

Naval Office

Shipping Lists

Nova Scotia

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BRITISH RECORDS RELATING TO AMERICA
IN MICROFORM

General Editor: Professor W. E. Minchinton

**THE NAVAL OFFICE SHIPPING LISTS
FOR NOVA SCOTIA
1730 - 1820**

in the
Public Record Office
London

Introduction by
Julian Gwyn
University of Ottawa
1981

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THE NAVAL OFFICE SHIPPING LISTS FOR NOVA SCOTIA

1730-1820

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1 PROVENANCE

The lists of vessels which entered and cleared Nova Scotia ports between 1730 and 1820, contained in this microfilm edition, were compiled by so-called naval officers. Such officials became common throughout North America and the West Indies from the late seventeenth century; and after the American Revolution their role was extended to the new colonies in the east. The lists were submitted either quarterly or semi-annually to the colonial governor to be despatched to London. Surviving copies have been found mainly in the Colonial Office papers, but also among the papers of the Treasury and Home Office. There is no indication that these lists were ever used as the basis for general reports which resulted in either policy discussion or decisions. The collection of data, however incomplete, thus having served no important use to contemporaries, is nevertheless of great interest to historians, who have begun to mine this information, with the aid of computers, in order to establish the volume and direction of British colonial trade, the element in overall British trade which in the eighteenth century grew the most dramatically. (1)

The Nova Scotia naval office lists, as with other colonies, have only partially survived, and only for the period 1749-1766 are they complete. Alternative sources can supplement these lists, notably lists of shipping compiled by customs officials, and those noted in the newspapers of Halifax. Reference to ship movements in war time vanish from the newspapers, and other sources have been sought by historians to fill these gaps. In the case of the war of the American Revolution, a manuscript in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, notes ships entering Halifax harbour from July 4th 1778 through November 15th, 1781. (2) Using a variety of New England sources one historian has compiled a list of 225 vessels captured by New England vessels off Nova Scotia between 1775 and 1783. (3) No such work has been undertaken for the war of 1812, which also greatly disrupted the shipping of Nova Scotia. Both these lists are reproduced here with permission.

1 Among the more interesting quantitative studies are Edward Charles Lesnick Jr, 'A Quantitative Analysis of the Supply and Demand for Ships: A Case Study of Colonial New York and South Carolina', (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1973), Lawrence James Bradley, 'The London-Bristol Rivalry: Conventional History and the Colonial Office 5 Records for the Port of New York', (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1971), John Haskell Levitt, 'New Jersey Shipping, 1722-1764: A Statistical Study', (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Utah, 1973), William T. Davisson, 'New York Maritime Trade: 1715-1765', New York Historical Society Quarterly, Vol. (October 1971): 308-17. Best known is the work of James F Shepherd & Gary M Walton, Shipping, maritime trade and the economic development of Colonial North America, (Cambridge University Press, 1972).

2 Report of the Board of Trustees of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia for the Year ended 30th November, 1936 (Halifax: King's Printer 1937): 26-66, Appendix C.

3 John Dewar Faibisy, 'Privateering and Piracy: The Effects of New England Raiding upon Nova Scotia during the American Revolution, 1775-1783', (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 1972) Appendix C: 269-314.

2 THE NAVAL OFFICERS AND THE NAVAL OFFICE SHIPPING-LISTS

The Navigation Act of 1696 (7 & 8 William III, c.22, para. v) first gave the naval officer official status, while one hundred and twenty-nine years later the position was abolished by an Act to Repeal Several Laws Relating to the Customs (6 George IV, c. cv), which received royal assent on July 5th, 1825. The Act of 1696 has been foreshadowed by an earlier Act (15 Charles II, c.7, para. viii), when the duties of the naval officer were first outlined. By the 1663 Act ships could lade or unlade goods in the colonies and plantations only after the captains had provided the naval officer with an inventory of cargo, given official notice of his arrival, details of the ship's name and of its master, and finally submitted proof, by showing a certificate of registration, that the ship was English built and owned. The duties were carried out in the name of the colonial governor by a clerk in the naval office of the colony, whose salary was to be provided for by Parliament.

