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Abstract

After the Revolutionary War, the United States struggled to be recognized by the various global powers throughout the Atlantic World. The American propensity for claiming a neutral trade status, often led to conflict with other nations who were warring with one another. Particularly during their early years, the United States was challenged by Great Britain, the French, and the Barbary powers in the Mediterranean. Relying heavily on maritime trade and contracts, the United States needed to prove that, even without Britain backing them, they were a country worthy of these contracts and treaties. Presented as a social history of the United States Navy, this dissertation argues that it was the U.S. Navy that made these trade agreements possible by being the face and brand of America. Their actions and attitudes not only showed that the United States was a country with morals, humility, and honor, they were also not a country to be trifled with. Taking on the most powerful navies and authorities in the Atlantic and Mediterranean worlds, and not just surviving, but thriving, proved to the world that the United States deserved a place in the trade community. In addition, the U.S. Navy also provided an example of what the new American man was striving to become back home. Gentlemen of courage, honor, intrepidity, integrity, and bravery. Their actions gave the American populace a focus on which to unite, when so many topics threatened to tear them apart. The United States Navy, oft underrepresented in the annals of American History, were actually very important to understanding how and why the United States was given a place on the world stage, and the kind of image they were portraying to the world.

Building the New American Man:

The Role of the United States Navy in Creating Ideas of Manhood, Masculinity, and an
American Identity in the Early American Republic

by

Amber Renae Shoopman-DeVries

B.A., Boise State University, 2016
M.Phil., Syracuse University, 2019

Dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History

Syracuse University
May 2023

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This dissertation is dedicated to all who have served so valiantly for this country.

God bless and thank you for your service!

In Honor of My Personal Heroes:

LeRoy Edward Shoopman (U.S. Marine Corps, WWII)

Andy Edward Schrock (U.S. Navy, WWI & WWII)

Edwin Calvin Cole (U.S. Army, WWII)

Edwin Calvin Cole, Jr. (U.S. Army, WWII)

Jack Carlton Chatwell (U.S. Army Air Corps, WWII)

James Luke Cole (U.S. Army, Korea)

William Dean Cole (U.S. Navy, Vietnam)

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Notes on Naval Terms and Quotations

Terms and Abbreviations

While I do not use a lot of naval terms, there are some maneuvers and areas of the ship described in the various battles that may be unfamiliar to most people. I hope these terms help clarify the situations and paint a clearer picture of the actions portrayed.

Abbreviations

£ – British Pounds (monetary symbol). The conversion rate during the time period of this dissertation was about \$5 for every £1.

Armd – Armed

HMS – His Majesty's Ship

Sd or sd – said

USS – United States Ship

Wm – William

Terms

- Aft – Toward the stern; opposite of forward.
- Bow – Front of the ship.
- Broadside – In naval terms this refers to all the guns on one side a ship that could be brought to bear on an enemy. To fire a broadside meant to fire all the guns at once or by groups or individually.
- Broadside or Broadsheet– Referring to printed materials this is a single page of print with only topic, usually an advertisement, major announcement, or, as most commonly used here, a poem relative to memorialize an event.
- Cannonade – The firing of the cannons; a report of the heavy guns/cannons on a ship.
- Carronade – Powerful shortrange weapon; made to use less gunpowder and provide more accuracy.
- Capstan – A vertical-axled rotating machine that looks a lot like a large ship wheel laid flat, that allows sailors to use more pulling force when hauling cables or sails.
- Chronometers – Precise, specialized clocks for finding longitude at sea using Celestial navigation.
- Fleet – Term used to refer to a nation's entire naval force. A fleet was also a portion of that force located at a particular station, divided into squadrons.

- Kedging – Method of moving a sailing vessel, typically against the wind or out from a dead calm, by hauling on a line attached to an anchor. In small boats, the anchor may be thrown in the intended direction of progress and hauled in after it settles, thus pulling the boat in that direction, while larger ships can use a boat to carry the anchor ahead, drop it and then haul.
- Long guns – Standard type of cannon mounted on a ship. It has a longer range than the Carronade and more maneuverability than a large cannon.
- Mussulmen – Typically referring to a Muslim during this time period, especially those who were taken prisoner by the Barbary Powers and chose to convert to Islam in their captivity.
- Naval Station – A geographic command center responsible for conducting and directing naval operations in its defined area.
- Navy yard – A complete workshop where every naval article is manufactured for the navy, including ships and ship repairs. Typically has a dry dock for getting the ships out of the water.
- Port – The left side of the ship when facing the bow (front).
- Raking – Firing a broadside the length of an enemy ship from across the bow or stern.
- Sextant - Instrument for determining the angle between the horizon and a celestial body such as the Sun, the Moon, or a star, used in celestial navigation to determine latitude and longitude. The device consists of an arc of a circle, marked off in degrees, and a movable radial arm pivoted at the center of the circle.
- Squadron – A number of warships detached from the fleet on special duty. Typically commanded by a rear admiral, captain, or commander.
- Starboard – Originally called larboard, this is the right side of the ship when facing the bow (front).
- Stern – Back of the ship.
- Tacking – Moving into the wind.
- Wearing/Wore – Moving away from the wind.

Wars

- Seven Years War – 1756 to 1763 – Global conflict involving most of the great European powers of the time, fought in many places throughout the world.
- French and Indian War – 1754 to 1763 – A theater of the Seven Years War, fought between the British colonists in North America and the French, with both sides having indigenous tribal support. British victory.
- American Revolution/War for Independence – 1775 to 1783 – War between Great Britain and British colonists in North America. France, Spain, and the Netherlands supported the colonists. American victory.

- Quasi-War with France – 1798 to 1800 – undeclared naval war between the United States and France (First Republic). Treaty of Mortefontaine ended hostilities between the two.
- First Barbary War – 1801 to 1805 – War pitting the United States, Sweden, and Sicily against the Barbary Powers of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli and Morocco. Peace treaty ended hostilities, but the U.S. was forced to pay an annual tribute to maintain the treaty.
- War of 1812 – 1812 to 1815 – War between Great Britain and United States. No victory for either side. Result: *status quo antebellum*.
- Second Barbary War – 1815 (lasted 3 days) – War fought between the United States and Barbary Powers of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. This ended in a U.S. victory and the U.S. no longer paying annual tributes to maintain peace.
- Mexican American War – 1846 to 1848 – Armed conflict between the United States and Mexico. American victory.

Naval Ships

Throughout this dissertation, I will simply be referring to various types of naval ships as “ship” or “vessel” or by their name. However, I do want to clarify that there are several different types of ships that were built during this time. Within this list I have also made note of every ship that is mentioned in these pages, so that they may be identified appropriately without deterring from the narrative with excessive description.

Types of Ships (organized by size)

- Brig – A two masted, square-rigged vessel.
- Brigantine – This vessel resembles a brig, except its main mast has a fore-and-aft rig with no square sails.
- Brig-sloop – A brig when sailed under the command of a commander or master commandant.
- Corvette – warship of small size classified between a frigate (above) and a sloop-of-war (below).
- Frigate – A ship-rigged vessel originally carrying between 30 and 40 guns. It was suitable to serve as a fleet scout or independent cruiser. The *USS Constitution* classifies as a frigate.
- Packet – Medium sized ships designed for domestic transportation and trade. Not typically fitted out for fighting.
- Ship of the line – war ship large enough to sail in the standard line of battle during a major naval engagement, rate by the number of guns. As a note, the USN did not have

any ships of the line until after the War of 1812. They began building them in 1815. The British had about 100.

- First rate – warship having more than 100 guns on three decks
- Second rate – warship having 90-98 guns on three decks
- Third rate – warship having 64-80 guns on two decks (smallest of the ships-of-the-line)
- Fourth rate – warship having 50-60 guns on one deck
- Fifth rate – warship having 30-44 guns on one deck
- Sixth rate – warship having 20-30 guns on one deck
- Sloop-Rigged – a vessel with one mast rigged fore and aft and commanded by a junior officer.
- Sloop – ship commanded by a Commander (RN) or Master Commandant (USN)
- Schooner – vessel having two masts rigged primarily with fore-and-aft sails.
- Ship – three masted vessel, rigged with square sails as well as fore-and-aft sails on the bow and stern commanded by a Captain
- Sloop-of-war – warship commanded by a commander or master commandant, but rigged as a sloop.

American Ships

- Alfred – 440 tons; 30-gun ship. Originally the *Black Prince*, sailed as part of the Continental Navy from 1775-1778 wherein she captured 24 Royal Navy ships before being captured herself.
- Andrew Doria – 190 ton Brigantine; 14-gun ship. Originally the *Defiance*, sailed as part of the Continental Navy from 1775-1777 wherein she burned by Americans to keep her out of British hands.
- Beulah – Merchant ship sailed by loyalists Robert and John Murray.
- Cabot – 14-gun Brig; One of the first ships in the Continental Navy, serving from 1775-1777 when she was captured by the British. She was the Navy ship captured by the British.
- Chesapeake – Frigate; 1,244 tons; 42-gun ship. One of the original six frigates of the United States Navy. 1800-1813. Involved in Chesapeake vs. Leopard affair (1807) and lost to British Navy during Chesapeake vs. Shannon (1813) which is known as the bloodiest naval battle of the War of 1812.
- Columbus – 200 tons; 28-gun ship. Originally the *Sally*, sailed as part of the Continental Navy from 1775-1778. She was eventually captured by the British and burned.

