

Timeline:

Introduction & Disclaimer: It should be noted that this is not a complete list of events or actions throughout the war. There are a great many sources for information, and each day we are finding new information that was lost or misplaced. Updates to this listing will be put in place as information becomes available. This list was compiled for the benefit of all who study this topic of history with the express intention to add to it as more is learned.

Timeline Data:

6/9/1772 The Schooner Gaspee Affair an action taken by Abraham Whipple and John Brown on the HMS Gaspee after repeated harassment. The Gaspee was boarded and torched after she had run aground while in pursuit of the Hannah. The Gaspee burned to her waterline where she sat.

12/16/1773 The Boston Tea Party Citizens of Boston protest the 3% increase on the tax of tea in addition to all the taxes and acts already levied by Parliament and the King. Men dressed as natives boarded a cargo ship and dumped tea into the harbor.

4/19/1775 Lexington & Concord - The opening battle of the American War of Independence. 1,500 British Regulars in total came to destroy Colonial military supplies at Lexington and Concord. They were met by 3,960 Massachusens and managed to win the first strategic victory of the war.

8/23/1775 King George III issued proclamation stating colonies are in rebellion and sedition.

9/1775 Schooner's hired by General Washington manned by Col Glover's 14th Massachusetts Regiment. (known as Marbleheaders) operated the horn till November of 1777. Often misidentified as privateers, the Marbleheaders were a Continental Army regiment, with Army officers and soldiers crewing these schooners and not in fact Privateers. No letter of marque and reprisal was awarded.

10/5/1775 Rhode Island delegates introduce "the most wild" plan to congress, the start of Naval forces in the colonies.

10/13/1775 Congress approves plan thus the beginning of the Continental Navy with 2 ships.

10/30/1775 Congress approves 2 additional ships to the fleet.

11/10/1775 Continental Marine Corps established

11/25/1775 Continental Navy is officially formed

11/27/1775 Push for Privateering officially starts

Early Dec 1775 American Privateering starts without congressional approval

1/23/1776 HMS Blue Mountain Valley captured off the coast of Egg Harbor, NJ.

3/2 - 3/1776 Yamacraw Bluff / Battle of the "Rice Boats" British needing supplies in Boston sent a ship to buy provisions SC and GA militia resisted and set fire to several boats. British tactically won, and Militia won strategically.

3/23/1776 Congress officially authorizes Privateering as a suitable effort for the cause

3/26/1776 HMS Blue Mountain Valley set afire by British troops of the HMS Phoenix and HMS Asia

3/27/1776 Privateering Resolution published in the Pennsylvania Gazette sparking off the privateer industry in the colonies

4/11/1776 First Privateer Letters of Marque issued to Schooners Chance and Congress from Phila.

6/15/1776 HMS Richmond is taken as a prize by Privateer Congress. Valued at 20,000 pounds and HMS Reward was also taken as a prize and close to a similar value.

6/29/1776 Battle of Turtle Gut Inlet First real privateer battle of the war. The American Brig Nancy laden with war provisions was attacked by the British. Three Continental Navy ships proceeded to help unload Nancy after she ran aground. Most of the cargo was removed, what gunpowder was left was Rigged with improvised canon fuse and lit. When colors were taken down British saw as a surrender and boarded Nancy in time for the gunpowder to explode.

10/28/1776 Battle of White Plains, British force General Washington's army to withdraw from NY

Early Jan. 1777 Bill on Privateering introduced to British House of Commons

Early 1777 Cranberry Inlet, NJ became another privateer port.

2/6/1777 Bill on British Privateering passed and sent to House of Lords

3/11/1777 An "appendix" was added to the "Prohibitory Act" in the London Public Advertiser announcing applications for Privateering.

3/15/1777 Application for Letters of Marque started arriving at British House of Lords

3/27/1777 Parliament passed the bill on privateering and King GR III issued instructions to Privateers.

