

From: Robert J. Anthony,
Pirates in the Age of Sail,
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Documents

Pirates of the West

Doc. 1: *Captain Plowman's Privateering Commission, 1703*

During times of war European governments frequently issued commissions to private individuals allowing them to attack the vessels of their enemies. The following document, issued during Queen Anne's War (1702–13), was a privateering license from the governor of colonial Massachusetts, which permitted Capt. Plowman to attack and destroy all vessels of France and Spain during the time of war with England.

Joseph Dudley, Esq; Captain General and Governour in Chief, in and over Her Majesties Provinces of the Massachusetts Bay, and New-Hampshire in New-England in America, and Vice-Admiral of the same. To Capt. Daniel Plowman, Commander of the Briganteen Charles of Boston, Greeting.

WHEREAS Her Sacred Majesty ANNE by the Grace of GOD, of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, QUEEN, Defender of the Faith, Etc. Hath an Open and Declared War against France and Spain, their Vassals and Subjects. And FORASMUCH as you have made Application unto Me for Licence to Arm, Furnish and Equip the said Briganteen in Warlike manner, against Her Majesties said Enemies, I do accordingly Permit and Allow the same; And, Reposing

special Trust and Confidence in your Loyalty, Courage and good Conduct, Do by these Presents, by Virtue of the Powers and Authorities contained in Her Majesties Royal Commission to Me granted, Impower and Commissionate you the said *Daniel Plowman*, to be Captain or Commander of the said Briganteen *Charles*, Burthen Eighty Tuns or thereabouts: Hereby Authorizing you in and with the said Briganteen and Company to her belonging, to War, Fight, Take, Kill, Suppress and Destroy, any Pirates, Privateers, or other the Subjects and Vassals of France, or Spain, the Declared Enemies of the Crown of England, in what Place soever you shall happen to meet them; Their Ships, Vessels and Goods, to take and make Prize of. And your said Briganteens Company are Comanded to Obey you as their Captain: And your self in the Execution of this Commission, to Observe and Follow the Orders and Instructions¹ herewith given you. And I do hereby Request all Governors and Commanders in Chief, of any of Her Majesties Territories, Islands, Provinces or Plantations, where the said Captain or Commander shall arrive with his said Vessel and Men: And all Admirals, Vice-Admirals and Commanders of Her Majesties Ships of War, and others, that may happen to meet him at Sea; Also all Officers and Subjects of the Friends or Allies of Her said Sacred Majesty, to permit him the said Captain or Commander with his said Vessel, Men, and the Prizes that he may have taken, freely and quietly to pass and repass, without giving or suffering him to receive any Trouble or Hindrance, but on the contrary all Succour and Assistance needful. And this Commission is to continue in Force for the Space of Six Months next ensuing (if the War so long last) and not afterwards. Given under my Hand and Seal at Arms at Boston the Thirteenth Day of July: In the Second Year of Her said Majesties Reign, Annoque Domini, 1703.

By His Excellencies Command,
 Isaac Addington, Secr.

George Francis Dow and John Henry Edmonds, *The Pirates of the New England Coast, 1630–1730*. Salem: Marine Research Society, 1923, pp. 371–372.

¹ Besides this commission Captain Plowman also received detailed instructions, consisting of ten items, concerning the operation of his privateering vessel.