- Constitution – 2,200 ton Frigate; 56-gun ship (more or less at times). One of the original six frigates, originally put to sea in 1798 and is the oldest commissioned naval ship still in commission today.
- Enterprise – 8-gun Schooner; sailed as part of the Continental Navy from 1776-1777; Mostly guarded and protected the Chesapeake Bay Area
- Essex – 850 ton Frigate; 46-gun ship; First U.S. Man-of-war to sail around the Cape of Good Hope; used in Quasi-War with France, First Barbary War, and the War of 1812. In 1814 she was trapped by two much more heavily armed British ships off the coast of Chile. After 2 hours of battle and 155 U.S. Naval men dead, the ship was forced to surrender. The British claimed the ship and she was used as a prison ship before being sold at auction.
- George Washington – 624 tons; 32-guns; Originally a merchant ship, purchased by Congress for the Quasi-War with France in 1798. Also served in the Barbary Wars. Commandeered under the Captaincy of William Bainbridge to run a diplomatic mission to Constantinople. This turned out to be a boon for the United States. She was sold in 1802 during one of the U.S. Navy's retrenchment periods.
- Hannah – 78 ton Schooner; 4-guns; The first ship to sail under Continental pay during the Revolutionary War. Employed by George Washington to intercept British communications. Mutiny of her crew of soldiers had her decommissioned in just weeks later in 1775.
- Intrepid – 64 ton ketch; 4-guns. A Tripolitan ketch sailing under the name *Mastico*. Captured by Stephen Decatur in 1803 when he officially made her a naval ship and renamed her. She was sailed by Decatur into the Tripolitan harbor to burn the *Philadelphia* in 1804. The ship was once again used on a covert mission to wreak havoc on a Tripolitan port and blew up before reaching the desired destination. It was assumed she was surrounded by the enemy and in an effort to keep the gun powder from falling into the hands of the enemy the crew of 12 U.S. Navy Seamen sacrificed themselves and ignited the powder. There were no survivors.
- Lawrence – 493 ton Brig; 20-guns; served as Oliver Hazard Perry's flagship during the Battle of Lake Erie in 1813. Deliberately sunk by the United States Navy in 1815 to preserve her hull. She was finally raised in 1875, and transported in sections for the United States Centennial Celebration Exhibition in Philadelphia. A fire at the exhibition destroyed her.
- Niagara – 493 ton Brig; 20-guns; served as Oliver Hazard Perry's flagship, when the *Lawrence* had taken too much fire and was in fear of sinking during the Battle of Lake Erie in 1813. Sunk for preservation by the U.S. Navy in 1820. Restored in 1963 for the sesquicentennial celebration of the Battle of Lake Erie. She remains on display in Erie, PA.
- Philadelphia – 1,240 ton Frigate; 28-guns; Served from 1800-1804 in the Mediterranean. She was captured by the Tripolitans and burned by the United States Navy to keep her out of the hands of the enemy.

- President – 1,576 ton Frigate; 23-guns; Served from 1800-1915 in the Barbary Wars and War of 1812. She was captured by the British in 1815 and demolished in 1817.
- Saratoga – 746 ton Corvette; 20 guns; Served as the flagship during the Battle of Lake Champlain in 1814. Sold in 1825.
- Somers – 259 ton Brig; 10-guns; Used as an experimental school ship for naval apprentices in 1842. The experiment ended in a perceived mutiny, three dead sailors, and a court-martial for the captain. Continued in service through the Mexican-American War when she capsized in a squall in 1843 and sunk to the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico.
- Ticonderoga – 350 ton Schooner; 15-guns; Third largest ship of the U.S. Navy in the Battle of Lake Champlain. Sold in 1825.
- United States – 1,576 ton Frigate; 44-guns; One of the original six frigates of the United States Navy. In service from 1797-1849 when she was decommissioned and left to sit in Norfolk Navy Yard. In 1861 she was cleaned up, refitted, and renamed by the Confederates during the Civil War when they captured Norfolk. In 1865, she was ordered to be broken up following the end of the war by the United States Navy.

British Ships

- Confiance – 831 ton 5th rate Frigate; 36-guns; Used by the Royal Navy during the War of 1812 on Lake Champlain as the flagship during the Battle of Plattsburgh and Lake Champlain in 1814.
- Gaspee – Revenue Schooner; Burned by Rhode Island rebels in 1772.
- Guerrière – 1,092 ton frigate; 38-guns (but usually ran with 45-55 guns); Captured and burned by the *Constitution* in 1812.
- Java – 1,073 ton 5th rate frigate; 38-guns; Captured and burned by the *Constitution* in 1812.
- Leander – 1,052 ton 4th rate Frigate; 50-guns; Captain Henry Whitby was tried for murdering an American sailor, John Pierce, in 1806. The *Leander Affair* caused major cause of discontent between the U.S. and Great Britain leading up to the War of 1812.
- Leopard – 1,055 ton 4th rate Frigate; 50-guns; Responsible for hostilities against the *Chesapeake* in 1807 leading to hostilities between Great Britain and the United States prior to the War of 1812.
- Macedonian – 1,082 ton 5th rate Frigate; 38-guns; Captured by the *United States* in 1812.

Naval Ranks

Throughout this dissertation I make mention of sailors, ordinary and able-bodied seamen, midshipmen, captains, commodores, and many other types of sailors. I also make comparisons between the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Army. It is important to understand the ranks of the Navy

and how they compare to that of the Army. It is also of note that in Chapter 4, when I refer to young men, I am specifically referring to midshipmen or cadets.

Ranks and Appointments (listed in descending order)

- Admiral – Commander of a fleet. (Comparable to Army General)
- Vice Admiral – Commander of a squadron of a fleet. (Comparable to Army Lieutenant General)
- Rear Admiral – Commander of a squadron of a fleet. (Comparable to Army Major General)
- Commodore – This is technically an appointment and not a rank. This is a Post Captain who has been given command of several vessels or a station.
- Post Captain – Senior Captain commanding a sixth-rate or higher warship.
- Captain – Captain of a ship. His word was law. There is no special designation for ships sailed under a captain. (Comparable to Army Colonel)
- Commander or Master and Commander or Commandant – Commander of a sloop of war. (Comparable to Army Lieutenant Colonel)
- Lieutenant Commander – (Comparable to Army Major)
- Lieutenant – Numbered by seniority of service (ie. first, second, third, etc...), senior officers on a vessel and eligible for independent command of a brig, schooner, or sloop. (First Lieutenant is Comparable to Army Captain; Other Lieutenancies are comparable to an Army 1st Lieutenant)
- Surgeon – Responsible for the health and welfare of the crew.
- Surgeon's Mate – Assists the Surgeon and takes over if he is sick or injured.
- Purser – A ship's business agent, responsible for keeping track of muster rolls, pay tables, supplies, and provisions.
- Chaplain – Education and not religion were the prerequisite for chaplains on naval vessels. Most were not even ordained, but all had college educations.
- Sailing Master – Responsible for the day to day running of the ship, especially navigation.
- Ensign – Or a "passed midshipman" before the rank was renamed in 1862. These are midshipman who have passed their lieutenant's exam but are waiting for a lieutenant position to open for their full promotion. (Comparable to Army 2nd Lieutenant)
- Master's Mate – a promotion for a midshipman who has not yet passed their lieutenant's exam
- Boatswain (pronounced bosun) – Mostly responsible for the ships rigging and keeping all sails, anchors, rigging, flags, and cables in good working order.

- Gunner – Responsible for ensuring all the ships guns and ammunition were in good working order and safe. He was also responsible for running gunnery drills and ensuring the crew knew how to fire the guns.
- Carpenter – Responsible for all the wood on a ship from the hull to the top of the masts.
- Sailmaker – Responsible for all the sails on the ship and ensuring they were in good working order and spares were available when needed.
- Captain’s servants – a promotion for midshipmen who have not yet passed their lieutenant’s exam
- Midshipman – Officers in training. They had no specific duties but were expected to learn how to perform every job on the ship at some point prior to taking their lieutenant exams. They also had no real authority, unless it was specifically given to them for a temporary time by the Sailing Master, Lieutenant, or Captain.
- Petty Officers – There are any number of petty officers that also served on a ship from the cook, steward, armorer, and mates to most of the warranted officers. (Comparable to Army Sergeants and Corporals)
- Able-bodied Seamen – Elite members of the enlisted crew. They had typically been sailing on either merchant or navy ships for years and were relied on by the officers to keep the ship sailing and operating smoothly. (Comparable to Army Private First Class)
- Ordinary Seamen – These members of the crew had only sailed on one or two voyages and new basic seamanship, but nothing more advanced as far as maneuvers went. They were the ones who were typically assigned to work aloft on the rigging, masts, and spars. (Comparable to Army Private)

Quotations

To the best of my ability all quotes are written as they appear in the documents they are taken from. This means that often words are misspelled or abbreviated. If any quote needs to be adjusted for clarification, that will be noted in the footnotes, and the specific changes will be indicated.

