book. The two books were kept by different people for different reasons. While the 1788 account book was a professional accounting of the mint's production and finances, the 1787 document is actually a day book that was kept in Mark Leavenworth's New Haven store that noted the daily activities of his business. Therefore, the 1787 document includes many entries that are unrelated to the mint. We have included all the daily entries in the transcript as they provide historical context for the document and in many cases entries that at first appear to be unrelated to the mint are, upon closer examination, significant to our understanding of the mint's operation. Anyone who examines the original document on the NNP will also see that it is much less legible

than the 1788 account book and has suffered environmental damage over the years. The Leavenworth document includes handwriting from at least four different individuals. While there was no standard way to spell many words in 1787, some of the original authors were very liberal in their spelling, making it very difficult to read and understand the original in the absence of a transcript.

The transcript of the Leavenworth Account Book for 1787 was prepared in much the same way as the 1788 transcript of the Connecticut and Federal Mint Account Book, with two teams working independently of one another for months preparing separate transcripts. Randy Clark and Lou Jordan created one transcript and a second group consisting of Christopher McDowell, Gary Trudgen, Jeff Rock, and Bruce Smith worked on a second transcript. Once the two transcripts were complete, they were combined and differences resolved in order to provide a definitive transcript of this historically important document. Because the spelling in the Leavenworth Book is much more random than in the 1788 document, we have corrected more spelling errors than in the previous transcript so the document is more readable and consistent throughout. Also, to make the entries easier to reference, entry numbers have been assigned starting with \*1 and running in order to \*706 (these numbers do not appear in the original). The actual Leavenworth Day Book begins on February 12, 1787, and continues for several years, but we have only transcribed one year of the book as this is the segment that concerns the Connecticut mint.

Before examining the transcript, a word of caution needs to be added. It is the editor's belief that the Leavenworth Account Book for 1787 does not cover all the activity of the Connecticut mint for 1787, but only those activities in which Mark Leavenworth, John Goodrich, William Leavenworth, and Isaac Baldwin were involved. It is my belief that there were multiple stamping presses operating in New Haven striking Connecticut coppers in



1787; one of which was located inside Mark Leavenworth's store, with another located inside Abel Buell's nearby silversmith shop. In early February 1787, there was a press at the Hamden copper works, but this press was moved to Mark Leavenworth's store and it is unclear if a third press remained there. The records transcribed here do not capture any of the activity that took place in Abel Buell's shop, which was significant. Indeed, it is my opinion that more coins were minted in Buell's shop than Leavenworth's shop. The reason why there were multiple presses operating at the same time in different locations around New Haven is explained in an in-depth article concerning the Connecticut mint's activities that will appear in the next issue of *CNL*.

One final note on these documents. The original documents are located the New Haven Museum. Through the efforts of the Colonial Coin Collectors Club, these documents have been professionally conserved. I have been in contact with the executive director of the New Haven Museum, Margaret Tockarszewsky, and can report that the museum is thrilled with the way colonial coin collectors have come together to preserve and protect these records. Anyone wishing to examine the originals in person may do so by contacting the museum directly and making an appointment.

This current issue of *CNL* has two other articles. The featured article concerns Arabian silver coins that circulated for a brief time in New England. The author, James Bailey, is a metal detectorist. It is the editor's opinion that metal detectorist represent an untapped source of potential numismatic scholarship. As more people are drawn to the hobby of metal detecting, the number of exciting new finds grows. Many of the people participating in metal detecting get involved in colonial numismatics once they begin to research their discoveries. As a community, we must welcome these people into our hobby and work towards a mutual goal of understanding our past. The stunning new insights that

can be made in the field of numismatics by metal detectorists is on display in Bailey's article which began the day he dug up a 1693 *comassee* coin from Yemen in a field in Middletown, Rhode Island, and started searching for how such a coin came to rest there over 320 years before. Bailey's painstaking research into the origin of the coin led to the discovery of other similar Arabian silver coins unearthed by other detectorist throughout New England and a potential breakthrough in the saga of one of history's greatest pirates. Bailey's excellent writing and detailed descriptions put the reader right in the middle of the fight as Captain Every and his crew attack and plunder a gigantic sailing ship belonging to the great Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb containing a king's ransom in gold, silver, and jewels.

The final article in this issue of *CNL* is a short piece on Jack Arabas. If you look at entries \*116, \*135, \*161, and \*181 of the transcript of the Leavenworth Account Book for 1787, you will see that Jack worked at the Connecticut mint striking Connecticut coppers. One of the joys of having access to these new records is that it lets us know for the first time the names of the workers at the mint who produced the coins we collect and study. Many of the mint's employees, such as Jack Arabas, have untold stories that are historically significant and provide added insight into the mint and its owners.

I sincerely hope you enjoy this important issue of *CNL*. As always, I invite your comments and contributions.

Christopher R. McDowell,

Editor, *The Colonial Newsletter*  
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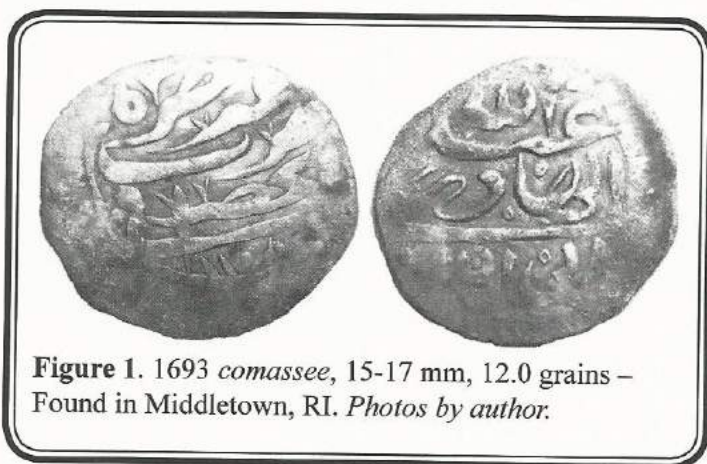


## Late 17th Century Arabian Coins Found in Southern New England: Uncovering the Evidence and History of Red Sea Piracy in Early America

by  
James Bailey; Warwick, RI

### 1) Introduction

This article offers a detailed study of Arabian silver coins that briefly circulated in the American Colonies at the close of the 17th century. The substance of the article is unprecedented in several respects. It advances the study of a subject hardly considered until now. Oliver Hoover's "The Real Forgotten Coins of North America" is the only past contribution of note, examining in part a detectorist's discovery of an unusual coin fragment of Arabian silver from the late 17th century found in Newport, RI.<sup>1</sup> Hoover's study concludes in pondering the possibility of recovering other such coins on North American soil. The possibility comes to fruition in this article reporting on the discovery of a second



**Figure 1.** 1693 *comassee*, 15-17 mm, 12.0 grains – Found in Middletown, RI. *Photos by author.*

specimen of Arabian silver – an intact, sharply detailed coin dating from 1693 (Fig. 1). It was eventually identified as a *comassee* coin from Yemen. The coin was found at a colonial period site by this author while metal detecting in Rhode Island - a mere five miles away from where the first fragmented specimen was recovered. The first ever documented recovery of a complete coin provided in this study helps mitigate reasonable concerns with solitary

finds, which can be dismissed as inexplicable anomalies. In addition, other hard evidence has been found. This author's ongoing interest in the recovered coin and numerous contacts with other detectorists in Southern New England led to the knowledge of other such coin recoveries presently totaling nine known specimens - four whole coins and five fragments. The recovery of these coins from one small region calls for investigation. This article answers the call reviewing a wealth of primary source documents relating to the origin of the coins from a distant part of the world, their unconventional conveyance to the American Colonies, and their illicit, brief circulation on the Atlantic seaboard. Examination of these coins offers unique insight into a subject matter previously limited to the study of historical records alone.

Hoover's contribution notes a number of possible sources for Islamic coins of gold and silver circulating in the American Colonies – piracy, the coffee trade, and the East African slave trade.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, a study of Dutch *leeuwendaalders* (lion dollars) by John

<sup>1</sup> Oliver Hoover, "The Real Forgotten Coins of North America: Islamic Gold, Silver, and Copper from the Eastern Trade," *CNL* 153 (December 2013): 4071-4082

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 4079-4081



Kleeberg considers piracy and the East African slave trade in particular as sources for these coins that circulated in the colonies.<sup>3</sup> This study advances a singular premise: the recovered coins detailed in this article are a small sampling of riches brought back to American Colonies by pirates who preyed upon the rich shipping lanes of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.

This specific study of pirate plunder in the American Colonies offers an intriguing look at local economies benefitting from piracy at the expense of emerging world trade. The steady drain of gold and silver specie from the colonies to England is a well-known though narrowly viewed subject in colonial numismatics. England was not a final stop but more of a way station particularly for silver, which went further eastward to finance the cost of doing business for the British East Indies Company in its dealing with the Mughal Empire (modern day India). The Mughal Empire had other trade partners, and they as well paid out in gold and silver coins, but some of this wealth never made it to the roadsteads of the mighty Mughal Empire. It was instead taken in brazen attacks by pirates from the American Colonies. In 1696 King William III contended with the problem of piracy by issuing a proclamation for the capture of pirates "who may be probably known and discovered by the great quantity of Persian and Indian gold and silver which they have with them."<sup>4</sup> It is this author's opinion and the purpose of this article to prove that the subject coins in this study were part of the foreign silver that King William referred to in his 1696 proclamation.

Pirate attacks that occurred throughout the 1690s would in short time pose a real threat to England's trade in the East Indies. Yet all was happy in the American Colonies. Pirate crews returning home from a successful voyage were welcomed with open arms as they returned with gold and silver that helped alleviate the economic strain caused by England's heavy draining of precious metals from the American Colonies. The much needed infusion of gold and silver helped fuel the local economy of select seaports, benefitting ship owners and prosperous merchants in particular, as well as shop owners, tavern keepers, tradesmen, and others as the money changed hands. Most must have known the illicit source for the foreign coins, but the money came and went in day-to-day transactions with few questions or concerns. There was little fear of consequences for those trying to scrape a living on the outer reaches of a rising British Empire.

## II) Site Description and Initial Finds

The Arabian coin that prompted this study was found at Sweet Berry Farm, a popular pick-your-own farm and market, in Middletown, RI. The site of a long-vanished mid-17th century house is located at the farm on approximately three acres of cultivated fields that offer little indication of the centuries-old history situated just below the surface; it is only a small portion of the 80 acres of cultivated land at the farm. The site was not located by chance; rather, it was found through detailed examination of modern aerial

<sup>3</sup> John Kleeberg, "The Circulation of Leeuwendaalders (Lion Dollars) in England's North American Colonies," *CNL* 152 (August 2013): 4031-4052

<sup>4</sup> Proclamation for the Apprehending Henry Every, 18 August 1696, National Library of Scotland. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Proclamation\\_for\\_apprehending\\_Henry\\_Every.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Proclamation_for_apprehending_Henry_Every.jpg).





**Figure 2.** A topographical chart of the bay of Narraganset in the province of New England by Charles Blakowitz and William Faden from 1777 (cropped from original- area of site is circled). <https://www.loc.gov/item/74692134/> (date accessed 3/19/17)

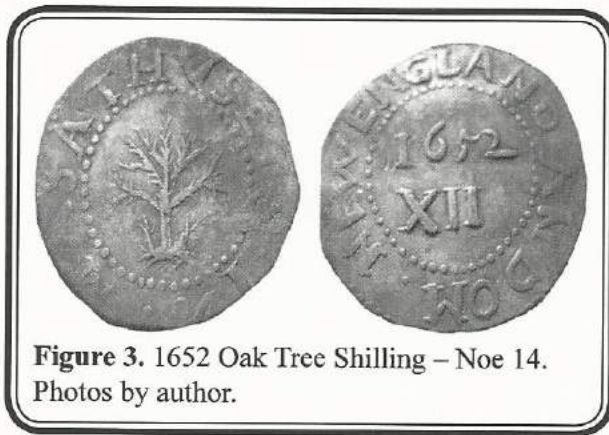
photos and an 18th century map (Fig. 2) showing a house site in the area.<sup>5</sup> Permission to search the farmland was granted by the owners, Jan and Michelle Eckhart. Apportioned from land in Newport, Middletown was incorporated in 1743; thus, when the subject coin was in circulation in the 1690s, the house site was in Newport, which was on its way to becoming one of the five major port cities in the American Colonies. The very first search of the property in the fall of 2004 produced a large shoe buckle frame, a few worn coppers, and some lead musket balls.

### III) Establishing a 17th Century Context

Additional finds from the house site recovered over the first two years of searching included additional musket balls, plain flat buttons, and nearly a dozen coppers. Sadly, dug coppers are typically ravaged by exposure to the elements with resulting degrees of corrosion that sometimes prevent even the most basic identification; such was the case with about half of the recovered coppers. The remaining coins consisted of a mix of British halfpence coppers and U.S. large cents dating from the late-end occupation of the house. None of the coins bore a legible date due to corrosion. None of the initial finds suggested that the house site dated much earlier than the 1777 map.

In April 2008, further searching yielded a significant colonial period find, a 1652 Oak Tree shilling (Fig. 3). Despite the passing of over three centuries in a rock-strewn farm field, the coin had a surprising amount of eye appeal. It was a wonderful Noe-14 variety with only light wear from circulation and remains one of the best recoveries from the site to date. The shilling was also the first in a series of finds that pushed back the initial dating of the house site by approximately 100 years.

<sup>5</sup> Blaskowitz, Charles, and Fadden, William. *A topographical chart of the bay of Narraganset in the province of New England, with all the isles contained therein, among which Rhode Island and Connonicut [sic] have been particularly surveyed, shewing the true position & bearings of the banks, shoals, rocks &c. as likewise the soundings: To which have been added the several works & batteries raised by the Americans. Taken by order of the principal farmers on Rhode Island.* [London: Engraved & printed for Wm. Faden, 1777] Map. Image Credit: Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/74692134/>. (Accessed Nov. 23, 2016.)



**Figure 3.** 1652 Oak Tree Shilling – Noe 14.  
Photos by author.

A few searches of the site each spring and fall over a 10-year period accumulated a wide variety of finds that date the site from the mid-17th century to the mid-19th century. Following the recovery of the Oak Tree shilling, additional finds of colonial period silver coins came slowly, amounting to a 1727 Spanish-American half real cob found in 2012 and a mid-18th century Spanish-American half real cob found in 2013, but the site steadily produced a solid assemblage of other finds that

established a mid-to-late 17th century context for the earliest occupation. An inventory of finds firmly dating from the mid-17th century to early 18th century is provided below in Table 1. Photos for some of these finds are provided in Fig. 4.

**Table 1.** Listing of finds dating from the mid-17th century to early 18th century.

Artifact Type	Date or Date Range	Description & Comments
button	mid-17th century to early 18th century	Solid cast, copper alloy button firmly dated by its center dot design.
cloth seal	mid-17th century to early 18th century	NORWICH – The stuffs industry produced wool yarn in Norwich, England for a large national and international market. After production, worsted fabric was inspected and secured with a lead seal for assurance of quality.
cloth seal	1680	Lead seal shows a coronet with three feathers above "80" for the date of 1680 - It's for the woolen industry in Taunton, England.
ceramic fragment	1688-1694	Höhr Rhenish stoneware fragment with partial image of Queen Mary, co-regent to King William (surface find).
coin	1660-1667	Oak Tree shilling – Noe 14 Variety.
coin	1672-1675	King Charles II halfpence – Exact date is illegible due to corrosion.
coin	1693	Comassee of al-Mahdi Muhammad, Arabia (modern Yemen).
coin	1727	Philip V – Spanish-American half real cob, Potosi, clipped.
horse bridle bosses	mid-to-late 17th century	Two different bridle bosses of molded copper alloy.
ornaments for leather	mid-to-late 17th century	Copper alloy ornaments or mounts in a few different styles; these were used on horse saddles, reins, etc.



spoon fragments	Mid-17th century to early 18th century	Latten spoon fragments are reliably dated by their trifid-style handle ends, makers' marks, and bowl shapes.
spur buckle fragments	Mid-17th century to early 18th century	Copper alloy, trapezoidal spur buckle fragments.