By the 1696 Act the naval officer took the place of the governor in all matters pertaining to the shipping clauses of the various acts of trade. He was required to give security to the commissioners of the customs, though he was never a member of the customs service, to grant certificates of entrances and clearances of vessels, to examine all certificates, docquets and navigation bonds, and to obtain detailed information regarding every vessel entering and clearing port. Such information includes the date of entry and clearance, the name of the ship, the home port or colony where and when the ship was built and registered, the name of the master, the name of the owner or owners, the measured tonnage, the number of guns carried if any, the number of crew, and details about the cargo carried, including information about slaves or indentured servants. In addition, the name of the last port of clearance or the immediate destination are also provided.

In time each of the West Indies and North American colonies (including Upper Canada after 1791) had a naval officer. Their work could readily have been done by the customs officers, whose co-operation was vital, but such an administrative reform seems not to have been considered until the 1820s. They, like the customs officials, had on occasion to collect fees. In Nova Scotia, for instance, the only provincial act to refer to the naval officer (33 George III, c.3, para. ii) required him to collect light duties for the lighthouses at Sambro Island and at the entrance to Shelburne harbour.

In Nova Scotia the naval officers not only were part of the ruling oligarchy, but held their post for many years. That they were well connected was to be expected since their appointments were made by the governor, under a mandamus from the Secretary of State. Between 1749 and 1825, the average tenure was more than fifteen years: Benjamin Green, 1749-72; Winckworth Tonge, 1772-1792, William Cottnam Tonge, 1792-1807; John Beckwith, 1807-1820; James Blackwell, 1820-1825. Green, Winckworth Tonge and Beckwith all died in office. The first three holders of the office were also members of the Nova Scotia Assembly, and held a multiplicity of posts. Green (1713-72) was born in Massachusetts, reared to trade in Boston, and came into prominence when William Pepperrell, who commanded the New England forces at the 1745 siege of Louisbourg, selected him as his secretary. (4)

4 Donald F Chard, 'Benjamin Green', Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol. IV (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979): 312-13.

When the fortress surrendered he was made secretary to the Louisbourg Council. When the new town of Halifax began to be laid out in the summer of 1749, he was not only made naval officer, but named to the Nova Scotia Council, and served first as secretary of the province (until 1752) and then as treasurer (until 1768). He also acted as judge of the Vice Admiralty court, and from 1760 as a justice of the peace.

The only Nova Scotia naval officer to generate controversy over the office itself was Green's successor, Winckworth Tonge (1728-92).⁽⁵⁾ Born in Ireland he served as an officer in the 45th Foot at Louisbourg from 1745 to 1749, and later served between 1755 and 1759 at Beauséjour, Louisbourg and at Quebec before resigning his commission in the early 1760s. From numerous land grants he was able to establish himself as a provincial gentleman. Elected to the Nova Scotia Assembly first in 1759, he was a member of the provincial Assembly continuously from 1765. A justice of the peace, who served as surveyor of roads, bridges and other public works, he tried to convert his post of naval officer into a lucrative office. Tonge insisted on appointing his own deputies, where before this had been part of the governor's prerogative. To the alienation of this important benefactor he added the annoyance of the merchants by appointing deputies to ports hitherto free of such bureaucracy. He became the centre of controversy not only by unilaterally raising his fees charged to shipping, but in attempts in 1789-90 to curb smuggling especially from the United States. When the controversy broke in the Assembly,⁽⁶⁾ the governor and Council felt obliged to back down and permit the entry of a wide range of American imports. In addition Tonge was ordered to recall his deputy naval officers from all but the ports of Halifax and Shelburne. A notice appeared in the Halifax newspaper to warn all ships' masters entering Nova Scotia ports from abroad in future to come 'to the ports of Halifax and Shelburne to enter, and they are not to break bulk, or take any articles on board previous to making report',⁽⁷⁾ or otherwise face prosecution. It was an important victory for regional towns and underscored the inadequacy of the Halifax authorities to control trade especially with New England.

5 Ronald H McDonald, 'Winckworth Tonge', *ibid.*, 736-38.

6 Reference to the battle over the naval officer in 1789-90 is found in Douglas Mitchell Brown, 'From Yankee to Nova Scotian; Simeon Perkins of Liverpool, Nova Scotia, 1762-1796', (MA thesis, Queen's University, 1978): 180-95. On the controversy over the appointment of Tonge's son to replace him as naval officer, see Terrance M Punch, 'The Halifax Connection 1749-1848: A Century of Oligarchy in Nova Scotia', (MA thesis, St. Mary's University, Halifax, 1972): 48-51. For details of William Tonge's career see Charles Bruce Fergusson, ed., The Diary of Simeon Perkins 1790-1796 (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1961) 6n5.