Preface

*Ye Parliament of England*¹

You first confined our commerce,
And said our ships shan't trade,
You next impressed our seamen,
And used them as your slaves.²

Go tell your king and parliament,
By all the world 't is known,
That British force, by sea and land,
By Yankees is o'er thrown.

Use every endeavor,
And strive to make a peace,
For Yankee ships are building fast,
Their navy to increase.

They will enforce their commerce,
The laws by heaven are made,
That Yankee ships in time of peace
To any port may trade.³

The world in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was much like it is today; a country's economic stability relied heavily on its ability to trade with other nations. The difference was that it was the Age of Sail and commerce was constantly disrupted by war, pirates, and competing trade agreements. Communication was difficult as there were no telephones, computers, or internet. Though the Atlantic World was a tight conglomerate of trade networks, it was not a country's leader that made agreements that impacted their nation's economy. Rather, it was ship captains, ambassadors, and company agents that made agreements.⁴ Once they were made the agreements were carried forward and only voided if word was

¹ Burton Egbert Stevenson, ed., *Poems of American History* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1908), 318.

² Stevenson, "Ye Parliament of England," *Poems of American History*, 318, lines 9-12.

³ Stevenson, "Ye Parliament of England," *Poems of American History*, 318, lines 61-72.

⁴ Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1905), Volume 1, 13.

received, often months or even a year or more later, that a country's leader disapproved. During the interim it was the navies of Europe that enforced the treaties and trade agreements. As such, having a navy in the Age of Sail was imperative to a country's success and survival.

When the United States declared its independence from Great Britain in 1776, they faced a major problem. As colonies of Great Britain, their trade was protected around the world by the Royal Navy, the strongest navy in the Atlantic World from the seventeenth century through the early twentieth century. After breaking from Britain, they were left defenseless with no trade agreements nor protection from pirates or privateers. Furthermore, as a new fledgling nation that had yet to prove itself capable of honoring and fulfilling its agreements, without the support of Great Britain other nations were hesitant to deal with the United States, especially between 1776 and 1787 when they were just a Confederation of States with no real central authority.⁵

To make matters worse, after the Revolutionary War, the United States was unable to fulfill its financial obligation to France, making an enemy of their strongest ally. With both France and Great Britain publicly withdrawing their support and protection, especially in the Mediterranean World, American merchants were left unprotected and actively preyed upon. It was the acts of the "Barbary Pirates" that convinced Congress in 1798 that the United States needed a navy of their own if they wanted to continue trading throughout the Atlantic World. However, the United States Navy would need to prove itself, both to the world and to the people of America if it expected to survive.

This dissertation is the story of how the United States Navy did just that. When they were created, the biggest threat to their survival was the same one that had them disbanded after the Revolutionary War. To state it plainly, the people were scared of what a standing military could

⁵ For more information on this topic please see Eliga H. Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth: The American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

do to the nation. Their recent experiences with the British Army and Royal Navy showed them that standing militaries could quickly turn into military aristocracies and take control as tyrants when they believed it was warranted. This fear was so strongly engrained in the minds of the people, that it was still being debated up until the mid-nineteenth century, though the United States Army and Navy had both been in service with no issues for several decades by that point.⁶

This dissertation will show how the United States Navy not only overcame those objections but grew to be a standard of American manliness and masculinity in the Early American Republic. Furthermore, it became the image to the rest of the world of American identity and helped bridge the gaps of distrust that allowed for the creation of new treaties and trade agreements throughout the Atlantic World. The role of the United States Navy was originally meant to protect seafaring merchants in the Mediterranean World and free captured sailors from the clutches of the Barbary Powers. When that was accomplished, they were called home to protect the Atlantic seaboard and Great Lakes area from the encroachment and impressment of the Royal Navy once again. After conquering both of their foes, the United States Navy struggled to maintain a positive reputation in the United States without a war to fight. However, through their willingness to echo and lead the trajectory of the nation in moral and intellectual reform, they once again became a beacon of hope for the future of the country in the antebellum year of the Civil War.

As the story of the United States is very much a chronological narrative, this dissertation follows the same course. The first chapter revolves around the precursor to the United States Navy, which was the Continental Navy that served the nation during the Revolutionary War.

⁶ For more information on this topic please see William P. Leeman, *The Long Road to Annapolis: The Founding of the Naval Academy and the Emerging American Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

This chapter not only discusses the necessity of a navy during the Age of Sail, but also the hesitancy of the Continental Congress to create and fund an entity they believed stood no chance against the Royal Navy of Great Britain. Finally, the chapter will introduce the idea of the changing image of American men and how the Continental Navy helped to introduce a type of sailor that was more than the “Jack Tar” people were used to. From the Continental Navy, America learned that the ship doesn’t matter if the right men are not at the helm. The men of the U.S. Navy were a new breed of gentleman sailors, focused on patriotism instead of money.

In the second chapter, the issues with the Barbary Powers in the Mediterranean are first introduced. Though the Quasi-War with France was occurring almost concurrently with the Barbary Wars, I do not spend time on the Quasi-War simply because it was not a war with France that inspired the creation of the navy, but specifically the American captives held by the kingdoms of Algiers, Morocco, Tunis, and Tripoli. In this chapter, I discuss in detail the debate regarding a standing navy and the arguments set forth against Congress fulfilling their Constitutional right “to maintain and provide for a navy.” Also described is the drawn-out process Congress took in creating the Navy and its almost instantaneous disbandment once again. However, it was through the actions of the Navy in the Mediterranean that convinced Congress that the U.S. Navy was necessary, as they made negotiations and impressions that showed Americans were not only trustworthy and honorable, but that they were also willing to do whatever it took to protect their new nation, including blowing up their own ships.

The third chapter focuses on the role of the United States Navy as it once again faces war with Great Britain in the War of 1812. It is within the pages of this chapter that the U.S. Navy fully legitimizes its existence by not only withstanding the might of the Royal Navy but manages to garner its respect as well. Some of the key naval battles are highlighted here, but rather than

detailing the events as a discussion of strategy, as other historians have done, the battles are utilized to show the traits of the men that came to be memorialized during them. I argue that it wasn't the battles themselves, though exciting for the American people to read about, it was rather the traits the naval seamen exhibited that truly made them legendary and worthy of emulation as examples of manliness and masculinity.

No story would be complete with seeing the protagonist stumble a little, and no history is complete without looking at the struggles and negative sides either. The United States Navy is no exception. After the War of 1812, the navy had done such a good job and become such a pillar of “gentleman manliness” that many parents wanted to send their sons into the navy, especially if the boys were unruly and in need of some discipline and direction. Unfortunately, that left the navy with a lot of young men to train. Without a war to fight, the question turned towards how to train the new recruits to be the kind of gentlemen sailors they wanted representing the United States throughout the Atlantic World. The biggest problem they faced was Congress believing that growing the navy was unnecessary and that they needed funding to formalize the education of the young recruits, as the U.S. Army had with West Point. Unfortunately, because Congress believed that a naval war would not occur again, having already beat the Royal Navy twice, they did not see much use in funding a naval academy. It would take until 1851 for the Naval Academy at Annapolis to be formally recognized and subsidized by Congress. During that time, the U.S. Navy struggled greatly and lost the respect of many people, both in the United States and in other nations. This chapter shows that struggle and how the U.S. Navy was able to not only reform its image, but act as an example and echo of the major struggles of the time – reforming the moral and intellectual attitudes of the youth of America.

The final chapter of this dissertation takes a slight detour from the ideas of manliness and masculinity that are presented in the other four chapters and shows how those ideas were used to create a national identity in the Early American Republic. This chapter focuses on the U.S. Navy as a unifying force to rally the American people together, despite their diversities and differences. By focusing on the traits that the United States clung to when they separated from Great Britain – equality, liberty, and republicanism – this chapter shows how the U.S. Navy encompassed those traits and presented them to the rest of the world as the essence of American identity.

As with all research projects, a wide variety of both primary and secondary sources were consulted for this dissertation. Understanding the importance, but often overlooked history of the navy, beginning with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1931 and continuing for the next eighty years the government set aside special funding to acquire, catalogue, and print all of the documents they could find relating to the United States Navy. Now fully digitized, comprising a total of twenty-eight volumes of approximately twelve-hundred pages each, these primary source documents offer a great compilation of letters, after battle reports, commendations, and official communications regarding the various engagements, wars, and conflicts the United States were engaged in.