**Figure 4.** Finds from site dating from the mid-17th century to early 18th century. Top: Spanish-American half real (1727) (obv. and rev.) and image of Queen Mary on stoneware. Center: Latten spoon fragments. Bottom: Woolen cloth seal from 1680 and Norwich cloth seal. Photos by author.

Dynamics of a conflicted relationship between the mercantilist practices of England and its colonies in America are evident in the coins and other artifacts found at the site: colonial dependence on England for needed imports (woolen goods); a prevalence of non-English coins (i.e., Spanish silver and Massachusetts silver) owing to a near total absence of coins coming from England; and far worse, foreign silver taken by piracy that threatened England's overseas trading.

#### IV) Discovery of an Arabian Silver Coin

The site has continued to yield more finds over the past 10 years due in great part to the updating of equipment - new metal detectors offering improved depth capabilities and sensitivity. During a brief search of the site with a new detector in May of 2014, this author came upon a slight but steady, high-toned signal near the center of the site. A small plug of grass was neatly cut out and placed next to the hole. Another sweep of the detector's coil determined that the target had come out with the plug. A small, dark gray disc protruded from the dirt at the bottom of the eight-inch thick plug (Fig. 5). Although it appeared to be a very old coin, this author

cautiously considered that it was perhaps nothing more than a small chip of slate, but a quick check with a small detecting probe indicated otherwise. It was a coin - a small hammered silver coin roughly equal to a U.S. dime in size. Despite many prior searches





**Figure 5.** View of removed grass plug; coin is visible near top left. Photo by author.



**Figure 6.** As-dug photo of coin with Arabic inscriptions. Photo by author.

of the area, the coin had gone undetected due to its small size and location eight-inches deep in the ground. The design on the coin was surprisingly difficult to discern. The recovery of a Massachusetts silver threepence or a Spanish half-real cob seemed unlikely as no pine tree or cross symbol appeared to be visible on the coin. After being buried for hundreds of years, the coin was covered with a built-up layer of dirt that prevented a full view of its features, so a bottle of water was used to drench the coin. The dousing of water revealed a surprising amount of detail particularly for a small hammered coin, yet the coin strangely lacked any sort of image; moreover, its entire design consisted of obscure inscriptions that appeared to be Arabic (Fig. 6). Because of the unusual nature of the coin, it could not be identified in the field.

#### **V) Full Identification of the Coin**

The Internet has been essential in identifying many past finds recovered by this author, but online research for the coin's identity was largely hindered for two reasons: the coin's inscription was completely foreign; and the coin was without any type of imagery. An

online search of 17th century coins with Arabic script produced some examples with similar traits, though no clear matches until a close friend of this author found a similar Arabian coin several years before at a colonial period site in southeastern Massachusetts. His coin was only 80% complete perhaps due to a plow strike having fragmented the coin. In addition, one side of his coin bore only a slight amount of its design, while the other side was completely void of detail apparently due to poor striking; however, enough detail was visible to show that the two Arabian coins were closely related in appearance. More importantly, his coin had just been recently identified after he saw an example of the same coin on a television program. He had long searched for the coin's identity without success until it came to him quite unexpectedly while sitting at home watching *Diggers*, a treasure hunting reality-television show on the National Geographic Channel. This particular episode featured the recovery of a worn, fragmented coin (60% complete) quite odd in appearance. It was another Arabian coin recovered in Newport, RI at another colonial period site.<sup>6</sup> Despite its poor condition, the coin fragment featured on the program was identified as a 17th century *khums kabir* from Yemen. This identification was provided by the American Numismatic Society, and the

<sup>6</sup> *Diggers*, "Mystery Coin," National Geographic Channel, March 4, 2014.



recovery and identification of the coin fragment was detailed by Oliver Hoover in his study of Islamic coins circulating in North America, as mentioned in the introduction.<sup>7</sup>

An online search for *khums kabir* coins resulted in a single contact, Steve Album, a leading expert on Islamic and Indian coins. He was consulted and kindly provided a full identification of the coin after viewing e-mailed photos. He confirmed that the silver coin was from Yemen and dated to 1693. The date of 1693 was crucial for determining how the coin arrived in the American Colonies. Though helpful in identifying the coin, the *khums kabir* term is a misnomer. *Comassee* is the historically correct term for the recovered coin.<sup>8</sup> *Comasseees* were valued at 80 to a dollar.<sup>9</sup>

#### **VI) Significant Coin Recoveries Relevant to this Study - Identification and Other Information**

This study documents the recovery of several other Arabian silver coins/coin fragments, all of which were found by detectorists mostly while searching colonial period sites in Southern New England. In addition, the recovery in the same locale of a single silver Ottoman *akçe* coin dating from the 17th century is also included due to its relevance to the study. A majority of the coins can be positively dated from the mid-to-late 17th century, while a few specimens apparently date from the same time period. Information on the recovery and identity of each specimen is provided below in Table 2. A map key corresponds to the location of the recovered coins in Fig. 7. Identification of the coins was provided by Steve Album and Dr. Lutz Ilisch. Photos of coins are provided below.

<sup>7</sup> Oliver Hoover, "The Real Forgotten Coin of North America," 4071-4082

<sup>8</sup> Lutz Ilisch, e-mail message to author, March 24, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> John Ovington, *A Voyage to Suratt: In the Year, 1689* (London: 1696) 463

Table 2. Listing of Arabian and Ottoman silver coins/fragments found by detectorists in Southern New England.

Place of Recovery & Site Description	Coin/Fragment – Date or Date Range & Type	Issuing Ruler - Title	Condition & Comments	Discoverer & Map Key
Middletown, RI – agricultural field – house site	coin 1693 – <i>comassee</i> from Yemen	al-Mahdi Muhammad	sharp detail and light, even toning	James Bailey -1
Windsor, CT – agricultural field – house site	coin 1687-1693 – <i>comassee</i> from Yemen	al-Nasir Muhammad	fractured and dark toned; corrosion visible from debased silver composition; considerable detail	Bob Ellis - 2
Raynham, MA – wooded area	coin 1694 or later (based on adopted name of ruler) – <i>comassee</i> from Yemen	al-Hadi Muhammad	sharp detail and light, even toning; date is off flan.	Tim Larkin - 3
Norwell, MA – wooded area – house site – cellar hole	coin 1691-1695 (range) Ottoman <i>aqche</i>	Ahmad II ibn Ibrahim	Coin is holed and lacks detail; mint and date are illegible.	Jerry Bates - 4
Newport, RI – agricultural field – house site	fragment 1687-1693 – <i>comassee</i> from Yemen	al-Nasir Muhammad <sup>1</sup>	lacks detail	George Wyant - 5
Plymouth, MA – school yard	fragment 1644-1686 – <i>comassee</i> from Yemen	al-Mutawakkil Ismail or successor	crisp detail	Paul Davis - 6
Braintree, MA – agricultural field	fragment 17th century – <i>comassee</i> from Yemen (probable)	al-Mahdi Muhammad (probable)	light striking; lacks detail	Joe Baker - 7
MA (city location withheld upon request) – wooded area – house site – cellar hole	fragment 17th century – <i>comassee</i> from Yemen (suspected)	unknown	damage and heavy wear – extensive lack of detail	Name withheld upon request - 8
Wellfleet, MA – shoreline - old wharf	fragment 17th century – <i>comassee</i> from Yemen (suspected)	unknown	holed and damaged along with salt water exposure – lack of detail	Ross Silva - 9





Figure 7. Map of Southern New England showing locations of coin recoveries – coins are shown below.



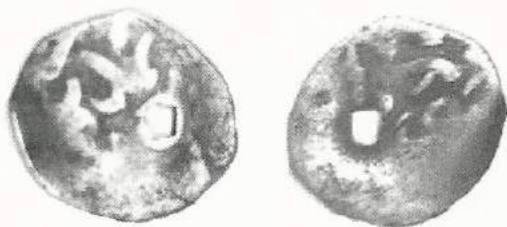
#1 Middletown, RI specimen – *Comassee* from Yemen, 1693.



#2 Windsor, CT specimen – *Comassee* from Yemen, 1687-1693.



#3 Raynham, MA specimen – *Comassee* from Yemen, 1694 or later.



#4 Norwell, MA specimen – Ottoman *aqche*, 1691-1695.



#5 Newport, RI specimen – *Comassee* from Yemen, 1687-1693.

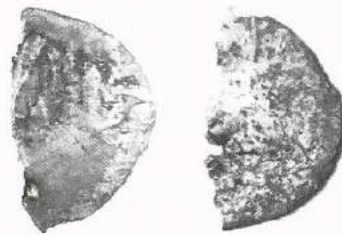


#6 Plymouth, MA specimen - *Comassee* from Yemen, 1644-1686 (based on style).

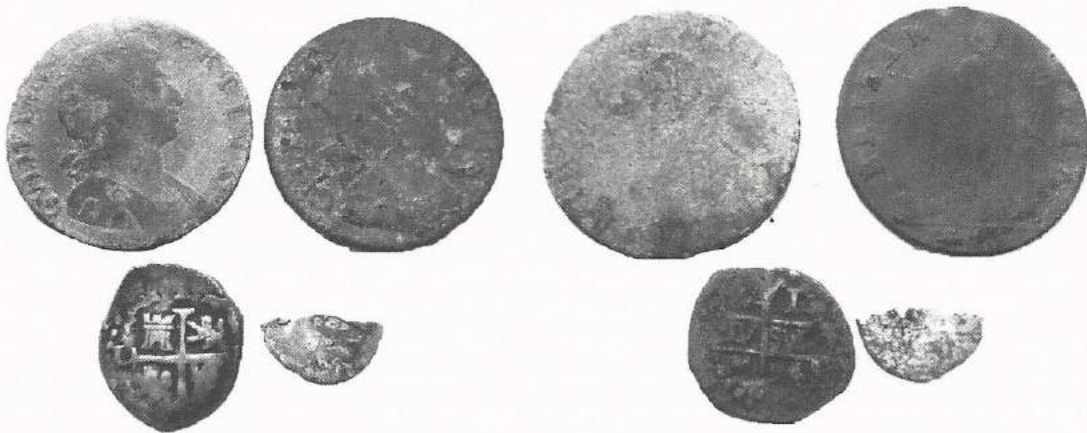


#7 Braintree, MA specimen - *Comassee* from Yemen (probable).

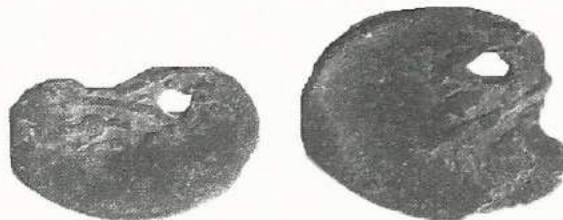




#8 Massachusetts specimen – *Comassee* from Yemen (suspected).



#8 Massachusetts specimen with associated coins from a coin spill.



#9 Wellfleet, MA specimen - *Comassee* from Yemen (suspected).

Excluding one find of a single Moroccan coin in North Carolina, research by this author could not account for any further recoveries of similarly dated Arabian or Ottoman silver coins in North America, including possible finds through accidental discovery, archaeological excavation, or from a shipwreck or hoard. As with the Middletown, RI site, the Windsor, CT and Norwell, MA sites listed in Table 2 produced multiple coins and artifacts from dwellings that dated from the mid-17th to early 18th centuries.

Specimens recovered from the remaining sites appear to represent single finds not associated with the context of a known historical site, with the possible exception of the Newport, RI, coin from the *Diggers* program. The isolated coins were perhaps lost by someone while traveling or engaged in working a farm field. The coin recovered from the unspecified site in Massachusetts was dug from a coin spill and thus offers compelling evidence for the common circulation of Arabian coins in the American Colonies. Consisting of four coins found together in a single hole; they were all lost at once by

the unfortunate owner. The coins consisted of the following: a cut silver coin with Arabic inscription (a suspected *comassee*), a 1694 Spanish-American one real cob, a 1700 King William halfpence, and a King William halfpence with no legible date. The early end of the known six year date range for the coin spill is 1694 for the Spanish cob – a single year off from the end date range of 1687-1693 for three coins in the study. Positive dating of the coins and the historical context of where these coins were recovered verify the circulation of Arabian coins in Southern New England in the late 17th century.

### VII) Yemen and the Red Sea Trade in the late 17th Century

Eight of the nine coins/fragments in this study are known or suspected to have originated from Yemen. The country of Yemen is located at the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula with Saudi Arabia to the north and Oman to the east. In the 17th century, Yemen was often referred to as Arabia or *Arabia Felix* – “*felix*” being a Latin term synonymous with happy, fortunate, and fruit-bearing. *Arabia Felix* referred to the fertile soils of southern Arabia in sharp contrast to the arid conditions to the north. Situated between the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea, the Mandeb Strait is located along the extreme southwestern part of Yemen. The passage of countless trade ships over the centuries through the Mandeb Strait gave rise to the prosperous port of Mocha in Yemen (Fig. 8). Ottoman Turk, Mughal, and European trade company vessels crowded into Mocha's bustling roadstead with precious cargoes of cotton, silks, spices, silver, and gold, along with Yemen's signature export, the coffee bean, which it held as a monopoly throughout the 17th century. The vast Ottoman Empire stretched along the Red Sea and far westward to the Mediterranean and Constantinople, capital of the Turks. The Mughal Empire to the east extended over most of India and beyond to Afghanistan in the north. The immense amount of trade exchanged between these two great empires, particularly in Mughal exports, soon attracted the interest of European powers, which entered the East Indies trade in the early 16th century. Portugal forced its way into the



**Figure 8.** *The City of Mocha* by Jacob van Meurs from 1680 (cropped from original). [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mocha\\_Dapper\\_1680.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mocha_Dapper_1680.jpg) (date accessed 11/24/16).



trade first, followed by the enterprising Dutch and later the English. In the late 17th century, Mocha and most everywhere else in Yemen was under the arbitrary rule of al-Mahdi Muhammad, an imam of the Qasimid Dynasty. While earlier imams were religiously consecrated leaders, those of the Qasimids ruled through a hereditary dynasty. The Qasimids were successful in re-establishing sovereign rule after forcing out the Turks from the Ottoman Empire and bringing prosperity to the region on their own terms.