May 1777 British Privateers first arrived in West Indies

Sept 1777 "Prize Act" authorized British privateers prizes to be sold in only British controlled ports

9/16/1777 British court of Admiralty opens in New York City

9/26/1777 Philadelphia falls to British after Siege of Fort Mifflin

11/5/1777 British Marauders destroyed the salt works at Shrewsbury, NJ which they would do repeatedly throughout the war.

1/10/1778 West Indies colonies receive permission from Parliament to issue letters of Marque

4/7/1778 Privateer Schooner Seaflower captured by HMS Weir

4/19/1778 CT Privateer Lyon and 2 Prizes (Experiment and Hazard) defeated by HMS Mermaid. Hazard was run aground and destroyed, Experiment was recaptured.

6/21/1778 New York City - General Howe restricts all exports to benefit the Army and Royal Navy, which increases the use of London Trade (Black Market)

7/8/1778 Privateer vessel Polly defeated by HMS Ostrich and HMS Lowestoff's Prize

8/20/1778 Little Egg Harbor privateer Glory of America defeated by Loyalist Brig Tryon and Loyalist Brig Recovery defeated and captured as Prize by unknown Privateer

8/29/1778 Privateer Susannah defeated but escapes HMS Emerald

9/6/1778 Pressed Privateer Capt Olmstead captured HMS Active (via mutiny action) while serving as a prisoner. Sparks off one of the longest legal issues regarding prizes in US history.

9/8/ 1778 Prize ship Active recaptured by PA Navy/Privateer Brig Convention which brought eventual changes to the Court of Admiralty over the course of years.

10/6/1778 Battle of Chestnut Neck, NJ British set out to destroy the privateer port, they were able to retrieve some cargo lost, but battle proved a draw.

10/15/1778 Little Egg Harbor Massacre British forces that sacked the port at Chestnut Neck also hit Little Egg Harbor before the privateers et. al. could rise. At least 50 men were killed in their sleep that day by British troops.

10/20/1778 Little Egg Harbor starts to rebuild after the attack 5 days prior

11/2/1778 New-York Gazette and Mercury Weekly report "resumption of activity by Egg Harbor Privateers."

1/12/1779 New Jersey Court of Admiralty reports that "no fewer than seven prizes libeled at the home of Gilbert Barton in Allentown (NJ)."

2/8/1779 Loyalist Sloop Fancy (Fanny) and Schooner Hope was taken to Little Egg Harbor as prizes

2/10/1779 Privateer Hunter engaged the New York Brig Bellona, outgunned the Hunter withdrew, but left the Bellona a wreck.

3/10/1779 Benjamin Franklin issues notice to all ship commanders and captains of armed vessels that he is granting a diplomatic passport to Captain Cook for his discoveries abroad. Unknown to Europe until 1780 Captain Cook was killed by the inhabitants of one of the islands he discovered.

April 1779 No fewer than 62 New York Privateers were blockading the Chesapeake Bay and 32 patrolling off the Delaware Capes

4/8/1779 through 5/1/1779 No fewer than 49 prizes brought to New York City by Loyalist ships

4/20/79 Capt. Douglas of the Hunter broke ranks and fired upon and captured 2 Spanish ships the Holy Martyrs and Valenciano creating tensions with Spain and threatening diplomatic relations.

7/27/1779 Chestnut Neck returns to service privateers as a port

8/12/1779 Capt. Douglas of the Hunter was found guilty of illegal capture by a court of Admirals, but he fled and evaded sentencing. Later was awarded another commission

9/25/1779 British transport Triton (carrying est 214 Hessians) captured by privateers Mars and Comet

9/29/1779 Prize ship Triton arrives at Little Egg Harbor

10/9/1779 British Transport Badger taken by unknown American Privateer

10/10/1779 British Frigate Solebay retook British Transport Badger

4/18/1780 Captain Mariner plus 9 men in whaleboat retook RI privateer vessel Black Snake from British at Sandy Hook

4/20/1780 Capt. Mariner captured the British Brigantine Morning Star

8/7/1780 3 Privateers (Fair American, Holker, & Enterprize) captured King's mail ship the Mercury Packet. The three ships conspired to hunt together in a pack just off of Little Egg Harbor creating a stir.