In addition, individually printed broadsheets that contained recruitment advertisements or poems and songs about the various naval activities were used throughout. These broadsheets show the depth of involvement and pride people were taking in the U.S. at the time and focus heavily on the ideals of manhood they wanted to emulate as well as criticizing traits they found repulsive by applying them to the British. Many of these broadsheets have been transcribed and can be found in the Appendices. Two final sources that were considered were plays and novels

written at the time. Though they are not expressly discussed in the narrative of the dissertation, only because they do not focus solely on the U.S. Navy, through them one is able to determine that the sailor was becoming less and less of a social pariah the more the United States Navy gained notoriety and respect. More books and plays were being written about the lives of sailors and the struggles they faced than in any time prior to the nineteenth century.

Ultimately, it is these particular sources that allow this dissertation to offer a distinctive intervention in the fields of both Naval History and that of the Early American Republic. When most historians write about the navy, they write institutional histories, or battle histories, or historical biographies. This dissertation is unique in that it is a social history of U.S. Navy. While social and cultural histories of early America are gaining prevalence among scholars, none have yet looked specifically at the impact the United States Navy had on the creation of an American identity and the ideals of manhood and masculinity. This important because the United States Navy created a bridge between the United States and the rest of the world. This dissertation shows how the U.S. Navy became the lens through which America appropriated and viewed much of the world, and conversely was the lens through which the world viewed the culture of the United States. Never before has a story like this been told wherein a social history of the navy is presented as a key piece to understanding the creation of varying identities in the Early American Republic.

President Theodore Roosevelt, a vocal and prominent advocate of the United States Navy once said, “If the American Nation will speak softly, and yet build, and keep at a pitch of the highest training, a thoroughly efficient navy, [they] will go far.”⁷ Though the time period of this dissertation ends long before Roosevelt becomes president, his words echo the same argument

⁷ This was taken from a speech given by President Theodore Roosevelt in Chicago, Illinois on April 2, 1903. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-chicago-illinois-4>

that is made within these pages. The United States Navy was more than just a cog in the machine that gained America its freedom and independence from Great Britain. They were more than a motley crew of sailors, wishing on luck to get through the first wars the United States faced. They were an elite and influential force of gentleman sailors doing their best to guide America through the often treacherous and complicated Atlantic trade system. This is their story...

Chapter 1

The Continental Navy: More than ‘Jack Tar’ Privateers and Soldiers on Ships

September 2, 1775, Captain Nicholson Broughton of the Marblehead (14th) Regiment “being a Seaman was appointed to the Command of the first Armd Vessell fitted out in the Service of the United States” by George Washington, then General and Commander in Chief of the Continental Army.⁸ Broughton was appointed Captain of the schooner *Hannah* and instructed to immediately make haste to Beverly, Massachusetts and set sail. Broughton selected other able-bodied seamen in his regiment to be his crew, rounding out the ranks with sailors he found in port at Beverly, and they set sail on September 5, 1775. They had one charge from Washington: “to take and seize all [British] Vessels, laden with Soldiers, Arms, Ammunition, or Provisions for or from sd Army.”⁹ They were to take all the supplies and correspondence from the ships they captured and send them immediately on to Washington so he could distribute them to the Continental troops and make plans based on their knowledge of enemy movements.

Broughton and the crew of the *Hannah* had only two rules. First, they were “charged to avoid any Engagement with an armed Vessel of the Enemy, though you may be equal in Strength, or may have some small Advantage; the Design of this Enterprize, being to intercept the Supplies of the Enemy, which will be defeated by your running into unnecessary Engagements...[and to be] extremely careful and frugal of your Ammunition, by no Means to waste any of it in Salutes, or for any Purpose, but what is absolutely necessary.”¹⁰ Second, “Whatever Prisoners you may take you are to treat with Kindness and Humanity, as far as is

⁸ “George Washington’s Instructions to Captain Nicholson Broughton,” 2 September 1775, In *Naval Documents of the American Revolution (NDAR)*, Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHC), edited by William Bell Clark, Volume 1, 1287.

⁹ “George Washington’s Instructions to Captain Nicholson Broughton,” 2 September 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 1288.

¹⁰ “George Washington’s Instructions to Captain Nicholson Broughton,” 2 September 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 1288.

consistent with your own Safety...[and] their private Stock of Money, and Apparell to be given them after being duly search'd.”¹¹ In other words, do not fight unless necessary, do not waste ammunition as it is in very short supply, and do not steal from the prisoners. In exchange for their “Courage in this Service”, they were entitled to “over and above your Pay in the Continental Army...one third Part of the Cargo of every Vessel” taken.¹² The shares would be divided among the crew according to their rank and station. Being seamen, they understood the value of incentives based on ships and cargoes. They were simple seamen out to earn the most money they could. There was one caveat to their orders, however – if the ship was a recaptured American vessel, there would be no prize money for the crew.¹³

The *Hannah* quickly showed just how invaluable they were. On only their second day at sea they came upon the *HMS Unity*. When Broughton determined that the ship was not armed, he demanded of the captain where they were headed. The captain claimed the ship was set to sail to the West Indies, but after inspecting the cargo and the fact the ship was running with no cannons or ammunitions, Broughton determined it was actually headed to Boston with supplies for the British.¹⁴ Broughton immediately sent men on board and forced the *Unity* into port at Cape Ann Harbor in Gloucester, Massachusetts.¹⁵ The captain was sent to General Washington while the prisoners and the many provisions which included lumber as well as fish and beef, were held by the Gloucester Committee of Safety until further orders arrived from Washington.¹⁶ Upon

¹¹ “George Washington’s Instructions to Captain Nicholson Broughton,” 2 September 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 1288.

¹² “George Washington’s Instructions to Captain Nicholson Broughton,” 2 September 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 1288.

¹³ “George Washington’s Instructions to Captain Nicholson Broughton,” 2 September 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 1288.

¹⁴ “Captain Nicholson Broughton to George Washington,” 7 September 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 36. For a more detailed account of this confrontation see also, Chester G. Hearn *George Washington’s Schooners: The First American Navy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), Chapter 2.

¹⁵ “Captain Nicholson Broughton to George Washington,” 7 September 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 36.

¹⁶ “*Essex Journal*, Friday, September 8, 1775,” 8 September 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 45.

conversation with the captain and further investigation, however, it was found that the *Unity* was actually a recaptured American vessel belonging to John Langdon of New Hampshire.¹⁷ Rather than receiving a reward of one third of the shares of the captured ship as was promised by Washington, the sailors were ordered to turn the ship over to Langdon's agent and continue with their mission with no compensation.¹⁸ To say the order was met with opposition would be a gross understatement.

Joseph Searle, though a member of the crew, was technically a private in the Continental Army from Broughton's Marblehead Regiment. Searle was chosen to act as the spokesman for the crew and vehemently argued against returning the ship without any sort of compensation for him and his shipmates. When he refused to desist in his argument, Broughton had him arrested for insubordination. Several of his shipmates and fellow soldiers attempted to free Searle and were also taken into custody. At that point, the remainder of the crew broke into the weapons cache and, fully armed, defied Broughton and the other officers and freed their shipmates. They then positioned themselves on board the *Hannah* and determined to hold her hostage until they were granted their share of the *Unity* prize money.¹⁹ The Gloucester Committee of Safety sent a request for assistance to General Washington, who immediately sent a detachment of soldiers to put an end to the mutiny.

As soon as the detachment arrived, Searle and the others surrendered, and thirty-six men in total were arrested. On September 22, 1775, the mutineers were tried by a General Court Martial for "Mutiny, Riot and Disobedience of Orders."²⁰ The court found that as leader of the mutiny, Joseph Searle should receive thirty-nine lashes and be forced out of the Army. The

¹⁷ "George Washington to John Langdon," 21 September 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 169.

¹⁸ "George Washington to John Langdon," 21 September 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 169.

¹⁹ Hearn, *George Washington's Schooner*, 18-20.

²⁰ "General Orders of George Washington," 22 September 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 175.

thirteen soldiers who had fought to free Searle were to receive twenty lashes and likewise be forced out of the Army. The remaining twenty-two sailors (technically not soldiers in the army, but sailors recruited to crew the ship and therefore subject to the laws of the land and not the military) were those who broke into the weapons cache to free their fellow shipmates and were only fined twenty shillings for their involvement.²¹ In the end, only Searle was physically punished, and all the men were either discharged from the Army, sent back home, or removed to other regiments.