The East Indies Company (EIC) in England was founded in 1600 with the granting of a monopoly from Queen Elizabeth I on all trade in the East Indies. The EIC originally aimed to make its fortune in the spice trade (pepper, nutmeg, and cloves) and was moderately successful in exporting spices and other products, such as indigo and saltpeter, but the company's bigger long-term profits came from textiles from the Mughal Empire in the form of silk and especially cotton. Textiles from India became all the rage among a broad segment of the English population who swapped out their dull wool garments for trendy, comfortable cotton. What did the EIC import to India in exchange for lucrative cotton textiles? Attempts by the EIC at importing woolen goods, tin, and iron to India proved unsuccessful, as these products could be obtained for less domestically or were not in demand. The markets of India desired coral, which the EIC obtained from the Mediterranean, but what India wanted most – what they insisted upon from the English and other trade partners – was silver and gold. The EIC responded by shipping large amounts of gold and especially silver that soon overshadowed the exporting of all other trade goods. It is estimated that bullion and specie made up 79% of the total worth of the EIC's export trade to India and Asia in decennial means from 1660-69 to 1710-19. Trade goods made up the remaining 21 percent.<sup>10</sup> The officers, shareholders, and supporters of the EIC regarded such expenditures as simply the cost of doing business, a very profitable business, in the East Indies. Even during the EIC's formative years in trade, goods acquired in India for £356,288 produced a sum of £1,914,600 in sales back in England.<sup>11</sup> Exports from the EIC alone to India from 1681 to 1685 totaled to 240 tonnes of silver and 7 tonnes of gold.<sup>12</sup> The EIC however was not the only customer who paid the Mughals in gold and silver. Bullion and specie was also exported from major ports along the Red Sea to Gujarat on the west coast of India throughout the 17th century, and silver exports from these Arab markets surged in the last quarter of the 17th century and onward – 56 tons in 1679 and 1685, and 68 tons in 1700.<sup>13</sup>

Francois Bernier, a French physician and traveler, served at the court of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb for 12 years in the mid-17th Century. Emperor Aurangzeb brought the mighty Mughal Empire to the height of its power, ruling over 120 million subjects, all with an appetite for gold and silver, though the Indian sub-continent lacked domestic sources

10 John Munro, *Money in the Pre-Industrial World: Bullion, Debasements and Coin Substitutes* (New York: Routledge, 2016) 10

11 Shafaat Ahmad Khan, *East India Trade in the 17th Century: In Its Political and Economic Aspects* (London: Oxford University Press, 1923) 17

12 John Keay, *The Honourable Company: The History of the English East India Company* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993) 150

13 Najaf Haider, "Precious Metal Flows and Currency Circulation in the Mughal Empire," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* vol. 39, no. 3 (1996) 312



of these precious metals.<sup>14</sup> Of his time with the Mughals, Bernier wrote the following: "It should not escape notice that gold and silver after circulating in every other quarter of the globe comes at length to be swallowed up, lost in some measure in Hindoustan."<sup>15</sup>

Historical records show absolutely no evidence of the American Colonies sailing to the distant Red Sea to engage in trade in the late-17th century, and the reasons are many – a lack of trade contacts in a distant land, differences in language, culture, and religion, control over trade by the EIC, and a lack of marketable goods and commodities with which to trade.

### VIII) Piracy as a Source of Arabian Coins in the American Colonies

The case for a connection between piracy and the subject coins is best presented with a detailed examination of one particular event rather than a broad study of late-17th century piracy. Such an approach affords several advantages. This particular event was one of the most extensively documented cases in the Golden Age of Piracy, which broadly dates from 1660 to 1730.<sup>16</sup> Primary source documentation of the event also brings a fascinating history to life and provides detailed accounts for skeptics. The case to be examined is well-representative of piracy in the late 17th century and includes events that took place in Rhode Island, where two of the subject coins were found. Finally, evidence suggests a link between this specific act of piracy and the coins presented in this study.

#### 1. Rise of the Pirate Round – the Voyage of the *Amity*

The EIC's profits in India required enormous capital to fund initial trade missions and later organize routine voyages of vessels, crew, provisions, and exports. Piracy was a simpler undertaking, requiring a vessel, an able-bodied crew, firepower, and a good measure of daring. Sailing upon the Atlantic in 1692, Captain Thomas Tew commanded just such a vessel, the *Amity*, with a dare-do-all crew. Tew carried a commission from Lt. Governor Isaac Richier of Bermuda to go against a French slave factory off the Gambian Coast of western Africa in the prosecution of England's war with France.<sup>17</sup> Privateering was legalized piracy, commissioned by a government authority to expedite fighting the enemy at sea during times of war. Privateering was widely practiced throughout the colonial period and subject to much mispractice and abuse. This mispractice is exemplified in Tew's voyage of 1692 upon his leaving the French unscathed and instead steering a southerly course to round the Cape for the east coast of Africa and onward to the Red Sea. The *Amity* only took a single prize, and it was not a French vessel. It was a "rich ship belonging to the Mogul" that earned the *Amity's* crewmembers "upwards of

14 By comparison, England had an estimated population of 5.5 million in 1650.

15 Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire A.D. 1656-1668* (London: Oxford University Press, 1916) 202

16 Historians refer to the "Golden Age of Piracy" in referencing a rise in pirating activity in many parts of the world from the mid-17th century to the 1730s.

17 Alexander Hawes, *Off Soundings: Aspects of the Maritime History of Rhode Island* (Chevy Chase: Posterity Press, 1999) 23





**Figure 9.** *He Had Found the Captain Agreeable and Companionable* by Howard Pyle – 19th century illustration of Captain Tew and Governor Fletcher. Janvier, Thomas “Sea Robbers of New York,” *Harper’s Magazine* (Nov. 1894)

a 1000 pounds for each.<sup>18</sup> The name of the captured ship, its home port, and other specifics are lost to history, but its capture in 1693 was big news at the time, ushering in a new period in piracy known today as the Pirate Round. Tew’s voyage was initially suspected as a possible source for the 1693 coin specimen from Middletown, RI, but research revealed an implausible time frame, as Tew captured the vessel within a few weeks of the Islamic New Year, September 10, 1693 – the year the coin was minted.<sup>19</sup>

The Pirate Round is named for the long, arduous voyage undertaken by pirates who sailed around Africa to the rich shipping lanes along the Red Sea and across the Arabian Sea to India. These pirates were called Roundsmen or Red Sea Men. The vessel taken by the *Amity* carried a cargo that exemplified the vast wealth being freighted in the East Indies trade. Sailors from European nations under the employment of trade companies were soon savvy to the rich trade in the East Indies. Thomas

Tew was not the first to take a rich prize as others had come before him, but he was one of the earliest and best known Roundsmen.

In the 1680s piracy in the Caribbean went into decline due to several factors. Jamaica at this time was transitioning from a major pirate haven located in the town of Port Royal to a respectable merchant economy based on sugarcane production fueled by slave labor. Passing of the *Act for Restraining and Punishing Privateers and Pirates* in 1683 affected a wide range of measures to upend the business of piracy in Jamaica.<sup>20</sup> The era of French and English raids on major ports up and down the Spanish Main had come and gone. Exporting of Spanish-American silver had been in decline for the past half-century, and it came to the point that a pirate could not make a dishonest living anymore in the waters of the Caribbean. Finally, even heaven above appeared intent on driving the buccaneers from the Caribbean, when Port Royal and 2,000 souls slid into the sea during an earthquake on June 7, 1692. When it came time to seek new prospects elsewhere, the riches of the East Indies beckoned.

18 J.W. Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies*, [Vol. 15], 15 May 1696-31 October, 1697 (London: Mackie and Co., 1904) 379

19 John Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period: Illustrative Documents* (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1923) 183; Steve Album, e-mail message to author, May 20, 2014.

20 Mark G. Hanna, *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire, 1570-1740* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015) 135-136



Instead of returning to Bermuda after his first voyage to the Red Sea, Captain Tew sailed for New England and arrived in Newport in 1694. The arrival of the *Amity* and its crew with individual shares of up to £1000 in plunder was undoubtedly a boon to Newport's economy. Certainly, it was not for their good company that pirates would be welcomed in the colony over the next several years. Enjoying his ill-gotten fortune, Tew traveled to New York and became a good acquaintance of Governor Benjamin Fletcher. The rapport shared by the two was the subject of a work by 19th century illustrator Howard Pyle (Fig. 9). Their relationship became the talk of the town as one of the early instances of political scandal between colonial officials and the Roundsmen. It was reported to London that Tew was "caressed by Governor Fletcher, dined and supped often with him, and appeared with him publicly in his coach. They also exchanged presents, such as gold watches, with each other. All this is known to most of this city."<sup>21</sup> Tew was not the only well-to-do pirate that patronized the office of Governor Fletcher; likewise, Fletcher was not the only Governor to compromise his governance in questionable dealings with pirates.

## 2. The Capture of the *Gunsway* in 1695

Tew's success and substantial wealth from his first voyage ensured that that he would have lots of company upon his return to the Red Sea in early 1695. As he did back in Bermuda, Tew sought a privateer's commission, offering £500 to Rhode Island Governor John Easton to obtain a veneer of legitimacy for his return trip to the Red Sea. When Easton informed the pirate captain that "he knew not his design," Tew slyly replied that "he should go where perhaps the commission might never be seen or heard of."<sup>22</sup> Governor Easton rebuffed the request for a commission, but Tew had better luck obtaining papers from his good friend, Governor Fletcher at a bargain rate of £300. Back in Rhode Island, other ships' captains hoping to get in on the action had better luck in obtaining commissions from Deputy Governor John Greene, who possessed a more business-friendly disposition. It is recorded that Newport Harbor was soon busy with activity as a "sloop, a brigantine, and a barque" prepared for the voyage with young men coming from all parts to sign aboard.<sup>23</sup> Between November of 1694 and January of 1695, four vessels departed from Newport for the Red Sea. They planned to sail as consorts along with a fifth vessel commanded by one of Tew's mates from the last voyage. Though most of the ships carried commissions, they were privateers only on paper. Everyone involved knew they had no intentions of sailing against the French, as they had other interests to pursue in the Red Sea. See Table 3 for a description of these vessels.

21 J.W. Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, [Vol. 16], 27 October, 1697-31 December 1698*, (London: Mackie and Co., 1905) 225

22 John Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England, Volume III* (Providence: Knowles, Anthony & Co., 1858) 341

23 J.W. Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, [Vol. 16], 379*



**Table 3.** Description of vessels that sailed for the Red Sea.

Ship	Captain	Port of Departure	Size of Crew/ Armament	Commissioned by
<i>Amity</i>	Thomas Tew	Newport	30-40 6 cannons	Governor Benjamin Fletcher
<i>Pearl</i>	William Mayes, Jr.	Newport	50 6 cannons	Deputy Governor John Greene
<i>Portsmouth Adventure</i>	Joseph Farro	Newport	60 unknown	Deputy Governor John Greene
<i>Susanna</i>	Thomas Wake	Newport	50 6 cannons	no known commission
<i>Dolphin</i>	Richard Want	Whorekills (Lewes, Delaware)	60 6 cannons	no known commission

The small fleet rendezvoused the following August at the Mandeb Strait and discovered that they had unexpected company. Armed with 46-guns and a carrying a crew of 150 "hungry, stout, and resolute men" the ship *Fancy* had recently arrived with like intentions under the command of Captain Henry Every.<sup>24</sup> He had been serving as first mate aboard the *Charles II* off the coast of Spain until being promoted by the consent of the ship's crew after he led them in a mutiny on May 7, 1694.<sup>25</sup> Captain Every and his fellow mutineers renamed the ship and soon got down to pirating aboard the *Fancy*. While sailing the Pirate Round, Every took numerous prizes, seized provisions as needed, and bolstered the size of his crew with eager volunteers.<sup>26</sup> With the addition of the *Fancy*, the fleet had the makings of a formidable armada; accordingly, all the ships' crews "agreed on and signed articles to share and share alike."<sup>27</sup>

Led by Every as commander of the fleet, the consorts took a position near the narrow Mandeb Strait and lay in wait for their prey, the Mughal pilgrim fleet located 60 miles to the north in the Yemen port of Mocha. The pilgrim fleet would be carrying thousands of passengers on their return to India after journeying to Mecca for the Haj, the annual pilgrimage of the Islamic faith. The pilgrim fleet would also be carrying huge quantities of silver and gold resulting from the sale of surplus trade goods taken on the trip for export from India. The Haj was a religious obligation and a business trip, and business was always brisk in Mocha. John Ovington, chaplain to the EIC, described Mocha in the late 1680s as the "principal Port in the Red-Sea" where Mughal merchants could find buyers from Turkey, Egypt, Arabia and other regions to "buy off their Goods for ready Money, and make little other Return but Coffee, Sena... and other small things of no great value."<sup>28</sup> According to Indian economics historian Om Prakash, "from the 16th century onward, the port of Mocha was repeatedly referred to as the 'treasure chest' of the Mughal Empire."<sup>29</sup> After departing from Mocha, the pilgrim fleet sailed out of the

24 John Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period*, 154

25 *Ibid.*, 165

26 J.W. Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies*, [Vol. 15], 260-261

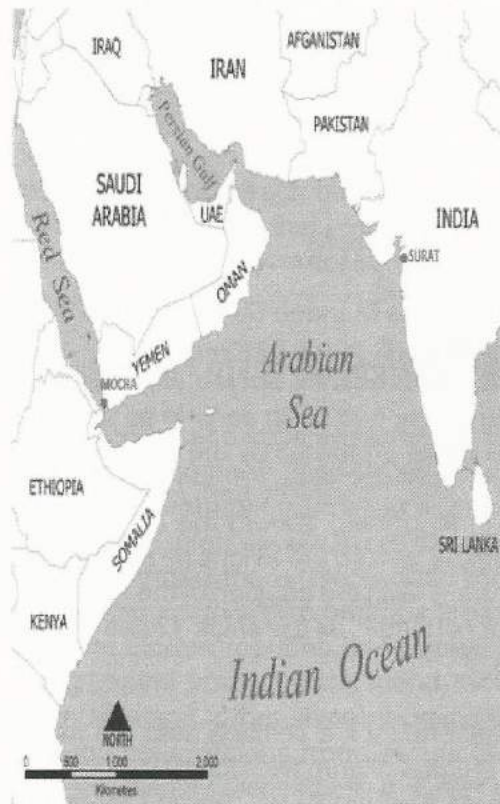
27 E.T. Fox, ed., *Pirates in Their Own Words* (Raleigh: Lulu Press, Inc., 2014) 26

28 John Ovington, *A Voyage to Suratt: In the Year, 1689*, 461

29 Rila Mukherjee, ed., *European Commercial Enterprise in Pre-Colonial India, Volume II, The New Cambridge History of India*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 13



Red Sea at the Mandeb Strait and went unnoticed as it passed by the pirate consorts. In the dead of night, the consorts' quarry slipped through the gauntlet carrying large cash withdrawals from the Mughals' "treasure chest" that was Mocha. The next day the consorts seized a ketch vessel and received word of missing the pilgrim fleet. Still intent on the riches bound for the Mughal Empire, the consorts made sail and gave chase.



**Figure 10.** The *Fancy* and other consort vessels pursued the pilgrim fleet across the Arabian Sea from Mocha to Surat. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arabian\\_Sea\\_map.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arabian_Sea_map.png) (date accessed 11/24/16)

Because she sailed too fast for her consorts, the *Fancy* took aboard the crew of the *Dolphin*, which was abandoned to the sea, and took the *Pearl* in tow. The *Portsmouth Adventure* kept up with the *Fancy*, but the *Amity* and the *Susanna* fell behind in the furious pursuit of the pilgrim fleet. The luck of the pilgrim fleet ran out about a day's sail from its home port of Surat (Fig. 10). After days of packing the canvas and crossing the entire Arabian Sea, Every closed the gap on the pilgrim fleet 10 leagues off the west coast of India and took two prizes.<sup>30</sup> The captured vessels were not French, but this mattered little as they were heavily-laden with silver and gold. The first prize was a merchant ship, the *Fateh Mohammed*, taken on September 3, 1695; it offered up between £50,000 to £60,000 in silver and gold after putting up slight resistance. The next day, while still in possession of the *Fateh Mohammed*, the crew of the *Fancy* spotted a second Mughal vessel, the massive *Ganj-i-sawai* or *Gunsway*, as its anglicized name appears in contemporary accounts. Though the first vessel was captured with little difficulty, the *Gunsway* would not be so easily taken, being "manned with abt [about] a 1000 men."<sup>31</sup> It was the largest ship in the port of Surat and was armed with 70 to 80 cannon.

Primary source documents relating to the capture of the *Gunsway* consist of depositions and courtroom testimony from 13 of the estimated 180 pirates aboard the *Fancy*. These accounts are insightful, straightforward, and reflect the known history of the period. More importantly, a few depositions provide the earliest insights on the silver and gold taken from the *Gunsway* as they relate to the subject coins in this study. In the engagement, Every played close to the *Gunsway* to unleash an effective cannon fire that significantly damaged the ship's mainmast, but the *Gunsway's* returning fire was most

30 10 leagues equates to 35 miles

31 E.T. Fox, ed., *Pirates in Their Own Words*, 38. This figure of 1,000 men was provided under examination of David Evans, crewmember of the *Fancy*. Other crewmembers provided numbers ranging from 700 to 1,300 persons aboard the *Gunsway*.