7 The Royal Gazette and the Nova Scotia Advertiser (Halifax), No. 60, 11 May 1790, in which issue Winckworth Tonge published a lengthy self-serving letter to explain his position in the affair, an unprecedented act for a naval officer.

The last naval officer to be appointed was James Blackwell, who was overtaken by Huskisson's reform of the customs service. In 1825 Blackwell was prematurely pensioned off, his pension being based on the net proceeds of his office, averaged over the five years he had held the post. This came to £410 8s; while his pension amounting to two-thirds of this sum, or £273 12s, was a very satisfactory sum being roughly the equivalent of the annual wage of a ship's master in the North Atlantic.(8)

Though the surviving shipping lists are of obvious value to historians, they have to be used with care. In the matter of ownership, for instance, usually only one owner is cited, while studies of such ownership elsewhere suggest that ownership was much more widely held,⁽⁹⁾ if other sources are employed to elaborate the details found in the naval office lists. Furthermore there are real problems with the cargo descriptions. General statements like 'sundry European goods', or simply 'foodstuffs' are frequently found in the Nova Scotia lists, thus making accurate measurement often impossible.

The Halifax lists for 1749-1766 have been analysed, with the aid of a computer, by Lewis R Fischer, of Memorial University of Newfoundland, and some of his data are summarized here with his permission.⁽¹⁰⁾ If we consider, by way of example, the proportion of shipping tonnage entering Halifax port, we can establish the relative importance of different regions as suppliers to Nova Scotia. Table 1 provides some details below:

Table 1

Shipping Tonnage Entering Halifax, 1749-1766

(%)

From ports in:	1749-53	1754-58	1759-63	1764-66
New England	64.5	56.8	56.9	42.9
Great Britain & Ireland	10.5	14.7	19.0	19.8
Elsewhere	25.0	28.5	34.1	37.3
Average annual total tonnage	8,776	8,514	8,203	5,105
Average annual no. of ships	184	200	176	107

9 See in particular Simeon J Crowther, 'The Shipbuilding Output of the Delaware Valley, 1722-1776'. Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, vol LXVII (April 1973): 90-114. This article was brought to my attention by Lewis R Fischer. See his own excellent as yet unpublished article, 'Revolution without Independence: The Halifax Merchants and the American Revolution, 1749-1775', (paper presented to the annual meeting of the Canadian Historical Association, London, Ontario, June 1978) (mimeographed).

10 Mr Fischer has carried out a computer analysis of the shipping lists from 1749 to 1766.

Ships giving New England ports as their last port of call dominated the Halifax import trade from the earliest years. By 1764-66 one-fifth of the ships came from British and Irish ports, while a steadily increasing share of Halifax's imports was met by ships coming from ports elsewhere than from the British Isles or New England. Highest annual tonnage was recorded in 1750 when 13,546 tons of shipping entered the port. Only in 1757 and 1759, when Halifax experiences unusual activity relating to military operations were more than 10,000 tons of shipping recorded entering the port: 10,775 and 12,223 tons respectively. Generally shipping declined sharply from 1762, and by the mid-1760s activity in Halifax port was about the same level as that of Sydney, the principal port of Cape Breton, in the mid-1790s.* If the activity of the port is measured by tonnage, then in the 1750s and 1760s, Halifax was three to four times less active than Boston, and about half as active as New York and rather more active than the port of Charleston. The table below illustrates the relative position between Halifax and Boston.