After this incident, the *Hannah* was decommissioned and Washington reassigned Broughton to another ship. In all, Washington commissioned eight schooners to act in service of the Continental Army at Sea until the Continental Navy was finally authorized and outfitted by the Continental Congress in late 1775. Though the case can be debated as to whether it should be considered the beginning of the Continental Navy since it was not authorized or sanctioned by the Continental Congress, the incident with the *Hannah* served as an example of why a dedicated Continental Navy was needed. A Navy whose ranks consisted of actual contracted sailors and not soldiers. Sailors who knew not only the rivers, harbors, and ports, but also how to effectively use the water, ships, and weather to their advantage; something land based soldiers who had never served onboard a ship before would not be proficient at. The *Hannah* mutiny also gives credence to the argument of why dedicated patriotic sailors were needed instead of soldiers and privateers who were primarily acting in their own interests, rather than the interests of the colonies. An actual navy was needed to defend the sea commerce of the budding nation and to protect the ports from invasion and blockade. Without men dedicated to sailing for the protection and

²¹ “General Orders of George Washington,” 22 September 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 175.

benefit of their country, no ship, no matter how strong or fast, would ever be enough to combat the Royal Navy.²²

This chapter is going to discuss why it was expedient to form a navy and what occurred to finally drive the Continental Congress to issue and fund naval support for George Washington's army. Furthermore, it will examine what sort of men were contracted to fill the ranks of the Continental Navy. Finally, this chapter will analyze how the Continental Navy served to illuminate and begin changing the ideas of manhood and masculinity in the Revolutionary Era.

Historiography of the Continental Navy

The Continental Navy was an oft forgotten topic of American History for many years. As can be seen with the works of Thomas Clark in 1811 and Charles Goldsborough in 1824, the Navy in the early years of the Republic was often forgotten and neglected in the annals of history being recorded. These two men took it upon themselves to highlight and tell the stories of the early naval expeditions as best they could. Their works, though some would say are very biased in favor of American patriotism, offer a look at the early naval years, struggles, and the victories that have been lost in the administrative papers over the course of the last nearly 250 years.²³

Moving forward in time, it was Theodore Roosevelt and Alfred Thayer Mahan who worked hard to record the activities of the U.S. Navy throughout the mid-nineteenth century. Their works were fairly elaborate and conclusive regarding the actions of the navy from its inception, but they were more administrative and encyclopedic than they were descriptive and

²² Christopher McKee, *A Gentlemanly and Honorable Profession: The Creation of the U.S. Naval Officer Corps, 1794-1815* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), xi.

²³ Thomas Clark, *Naval History of the United States: from the Commencement of the Revolutionary War to the Present Time*, Volumes 1-2 (Philadelphia, PA: M. Carey Publisher, 1811) and Charles Goldsborough, *The United States Naval Chronicle*, Volumes 1-2 (Washington City, D.C.: James Wilson, 1824).

informative in terms of social history of the United States Navy. The focus of their works was mostly on improving naval strategy by studying the successes and failures of the past. They served their purpose in recounting the actions of the U.S. Navy, but they did nothing to really discuss the individuals serving in that navy. Roosevelt and Mahan, regarded the navy as its own entity that needed to be improved, rather than a collection of men serving under specific duties and commissioned to specific tasks.²⁴

It really wasn't until the mid-twentieth century that historians really started to explore the topic of the United States Navy. It was during this time that the government began funding projects that detailed the history of the U.S. Navy. The European world had just ended WWI and military strategists and foreign policy advisors wanted to know if there was a way to learn from the past to prevent another war. Historians began by compiling documents regarding the Quasi-War with France (undertaken between 1791 to 1800) and then the war with the Barbary Powers (completed in 1801 to 1815) because these wars also contained papers relating to diplomatic missions in the Atlantic and Mediterranean worlds, something of great import to those living after WWI.²⁵ The plan failed and WWII came quickly on the heels of the publication of the projects.

After the devastation of Pearl Harbor in World War II and the subsequent naval victories in the Pacific, the U.S. Navy became a popular topic and historians were quick to tell the story of

²⁴ Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, Volume 1; and Theodore Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812* (New York, NY: The Knickerbocker Press, 1882).

²⁵ For examples of these works please see, Thomas G. Frothingham, *The Naval History of the World War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924-1926); John R. Jellicoe, *The Crisis of the Naval War* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries, 1920); Carlton Savage, ed., *The Policy of the United States Toward Maritime Commerce in War* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1934); Edward H. Currey, *Sea Wolves of the Mediterranean* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Stokes, 1929); and Milton Offutt, *The Protection of Citizens Abroad by the Armed Forces of the United States* (Baltimore, MD: John's Hopkins University Press, 1938).

the “world’s strongest navy.”²⁶ The Naval Documents of the American Revolution project was commissioned in 1957, and William Bell Clark began to compile the documents that related specifically to naval activities during the Revolutionary War. Other historians wrote about the navy mostly in terms of specific battles in specific wars, the valiant efforts of specific ships, or about the men who led the Navy in the early years. John Paul Jones and Esek Hopkins were favored biographical topics during this time. Historians were also extremely interested in writing about the policies and process of the Continental Congress in establishing a Continental Navy during the Revolutionary War. In terms of the Continental Navy specifically, once again, little was written except to highlight how the Continental Navy was formed and that it was a precursor to the United States Navy that would come some years after it was disbanded.²⁷

During the 1980s and 1990s historians once again shifted their focus to a patriotic emphasis. Discussing the U.S. Navy in terms of American sea power seemed to be the popular conversation.²⁸ It was during this time that George Washington’s attempts to create a navy prior to the Continental Congress’s approval were explored. However, the texts of the time chose to focus more on Washington and his actions rather than on the actual success or failure of the ships

²⁶ It wasn’t until WWII that the United States Navy surpassed the British Royal Navy in terms of ships and technology. For more information on this see H. W. Crocker III, *Don’t Tread on Me: A 400-Year History of America at War, from Indian Fighting to Terrorist Hunting* (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 2006); James C. Bradford, ed., *America, Sea Power, and the World* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2016); and Alex Roland, W. Jeffrey Bolster, and Alexander Keyssar, *The Way of the Ship: America’s Maritime History Reenvisioned, 1600-2000* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2008).

²⁷ Examples of books from this time include James D. Bradford, ed., *Command Under Sail: Makers of Naval Traditions* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1984); Daniel J. Carrison, *The United States Navy* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1968); John E. Cayford, *The Penobscot Expedition: Being an Account of the Largest American Naval Engagement of the Revolutionary War* (Orrington, ME: C & H Publishing Company, 1976); and William Bell Clark, *George Washington’s Navy: Being an Account of His Excellency’s Fleet in New England Waters* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1960).

²⁸ For examples of this please see: George W. Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power: The US Navy, 1890-1990* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993); Paul B. Ryan, *First Line of Defense: The US Navy since 1945* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1981); William N. Still, Jr., *American Sea Power in the Old World: The United States Navy in European and Near Eastern Waters 1865-1917* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1980); and Mark R. Shulman, *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power, 1882-1893* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995).

he commissioned. Also during this time, historians began looking deeper into the roots of the U.S. Navy, specifically into the origins of the Continental Navy. However, the focus was mostly always on how the colonists were able to achieve power over the seas and the British to claim victory in the war for independence.

It wasn't really until the turn of the century that historians began looking at naval history from the perspective of the lower echelons...the actual seamen and sailors serving in the Navy. It is during this time that histories began to emerge regarding the ship builders and the strategies they incorporated into their designs for early naval vessels. History itself was being viewed from the bottom up rather than the top down. Readers were tired of hearing the same stories of the same rich white men who were given credit for great deeds.²⁹ Historians were determined to give people the "truth" and began shifting their perspective of documents and looking for small actors: ordinary seamen who were mentioned in a letter from their captain for doing extraordinary deeds; sailors of color who received no recognition at all in the history books, but performed amazing acts of bravery and heroism that saved the lives of others; and women who performed essential roles but were also left out of the historical narrative.

It is from these "common histories" that this dissertation takes shape. While there is no way to completely eliminate the typical historical actors, such as George Washington and Stephen Decatur, it should be noted that while history remembers them as great men who accomplished great feats, during the time they are being discussed, they were in most cases

²⁹ For examples of these types of works see: Clark, *George Washington's Navy* (1960); Samuel Eliot Morison, *John Paul Jones: A Sailor's Biography* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, & Company, 1959); Robert J. Schneller, *A Quest for Glory: A Biography of Rear Admiral John A. Dahlgren* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1996); Alexander Slidell Mackenzie, *Life of Stephen Decatur: A Commodore in the Navy of the United States* (Boston, MA: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1848); Eugene S. Ferguson, *Truxtun of the Constellation: The Life of Commodore Thomas Truxtun, U.S. Navy, 1775-1822* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956); and Edward Field, *Esek Hopkins: Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Navy during the American Revolution, 1775-1778, master mariner, politician, brigadier general, naval officer, and philanthropist* (Providence, RI: The Preston and Rounds Co, 1898).

ordinary men just beginning to build the reputations that made people like, respect, and admire them, making them a crucial part of these history from the bottom stories. This dissertation does not focus on the ordinary or able-bodied seaman in particular but tells more of a social history of the United States Navy that has not been told before, except in bits and pieces. This history looks at the battles and people not for strategic purposes or inspiration, but for the impact they had on American society.