**Figure 11.** CAPT. AVERY and his crew taking one of the GREAT MOGUL'S Ships. Johnson, Charles, *A General and True History of the Lives and Actions of the Most Famous Highwaymen, Murderers, Street-Robbers &c. To Which Is Added, a Genuine Account of the Voyages and Plunders of the Most Noted Pyrates*, London, 1734.

Avery has been used as an alternate spelling of Every in both primary and secondary sources since the 1690s.

effective against her own crew as a fatigued cannon violently ruptured, spraying the deck with iron shrapnel and carnage.<sup>32</sup> Sensing the distress on board the *Gunsway*, the Roundsmen swarmed up and over the sides of the pilgrim vessel. The *Gunsway*'s crew scrambled below deck with the passengers surrendering the ship to its fate (Fig. 11). The victorious pirates followed soon after down into the ship's hold where "they made their voyage" in the discovery of huge quantities of silver and gold.<sup>33</sup>

The accounts provided by the crew of the *Fancy* offer a few interesting details on the *Gunsway*'s silver, gold, and other treasure beyond its total amount in English pounds. Pirate William Phillips of the *Fancy* describes the money from the *Gunsway* as belonging "to Turkish merchants which we found in the hold in baskets, there might be in the whole about £150,000." Phillips and others also recount in their depositions that the crew of the *Fancy* exchanged their silver for gold with the men aboard the *Pearl* "for the conveniency of carriage" until it was discovered that the *Fancy*'s crew had been cheated. Phillips states that "finding the Brigantine's men clipped

the Gold before they exchanged with us, we sent for the Captain, Meese [Mayes], on board and commanded all their money on board, and took it from them, but we gave them £2000 among them."<sup>34</sup> It was just deserts for the men of the *Pearl* who violated the articles requiring equal shares. The initial shipment of the *Gunsway*'s coins in baskets instead of chests and dealing to trade cumbersome loads of silver coins for smaller parcels of gold coins suggest that small silver coins, such as the *comassees* in this

32 Sir Henry Elliot, *The History of India, as Told by Its Own Historians: The Muhammadan Period* (London: Trubner and Co., 1877) 350

33 John Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period*, 168

34 E.T. Fox, ed., *Pirates in Their Own Words*, 28



study, represented a significant portion of the wealth taken from the *Gunsway*. Further details of the wealth aboard the *Gunsway* was provided by pirate Philip Middleton who stated their taking of "great quantities of jewels, and a saddle and bridle set with rubies designated as a present for the Great Mogul."<sup>35</sup> The most often reported figure of individual shares was £900 to £1000, followed by smaller shares of £400 to £800 "as the company thought they deserved."<sup>36</sup> Youngest members of the crew were reported to have received only £100. Figures for the total value of plunder taken from the *Gunsway* range from £130,000 to £200,000 divided into shares among 160 to 180 participants. Every as captain earned two shares. The Mughals claimed a likely exaggerated value of £600,000 in seeking compensation for their losses. Perhaps the most reliable figure is provided by former EIC employee Alexander Hamilton, who was established as a private trader in Surat by 1696. His figure falls in between the high and low estimates at £325,000<sup>37</sup>

### 3. Aftermath – Pirates on the Run

Pirates aboard the *Fancy* clearly were not in the habit of keeping a journal of their crimes, and known accounts by the Mughals themselves that were later translated to English consist of a single source. While primary sources documentation might seem sparse, it is surprisingly extensive owing to the involvement of the EIC. The plunder of the *Gunsway* brought severe consequences upon the trade factories of the EIC in India, especially in Surat. When the *Fateh Mohammed* and the *Gunsway* limped back to home port, condemnation and fury spread throughout Surat before coming down on the English representatives of the EIC. Khafi Khan, who was in Surat at the time the *Gunsway* returned to port, wrote of English pirates plundering the *Gunsway* and "dishonoring the women" some of whom "threw themselves into the sea, to preserve their chastity, and some others killed themselves with knives and daggers."<sup>38</sup> Acts of rape and torture of passengers to determine where money was hidden onboard the *Gunsway* was also reported by Sir John Gayer, the general in charge of the EIC's affairs in India.<sup>39</sup> This time the actions of the Roundsmen meant consequences for all Englishmen in the East Indies. EIC officials had to take refuge, locked within their own factories like prisoners, but not before angry mobs attacked several English, including one who died from his injuries.

The massing crowds clamoring for retribution were not the only problem facing the EIC, as the crew of the *Fancy* had plundered no ordinary trade ship. The *Gunsway* belonged to Emperor Aurangzeb himself, ruler of the Mughal Empire and protector of its people, including the victims aboard his royal ship. Aurangzeb's rise to power required the imprisonment of his father and the murder of his brother. He was an austere ruler.

35 J.W. Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies*, [Vol. 15], 260

36 Thomas Salmon and Sollom Emlyn, ed., *A Complete Collection of State-Trials, and Proceedings for High-Treason, and Other Crimes and Misdemeanours; from the Reign of King Richard II to the End of the Reign of King George* (London: 1730) 10

37 Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies, Volume I* (London: Printed for C. Hitch and A. Millar, 1744) 44

38 Sir Henry Elliot, *The History of India*, 350-351

39 John Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period*, 158-159



Company chaplain John Ovington noted the EIC's precarious situation stating that "tho' the Mogul cannot justly charge the E. India Company with the barbarous actions of these pirates...it may be very apt to excite in him very ireful resentments, because of the misery of so many of his subjects."<sup>40</sup> The EIC's fears culminated in the possibility of losing its trade rights in India altogether. Consequently, the company's governor and its officers responded with letters seeking assistance from the Lords Justices, the Board of Trade, and other crown officials back in England. Letters of enquiry and proclamations would follow from London to the governors and other administrators in the American Colonies.

The fortunes and fates of the pirate fleet varied considerably. Captain Every and the crew of the *Fancy* along with the added company from the *Dolphin* took the lion's share of the *Gunsway's* plunder. Captain Mayes and the crew of the *Pearl* lost their shares for failing to honor the articles in the exchanging of clipped coins. Captain Wake of the *Susanna* came on scene too late for any action other than £100 pounds share for each of his men taken from another prize. Captain Wake eventually went ashore at St. Mary's in December of 1695 to careen the *Susanna*, but he and most of his crew took ill and soon died. Captain Tew aboard the *Amity* met his end in the pursuit of the Mughal fleet, as he was disemboweled by a cannonball fired by a targeted ship defending itself. While the *Amity* had proved to be a lucky ship on this first voyage, her second cruise was a curse to the ship's crew as they themselves were later captured "being taken by the Moors."<sup>41</sup> Although Captain Joseph Farro of the *Portsmouth Adventure* had kept pace with the *Fancy* and the *Pearl*, pirate John Dann later testified as an informant that "the *Portsmouth* did not come into the fight and therefor had noe dividend."<sup>42</sup> Additional witness statements regarding Captain Farro are peculiar and contrary but also very intriguing. Not all of the 60 or so men aboard the *Portsmouth Adventure* went without a division of the plunder. Indeed, Captain Farro and four other men in his crew received a division of plunder for "being concerned in taking the first ship" while the remaining crew apparently received nothing though they had participated as well in capturing the *Fateh Mohammed*.<sup>43</sup> In addition, when the *Fancy* later made landfall in the Caribbean, Captain Farro and four of his former crew were aboard – most certainly the same four who received shares of plunder. The reasons for these particulars concerning Farro and several select men from his crew soon played out as Every stayed one step ahead of crown officials seeking his capture.

After departing from the west coast of India, Every made a stop 550 miles to the east of Madagascar in the French-held Mascarene Islands and took aboard provisions. A total of 22 Frenchmen and 15 to 16 of the *Fancy's* original crew chose to remain behind on the Mascarene Islands rather than return home. Every sailed hard for the Atlantic and arrived in early April of 1696 in the Bahamas, where he cautiously enquired by letter for permission to come ashore in New Providence. For any hospitality that might be offered, the Roundsmen took up a collection presenting 20 pieces of eight and two pieces of gold from each of the 113 men aboard the *Fancy* except for the good captain

40 John Ovington, *A Voyage to Suratt*, 465

41 John Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period*, 184

42 *Ibid.*, 169

43 E.T. Fox, ed., *Pirates in Their Own Words*, 27



who doubled his contribution. The island's governor, Nicholas Trott, readily consented, and the grateful Roundsmen came ashore and presented as a bonus their proud ship to the governor with "50 tons of elephants teeth, forty six guns mounted, one hundred barrels of gunpowder or thereabouts, several chests of buccaneers guns, besides the small armes which were for the ships use."<sup>44</sup> The Roundsmen also had a shipment of slaves that were taken aboard the *Fancy* during the stopover at the Mascarene Islands. After making their fortunes in taking the *Gunsway*, Every and his crew had little need for further profit by shipping slaves 8,000 miles to the Caribbean; rather, the slaves were likely obtained so the ship would appear to be a slaver. Trott claimed as much in his defense when crown officials later investigated the whole affair. Trott claimed that he had been genuinely duped into believing that the Roundsmen were interlopers from the Guinea Coast with a shipment of slaves and insufficient provisions aboard an unseaworthy vessel.<sup>45</sup> Multiple deponents reported that the *Fancy* was later intentionally sunk offshore under orders from Governor Trott, but not before being stripped of her guns, tackle, and gear.<sup>46</sup> The Roundsmen's respite was brief – just long enough to arrange their disappearance. In advance of the manhunt for the *Gunsway* heist, Henry Every under the alias Henry Bridgman and the rest of the crew broke up and scattered, purchasing a few sloops for their getaway.

In July of 1696 desperate news from the EIC in Bombay circulated through London, where the attack on the *Gunsway* was viewed as an attack on trade itself - the foundation of England's growing ambitions for empire. For an attack on emerging world trade, the English crown responded with the first world-wide manhunt. On August 8, 1696, the *Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every, Alias Bridgeman, and Other Sundry Pirates* was issued by King William III throughout his kingdom, including the distant colonies in America, but news travelled slowly in the age of sail and horseback. Announcement of the king's proclamation would not reach the American Colonies until mid-1697, excluding Rhode Island where the king's charges were announced with pomp to the beating of drums albeit about a year later on May 4, 1698. Appeasing the wrath of Emperor Aurangzeb for the sacrileges committed against the pilgrims aboard the *Gunsway* would require a number of conditions: reparations to the Mughals for their losses to be paid by the EIC, future convoying of the Mughal fleet by armed company ships of the EIC, and most of all, the capture and execution of Henry Every and the crew of the *Fancy*.

#### 4. Chasing Down the Crew of the *Fancy* and Their Plunder in Ireland and England

Just before news of the *Gunsway* heist reached London, County Mayo in Ireland was abuzz with word of strangers coming ashore with a king's ransom in silver and gold – the Roundsmen had arrived. The sloop *Isaac* from the Bahamas landed on June 7, 1696, with 16 or so passengers seeking immediate means of further travel.<sup>47</sup> Their hurried pace was anything but discreet as they struggled with heavy sacks of silver in the form of coins and rough ingots, along with other treasure to a total value of £20,000. In their haste to get on the move they soon attracted the attention of local authorities, who took

44 John Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period*, 173

45 J.W. Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers*, [Vol. 16], 506-507

46 John Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period*, 172-174

47 *Ibid.*, 160



several into custody. The sloop *Sea Flower* then came ashore a few weeks later to the northeast in County Donegal carrying approximately 18 more Roundsmen on the run, including Henry Every. One of the passengers, John Dann, was later apprehended in England with £1,045 in gold chequins (Arabian gold coins) sewn into the lining of his jacket. He later offered up testimony in the trial against his former shipmates to literally save his neck from the gallows. Dann's initial examination on August 3, 1696, stated the following: "This informant saith that the sloop they come home in was given to Joseph Faroe of the *Portsmouth Adventure*, and that he intended to returne in her to America. The vessell is called the *Sea Flower*, about 50 tuns and 4 guns."<sup>48</sup> This information likely reveals why Farro and a small number of his crew left the *Portsmouth Adventure* and went aboard the *Fancy* bound for the Bahamas. They had cut a deal with Every providing transportation back to England via a drop off in Ireland in exchange for early departure from the East Indies and shares of plunder.

While gold constituted all of Dann's cut in plunder, documentation indicates that the riches aboard the *Isaac* consisted of an abundance of silver coins, including coins similar to those detailed in this study. On June 16, 1696, Sheriff Thomas Bell of County Mayo recorded the arrival of the *Isaac* with "no other loading but gold and silver" and his seizure of "two bags of about 40 pounds worth of mony not passable in this kingdom."<sup>49</sup> The 40 pound of foreign money is surely referring to Arabian coins, as subsequent documents from County Mayo knowingly mention several bags of dollars and Spanish reales, including "2700 plate cobs" confiscated from two Roundsmen taken into custody.<sup>50</sup> In Galway, on June 25, 1696, Farmer Glover, the General Supervisor of Revenue, reported that the coin and bullion from the *Isaac* amounted to "32 baggs and one cask of mony, each as much as a man could well lift from the ground." Informative and comic details in Glover's report include the following: "Their way of coming into the country gave great cause of suspition, for as soon as they had landed they offerd any rates for horses – ten pounds for a Garran [nag] not worth forty shillings and thirty shillings in silver for a guinea for lightness of carriage."<sup>51</sup>

Another detail from the authorities strongly suggest that the fugitive pirates in Ireland also received shares of small, light-weight, Arabian coins, such as those presented in this study. Possession of such loot was problematic. Based upon a weight of 12 grains in silver for the whole *comassee* specimens recovered in New England, such coins if comprising just 5% of an individual's full share of £1,000 pounds in silver would amount to an unwieldy, clinking sack of approximately 7,666 coins to be carried while on the run.<sup>52</sup> Covered in Arabic script, the unusual appearance of these coins was even more troublesome because any bearer of such peculiar specie would be suspected for a pirate or having dealt with pirates. The Roundsmen apparently anticipated these difficulties while in the Bahamas and took to laboring as apprentice silversmiths in melting down Arabian coins to produce rough silver bullion that later turned up in northwestern Ireland. At 13 pounds in total weight, the hypothetical 5% allotment in small *comassee* coins for

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48 Ibid., 171

49 Ibid., 160

50 Ibid., 163

51 Ibid., 161

52 5% of £1000 = £50 = 1000 shillings @ 92 grains each = 92,000 grains / 12 grains to each coin = 7,666 coins



individual shares was not an unrealistic figure; indeed, one local person acquired in a business transaction “five pounds of broken silver and nine pounds of course melted silver” that was later confiscated in County Mayo.<sup>53</sup> The likely melting down of Arabian silver from the *Gunsway* was not an isolated incident; indeed, other primary source documents describe Roundsmen in possession of melted or broken silver. The likely common practice of melting Arabic silver coins by the Roundsmen explains the extreme scarcity of reference to such coins in circulation in the colonies.

Not surprisingly, England as a destination proved to be a poor choice for some of the pirates – no better than a stalked lamb choosing to hide in the lion’s den. Of the estimated 34 pirates who sailed for England, six were eventually apprehended. Five of these men went to trial, were convicted, and later hanged at Execution Dock on the shoreline of the Thames on November 25, 1696. It was small compensation for the English Crown and the EIC. Henry Every and most of the *Fancy’s* crew had not been brought to justice, undermining the crown’s effort to portray England as an able, worthy trade partner. Government officials however still hoped to close in on the Roundsmen hiding out in the colonies, apprehending them in a dragnet as tight as the hangman’s handiwork that left five former crewmembers of the *Fancy* dancing to their last breaths on the shore of the Thames. These officials though, particularly from the Board of Trade, would soon find that they had considerably less authority over British subjects located 3,000 miles away across the Atlantic.