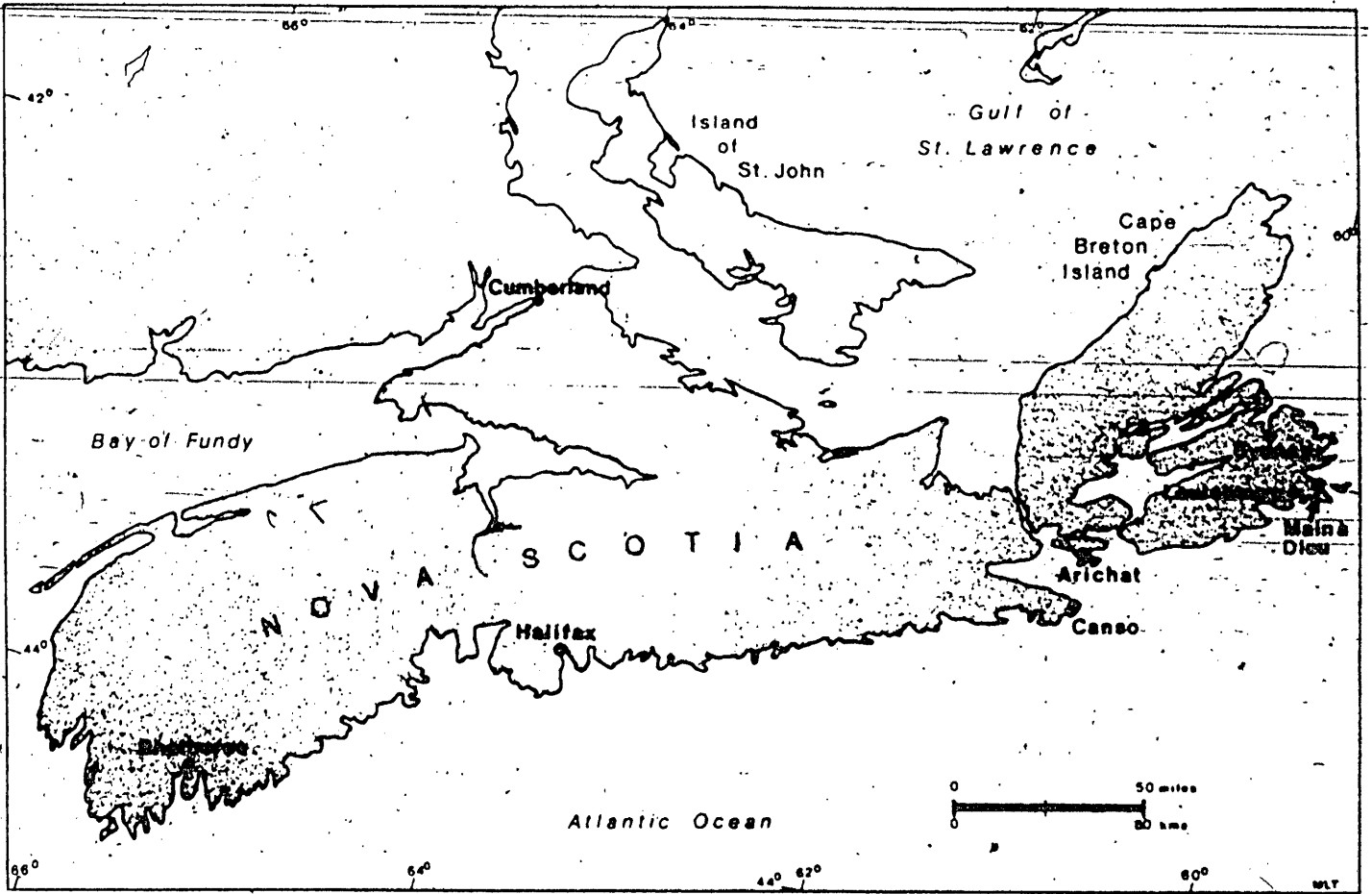
Table 2
Halifax and Boston Shipping Compared
(Tonnage)

Annual average	Entrances		Clearances	
	Boston	Halifax	Boston	Halifax
1753-56	16,149	7,367	24,657	7,730
1759-64 ⁺	31,511	8,377	25,270	7,574

⁺for the years 1759, 1761, 1762 and 1764 only.

Sources: For Halifax, supplied by Lewis R Fisher; for Boston, Murray G Lawson, 'The Routes of Boston's Trade, 1752-65' in Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, XXXVIII, Transactions 1747-1951 (Boston, 1959), Table 1.

*The map was prepared by Lynne Trepanier-Warner, of the Department of Geography at the University of Ottawa, see page 8.



4 CONTENTS OF THE FILM

The Nova Scotia shipping lists have been microfilmed as they appear in the original Public Record Office collections. To indicate which lists have survived and are found in this film the letters (a), (b), (c) and (d) are used to denote the four quarters of the calendar year.