16th-18th Century – The Rise of Naval Power

To understand the importance of the United States Navy, one must first understand the power of the sea for those living in the Atlantic World. Beginning in the sixteenth century, shortly after Spain's claim to the "New World," European nations relied heavily on navies to create their empires. The world had become centered on maritime empires. Trade and colonization strengthened economic interests and reignited commerce and markets that had been slowly declining. Prior to this time, navies were rather small and used only to protect important ports in times of war. Occasionally, some ships were sent on expeditions, but these were mostly contracted vessels for a specific purpose and naval vessels. When the western hemisphere opened for new exploration and opportunity, navies became ever more important. As empires began growing, governments realized they needed some sort of official presence to ensure their interests were being cared for and they were not being swindled by less than honest colonizers. Navies were the perfect solution; not only could they protect national interests, but they could protect colonies from other nations that may seek to overpower and conquer them or interfere with their growing trade.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Spanish Navy was the strongest in the world with 130 ships. However, the navy was divided into two separate fleets, one in the

Mediterranean and one for the Atlantic. Piracy, war, and weather greatly diminished the size of the Spanish Navy, and the Hapsburg regime decided it was simpler and more cost effective to rely on their allies' navies than to maintain their own. Prior to deciding to allow their navy to diminish, Spain had sent their navy to attack Great Britain in 1588 and made it very clear to the British government that the world was changing, and that maritime power was on the rise.³⁰ The British began building their naval force at that time and by the middle of the eighteenth century, Britain's Royal Navy was the strongest in the world. That's not to say the French and Dutch navies, the next largest in the world, were weak by any means. They could definitely hold their own, especially if they allied together against the stronger British force. However, the British Royal Navy dominated the sea, and though they lost ships and battles on occasion, they never lost the wars they engaged in. At the start of the Revolutionary War, the British Royal Navy boasted 270 ships. By the end of the war that number had soared to nearly 500.³¹ It was the Age of Sail, and the British were nigh unstoppable in their determination to rule the seas. It is ironic that their own colonies would be the downfall of their quest.

To understand the impact of that downfall and the risks and challenges the colonies faced, several important factors need to be addressed. First, if a nation was not trading globally, or at least had open trade routes across the Atlantic, they were destined to fail economically. While the colonies produced many commodities, they were useless unless they could sell them to countries that were capable of manufacturing them into usable merchandise. They did not yet possess the capability to manufacture goods, though it was something being considered by the

³⁰ For more information on the Royal Navy please see, Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York, NY: Random House, 1987).

³¹ "American Revolution, 1775-1773," NHHC website. <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/wars-conflicts-and-operations/american-revolution.html>

Continental Association. Without an Atlantic trade, the commodities would rot, and the economy would decline into a fatal downfall.

Second, if a nation did not have a naval power to support and protect that trade, they were destined to fail economically. The thirteen colonies were poised to be economically prosperous through Atlantic trade routes. All had port access along the Atlantic coast. However, this also left them vulnerable to outside entities through bombardment and blockades. If a country could not protect its ports, it could not have open trade routes. If a country could not protect its merchants and their cargo, the economy would, once again, fail. A naval force, whether big like Britain, France, and Holland, or small like Spain, was absolutely necessary in the Atlantic World.

Third, if that nation was not allied with Great Britain, their ships were considered open for attacks from both British naval and merchant ships, and thus their economic interests were in constant peril. The British ruled the Atlantic Ocean and that included the trade. Holland and France had navies large enough to protect small portions of their trade routes, but it was Great Britain that controlled the majority of the main trade routes in the Atlantic, Caribbean, and Indian Ocean. To pass unmolested through their territory, one would need to have a treaty and/or contract with them, usually requiring a tariff or tax to be paid in order to engage in trade in British controlled areas. For anyone not protected by those treaties, as the rebellious colonists would not be, the British gave letters of marque to privateers who were specifically charged with attacking “enemy” ships and stealing their cargo. In addition to the privateers, the Royal Navy would often not only stop ships who did not have British protection and take their cargo, they would also often force the sailors to serve aboard their own ships or become prisoners.

Ultimately, if any nation wanted to challenge the authority of the seas, they would need a mighty force to overcome the power of the British Royal Navy. Considering these facts and the

force they were up against, one may ask why the British North American colonies would choose to go to war against Great Britain. There will not be a full account discussed here of the various causes of the American Revolution. Neither is there going to be a long discussion of the various land or sea battles that were fought during the Revolution. Suffice it to say, the colonists made the decision to separate themselves from Great Britain and a war ensued. What is important here is how the colonists were able to build a naval force sufficient to defeat the British Royal Navy and help claim their independence from Great Britain. To fully examine this, one must first have a good understanding of just who the colonists were and their mindset regarding maritime matters.³²

Rebelling Against the British Mercantilist System

At the time of the Revolution, people were living in mostly rural areas, but still within a day's journey of the nearest port cities. Census numbers show that by the year 1760, there were 1.6 million people living in the British North American colonies. Of those, nearly 70,000 or 4.3% of the population lived in the port cities of Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Charleston, Baltimore, Salem, and Newport.³³ The remainder lived in rural areas where goods had to be transported, usually by inland water ways or overland by wagons. To live far from a port city meant supplies and necessities could become scarce. However, the colonies were predominantly agrarian.

³² For more information on these four points and the necessity of having a navy during this time please see Paul A. Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Paul A. Gilje, *Free Trade and Sailors' Rights* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013); John H. Parry, *Trade and Dominion: The European Overseas Empires in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1971); and W. E. Minchinton, ed., *The Growth of English Overseas Trade in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London, England: Methuen, 1969).

³³ Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, *A Century of Population Growth: From the First Census of the United States to the Twelfth, 1790-1900*, S.N.D. North, director, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909).

The North American colonies produced the majority of indigo, rice, cotton, tobacco, grains, and lumber for the British empire.³⁴ The mercantilist system required that all of these raw commodities be sent to England to be manufactured into usable products, then shipped back to the colonies to be sold. The British mercantilist system allowed Parliament to effectively control the economy of the colonies through sea power. Because there was little to no real manufacturing done in the colonies, all of the colonists' clothing, household, and other goods, including many of their food supplies, had to be imported from other areas of the Empire. The inequity of the mercantilist system led the colonists to consider whether or not they were being treated fairly by Parliament and how to correct the situation.

On October 20, 1774, while drafting the resolutions of the Association entered into by the American Continental Congress in behalf of all the Colonies [simply called the Continental Association going forward], they stated “the present unhappy Situation of our Affairs is occasioned by a ruinous System of Colony Administration, adopted by the British Ministry about the Year 1763, evidently calculated for enslaving these Colonies, and, with them, the British Empire.”³⁵ Suffice it to say, the rebellious patriots grew weary of the taxes imposed on them specifically and the mercantilist system in general and felt as though they were being unduly subjugated in a type of slavery by the King and Parliament.³⁶ The Continental Association entered into an alliance with one another declaring that beginning December 1, 1774, there would be a non-importation and non-consumption agreement on all “Goods, Wares, or

³⁴ For more information on the relationship between colonial trade and the mercantilist system of Great Britain see Arthur H. Basye, *The Lord Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, 1748-1782* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1925); and Leslie V. Brock, *The Currency of the American Colonies, 1700-1764: A Study in Colonial Finance and Imperial Relations* (New York, NY: Arno Publishing, 1975).

³⁵ Thomas Jefferson, “Continental Association, 20 October 1774,” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1, 1760–1776, edited by Julian P. Boyd, (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1950), 149–154. Accessed through the National Archives. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-01-02-0094>

³⁶ This idea of “slavery” is one that will be addressed more throughout this dissertation and is the word that seems to be prevalent in the writings of the leaders of the Revolution as will be shown in later citations.

Merchandise whatsoever, or from any other Place, and such Goods, Wares, or Merchandise, as shall have been exported from Great Britain or Ireland.”³⁷ Furthermore, they agreed, “The earnest Desire we have not to injure our Fellow Subjects in Great Britain, Ireland, or the West Indies, induces us to suspend a Non-exportation until the tenth Day of September 1775; at which Time, if the said Acts, and Parts of Acts of the British Parliament...are not repealed, we will not, directly or indirectly, export any Merchandise, or Commodity whatsoever, to Great Britain, Ireland, or the West Indies, except rice, to Europe.”³⁸ In addition to these non-importation and non-exportation agreements, the Continental Association made plans to improve animal husbandry, manufacturing, and the general economy and consumption habits of the colonies and their citizenry. Their intention was to show Great Britain, that while they would willingly remain a part of the British Empire, under the right circumstances, they would not be pushed around and made subject to tyranny.

At the same time the Continental Association was created and issued their resolutions regarding trade with Great Britain, King George III of Great Britain realized a confrontation with the colonies in North America was all but inevitable. On October 19, 1774, he issued a proclamation stating the British Navy receive “directions for intercepting and securing any Gunpowder, Arms or Ammunition, which might be attempted to be imported into North America, except the Master of the Ship or Vessel should produce a License from his Majesty, of the Privy Council for the exportation thereof from Great Britain.”³⁹ King George felt that by controlling the weapons and ammunition that were making their way into North America, he could effectively control the colonists’ access to them, and that his forces, namely the Royal

³⁷Jefferson, “Continental Association, 20 October 1774,” 149–154.