##### 5. Refuge for Pirates in Rhode Island Draws Scrutiny from the Board of Trade

Seven pirates reportedly remained in the Bahamas or elsewhere in the Caribbean, leaving about 72 pirates seeking a new life of ease and anonymity in the American Colonies on the mainland. Star witness John Dann stated that 23 men had sailed from New Providence for Carolina.<sup>54</sup> Information provided to London by authorities in the colonies was sparse and occasionally misleading. A single instance of useful information came from the capture of former crewmember John Elston in a deposition taken by Governor Jeremiah Basse in East Jersey. Elston had landed with a dozen men at most at Fisher’s Island just off the coast between Connecticut and New York, traveling from there to East Jersey.<sup>55</sup> An estimated 37 pirates went elsewhere in the colonies, and more than a few went to Rhode Island; after all, five men among them, including Joseph Farro, came from the *Portsmouth Adventure* based in Newport, and four out of the five consort vessels from their cruise in the Red Sea the year before had departed from Newport. They would be welcomed in Newport; the Board of Trade certainly came to determine as much, writing to Governor Walter Clark on February 9, 1697, that “upon occasion of the late trials of some of Avery’s crew here, severall informations have transmitted to us, wherein mention is made of Rhode island, as a place where pirates are ordinarily too kindly entertained.” This first of many accusatory missives noted

53 John Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period*, 165

54 J.W. Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers*, [Vol. 15], 263

55 William Whitehead, ed., *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New Jersey*, Vol. 2 (Newark: Daily Advertiser Printer House, 1881) 226



the colony's increasingly apparent reputation as a pirate haven and went on to name names – Captain William Mayes, Captain Want, and crewmember Thomas Jones, each of whom had a Rhode Island connection. In closing, the Board of Trade put the Rhode Island officials on notice, requiring that any of Every's men “be sought out and punished, according to the utmost severity of the law; of which we expect a particular account.”<sup>56</sup> In response to these demands, which the Board of Trade reiterated in a subsequent letter in August of 1697, the colony of Rhode Island turned a deaf ear.

The Board of Trade received no reply from officials in Rhode Island for 15 months until newly elected Governor Samuel Cranston wrote a carefully worded defense on Rhode Island's image problem, reporting on May 8, 1698, that “things are misrepresented to his Majesty and your Lordships, and that this his Majesty's government was never concerned in or countenanced any such things.” Cranston then composed the colony's defense with half-truths, misinformation, and omitted details. Cranston's spin on William Mayes asserted that the good captain had “his clearance from the custom-house here, to go on a trading voyage to Madagascar, with a lawful commission to fight the French...and the best information we can have, is, that Capt'n Avery and his men plundered him; and we very much suspect that they have destroyed him and company.”<sup>57</sup> Mayes however eventually returned to Newport and was the owner of a well-known tavern in the center of town by 1702, yet London remained none the wiser. Cranston maintained, perhaps honestly, that no one in the colony knew of Captain Want or his ship, but shrewdly left out any mention of Thomas Jones and for good reason. Living in Newport in 1692, Thomas Jones left for the Red Sea with Captain Farro aboard the *Portsmouth Adventure*. He was back in Newport by 1696; thus, Jones was certainly one of the five men including Farro who left the *Portsmouth Adventure* to sail off with Every aboard the *Fancy*. Jones was not taken into custody upon his return to Newport – far from it. Rich and secure in Newport upon his return in 1696, Jones was married in the same year to the daughter of town sheriff Thomas Townsend.<sup>58</sup> Jones later took his new bride to Long Island to settle land belonging to his father-in-law. A change in his location did not lead to a changing of his ways. A deposition taken on September 8, 1698, implicates Jones in the safe keeping of a “barrel of gold, silver, and plate” for Thomas Willett on Long Island while Governor Bellomont of New York pursued a dogged search for Red Sea plunder.<sup>59</sup> Jones appears to have been very loyal to his Red Sea brethren. During this time in 1698, Jones writes a letter to a Jacob Jones (no known relation) to advise the following: “As to the money you left with me, to buy land, I have paid the money and got a bill of sale for you. Our government is turned upside down. Bellomont plays devil with all in commission. Colonel Willett and Mr. Harrison are both out of place. Bellomont has had most part of the country up over the barrel of money. I have been up before him and likely to be in trouble about it.”<sup>60</sup>

Beyond Sheriff Townsend's relationship with his pirate son-in-law, there was his involvement in a whole other matter that transpired just before Governor Cranston wrote his

56 John Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island*, Vol. III, 322

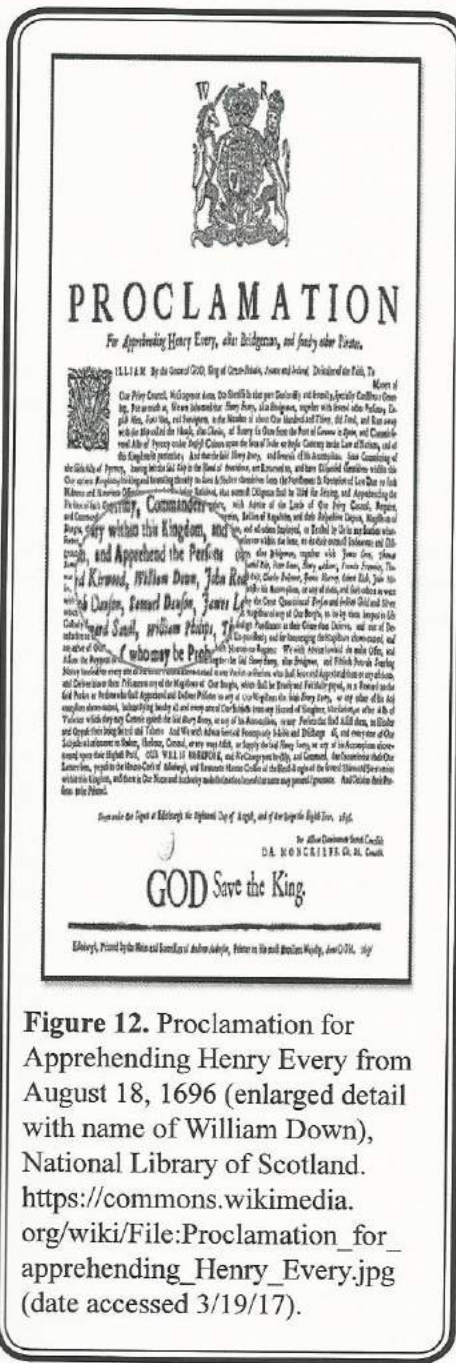
57 Ibid.

58 Alexander Hawes, *Off Soundings*, 49

59 J.W. Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers*, [Vol. 16], 493

60 Ibid., 557





**Figure 12.** Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every from August 18, 1696 (enlarged detail with name of William Down), National Library of Scotland. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Proclamation\\_for\\_apprehending\\_Henry\\_Every.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Proclamation_for_apprehending_Henry_Every.jpg) (date accessed 3/19/17).

first appeal to the Board of Trade. On May 4, 1698, the General Assembly in Newport voted that former Sheriff Townsend be secured and brought to trial for the following: "Capt'n Thomas Townsend, late sheriff, did, some time in the month of April last, by his connivance, or wilful neglect, let one William Downs at large out of his Majesty's jail, and so has made his escape from the hands of justice, he being committed upon suspicion of piracy."<sup>61</sup> Any censure of Sheriff Townsend was best handled in-house without any notification to authorities back in England as information on Downs' presence in Rhode Island would only add to the colony's ill repute in view of King William's *Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every*. Along with Henry Every, the king's proclamation called for the capture of 25 accomplices from the *Fancy*, including Newport jail breaker "William Down."<sup>62</sup> King William's proclamation along with the documentation from the General Assembly concerning Downs provide the clearest evidence of Roundsmen from the *Fancy* starting new lives in Rhode Island (Fig. 12).

Both Jones and Downs are noted in *Off Soundings: Aspects of the Maritime History of Rhode Island* by Alexander Hawes, who conducted research in Rhode Island, Washington D.C., and England in writing his detailed study. Hawes' work also identified two more men from the *Portsmouth Adventure* who came back to Newport – Richard Cornish and Peter Broc.<sup>63</sup> When the Board of Trade in 1699 launched an investigation of piracy based out of Newport, a prepared list of questions was presented to Governor Cranston, former governors, and other colony officials. Cornish was the subject of several questions.<sup>64</sup> The last of the five crewmembers from the *Portsmouth Adventure* can be traced through pirate William Phillips' confession taken in Dublin, for his list of men going ashore in

Ireland with Every includes "Mr. Gause, in prison here, one of Ferrar's [Farro's] men."<sup>65</sup> Primary source documents report men from the *Fancy* and the *Portsmouth Adventure* going to either Ireland or Newport. Exactly how many men from Every's crew went to

61 John Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island, Vol. III*, 333-334  
 62 Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every, 18 August 1696  
 63 Alexander Hawes, *Off Soundings*, 42-49  
 64 John Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island, Vol. III*, 365  
 65 E.T. Fox, ed., *Pirates In Their Own Words*, 32



Rhode Island is anybody's guess, but there are a few intriguing documents that suggest how and when they got there. William Downs, Richard Cornish and others would have presumably reached Newport with Captain Farro after Every and company were transported to Ireland, but these documents offer a different chain of events.

#### 6. A Slave Ship in Newport as Cover for England's Most Wanted Men?

The only sources of information for the arrival of the *Sea Flower* in Ireland come from pirates Philip Middleton and John Dann. Middleton provides a date of early June for the arrival of the *Sea Flower* in Ireland, but this date contradicts his later testimony on the ship's departure from the Bahamas. Pirate John Dann under examination reported that the *Sea Flower* arrived in Ireland in late June, and he is the only pirate known to have traveled on board the vessel with Every based on his own admission and the testimony of another shipmate from the *Fancy*.<sup>66</sup> The date of late June is certainly plausible yet unexpected as the study by Hawes notes a pre-trial examination for pirate Richard Cornish taking place in Newport in May of the same year. One would reasonably conclude that two ships sailed for each location - if not for a peculiar event referenced years later in an 18th century document. In 1708 the Board of Trade sent circulars to the American Colonies seeking information on the state of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Upon checking the colony's shipping records, Governor Cranston responded that there was "small encouragement for that trade" amounting to the importation of 20 to 30 slaves each year from Barbados.<sup>67</sup> Cranston also stated that the colony had never imported slaves directly from Africa with the exception of a single event, which he described as follows: "That on the 30th day of May, 1696, arrived at this port from the coast of Africa, the brigantine *Seafflower*, Thomas Windsor, master, having on board her forty-seven negroes, fourteen of which he disposed of in this colony, for betwixt £30 and £35 per head."<sup>68</sup> Along with identical names, the date of May 30th presents a feasible time frame for Farro, Every, and company to make a brief stopover in Newport on their way to Ireland. The date also agrees with the examination of Cornish in May assuming he ran afoul of the authorities shortly after coming ashore - no difficult feat for a newly arrived, rich pirate in a celebratory mood. At a time when most shipping was engaged in coastal trading and provisioning of plantations in the Caribbean, the overlapping voyage dates and matching names for the two ships among a limited number of ocean-going vessels seems far beyond a coincidence.

Accounts from Every's men describe the *Sea Flower* as a sloop - not a larger brigantine as reported by Cranston; but such a discrepancy is not to be unexpected as Cranston's information was based on 12 year-old shipping records of unknown accuracy. The accuracy of one small detail does not outweigh the more probable theory presented for the first time in this study: the *Sea Flower* that arrived in Newport on the 30th of May, the ship that transported pirate Richard Cornish to Newport in the same month, and the *Sea Flower* that arrived in Ireland in late June - all of these ships were actually the same vessel. The stopover in Newport also clears up Avery's unlikely delay in

66 J.W. Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies*, [Vol. 15], 263

67 John Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England, Volume IV* (Providence: Knowles, Anthony & Co., 1859) 55

68 *Ibid.*, 54



departing from the Bahamas three weeks behind the men aboard the *Isaac* and any other former shipmates fleeing to points unknown. Such a delay was not appropriate for Avery's situation and went against his very nature. Every orchestrated the mutiny that led to his being made captain of the *Fancy*, which he then took to India to seize and plunder the *Gunsway*. His name was known by the EIC and crown officials, and he was now the most wanted man in the world. The wording of the proclamation for Every's capture was resolute and unrestrained, "indemnifying hereby all and every one of Our Subjects from any Hazard of Slaughter, Mutilation, or other Acts of Violence which they may Commit against the said *Henry Every*, or any of his Accomplices."<sup>69</sup> In other words, Every was to be taken dead or alive. England also put a bounty on his head, a fortune of £500 pounds. For these reasons, Every should have been among the first to leave Bahamas, especially when so close to nearing the end of his crime venture. He was not a man of hesitation or half-measures. Every left nothing to chance during his one-year voyage aboard the *Fancy*. According to a letter reporting Every's first arrival in the Indian Ocean, he had taken down the ship's "upper work and made her exceeding snugg" allowing the ship "to sail so hard now that she fears not who follows her."<sup>70</sup> He packed up and shipped slaves over 8,000 miles to likely pose as a slaver for the voyage to the Bahamas. He had cajoled and bribed Governor Trott. Every did not rest in the Bahamas; he was among the first to leave but next went to Rhode Island.

The peculiar shipment of African slaves to Newport in May of 1696 solidly supports a single-ship theory proposing that Henry Every and a large portion of his crew, all wanted men, went to Newport before continuing their voyage to Ireland. The Roundsmen had their reasons for a brief stopover in Newport. Joseph Farro hailed from Newport and could acquire shipmates needed to sail the *Sea Flower* back to the colonies after getting his passengers and their loot safely ashore in northwestern Ireland. In Newport, Farro could offer all-around favorable terms for a sufficient crew – generous payment in foreign silver specie and no questions asked. In addition, some of the *Fancy*'s crew planned on going to Newport to start new lives (Fig. 13). William Downs certainly was not the only retiring pirate that came to live in Newport and elsewhere in Rhode Island. Newport also offered a weak, but expedient marketplace for the pirates' cargo of East African slaves before making their final run to Ireland. These slaves were noted during the Board of Trade's investigation of the dealings between Every and Governor Trott, who was glad to take the pirates' money but less so their cargo of slaves. In 1696 New Providence was still recovering from an attack on the island by the Spanish years before, and its colonists were too few in number to handle a large influx of slaves.<sup>71</sup> Owing to its poor soil, the Bahamas was not driven by a plantation economy operating on slave labor as seen in Jamaica and Barbados. Any interests in acquiring Every's shipload of slaves did not outweigh their liability as potential evidence of the *Fancy* having come to the island. Like the *Fancy* itself, sunk offshore of New Providence, Trott likely wanted the cargo of slaves gone from the colony in the event of that crown officials made their own visit to investigate matters, which happened soon enough.