8/8/1780 Also captured the Loyalist Schooner Nancy and Arbuthnot which started a month-long trend. Also captured were the Loyalist Schooner's Poplar, Gage, Lewis, British Privateer ship Queen Charlotte, the Lady Margaret, and the sloop Dispatch.

8/31/1780 Fair American, Holker, and General Greene were stopped by Continental Navy ships, Trumbull & Deane. CN ships pressed crews from all three into service and left the ships without adequate crews to continue their cruises.

9/2/1780 Owners of the Fair American petitioned congress to have the men from Fair American and Holker released. Congress begrudgingly released the men with the stipulation the owner would hand-deliver the release to both CN captain's

11/1780 Privateer vessel Revenge captures British merchant sloop, Susannah

2/7/1781 Benjamin Franklin issues notice to all ship Captains and Commanders of armed vessels to allow ships en route to Dublin proving to have bonafides and "authentic papers" be allowed to pass unmolested if cargo is meant for donation and not profit.

2/20/1781 Whaleboat Captains Hyler and Dickie took two whaleboats up the Raritan River and returned with 2 undisclosed prizes

5/21/1781 Battle of Cape Split/Battle of Blomidon 3 American privateers took on 3 British Nova Scotian vessels resulting in a British victory.

10/5/1781 Revenge and two whaleboats upon return to Sandy Hook took three prizes, one ran aground accidentally in the dark (subsequently stripped), one burned (to avoid recapture) and one taken into port.

11/9-10/1781 Revenge (Capt. Hyler) sailed into the New York Narrows and captured British cargo ship Father's Desire. Upon returning to the Raritan Revenge ran aground on shoals and the Father's Desire was set afire after cargo transferred to avoid recapture.

12/15/1781 Hyler in command of a flotilla comprising of 8 whaleboats (nearly 100 men) captured two "refugee" (loyalist privateers using small boats) sloops commanded by a Tory known as Shore Stephans.

1/2/1782 Fair American under command of Captain Eldridge was taken by the HMS Garland.

1/9/1782 Hyler's flotilla destroyed by elements of the 40th and 42nd Regiments of Foot, and several refugees in 6 boats (totaling 200 men) that set out upon the Raritan to target Hyler, who escaped and lived to fight another day.

3/20/1782 The Huddy Affair. A Lt. Roberts and Loyalist Bucks County PA Volunteers set out with Loyalist privateer brig Arrogant to raid and capture one Capt. Joshua Huddy at the blockhouse at Toms River, NJ.

3/23/1782 Roberts and party met up at the blockhouse and destroyed the fort, the salt works, and the surrounding homes. Huddy surrendered and was taken to New York to await trial, whereupon things went awry. He was transferred off a prison ship into the custody of a Captain Lippincott for the express purpose of a false prisoner exchange.

3/25/1782 While Capt. Hyler (formerly of the Revenge) was en route down the Shrewsbury river with a small group of whaleboats encountered a complement of 25 soldiers of the 57th Regiment of Foot commanded by Capt. Schaak. Hyler captured 8, including Capt. Schaak. The rest were either killed or ran.

4/8/1782 The battle of Delaware bay. Three American privateers (General Greene, Charming Sally, and Hyder Ally) set out into Cape May to protect a small convoy whereupon they were discovered by the British frigate HMS Quebec and British sloop-of-war General Monk. Ultimately Victory went to the Americans.

4/12/1782 Captain Huddy was unjustly executed at Middletown Point in Sandy Hook Bay for a crime he was not guilty of. Thus stirring colonial uproar whereon Washington demanding retribution by the execution of a British officer of similar rank if Captain Lippincott was not surrendered thus making this the Huddy-Asgill Affair as Captain Asgill was then held in place of Captain Lippincott.

