

Pennsylvania Farmer ^[1]

Pennsylvania Farmer

by David A. Norris, 2006

The *Pennsylvania Farmer* was the most well known of three vessels obtained for the North Carolina Navy in early 1776 for service in the [American Revolution](#) ^[2]. The North Carolina [Provincial Council](#) ^[3], meeting at the [Johnston County Courthouse](#) ^[4] in December 1775, authorized the purchase of three ships to protect the state's maritime trade. In February 1776 the state paid £1,000 for the *Pennsylvania Farmer* at New Bern. A board of eight commissioners was appointed to find a crew and obtain provisions for the ship. The approximately 120-ton vessel was armed with 16 four-pounder and six-pounder carriage guns and 10 small swivel guns; some of the guns were sent from Philadelphia, and others were purchased overseas. Its crew ranged from 80 to 110 officers and men, including a marine detachment. Perhaps the name of the vessel was inspired by [Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer](#) ^[5], a series of pro-independence writings by John Dickinson.

When the *Pennsylvania Farmer* at last left port in December 1776, it was for a trading voyage to bring back salt, guns, and ammunition for the state of North Carolina from the West Indies. The captain, Joshua Hampstead, sold the cargo when the ship returned and disappeared with the money. He was apparently never heard from again. Soon afterward, smallpox was detected on board, and the ship and crew had to be quarantined for a time at [Cape Lookout](#) ^[6].

In September 1777 two British brigs, "one a very large one," captured several vessels in the North Carolina sounds. The *Pennsylvania Farmer* and two other rebel ships were reported to be "preparing to sail . . . in quest of the English pirates," but ostensibly the vessels never confronted the British.

By late 1777 the [General Assembly](#) ^[7] was considering the sale of the *Pennsylvania Farmer* and the other two brigs of the North Carolina Navy, as they had been of little use in protecting the state's maritime trade. In May 1778 the *Pennsylvania Farmer* was put up for sale but a buyer could not be found. Later, the ship mysteriously sank at its moorings; the sinking was blamed on a saboteur. In June 1779 the ship was again offered for sale at [Edenton](#) ^[8] "as she now lies"; after that, there appears to be no further record of the *Pennsylvania Farmer*.

Reference:

William N. Still Jr., *North Carolina's Revolutionary War Navy* (1976).

Additional Resources:

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Paullin, Charles Oscar. *The navy of the American Revolution: its administration, its policy and its achievements* Chicago: The Burrows Brothers Co. 1906. p. 452. <http://books.google.com/books?id=Ws5EAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA452#v=onepage&q=Pennsylvania%20Farmer&f=false> ^[10]

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Subjects:

[American Revolution \(1763-1789\)](#) ^[11]

[Military](#) ^[12]

[Ships](#) ^[13]

Authors:

[Norris, David A.](#) ^[14]

Origin - location:

[Edenton](#) ^[15]

[New Bern](#) ^[16]

From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[17]

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[1] <https://ncpedia.org/pennsylvania-farmer> [2] <https://ncpedia.org/american-revolution> [3] <https://ncpedia.org/provincial-congresses> [4] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/johnston> [5] <https://archive.org/stream/farmersmonitorsl00dick#page/n9/mode/2up> [6] <https://ncpedia.org/cape-lookout-national-seashore> [7] <https://ncpedia.org/general-assembly> [8] <https://ncpedia.org/edenton> [9] <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/north-carolina-booklet-great-events-in-north-carolina-history-1917-july-v.17-no.1/413948> [10] <http://books.google.com/books?id=Ws5EAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA452#v=onepage&q=Pennsylvania%20Farmer&f=false> [11] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/us-revolution> [12] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/military> [13] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/ships> [14] <https://ncpedia.org/category/authors/norris-david> [15] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-56> [16] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/coastal-41> [17] <https://ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/encyclopedia->