³⁸Jefferson, “Continental Association, 20 October 1774,” 149–154.

³⁹ “Narrative of Vice Admiral Samuel Graves,” 4 December 1774, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 4.

Navy, would remain more powerful than the opposition. What he did not take into consideration was the opposition the British forces would encounter in response to this decree.

Word of the King's orders arrived in the colonies by the end of November 1774 and quickly spread. In several communities, the patriots and rebels chose to counter the King's decree by taking possession of the cannons and ammunitions currently under British control, especially in the port cities and forts. For instance, on December 8, 1774, the General Assembly of Rhode Island voted to remove all the cannons, except three and all the ammunitions from Fort George to the town of Providence and hide them from the British.⁴⁰ A few months later in Salem, Massachusetts, another group of rebels received word that a troop of British soldiers had been dispatched to Fort-Island to seize the cannons and ammunitions there. Instead, as the newspapers reported the next morning, "some People assembled in the Evening, and removed them to a more secure place."⁴¹ No matter how hard the British tried to maintain control of the guns and ammunitions that the rebellious colonists had access to, they were consistently thwarted in their efforts. This held true for other supplies as well.

Even before the Revolution began, the British Navy blockaded some of the port cities to stop all imports and exports in the colonies hoping to gain a quick surrender from the colonists. Tensions between the Royal Navy and the colonists of Rhode Island were especially high prior to the Revolution. The bane of their existence was the *HMS Gaspee*. First sent from Halifax in 1763 to investigate and end smuggling operations by the Rhode Island colonists to the French, the *Gaspee*, under the direction of Lieutenant Thomas Allen, struggled to keep a crew as the British sailors were constantly deserting. Finding himself with an undermanned ship, he forced several of the local merchant sailors to join his crew. The local community rebelled, attach the

⁴⁰ "Journal of the General Assembly of Rhode Island," 8 December 1774, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 7.

⁴¹ "*Salem Gazzett*," 3 March 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 122.

Gaspee, and kidnapped Lieutenant Allen, freed his crew, and sent him back to Halifax with a warning to the British to stop impressing their local sailors⁴².

The *Gaspee* next came back to Rhode Island in 1768 under the command of Lieutenant William Dudingston. Dudingston was a particularly harsh man who reveled in dealing out punishments to his crew and did not falter at treating civilians with the same cruelty. In fact, in a Philadelphia man, Davis Bevan sued Dudingston in 1772 for beating him and shackling him on suspicion of smuggling.⁴³ Dudingston was arrested by the local sheriff for that assault, but his men managed to free him, and he mostly stayed clear of Philadelphia after that.⁴⁴ The people of Rhode Island were not so lucky.

In February 1772, the Dudingston had a shipment of twelve hogsheads of rum from West India seized and sent off to his commanding officers in Boston. The community of Newport was livid that one of their merchants had been deprived of their entire cargo when only a portion of it did not have supporting paperwork. The incident continued to spark outrage and discontent with the Royal Navy and their continued presence in the port. They were further outraged that Dudingston refused to meet with the Governor of the colony as custom required and present his credentials and orders. When ordered by the Governor to accede to this demand, Dudingston instead insulted him by sending an inferior officer to report that he had no right to issue commands to the Royal Navy.⁴⁵

To retaliate against the aggression and attitudes the locals were bombarding him with, Dudingston began stopping every single small vessel that entered Narragansett Bay. The people

⁴² Steven Park, *The Burning of His Majesty's Schooner Gaspee: An Attack on the Crown Rule Before the American Revolution* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2016), 8-9.

⁴³ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, London, August 1772. <http://gaspee.org/GentlemensMag.html>

⁴⁴ Park, *Burning of His Majesty's Schooner Gaspee*, 10.

⁴⁵ Park, *Burning of His Majesty's Schooner Gaspee*, 10-11.

of Rhode Island were enraged further and began discussing outfitting a vessel to resist the seizures and fight the *Gaspee*. Dudingston reported to his commanding officer about the growing unrest and more Royal Navy ships were sent to protect the *Gaspee* in its mission. The protection ships were just as rude and arrogant as Dudingston was and refused to ever come ashore for fear of what the locals might do to them.⁴⁶

Things came to a head on June 9, 1772. A local Newport vessel spotted the *Gaspee*, and as it was all alone, decided to make a run for Providence. Dudingston ordered the *Gaspee* to follow, but the other vessel was lighter than the schooner and had a local pilot who knew the waters of the area. Before long, the *Gaspee* found itself in too shallow water and ran aground at Namquid Point. Until the tide came in, there was no way for Dudingston crew to free the ship. As night fell, the Rhode Islanders decided their chance for revenge had finally come. They gathered eight long boats, with ten rowers in each boat, and departed from Providence at around 10:00 PM.⁴⁷

Just after midnight on June 10, the longboats drew near to where the *Gaspee* lay trapped. The deck sentinel on the *Gaspee* saw them approaching and yelled out for them to identify themselves. One of the men responded that he was the sheriff and that he had a warrant to arrest Dudingston. By that time, Dudingston had made his way to the deck and responded that it was not appropriate hour for such business and that they would have to come back later. When they refused, Dudingston ordered all of his crew, nineteen men in total, to assemble on the deck with guns in hand and prepare for combat. The *Gaspee* fired the first shots, and a gun battle ensued between the two groups of men. In the midst of the fracas Dudingston was hit in the arm and groin by gunfire. The fight ended quickly after that as the *Gaspee* surrendered in the face of their

⁴⁶ Park, *Burning of His Majesty's Schooner Gaspee*, 12-14.

⁴⁷ Park, *Burning of His Majesty's Schooner Gaspee*, 14-16.

Lieutenants injuries. The Rhode Islanders had their doctor patch up Dudingston's wounds, then looted the *Gaspee* of all they could find in recompence for all that had been stolen from "smugglers."⁴⁸ The crew of the *Gaspee* were taken off the ship and the *Gaspee* was burnt to ashes.⁴⁹

As soon as news of the attack on the *Gaspee* was heard, Admiral Montagu of the Royal Navy arrived in Providence to ascertain for himself what had occurred and what the local government was doing to bring justice to the raiders. He was disheartened to find that the majority of the community, including the governor and deputy governor, while stating dismay and disdain for the actions taken by their fellow colonists, were in fact protecting them and refusing to take action against them. He reported back to England that "the attack on the *Gaspee* was not the effect of sudden passion and resentment but cool deliberation and forethought...it had been long determined she should be destroyed."⁵⁰ Rhode Island and the surrounding colonies were all on tenterhooks as they waited weeks to hear how Parliament and the Crown would respond to the incident. Governor Hutchinson from Massachusetts wrote:

People in this province, both friends and enemies to government, are in great expectations from the late affair at Rhode Island, of the burning of the king's schooner; and they consider the manner in which the news of it will be received in England, and the measure to be taken, as decisive. If it is passed over without a full inquiry and due resentment, our liberty people will think they may with impunity commit any acts of violence, be they ever so atrocious, and the friends to government will despond and give up all hopes of being able to withstand the faction.⁵¹

Rather than pursue the raiders and alienate the community that obviously supported them and risk starting a war, the Royal Navy was ordered to send more ships to the area to put a stop to the

⁴⁸ Just as a note here. Not every vessel the British stopped in Rhode Island was smuggling, but by comparison to the other colonies, the rate of smuggling was much higher in Rhode Island than anywhere else (Park, *Burning of His Majesty's Schooner Gaspee*, Chapter 1).

⁴⁹ Park, *Burning of His Majesty's Schooner Gaspee*, 16-19.

⁵⁰ Park, *Burning of His Majesty's Schooner Gaspee*, 24.

⁵¹ Park, *Burning of His Majesty's Schooner Gaspee*, 26.

illicit smuggling trade in Rhode Island. The punishment for their actions was light, but tensions in Newport and Providence continued to rise as their trade was further disrupted by the Royal Navy. However, the message had been sent and received – the colonists were willing to fight when pushed far enough. Parliament needed to decide very carefully how to proceed with their plans for the colonies.

Even after this incident and the unrest it inspired in Parliament, many of the British army and naval commanders still believed if they could simply put a swift end to the rebellion, the war would be over before it even began. In a letter to Lord Sandwich on March 4, 1775, Major John Pitcairn of the British Army stationed in New York stated, “I am satisfied that one active campaign, a smart action, and burning two or three of their towns, will set everything to rights. Nothing now, I am afraid, but this will ever convince those foolish bad people that England is in earnest.”⁵² The British government in the colonies firmly believed that there were still more loyalists to the crown than there were rebels, and that it would not take much to bring them back under control. In another letter from Major John Pitcairn on 14 February 1775, he states, “I think many of the people of this country begin to think they have gone too far. The deluded people are made to believe that they are invincible... [and] assert that they are an over-match for all Europe in their own country. When this army is ordered to act against them, they will soon be convinced that they are very insignificant when opposed to regular troops.”⁵³ While just the written opinion of one man, it seems to be evocative of the attitude most British leaders had regarding the rebellious patriots.⁵⁴ They truly believed that the patriots did not have the strength, gumption, nor manpower to go to war with Great Britain. They believed that cutting off all supplies to the

⁵² “Major John Pitcairn, R.M., to Lord Sandwich,” 4 March 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 125.