4/24/1782 CT Governor Jonathan Trumbull appeals to Congress for authority to suspend privateer commissions "in cases of malconduct."

5/21/1782 Congress passes a resolution authorizing executives in several states to suspend the commissions of privateer captains in some cases.

5/28-29/1782 Battle of Halifax. The American Privateer Jack was captured by the HMS Observer.

6/1/1782 Refugee Captain Davenport took 80 men to raid and destroy the salt works at Forked River, NJ. Also plundered it's owner Samuel Brown then continued on to raid other salt works down river and in the area

6/25/1782 Capt. Hyler formally applies to New Jersey to request a privateer commission for his new flag boat Active. Unfortunately, he was unable to post the required bond for the letter of marque and reprisal.

7/1/1782 Privateer ships Hero, Scammel, Hope, and Swallow landed 90 men on a raid at Reads Head, Nova Scotia thus plundering the town. Raiding party also held several prominent residents along with a few British officers for 1,000 pounds ransom.

7/2/1782 Active and another whaleboat took the Loyalist vessel SkipJack and tender to Admiral Mariot Arbuthnot's flagship. SkipJack with her Captain and 9 or 10 men were taken easily as the SkipJack had run aground. Hyler set fire to the SkipJack and his crew and prisoners escaped in sight of the Royal Navy. Hyler died 2 months later due to complications of a previous non-related injury, no specific date is known.

12/20/1782 Battle of the Delaware Capes. SC Privateers and 3 other American ships were attacked by 3 British frigates.

11/5/1782 British Captain Asgill who was chosen as collateral in place of Captain Lippincott for the murder of Captain Huddy was released by Congress thus bringing an end to the Huddy-Asgill affair.

11/30/1782 Battle of the barges (Battle of Kedges Strait) near Tangiers Island, VA. American Militia barge flotilla went against the British barge flotilla that was harassing the area. The action resulted in a British victory as the American flotilla broke ranks and withdrew.

12/15/1782 American privateer vessel Greyhound captured British schooners Dolphin and Diamond then sent prizes to Little Egg Harbor

3/3/1783 British sloop Katy falls to American privateer Lively off the coast of New Jersey. This is thought to be the last privateer action of the war.

4/6/1783 HMS Ampheon arrives at the British prison ship Jersey to determine the condition of prisoners and secure releases.

4/9/1783 Prisoners aboard the Jersey start being released.

4/11/1783 Congress proclaims a formal cease to all hostilities.

4/19/1783 British sloops Rachel and Nancy are the last prize ships of the war to be sold. Sold at public auction in New Jersey.

9/3/1783 Final definitive treaty ending the war for independence was signed by the United States, Great Britain, France, Spain, and the Netherlands.

1/14/1784 Congress ratifies the signed treaty thus officially putting the conflict to rest.

Timeline: Sources:

The Burning of His Majesty's Schooner Gaspee, Stephen Park, 2016

The Documentary History of the Destruction of the Gaspee, by William Staples 1845, 1990

Privateers of the Revolution, War on the New Jersey Coast. Donald Grady Shomette 2016.

Founders.archives.gov/documents/franklin/01-34-0265 and /101-29-02-0057

Secondary sources/web search sources:

Wikipedia searches The Boston Tea Party, Battle of Delaware Bay, Battle of Kedges Strait, Lexington & Concord, Battle of the "rice boats," Battle of Turtle Gut Inlet, Battle of White Plains, Siege of Fort Mifflin, Battle of Chestnut Neck, Little Egg Harbor Massacre, Battle of Cape Split, Treaty of Paris, Battle of Halifax. All searches researched through listed sources in articles.

List compiled and researched by: Samuel W. Siegel, Executive Director,
Schooner Pursuit Historical Society

Last edit of this data: 9/10/2020