

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Salem Maritime National Historic Site  
Salem, Massachusetts



# Pickled Fish and Salted Provisions

## *Historical Musings from Salem Maritime NHS*



## **"And Other Duties as Assigned"**

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**On the cover: A portrait of Henry Prince, Jr. as a young man by Michele Felice Corne.**

*Although not necessarily related to one another, men named Prince have appeared more than a few times in the context of collecting the revenue due the United States. Hezekiah Prince, Jr. (1800-1843) was a Customs inspector at Thomaston, Maine. Inspector and measurer Captain Henry Prince, Sr., (1764-1846) was on the rolls of the Salem Custom House from 1830 to 1846. John Prince appears on an 1861 roster as a weigher and gauger at Salem. Joseph H. Prince was an inspector at Boston in 1832.*

#### **Captain Henry Prince, Jr.**

Captain Henry Prince, Jr. (1787-1854) of Salem served in the sea-going arm of the Treasury Department, the United States Revenue Cutter Service (USRC). His connection to Salem Maritime National Historic Site provides reason to explore his activities and those of his agency.

Henry Prince, Jr. was a son and business partner of Captain Henry Prince, the Salem shipmaster and merchant who raised his family in the former home of Elias Hasket Derby, and owned the property next door now known as the West India Goods Store.

His early years are shrouded in mystery, but he followed in his father's footsteps in pursuit of a life at sea. He married Ruth Hardy Ropes (1791-1837) on May 21, 1812, and raised six children on Bridge Street in Salem. <sup>1</sup>

Henry Jr. seems to have been very well suited to his future career in the Revenue Cutter Service. He was issued his Seamen's Protection Certificate on October 26, 1803, when he was sixteen years old. Well versed in the shipping business, in 1809 he was master of the ship *Golden Age*, owned by his father and Amos Hovey. In 1811 he sailed the schooner *Neptune* for Benjamin Crowninshield and associates. A man not lacking in courage or ability, he had been appointed to command the privateer brig *Montgomery*, in which he was a shareholder, when the captain was wounded in action during the War of 1812.<sup>2</sup> He was part-owner of the 168-ton brig *Philaeni* with Timothy Bryant, Jr. in 1824. The Prince family business failed in 1827, and both Henry Jr. and his father needed new sources of income. Henry Jr. was master of the bark *Octavia* for Ropes & Co. during 1829 and 1830. Both ultimately found employment with the United States government. The Custom House needed the skills of men experienced in maritime commerce, and, as a law enforcement organization, the Revenue Cutter Service called for active, experienced officers who could face potentially dangerous circumstances with minimal resources.

Courage and ability were prerequisite qualities for an officer in the Revenue Cutter Service. Prince was commissioned as a First Lieutenant by President Andrew Jackson on June 5, 1832, and was assigned to the 110-ton Cutter *Swiftsure* patrolling out of Eastport, Maine, followed by service in 1833 and 1834 aboard the Cutter *Oliver Wolcott* from New Haven, Connecticut.



**Left: Portrait of Alexander Hamilton (1757-1804) by John Trumbull. Hamilton was the first U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, and he created the U. S. Revenue Cutter Service in 1790.**

### **The Revenue Cutter Service**

The Revenue Cutter Service, predecessor of the United States Coast Guard, was established through the insight and efforts of Alexander Hamilton, the first United States Secretary of the Treasury, who submitted his plan to Congress on April 23, 1790 for the construction and staffing of ten small, fast vessels known as Revenue Cutters. Under the supervision of the collectors of customs in charge of the districts to which the cutters were assigned, they were intended to combat smuggling and ensure compliance with the revenue laws.

The primary duties performed by the personnel of the cutters were boarding and examining the papers, such as the manifests and registry certificates of arriving and departing vessels, sealing the holds of vessels approaching port to prevent clandestine landing of goods or transferring cargo to vessels waiting to smuggle it ashore, and seizing vessels found breaking the law.

Other duties that fell to the Revenue Cutter Service included enforcing United States neutrality laws, President Jefferson's highly unpopular 1807 embargo act and subsequent trade restrictions, suppression of the foreign slave trade, preparing navigational charts, assisting with the maintenance of lighthouses and aids to navigation, aiding mariners in distress and enforcing quarantine regulations. Following the War of 1812, the elimination of piracy and "Latin American privateers" became a high priority, with the greatest activity between 1819 and 1825.

### Captain Prince Joins the Revenue Cutter Service

Captain Prince joined the service as piracy was winding down, but just in time for duty during Florida's Second Seminole War (1835-1842). The Revenue Cutter Service was called upon to assist the Navy and Army however they could, patrolling and providing intelligence, preventing arms smuggling to the Seminole insurgents, and sometimes confronting the enemy in shallow draft riverine combat in the Everglades. Promoted on October 4, 1839, Captain Prince intermittently commanded the Revenue Cutter *Van Buren* in 1839, 40, and 41.

On December 7, 1841, Captain Prince was assigned to superintend the construction of the U.S. Revenue Cutter *Walter Forward*, and it appears that he commanded her from April 23, 1842 until April 18, 1843.<sup>3</sup> Available records are not clear, but he commanded *Oliver Wolcott* from April, 1843 to an undetermined date, followed by *Madison* until 1845, when he took command of the 398-ton iron revenue steamer *Spencer* on June 16. He served aboard *Spencer* until May 12, 1846.

Below: U.S. Revenue Cutter *Walter Forward* in a painting by an unknown artist. USRC *Forward* was named for Secretary of the Treasury Walter Forward (1786-1852). He served in that capacity from September 13, 1841 to February 28, 1843. Capt. Henry Prince, Jr. superintended the construction of the 89 foot, 139 ton topsail schooner, which was built by William Easby of Washington at a cost of \$3,786.75. She was in service from 1842 to 1865, mainly sailing out of Baltimore, Maryland.



Captain Prince left the Revenue Cutter Service (or Revenue Marine as it was sometimes called beginning in 1843) on September 16, 1847. He returned to Massachusetts and became Superintendent of Ship Building at Newburyport.

Captain Henry Prince Jr. died on March 5, 1854 in Newburyport, Massachusetts, and is buried with his family in Salem's Harmony Grove Cemetery.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Sydney Hardy Prince, "Genealogy of Sydney Hardy Prince and Priscilla Sanborn Prince of Beverly Cove, Massachusetts", (Unpublished manuscript, edited and revised by Sydney Henry Prince and Jeff Henry Prince, 2004), p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> William Bentley, D.D., *The Diary of William Bentley, D.D.* (Gloucester, MA 1962), vol. 4, p146.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Transportation, United States Coast Guard, *Record of Movements, Vessels of the United States Coast Guard, 1790-December 31, 1933* (Washington, D.C., 1989), p. 98. The U.S. Revenue Cutter *Walter Forward* was named for Secretary of the Treasury Walter Forward (1786-1852). He served in that capacity from September 13, 1841 to February 28, 1843.

Right:  
A button from a  
U.S. Revenue Cutter  
Service uniform.  
The shield on the lower  
half of the button is  
the seal of the  
U.S. Treasury.





Above:

The Custom House on Derby Street in 1854. Henry Prince Jr.'s father, Captain Henry Prince Sr., worked as an inspector out of this Custom House between 1830 and 1846. Henry Sr. also owned the Derby house, only two doors down Derby Street from the Custom House, so Henry Jr. would have been very familiar with the building as he visited his father, or as he came to the Custom House to get papers signed and sealed at the beginning or end of a voyage.



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**Page four: Library of Congress**

**Pages five and six: U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office**