SUMMARY OF THE NOVA SCOTIA NAVAL OFFICE LISTS

<u>Year</u>	<u>Port</u>	<u>Entrances</u>	<u>Clearances</u>	<u>References</u>
1730	Canso		abcd	CO 221/28, fol. 13-4
1749	Halifax	cd	cd	CO 221/28, T64/84
1750	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/28, T64/84
1751	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/28, T64/84
1752	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/28, T64/84
1753	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/28-29, T64/84
1754	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/29
1755	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/29, T1/360
1756	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/29, T1/369
1757	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/29, T1/379
1758	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/30, T1/387
1759	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/30, T1/393
1760	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/30
1761	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/30, T1/411
1762	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/31, T1/416
1763	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/31, T1/424
1764	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/31
1765	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/31, T1/447
1766	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 217/44, fol. 237-64
	Cumberland	abcd	abcd	CO 217/44, fol. 265-74
1785	Sydney	bcd	bcd	CO 221/34
1786	Sydney	d	d	CO 221/34
	Arichat	d	d	CO 221/34
	Louisbourg	d	d	CO 221/34
	Main a Dieu	d	d	CO 221/34

<u>Year</u>	<u>Port</u>	<u>Entrances</u>	<u>Clearances</u>	<u>References</u>
1787	Sydney	cd	cd	CO 221/34
	Arichat	cd	cd	CO 221/34
1788	Sydney	ab	ab	CO 221/34
1792	Halifax	d	d	HO 76/1 i (34)
	Shelburne	cd	cd	HO 76/1 i (4-7)
1793	Halifax	abc	abc	HO 76/1 i (35) ii (39-42)
	Shelburne	a	a	HO 76/1 ii (6)
1794	Halifax	cd	cd	HO 76/1 i (35)
	Sydney	abcd	abcd	CO 221/34
1795	Sydney	abcd	abcd	CO 221/34
	Arichat	abcd	abcd	CO 221/34
1796	Sydney	abcd	abcd	CO 221/34
	Arichat	abcd	abcd	CO 221/34
1797	Sydney	abcd	abcd	CO 221/34
	Arichat	abcd	abcd	CO 221/34
1798	Sydney	ab	ab	CO 221/34
	Arichat	ab	ab	CO 221/34
1800	Sydney	cd	cd	CO 221/34
	Arichat	cd	cd	CO 221/34
1801	Sydney	ab	ab	CO 221/34
	Arichat	ab	ab	CO 221/34
1802	Arichat	ab	ab	CO 221/34
1803	Sydney	abcd	abcd	CO 221/34
	Arichat	abcd	abcd	CO 221/34
1804	Sydney	abc	abc	CO 221/34
	Arichat	abcd	abcd	CO 221/34

<u>Year</u>	<u>Port</u>	<u>Entrances</u>	<u>Clearances</u>	<u>Reference</u>
1805	Sydney	abcd	abcd	CO 221/34
	Arichat	abcd	abcd	CO 221/34
1806	Sydney	abcd	abcd	CO 221/34
	Arichat	ab	ab	CO 221/34
<i>Rec 3</i> 1807	Sydney	abcd	abcd	CO 221/35
	Arichat	cd	cd	CO 221/35
1808	Sydney	abcd	abcd	CO 221/35
	Arichat	abcd	abcd	CO 221/35
1809	Sydney	abcd	abcd	CO 221/35
	Arichat	abcd	abcd	CO 221/35
1810	Sydney	abcd	abcd	CO 221/35
	Arichat	abcd	abcd	CO 221/35
1811	Halifax	cd	cd	CO 221/32
	Sydney	abcd	abcd	CO 221/35
	Arichat	abcd	abcd	CO 221/35
1812	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/32
	Sydney	ab	ab	CO 221/35
	Arichat	ab	ab	CO 221/35
1813	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/32
1814	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/32
	Sydney	abcd	abcd	CO 221/35
	Arichat	abcd	abcd	CO 221/35
1815	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/32
1816	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/33
1817	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/33
1818	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/33
1819	Halifax	abcd	abcd	CO 221/33
1820	Halifax	abc	abc	CO 221/33

The Nova Scotia Naval Office lists appear on microfilm in the following sequence:-

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 CO 221/29
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 CO 221/31

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