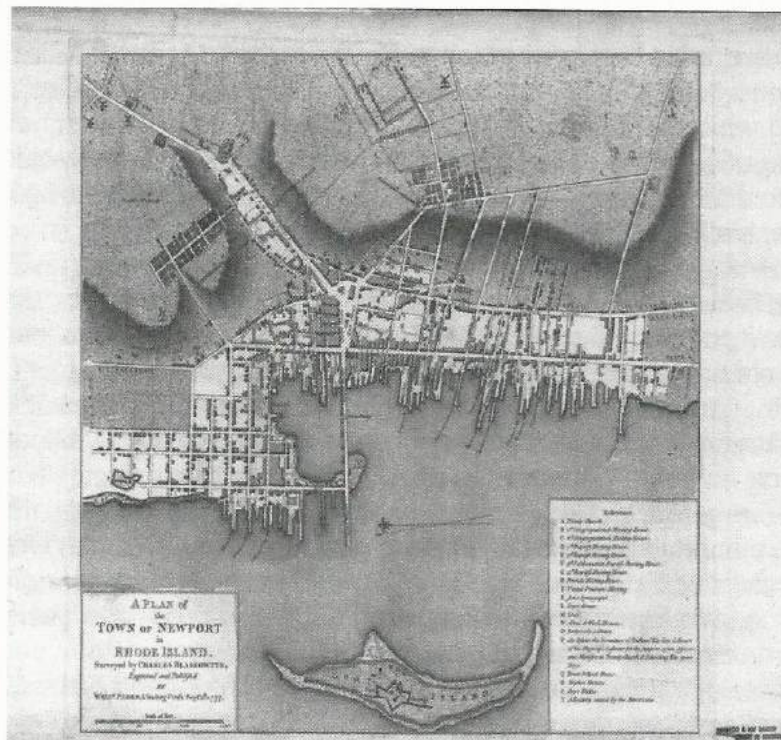
As reported by Governor Cranston to the Board of Trade, the *Sea Flower*'s shipment of slaves *direct from Africa* to Newport in 1696 was quite unusual. It was the only such

69 Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every, 18 August 1696

70 John Jameson, *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period*, 156

71 J.W. Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers*, [Vol. 16], 379





**Figure 13.** A plan of the town of Newport in Rhode Island by Charles Blakowitz and William Faden from 1777. <https://www.loc.gov/item/74692105/> (date accessed 3/19/17)

shipment to have occurred in the colony when reported in 1708 and would remain so until the 1720s. An accounting of the colony's 7,181 inhabitants from 1708 listed only 426 slaves (less than 6%). There was little demand for slaves in Rhode Island, and far less so for slaves taken directly from Africa. Such slaves were known for being too resistant to their bondage; accordingly, New Englanders preferred long-held slaves from Jamaica or Barbados who were more accustomed to their captivity. Cranston included one other detail concerning the peculiar arrival of the *Sea Flower*, stating that the ship's master, Thomas Windsor, transported the unsold slaves "by land for Boston, where his owners lived."<sup>72</sup> Upon nearly completing a lengthy slaving voyage to Africa, the *Sea Flower* apparently did not return to its home port of Boston with its cargo – it sailed elsewhere. The ship's strange itinerary is just as odd as its avoidance of the slave markets in Jamaica and Barbados where the constant demand for slave labor would have ensured a greater profit from their voyage. Details on the arrival of the *Sea Flower* recounted years later by Governor Cranston make no sense, but it all makes perfect sense under the premise that the slaves offloaded in Newport were of little concern. The *Sea Flower's* real business was the quick and clandestine transport of Henry Every and Company to Ireland. The poor earnings from the sale of slaves carried on their long journey from the East Indies was of no concern to Roundsmen who carried individual fortunes in looted gold and silver.

A second document possibly referring to the *Sea Flower* and its fugitive passengers is found in the closing of a letter from Governor Walter Clarke of Rhode Island to Governor Benjamin Fletcher of New York – two men of questionable devotion to good government from the two colonies most suspected of supporting piracy. In this letter from May 12, 1696, Clarke passes news on the arrival in Newport of a Captain Loverell from Jamaica aboard a six-gun privateer on the same day of the dated letter. Clarke describes the vessel as initially lurking off the coast for a time and arousing suspicions as an enemy

<sup>72</sup> John Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island*, Vol. IV, 54



ship, which necessitated dispatching a Newport ship with 20 men to investigate. After the ship's identity was determined and needed pilot provided, the vessel came into Newport. Clarke reports one detail of interest: the presence of a small additional ship under Loverell's command, which he supposedly took after finding the vessel abandoned off the coast of Cuba. The arrival of the mystery ship in the company of the privateer is noted only 18 days before the recorded arrival of the *Sea Flower* on May 30, 1696. Was the mystery vessel actually the *Sea Flower*? The difference of arrival dates could be attributed to inexact record keeping or prudent delays in registering the ship with port officials, as the Roundsmen kept a low profile. Anchored in Newport harbor, the ship functioned as a floating safe house as the Roundsmen finished final preparations – determining whether to stay or leave for Ireland, obtaining provisions and men to sail the *Sea Flower* upon return, and dispensing with their shipment of slaves. Every and his fellow passengers would have desired sailing to Newport in company with the Jamaican privateer for plenty of good reason – protection of their vast wealth in gold and silver taken from the Mughals. Every, who would go down in history as the Arch-Pirate, the Successful Pirate, always planned ahead, leaving little to risk. A chance encounter with a well-armed French privateer while in route to Newport would have certainly brought an unfortunate and ironic end to Every's exploits. He and his crew could have easily afforded protection from an escort of fellow Englishmen privateers, just as they had bargained for Farro's services in getting to Ireland. Such caution was indeed prudent. Pirate Philip Middleton reported that upon nearing Ireland, the *Isaac* was chased into Dublin by a French Privateer; however, the mention of Dublin, located on the opposite east coast brings Middleton's account into question.<sup>73</sup>

Adding to the weight of evidence is a letter from Governor Fletcher to the Lords of Trade and Plantations from May 30, 1696, which would date to soon after receiving Clarke's news from Newport. Fletcher dutifully reported that "a pirate ship lately came into Providence, as I am informed, where they shared their money, left their ship and separated." Fletcher undoubtedly provided this information hoping to polish up his reputation in the midst of the crown's growing awareness of his own shady dealings with Tew and other Roundsmen over the past year. Fletcher also reported that many of the pirates had gone to neighboring colonies. More importantly, Fletcher writes that "their treasure was Spanish money; they enrich the Charter Governments."<sup>74</sup> Fletcher's reference to charter governments was directed at the colonies of New England, specifically Rhode Island; of course, Fletcher neglected to mention his own culpability in issuing a commission to Tew who had sailed in the company of the same men now hiding out in the colonies. The date of Fletcher's letter, May 30, 1696, casts further doubt on the approximate date of early June for the departure of Every, Farro, and the other pirates aboard the *Sea Flower*, as provided by Philip Middleton; however, Dann's date of arrival in Ireland in late June established a workable time frame under the premise of a stopover in Rhode Island. Based on a conservative sailing speed of 6-8 knots, the *Sea Flower's* voyage to Newport would have taken 5-7 days, and the subsequent voyage to Ireland would have taken 14-18 days.<sup>75</sup> An estimated departure date of the *Sea Flower* from the Bahamas

73 J.W. Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies*, [Vol. 15], 262. This detail by Middleton is a bit perplexing; Dublin is on the east coast opposite of Galway where the *Isaac* came ashore.

74 J.W. Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies*, [Vol. 15], 7

75 <http://www.sea-distances.org/>



occurring between mid-April and mid-May would have provided more than enough time for a stopover in Newport to finish up business. Most importantly, a voyage to Newport explains Every's arrival in Ireland three weeks behind the *Isaac*.

Evidence of Every's short hiatus in Newport is compelling: ships of the same name traveling at the same period of time off the Atlantic seaboard; the Roundsmen's shipment of slaves and the highly unusual arrival of slaves in Newport direct from Africa; Every's inexplicable delay in reaching Ireland; and Fletcher's report of Every's men in the charter colonies, i.e., Rhode Island. The occurrence of these relevant events centered on Newport in May of 1696 draw out a convincing case of an unknown history. The small colony of Rhode Island located on the distant reaches of the British Empire briefly hosted Henry Every and other men of *Fancy*, soon-to-be fugitives of the first world-wide manhunt for one of the greatest piracies in history.

### 7. A Deepening Investigation of Rhode Island's Ties to Piracy in the East Indies

The letters of reproach from the Board of Trade to Rhode Island officials starting in February of 1696 escalated in time to a war of words that would threaten the small colony with the loss of its charter. Governor Cranston's initial letter of defense to the Board of Trade from May 8, 1698, included a recently issued *Proclamation of the Rhode Island Assembly Concerning Piracy*, which called for the capture of any Roundsmen in the colony, noting that "severall persons are lately come into said government, which are justly suspected by their great quantities of foreign coin, and East India goods, to be pirates and robbers upon the high seas."<sup>76</sup> Along with issuance of the proclamation, Cranston dutifully reported the colony's capture of two suspected pirates with £1,500 in gold and silver from a voyage unrelated to the *Fancy*. The Board of Trade eventually heard not surprisingly that both men were released on bail and eventually acquitted. The Board of Trade wrote back to Cranston on October 28, 1698, and requested that copies of the commission and bond for proper conduct from Mayes' voyage and other such voyages be sent to London for a "more full and perfect vindication from the aspersions that have been, and are still cast upon that Collony."<sup>77</sup> Upon receiving further information of ongoing misdeeds in Rhode Island, the Board of Trade on December 21, 1698, submitted a document to King William in regards to the "irregularities" in the distant colony without mincing words. The board reported that the "mischiefs arising" due to piracy "have been very notorious in Rhode Island." The report declared that colony officials had erected a sham court of admiralty, and "having seized some pirates with their money, they designed to try them, and probably would acquit them." In Rhode Island pirates were given "constant encouragement...to come in with their spoils." The board concluded its denunciation by recommending "the prosecution of these and other high misdemeanors of that government" through a "Commission of Inquiry" headed by the indefatigable Richard Coote, the Earl of Bellomont.<sup>78</sup> In that late 1690s, Bellomont was the governor for the colonies of New York, Massachusetts Bay, and New Hampshire. As a loyal servant to the king, Governor Bellomont had made a reputation for himself as a steadfast opponent of pirates and their collaborators.

<sup>76</sup> John Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island, Vol. III*, 338

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 341

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 351-353



## 8. Rhode Island Emerges Unscathed and Unreformed

In his follow-up response to the Board of Trade dating from May 27th, 1699, Cranston assumed far too much progress in dispelling concerns over the colony's conduct. He made excuses for delays in reporting back to the board and blamed past transgressions on "a want of better knowledge and a right method." Taking the Board of Trade for a bunch of fools, Cranston sought vindication by innocently declaring that "sins of ignorance ought to be forgiven." Worst of all, Cranston enclosed the requested commissions but advised the board that they were only for defensive purposes. He then closed his reply with accusations of the colony being maligned by false reports from customs officials.<sup>79</sup> In a letter dated August 11, 1699, the Board of Trade made clear its displeasure with Cranston's past remarks. Inferring that the governor was not forthcoming with all the requested commissions, the board regarded his actions as "willful neglect" and warned the beguiling governor to "reform all such shuffling in your correspondence with us." On the subject of so-called defensive commissions, the board wrote that such claims by Cranston were "so contrary to the truth, and to your duty, that we wonder how you could write them." The board questioned how commissions that "give power to take, slay, burn, and utterly destroy his Majesty's enemies" could be called only defensive. They admonished the wayward Governor stating that "you know better." The Board of Trade closed the letter by advising for better government with a warning that "unless such a reformation be sincerely set about, and both speedily and very effectually prosecuted, you will fall into such inconveniences as will make you sensible of your miscarriages, when perhaps it may be too late."<sup>80</sup>

Along with the grim correspondence from the Board of Trade, Governor Cranston had to contend with the Earl of Bellomont's fact-finding mission in September of 1699. Bellomont's investigation produced a laundry list of 25 irregularities within the colony, which included the following: "The government is notoriously faulty in countenancing and harboring of pirates, who have openly brought in and disposed of their effects there; whereby the place has been greatly enriched." Despite Bellomont's commission, all the correspondences, and the threat to its charter, the colony of Rhode Island survived it all owing to Governor Cranston's skills as a master politician and the limits of royal prerogative administered from the far side of the Atlantic. In fact Cranston bested Bellomont and other crown officials with a simple but effective strategy – he outlived them all. While Bellomont died in March of 1701, Governor Cranston was continuously re-elected to his office until his death in 1727 – the longest serving governor in the history of Rhode Island as a colony and a state. Cranston played the part as a reformed servant in his letter to King William from May 13, 1700, writing that "we prostrate ourselves and cause at your Majesty's feet, begging your Majesty's gracious pardon for what failure or weakness hath been in us." Much as the supplications to the king from Cranston might appear heartfelt, Rhode Island soon enough got back to business as usual except in dealing with new adversaries, such as Governor Joseph Dudley of Massachusetts. On November 2, 1705, Dudley submitted documentation to the Board of Trade to file multiple charges against Rhode Island, which he described as a "receptacle of pirates."<sup>81</sup> Also in 1705, Judge Nathaniel Byfield of the Vice-Admiralty Court in Newport balked at

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 374-375

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 376-377

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 543



condemning a captured vessel, as the privateer's commission from Governor Cranston was judged to be invalid. Because of Byfields's steady diligence to duty, townspeople threatened his life behind his back and jeered him face-to-face in the street.<sup>82</sup>

### 9. The Pirate Round and the East African Slave Trade

In the wake of Henry Every's infamous 1695 voyage, other captains followed. In the colonies from where they based their operations, the Roundsmen clearly had an influence on trade, governance, economics, and other matters of importance. The East African Slave Trade in particular became intertwined in the business of the Pirate Round. Interlopers from Britain and the American Colonies were traveling to Madagascar and other islands off Africa's east coast by the 1670s, for the west coast was held as a monopoly by the Royal African Company. This monopoly was relatively short-lived, coming to an end in 1698, after which all comers from England and the American Colonies entered the booming trans-Atlantic slave trade; thus, longer voyages to Madagascar became unnecessary. English pirates however had been arriving on the island for an extended stay since the early 1690s. As the world's fourth largest island, Madagascar and many smaller peripheral islands afforded safe harbor for English pirates looking to set-up camp. Located 250 miles off the southeast coast of Africa, Madagascar was an ideal location for pirates: it was close enough to be within striking distance of the Red Sea shipping lanes but was just far enough beyond the intrusive reach of both the EIC based in India and the Royal African Company. Adam Baldrige undoubtedly understood the importance of the location, as he settled in 1691 on St. Mary's Island located several miles off the east coast of Madagascar. Baldrige soon established a lucrative business in the supplying of provisions, in which he charged steep prices for his long-range logistics support to a clientele of Red Sea pirates with deep pockets of looted gold and silver. Rum acquired in New York for two shillings a gallon sold for £3 in Madagascar, while a pipe (barrel) of Madeira wine costing £19 back home went for £300 to thirsty Roundsmen on St. Mary's.<sup>83</sup> Baldrige and a later entrepreneur, Edward Welch, were supplied by New York merchants Frederick Philipse and Stephen Delancey. These merchants realized even further profits in shipping exotic East Indian goods and slaves aboard their vessels returning to the American Colonies, but the real big money came from the paying passengers – pirates with their spoils looking for discreet passage back home.

Detailed information on the Pirate Round and the overlapping business interests of piracy and the East African slave trade can be found in studying the voyages of two New York vessels, the *Margaret* and the *Nassau*.<sup>84</sup> Both vessels sailed to Madagascar, conducted trade, and departed for New York in 1699 with cargos of slaves. The vessels also carried fortunes in gold and silver on the return voyage, though little, if any, came from trading in slaves. Such wealth did not go unnoticed by Governor Bellomont – the eyes and ears of the Board of Trade in the American Colonies. When Captain Giles Shelley of the *Nassau* returned to New York from his highly profitable voyage, Bellomont

82 Ibid., 538-539

83 E.B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, Vol.4*, 532

84 The two vessels' voyages are covered in John Kleeberg's study on the circulation of lion dollars as noted on p. 2.



went about taking action, but his authority was not match for Shelley's connections and influence. On August 24, 1699, Bellomont reported to the Lords of Trade that Shelley could not be brought up on charges, as James Graham, Attorney General for New York, could find no grounds for doing so and instead issued a bond for Shelley's freedom. Bellomont suspected Graham of taking a bribe and later had him removed from office.<sup>85</sup> In the seaport of New York, piracy was good for business and many prospered. Outgoing voyages required ships to be built, outfitted with supplies, and manned with crews. Ships returning to port brought in the pirates' enormous earnings and East India goods, which helped to jumpstart emerging economies in New York and other early seaports. This influx of wealth also afforded political protection for merchants, ship owners, and captains who were in on the action – men like Shelley. The unwavering protection afforded to hometown pirates and their supporters by the local population was not unique to New York. In a letter to the Council of Trade and Plantations from 1699, Bellomont complains that colonists of Rhode Island "cannot be persuaded to keep a pirate there in gaol, they love'em too well."<sup>86</sup> In 1702 Crown official George Larkin conveyed similar frustration though a bit more vehemently on public complicity and protection of pirates in Bermuda when he wrote to the Council of Trade and Plantations that he "would not try a cockroach by a Bermuda Jury."<sup>87</sup>

A primary source document from Captain Shelley, himself, clearly shows that the gold and silver carried aboard the *Nassau* was pirate loot from the East Indies. In a letter dated May 27, 1699, Shelley updated part-ship owner Stephen Delancey on the results of his voyage, reporting the sale of trade goods to obtain "muslin, calicoes, a ton of elephants teeth and 2 or 3 cwt. of opium." Shelley also mentions the purchase of just a few slave and minor goods. Shelley then passes word on the matter of his return trip transporting 51 passengers, all pirates, returning to New York, New Jersey, Virginia, and Whorekills (Lewes, Delaware). Shelley writes, "I have for their passages about 12,000 pieces of eight and about 3,000 Lyon dollars. I hear there is no man-of-war at New York, and design to come to Sandy Hook."<sup>88</sup> According to tradition, wealthy merchants who profited handsomely from the *Nassau's* voyage presented Shelley with a silver tankard now held in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>89</sup> Created by silversmith Gerrit Onckelbag, the handsome tankard weighs just over 38 ounces in silver (see Fig. 14). It's a safe bet that the source for the silver came from the voyage of the *Nassau*. The tankard would have required a mere 40 to 50 of the 3,000 lion dollars brought back to the grateful ship owners; of course, a few handfuls of eight-reales from the load of 12,000 cobs could have been used instead for a job well done. The tremendous profits being earned by supposed trade vessels from New York was not fooling anyone back in England. In a correspondence to the Lords Justices dated August 10, 1699, the Council of Trade and Plantations wrote "Shelley is [captain of] one of the forementioned ships.

85 E.B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, Vol.4* (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Co., 1854) 812

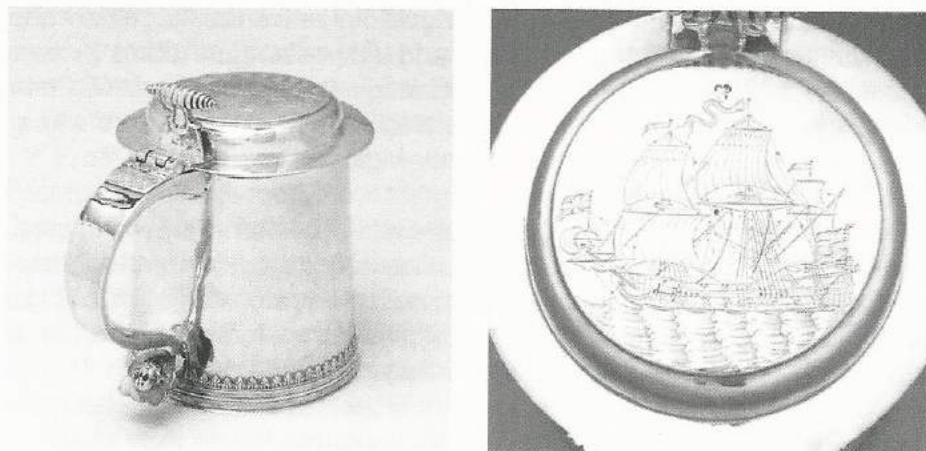
86 Cecil Headlam, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, American and West Indies, [Vol. 17], 1699*, (London: Mackie and Co., 1908) 488

87 Cecil Headlam, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, American and West Indies, [Vol. 20], Jan.-Dec. 1702*, (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1912) 541

88 Cecil Headlam, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, [Vol. 17]*, 281

89 Beth Carver Wees, *Early American Silver in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press) 41-43. Item #33.120.517





**Figure 14.** Silver tankard likely owned by Capt. Giles Shelley (left) features the arms and crest of Shelley and an engraved lid (right) depicting a 32-gun vessel, possibly the *Nassau*. Photos courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

His cargo outwards was of very small value, but the returns mentioned in his letter are exceedingly great and prove the nature of his trade."<sup>90</sup>

The pirate passengers aboard the *Nassau* arrived back in the colonies with their riches intact, but they were not necessarily free and clear. Some of them were soon on the run from local authorities as word spread of their arrival. Bellomont was not the only high-minded government official in the colonies, although such men were relatively few in number. One of these officials, Governor Jerimiah Basse of West and East Jersey informed the Board of Trade on the capture of six pirates in the provinces in a letter dated June 9, 1699. According to Basse, chests owned by two of the pirates contained "7,800 Rix dollars and Venetians, about thirty pound of melted silver, a parcel of Arabian and Christian gold, some necklaces of amber and coral, sundry pieces of India silk...."<sup>91</sup>

Unlike Shelley, Captain Samuel Burgess of the *Margaret* did not make a safe return to New York. The unfortunate Captain Burgess, his crew, and a ship's rabble of passengers suffered a chance encounter with the *Loyal Merchant*, an East Indiaman, off the Cape of Good Hope.<sup>92</sup> Over a dozen passengers aboard the *Margaret* were all Roundsmen paying individual fares of 100 pieces of eight to get back home; the cargo of 120 slaves aboard the ship rode for free.<sup>93</sup> The pirate passengers were taking advantage of a pardon recently issued by King William so long as they gave up the rogue's life.<sup>94</sup> Captain Lowth thought little of the pirates' written pardons drawn up 6,000 miles away back in London, and the slaves crammed below deck did not distract the no-nonsense Lowth from the other purposes being served by the *Margaret's* voyage. It was most certainly

<sup>90</sup> Cecil Headlam, ed., *Calendar of State Papers*, [Vol. 17], 387

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 280

<sup>92</sup> An East Indiaman was a large cargo ship owned or chartered by a trade company of Europe; they carried cannons for self-protection against pirates.

<sup>93</sup> Jacob Judd, "Frederick Philipse and the Madagascar Trade," *The New-York Historical Society Quarterly*, vol. 55 (Oct. 1971) 369; E.T. Fox, ed., *Pirates in Their Own Words* (Raleigh: Lulu Press, Inc., 2014) 70

<sup>94</sup> E.T. Fox, ed., *Pirates in Their Own Words*, 61-71



hard to miss – a princely sum of £11,140 in gold and silver coins carried aboard the slaver.<sup>95</sup> Lowth took the *Margaret* as a prize, and the passengers' plans for early retirement came to an abrupt end. Several pirates managed to hustle ashore with their money and evade capture, but Lowth took the rest, a total of 15 men charged with piracy to prison in Bombay, India – over half of these men did not get out alive.<sup>96</sup>

Though the capture of the *Margaret* was a grave misfortune to its crew and passengers, it produced a windfall of primary source documents for studying of the Pirate Round. The captured men who survived confinement in Bombay were brought to England and examined before the High Court of Admiralty. The riches found aboard the *Margaret* included 2,000 Arabian gold chequins, 7,800 Spanish eight-reales, and 7,500 lion dollars.<sup>97</sup> Thomas Bagley, Michael Hicks, Richard Roper, and John Barrett were passengers aboard the *Margaret* and provided detailed information on their stunning wealth as noted in Table 4.<sup>98</sup>

**Table 4.** Declared property carried by some passengers aboard the *Margaret*.

Name	Property
Thomas Bagley	2,140 pieces of eight
Michael Hicks	£100 in silver and £600 in gold
Richard Roper	£400 in silver and gold
John Barrett	2,100 lion dollars, 1,300 pieces of eight, small money and plate to the value of 100 pieces of eight, coral and amber to the value of a 100 pieces of eight

While all four men admitted to acts of piracy against Moorish vessels, they all claimed to have been ill-informed shipmates or reluctant participants under duress. In addition, three of the four men declared to have received only small shares of plunder taken from the Moorish vessels in amounts ranging from 30 pieces of eight to £125. Their later wealth is suspiciously attributed to their skills as professional gamblers in winning money from their shipmates in games of chance or by "tending upon sick people, working of clothes and other services."<sup>99</sup> The seemingly legitimate position of Samuel Burgess as captain of the *Margaret* afforded him no protection as he was among the 15 brought to prison. He had a past history as a pirate dating back a decade or so – a history he could not escape. He was eventually brought to England and went to trial for his past piracies. He was found guilty and sentenced for execution until he secured a royal pardon in 1703. After his release, he eventually ended up back in Madagascar.<sup>100</sup>

From legitimate English traders in the East Indies, crown officials came to know of the provisioning of pirate crews by well-to-do merchants from New York and elsewhere. In

95 Jacob Judd, "Frederick Philipse and the Madagascar Trade," 372

96 H.C.V. Leibbrandt, ed., *Precise of the Archives of the Cape of Good Hope: Journal, 1699-1732* (Cape Town: W.A. Richards & Sons, 1896) 18; Richard Zacks, *The Pirate Hunter: The True Story of Captain Kidd* (New York: Hyperion, 2002) 308

97 Jacob Judd, "Frederick Philipse and the Madagascar Trade," 372

98 E.T. Fox, ed., *Pirates in Their Own Words*, 59-71

99 *Ibid.*, 68

100 *Ibid.*, 17-21



1696 pirates took physician Henry Watson off a trade ship bound for Bombay and held him in captivity for three months. After his release, Watson wrote a detailed narrative of his ordeal. Watson revealed that the Roundsmen "were supplied with ammunition and all sorts of necessaries by one Captain Baldrige and Lawrence Johnston, two old pirates."<sup>101</sup> From their trade posts in Madagascar, Baldrige and Johnston sold provisions direct to the Roundsmen. According to Watson, the supply source for provisions were shipped from New York by Frederick Philipse, "who under pretense of trading to Madagascar for negro slaves, supplies these rogues with all sorts of stores."<sup>102</sup> As with Watson, Captain William Willock suffered a similar fate when his ship was taken by pirates off Ceylon in 1697. One detail in the narrative from his 11 months in captivity is as follows: "All kinds of stores for the pirates are sent to St. Mary's from New England, New York, and Rhode Island."<sup>103</sup>

The *Nassau* and the *Margaret* had not engaged in any act of piracy in voyaging to Madagascar and other area islands, and it is clear that these vessels did conduct trade in slaves. These facts, however, do not speak to the source for the Arabian chequins, lion dollars, and pieces of eight carried aboard the vessels. The coins came from the Roundsmen either directly in the form of shares in plunder being conveyed back home or indirectly in the purchasing of goods and services being provided by merchants and ship owners back in the colonies.

### 9. Disparity in Primary Source Documentation of Arabian Coins - Gold vs. Silver

A multitude of documents note the circulation of gold chequins all along the Atlantic seaboard. Meeting in committee on May 9-10, 1699, the House of Burgesses in Virginia resolved on passing value of numerous coins – pieces of eight at 4s, "dog and lion dollars" at 4s, Rix dollars or ducatoons at 6s, French crowns as 5s, and "Chickeens and Arabian pieces at 10s."<sup>104</sup> During a brief resurgence of the Pirate Round in the 1720s, John Plantain followed after Adam Baldrige in erecting a stockade fortress in Madagascar where he ruled over the native population as the self-styled "King of Ranter-Bay" after finishing a short career sailing the Pirate Round. Plantain was tempted into the trade years before in Rhode Island by a pirate crew "shewing great sums of gold, and treating him and other in a profuse and expensive manner."<sup>105</sup> Transactions of Arabian gold was not exclusive to the taverns, brothels, and other haunts of the Roundsmen, for such coins were carried by both the wicked and the righteous. Puritan diarist Samuel Sewall sat as a judge during the Salem witch trials and criticized slavery in his work titled, *The Selling of Joseph*. This anti-slavery tract from 1700 makes reference to a public angst over handling Arabian gold.<sup>106</sup> Despite Sewall's mention of reluctance to carrying tainted gold chequins, an entry from his diary two years later mentions his

101 J.W. Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers*, [Vol. 16], 108

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid., 366-367

104 Cecil Headlam, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, American and West Indies*, [Vol. 17], 198

105 Clement Downing, *A Compendious History of the Indian Wars; with an Account of the Rise, Progress, Strength, and Forces of Angria the Pyrate* (London: Globe in Pater-noster Row, 1737) 106-114

106 Samuel Sewall, *The Selling of Joseph* (Boston: 1700) 1



own transactions using Arabian coins of gold.<sup>107</sup> According to a deposition from New York in 1698, Leonard Lewis acquired legal protection for this brother who had gone pirating in the Red Sea. While he paid the going rate of 75 dollars for pardons from Governor Benjamin Fletcher, he extended a gratuity of 12 pieces of Arabian gold to council member Nicholas Bayard, who had functioned as an intermediary while Fletcher was away in Philadelphia.<sup>108</sup>

In stark contrast to the amount of documentation referencing Arabian gold, primary source documents noting Arabian silver in the colonies is extremely scarce but not entirely void. The scant number of coins recovered by detectorists as noted in this study closely correlates with the results from an extensive search of primary source documents. This study located two probate records referencing Arabian silver in the American Colonies, specifically, New York. In-depth research of these two separate cases was prudent; one case proved to be unrelated to piracy, while the other case is highly significant.

The unrelated case involves an inventory of the estate for twice-widowed Margrieta Van Varick for the proving of her will on January 2, 1696, which noted "11 pieces of Arabian and Christian silver" along with a silver spice box, a gold ducat, gold rings with diamonds, three silver wrought East India cups, and a multitude of other small items in gold and silver to be divided up into bundles for her children.<sup>109</sup> Listing of Arabian silver suggests a connection to Red Sea piracy until further consideration is made for other possessions of the deceased – "Chinese porcelain, Turkish carpets, Japanese lacquerwork, ebony chairs, Dutch paintings, Indonesian cabinets...."<sup>110</sup> It turns out that Van Varick's property was not eclectic pirate swag; rather, it was possessions and a bit of spare change acquired during her early adult years living in Malaysia in southeast Asia at first with her uncle guardian and later her first husband. Both men worked in the merchant trade out of Malacca for the United East Indian Company of the Dutch, the *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* or VOC. Eventually, Van Varick settled in New York with her second husband and the cosmopolitan possessions and other property from her earlier years, including several Arabian coins; thus, a connection between these coins and Red Sea piracy is a dead end.

Unlike the first case, the second case of documentation of Arabian silver in New York presents a "smoking gun" for further evidence connecting such coins to the Pirate Round. An inventory for the estate of Sarah and Cornelius Jacobs from August 25, 1700, included 33 Spanish pistoles, 2 Guineas at 28s each, 2 gold Arabians at 12s each, 23 pieces of Arabian silver at 18p each, "54 Bank Dollars...." The estate also listed a watch, a sword, and an apparently enormous amount of gold and silver wrought plate valued at £5 per ounce and 7s per ounce respectively. Intriguingly, no description of the gold and silver plate is provided by description or weight (value), though the total

107 Mark G. Hanna, *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire*, 292

108 J.W. Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers*, [Vol. 16], 228

109 William Pelletreau, ed., *Abstract of Wills on File in the Surrogate's Office, City of New York, Vol. 1, 1665-1707* (New York, New York Historical Society, 1893) 271-272

110 Marybeth De Filippis, "Margrieta van Varick's East Indian Goods," *The Magazine ANTIQUES*, September, 2009, (date accessed 11/24/16) <http://www.themagazineantiques.com/articles/margrieta-van-varicks-east-indian-goods-a-possible-influence-on-colonial-american-silver/>



value of the noted items was a surprising £1953-19.<sup>111</sup> In comparison, an inventory for the New York estate of Colonel Lewis Morris in 1691 lists 900 ounces of silver plate valued at £303-9-9. The 900 ounces of silver plate in the Morris estate equates to just over 56 pounds in weight, but the value even for this back straining load of silver at a 7s per ounce rate would only represent 15% of the total value from the Jacobs estate. What was the source for such wealth in gold and silver? Cornelius Jacobs had no Midas-like ability to turn his furnishings and other objects into gold or silver, but he was a ship captain, a smuggler, and a representative for merchant Frederick Philipse in supplying the Roundsmen based in Madagascar. He could be counted among the usual suspects. The Roundsmen's best known supplier, Adam Baldrige, reported Captain Jacobs' arrival in St. Mary's in June of 1697 with "severall sorts of goods a board and sold to Captain Hore and his company."<sup>112</sup> The 23 Arabian coins noted in the inventory of Jacobs' estate only a few years later likely came from this voyage. Philipse was no doubt impressed with Captain Jacobs handling and sale of his goods. When Philipse sent the unfortunate Captain Burgess to Madagascar two years later, Burgess carried crib notes of goods to be sold with pricing from Captain Jacobs' past voyage: rum by the gallon at three pieces of eight with rates to increase up to 4-5 pieces of eight as supply decreased; wine by the bottle for one piece of eight; lime juice for four pieces of eight a gallon; half barrel of dried peas at 12 and later 15 pieces of eight; hats for 12 pieces of eight; and tobacco pipes at six reales a dozen.<sup>113</sup> How much of Jacobs' abundant wealth was acquired in the supplying and transporting the Red Sea Men would be nothing more than a wild guess, although it was certainly more than the overlooked pocket change in Arabian silver totaling £1-14-0 – a great deal more.

Probate records in New York also detail the estate of Captain Giles Shelley. Although the inventory makes no mention of Arabian silver, it does offer other helpful information. Like Captain Jacobs, Giles Shelley lived comfortably. In fact, Shelley was a rich man. The services he provided in far-away Madagascar contributed to amassing a fortune of £6812-17-6½.<sup>114</sup> Incidentally, Captain Shelley may have preferred his long voyages away from home, as his will from September 22, 1702 states the following: "I leave my wife £20 and no more." An updating of Shelley's will on February 19, 1711, suggests an ever so slight reconciliation by bequeathing to his better half a sum of "£15 per annum for life" and "£60 in money or household goods."<sup>115</sup> Some of Shelley's possessions seem quite indicative of his time engaged in transporting goods and clientele on the Pirate Round. He reportedly owned much jewelry – a gold chain and pendants, eight gold beads, a string of pearls, pearl and amber necklaces, a piece of coral, gold pins with pearl heads, a 1 & ½ dozen gold rings some with stones, two East India gold chains, and other assorted pieces.<sup>116</sup>

111 William Pelletreau, ed., *Abstract of Wills on File in the Surrogate's Office, City of New York, Vol. 1, 1665 - 1707*, 97

112 E.T. Fox, ed., *Pirates in Their Own Words*, 351

113 Ibid., 362-363. The High Court of Admiralty came into possession of this document most likely when Burgess and his passengers were seized from the *Margaret* by hard-nosed Captain Lowth of the EIC.

114 Esther Singleton, *Social New York Under The Georges 1714 – 1776* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1902) 59

115 William Pelletreau, ed., *Abstract of Wills on File in the Surrogate's Office, City of New York, Vol. 2, 1708-1728* (New York, New York Historical Society, 1893) 61

116 Esther Singleton, *Social New York Under The Georges 1714-1776*, 250



## 10. Fencing of Mughal Silver in the American Colonies

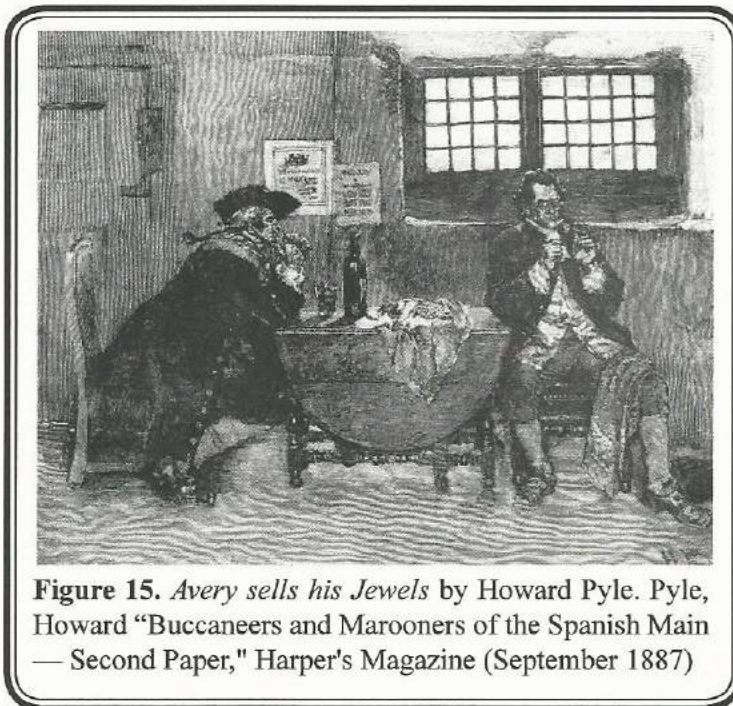
The sparse mentioning of Arabian silver in primary source documents from the American Colonies makes perfect sense. Throughout the American Colonies, the possession of questionable foreign silver coins or crudely cast silver ingots only invited suspicion of being a pirate or complicity in their affairs. A far better option was to *have your cake and eat with it* in the form of silver plate. In the same way that silver coins were likely used to fashion the silver tankard given to Captain Shelley of the *Nassau*, so went the rest of the Arabian silver arriving in the colonies through the 1690s. After decades of struggle, American colonists by the late 17th century began to secure a livelihood beyond a subsistence level existence, which resulted in acquiring goods, luxury items, and wealth. Accumulated wealth primarily consisting of untraceable silver coins presented obvious concerns at a time when banks did not exist. To safeguard their wealth, colonists sought the services of silversmiths who converted and consolidated silver specie into silver plate engraved with monograms, family crests, and other identifying marks, which a thief would find difficult to fence. Skilled silversmiths produced tankards, tumblers, communion wine cups, bowls, and other objects of beauty, utility, and status. Once tainted Arabian silver from the Roundsmen poured into major port towns, the skills of local silversmiths were in great demand. With a weight of only 12 grains in silver, the recovered *comassee* specimens weighed less than a Pine Tree threepence – not much purchasing power for troublesome coins cautioned about in royal proclamations. If the *comassee* coins from this study are representative of the Red Sea silver that came into the colonies, then there was most certainly a steady confluence of such plunder to the silversmith's crucible. With a wink and a nod, rough melted slabs of silver or an occasional sack of coins were left in the care of a local silversmith. In the hands of a skilled craftsman, ill-gotten silver plunder taken by the sword was transformed into attractive silver plate that graced the dinner tables of good and god-fearing American colonists.

Not all Arabian silver went directly to the silversmith. After completing a successful voyage to the Red Sea, Roundsmen still required small amounts of spending money for day-to-day expenses before settling down somewhere in the American Colonies. In Rhode Island and New York, the coins passed from one transaction to the next with little more than a cursory glance. Some of these same coins circulated until being lost and remained so until being recovered by detectorists over three centuries later.

## 11. Discovering a Pirate's Coin and Recovering History

Hopefully, the research undertaken in this article is both a contribution to numismatics and the study of colonial history as influenced by the Pirate Round. In studying the origins of the subject coins, it appears that the undertaken research has also discovered historical evidence in documenting the highly probable visit by Henry Every to Rhode Island in May of 1696. The comprehensive and detailed examination of primary documents undertaken in this study provides a fuller understanding of the Pirate Round, specifically Captain Every and the crew of the *Fancy*. The prevailing belief regarding the fate of Henry Every has been long suggested by the first popular history on the Golden Age of Piracy. Published in 1724, *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates* was written by the mysterious Captain Charles Johnson, of whom very





**Figure 15.** *Avery sells his Jewels* by Howard Pyle. Pyle, Howard "Buccaneers and Marooners of the Spanish Main — Second Paper," *Harper's Magazine* (September 1887)

little is known.<sup>117</sup> The story of Henry Every is covered in the book's first chapter with a mix of facts and fiction, which ends in a morality tale, as the Arch Pirate finished his days as a pauper in Bideford, England. According to Johnson, Every's plunder, consisting largely of diamonds, were left in the trust of wealthy merchants for sale through consignment. Every was eventually compelled to accept just a pittance for his loot from the *Gunsway* because the merchants threaten to turn him over to the authorities (Fig. 15). On the opposite end of the spectrum, some other early

histories, and some modern histories as well, end with a fanciful description of Every retiring on a tropical isle with his fortune and a Mughal princess bride willingly taken off the *Gunsway*. The truth is that the fate of Henry Every remains an enduring mystery.

## 12. Impact of Red Sea Piracy on the American Colonies

Though the circulation of Arabian silver coins in the American Colonies was brief, the immense wealth taken back by the Roundsmen had a significant impact on the American Colonies that also forebode the conflict to come between the crown and its American Colonies. In the spring of 1700, crown official George Larkin was dispatched by the Board of Trade to America for the purpose of inspecting the colonies and issuing commissioned positions to suitable men to try pirates without local juries with conflicting interests. Boston was a minor player in the Pirate Round, yet Larkin reported on October 14, 1701, that people in the port town possessed the same vexing temperament that he encountered elsewhere in America. Larkin's report to the Board of Trade stated the following: "They hate the very thought of a King or King by Government, and it is fear'd if some care be not taken for asserting H.M. [His Majesty's] power and right here and putting his orders in execution, they will in a short time set up a Government themselves."<sup>118</sup> Despite Larkin's warnings, the colonies were soon enough back into the fold of a growing English empire at the dawn of the 18th century as new economic opportunities lead to increased prosperity. In New England and elsewhere, opportunity came with the end of the Royal African Company's monopoly of the slave trade in 1698,

<sup>117</sup> Past research identifying Daniel Defoe as the author is now disputed.

<sup>118</sup> Cecil Headlam, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, American and West Indies*, [Vol. 19], 1701 (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1910) 576



after which American colonists sailed to Africa's west coast as legitimate slave traders whose profits loomed even larger when the manufacture and bartering of rum was added to the business strategy. The good times between mother England and her colonies would however last only 60 years or so. When the colonies were made to shoulder more of the debt incurred in maintaining the English Empire through the French and Indian War, George Larkins warning would ultimately prove prophetic.

The wealth of the Roundsmen obviously had its greatest impact in the colonies where the men based their ships. In these seaports, the Roundsmen, who typically earned £16 a year as an honest sailor, came ashore after successful pirating voyages with shares of £500, £800, or £1000. The circulation of their plunder is certain. These men did not risk two years at sea, shipwrecks, sickness, loss of life or limb in taking a prize, or public execution to not enjoy their money – no matter what fiction writers would later imagine concerning buried treasure. The pirate's spending habits varied. While some doled out their shares in waterfront taverns, others bought land, married and settled down as respected members of the community. Towns that welcomed Red Sea pirates benefited from an influx of gold and silver coins, *trickle-up economics*, that boosted everyone's ability to conduct business from tavern owners to governors who offered commissions, bonds, and pardons for a price. Newport, New York, and Philadelphia were counted among the five largest cities in the American Colonies just prior to the Revolutionary War. Not surprisingly, these thriving cities of 18th century commerce also provided the most support to those who sailed the Pirate Round in the late 17th century.

### 13. Factoring a Precise Source for the Subject Coins

A connection between the recovered coins in this study and Every's capture of the *Gunsway* is tantalizingly possible, even probable, owing to several factors: the coins are appropriately dated, i.e., dating before the capture of the *Gunsway* in 1695; nearly all the coins came from Mocha (Yemen) where the *Gunsway* took aboard such coins; a few specimens show only a slight amount of wear that would be expected from a coin of brief, intermittent; yet far-reaching circulation. In addition, the 1693 specimen was found near Newport where a considerable number of the *Fancy's* crew disembarked and others settled down. These facts in total make for a persuasive argument, yet exact attribution for the 1693 specimen or any of the recovered coins in this study to a single pirate ship or voyage can never be fully determined. Rhode Island's reputation as a haven for pirates was not acquired on the exploits of a single pirating voyage no matter how infamous, nor was such a reputation unique to Rhode Island. In his 2015 study of colonial America's presence in the Indo-Atlantic world, author Kevin McDonald lists a total of 23 pirate vessels that sailed from the American Colonies to the East Indies from 1689 to 1708.<sup>119</sup> Undoubtedly, there were other ships that sailed the Pirate Round during this time, and multiple accounts report many ships returning home with substantial wealth. An investigation of Governor Fletcher's 5 & ½ years in office estimated that he made £30,000 for his services provided to pirates.<sup>120</sup> While on the run from authorities in Massachusetts, Red Sea pirate Joseph Bradish left one person with £942 for safekeeping.<sup>121</sup> In a deposition taken on January 31, 1700, Red Sea pirate

119 Kevin McDonald, *Pirates, Merchants, Settlers, and Slaves* (Oakland, University of California Press, 2015) 141

120 Mark G. Hanna, *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire*, 219

121 *Ibid.*, 271



Theophilus Turner described the capture of the *Great Mohammed* of the west coast of India in September of 1698. Turner's estimate of total plunder shared out to the crew was £130,000 in Arabian gold, pieces of eight, and dollars.<sup>122</sup> An inventory of Red Sea plunder confiscated from the much misjudged Captain William Kidd in 1699 totaled to 1,111 ounces of gold bullion and 2,353 ounces of silver and other goods.<sup>123</sup> Many successful voyages to the East Indies returned with plunder that could have produced the coins listed in this study, but Every's capture of the *Gunsway* is the most likely source for the coins owing to the close correlation of dates, the origin of the coins from Mocha where the *Gunsway* departed, and other aforementioned factors. In addition, only the crew of the *Fancy* is known to have been in possession of foreign, i.e. Arabian, coins of silver based on the reports from authorities in Ireland. It is an interesting prospect, as the taking of the *Gunsway* is noted in history as one of the greatest crimes of the 17th century.

### VIII) Conclusion

The recovered coins examined in this study came to the American Colonies through piracy that occurred in the East Indies in the late 17th century. An extensive search of primary source documents did not reveal a single record of such coins possibly being acquired through trade, but detailed historical accounts offer evidence of such coins being obtained through piracy. Despite the obscure appearance and origin of the subject coins and seemingly fanciful notions of a connection to piracy, thorough research from this first-time study has produced a historical context that is equally fascinating and certain. In the unlikely travel of these coins from the Red Sea to Southern New England, research has uncovered a rich historical context on a range of subjects – piracy, emerging world trade, the slave trade, limits of Crown authority, political corruption, and other matters of obvious significance. The extensive scope of this groundwork study hopefully results in interest and further research of a long overlooked subject in colonial numismatics and history.

### **Acknowledgements**

I wish to thank the American Numismatic Society for publication of my long-sought study. I am sincerely grateful for Sydney Martin's encouragement and guidance. For their assistance with research, I owe much thanks to Dr. Lutz Ilisch, Stephen Album, and Daniel Sedwick. I also send my thanks to Dr. William Turnbaugh for his assistance and helpful comments. I extend my deep gratitude to Editor Christopher McDowell and Dr. Louis Jordan as co-editor for their thoughtful guidance and labors in editing my lengthy work. I owe much thanks to those individuals and the SVF Foundation for providing information and photos of their coin recoveries so vital to the study of colonial numismatics and colonial period history through this publication. Finally, I wish to express my fullest measure of thanks and gratitude to Jan & Michelle Eckhart for their kind permission and consideration that made possible the recovery of long lost history and this resulting publication.

<sup>122</sup> E.T. Fox, ed., *Pirates in Their Own Words*, 55

<sup>123</sup> Frederic De Peyster, "The Life and Administration of Richard, Earl of Bellomont, Governor of the Provinces of New York, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire, from 1697 to 1701" (lecture, New York Historical Society, New York, NY, Nov. 18, 1879).