⁵³ “Major John Pitcairn, R.M. to Lord Sandwich,” 14 February 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 89.

⁵⁴ The files of the *NDAR* are organized by American letters and British letters. There are several examples of this same sentiment found in the British letters of around the same time frame.

colonies and wreaking havoc on a select few key cities, like New York and Boston, would create such hardship for the rebels that they would quickly become docile and give up their rebellion.

The patriots, however, had their own beliefs about the matter. On February 13, 1775, Alexander Hamilton wrote, “It will be impossible for the ships of Britain, to line the vast extended coast of this continent, in such a manner, as to procure the admission of foreign aids and supplies. After every possible precaution against it, we shall still be able to get large quantities of goods from France and Holland...Great Britain can never force us to submission, by blocking up our ports; and that the consequences of such a procedure to herself, Ireland and the West Indies would be too fatal to admit of it...”⁵⁵ Hamilton and other rebel leaders had no doubt that by increasing the manufacturing efforts in the colonies, and finding a way to smuggle goods from both the colonial suppliers as well as from France and Holland, the British blockades would be ineffective. Furthermore, they believed if they could effectively show that the colonies could provide for themselves, or at the very least, they did not need Great Britain as their sole supplier of all commodities, more of those loyal to Britain, or on the fence about revolution, would join their cause. Prior to a navy ever being discussed, rebellious smuggling was the tactic the patriots would use to prove their tenacity against the British and justify their cause for freedom.

The colonists believed there was no reason merchants should not be able to trade openly and in cooperation with other colonial entities to sell and manufacture goods themselves. The British believed they had created the colonies and they, therefore, had the right to legislate commerce. The Colonial Association’s agreements banned all British goods. However, the British were determined to stop all goods, imports or exports of any kind, until the colonists

⁵⁵ Alexander Hamilton, “A Farmer Refuted,” 23 February 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 105-106.

lifted their bans. Smuggling became the only way to move goods throughout the colonies, but the British were inflexible in their bid to destroy the colonial rebel trade. The situation got so bad, that there were several instances of those presumed to be possible smugglers being fired upon and even killed by British sailors without proof. In one such incident, two men, Mr. Starbuck and Mr. Fish, were innocently sailing an empty sloop from Nantucket, Massachusetts, well-known for their whaling and fishing community, when they were fired upon three times by a British warship off the coast of Newport. It was reported that the shots came within six inches of hitting them, but when the two men attempted to report the shootings to British Commander James Ayscough, the situation was disregarded and the officer responsible for the shooting was neither disciplined nor charged.⁵⁶ Smuggling became the highest priority for both sides, and many innocent people, like Mr. Starbuck and Mr. Fish, were caught in the middle.

Attempting to smuggle raw goods from colony to colony to those capable of manufacturing them was only one part of the rebels' plan.⁵⁷ In accordance with the Continental Association agreement, the rebels were also focused on keeping goods manufactured in other areas of the British Empire out of the colonies. A great example of this power struggle revolving around the non-importation and exportation agreements is the ship *Beulah*, owned by Robert and John Murray of New York City. While the situation the *Beulah* was forced to endure was not an isolated incident, it showcases the various organizations and methods of both the patriots and the loyalists and by extension, the British government in this unending commercial power struggle and emphasizes the need for an actual Continental Navy to enforce the agreement rather than it

⁵⁶ "Newport Mercury," 13 February 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 88.

⁵⁷ See Appendix 1 – *The Continental Association* – Articles 8, 9, 10, and 13. While these articles do not specifically state that smuggling is deemed legal, they discuss the need for frugality, improving manufacturing, and keeping manufactured goods accessible to the public.

being handled by random patrols of the Sons of Liberty and/or those who may have a personal connection to either the cargo or captains of ships accused of breaking the agreement.

Case Study : *The Beulah*

The *Beulah* set sail from London in early December 1774.⁵⁸ The cargo included many different types of clothes, special orders of paper and goods for specific people, food (cheese, lemons, oranges, and potatoes) and beer that were to be presented as gifts from the Captain, William M. Bussell, to the Murray brothers, as well as straw and other materials.⁵⁹ Regardless of the intended recipient of the goods, the entire cargo and ensuing attempts to unload the ship violated articles one, five, ten, eleven, and fourteen, of the Continental Association Agreement.⁶⁰

When the *Beulah* landed at the Watering Place, just off the coast of New York City on February 17, 1775, Captain Bussell was ordered by the Committee of Observation in New York, to remain on board and was informed that he would not be allowed to unload the ship.⁶¹ Robert and John Murray were summoned and called a meeting with those that had an interest in the cargo of the ship to decide what to do about the situation. As far as the Committee of Observation was concerned, there was no question about what to do as the Continental Association was very clear on their rules and expectations regarding imports from Great Britain. Article Five specifically states it is the responsibility of the owners to communicate with their agents that no cargo from Great Britain, under any pretense whatsoever, will be received in the

⁵⁸ The exact date here is unknown, however, they arrived in New York after a nine-week journey on February 17, 1775, meaning they had to have departed London somewhere between the 10th and 20th of December 1774.

⁵⁹ The entirety of the list is not given. The mentioned items are known as they were recorded in a deposition of John Murray on 15 March 1775 and listed in a document of items removed from the ship in the "Journal of the General Committee of New York," on 16 March 1775. Both documents can be found in *NDAR*, NHHHC, Volume 1, 146-148.

⁶⁰ The entire transcribed text of the Continental Association Agreement that is so often referred to in this chapter can be found in Appendix 1.

⁶¹ Committees of Observation were organized in every colony, with sub-committees specific to certain ports and cities, under Article Eleven of the Continental Association Agreement. Their sole purpose was to ensure that the non-importation and non-exportation agreements were being enforced and upheld.

colonies.⁶² The Committee of Observation ordered the brothers to send the ship back to Great Britain and forbade them from unloading any of the cargo, sending a boat with twenty armed men to ensure that they did not.⁶³

By February 23, the *Beulah* was still sitting in the Watering Place on shore and had not unladen any of the cargo nor moved. The Murray brothers stated that the ship was in need of repairs and then it would be sent off.⁶⁴ Though the brothers did not state it to the general public, it was supposed that rather than sending the ship back to London, they were going to send it to Halifax, Nova Scotia, a British colony not allied with the Continental Association.⁶⁵ The ship continued to be guarded day and night by the Committee and the citizens of the city were getting nervous about what was going to happen. They didn't know if the Provincial Government (Lieutenant Governor Cadwallader Colden, a king's man) was going to intervene or not. They knew if he did, the Committee of Observation would put up a fight and none were certain what consequences would ensue. However, Lt. Governor Colden lamented in a letter, neither the Murray brothers nor the owners of the special ordered cargoes had appealed to him for assistance so he could do nothing to intervene in the situation.⁶⁶ He concluded his letter stating, "The success... which the violent Party have had in preventing their vessels from Landing their Cargoes here, has given them great spirits."⁶⁷ It was not until March 5, that the *Beulah* was finally moved from the Watering Place. However, it was not being sent back to London, nor on to Halifax, and the situation was about to become even more tense.

⁶² Jefferson, "Continental Association, 20 October 1774," 149–154.

⁶³ "Peter R. Livingston to Robert Livingston, Jr.," 19 February 1775, *NDAR*, NHHHC, Volume 1, 94.

⁶⁴ "*New York Journal*," 23 February 1775, *NDAR*, NHHHC, Volume 1, 105.

⁶⁵ "Extract of a letter from New York," 23 February 1775, *NDAR*, NHHHC, Volume 1, 105.

⁶⁶ "Cadwallader Colden, Lieutenant Governor of New York, to Lord Dartmouth," 1 March 1775, *NDAR*, NHHHC, Volume 1, 117-18.

⁶⁷ "Cadwallader Colden, Lieutenant Governor of New York, to Lord Dartmouth," 1 March 1775, *NDAR*, NHHHC, Volume 1, 118.

Sailing with the morning tide on March 5, the *Beulah*, accompanied by John Murray and his clerk, John Graham, left the Watering Place and proceeded to Sandy Hook, Connecticut where it again dropped anchor just off the coast. It stayed there for a few hours, while Mr. Graham copied invoices and letters, then he and Mr. Murray, boarded a second boat and made for shore at Staten Island, New York where Mr. Graham got off and John Murray continued on to Elizabeth-Town, New Jersey, “to settle some Business with Lord Sterling.”⁶⁸ While seemingly innocent enough, through a maneuver of subterfuge, goods were taken from the *Beulah* during this time causing quite an uproar among the various colonial populace and Committees of Observation. Here is how the incident unfolded...

On March 5, while the *Beulah* was anchored off the coast of Sandy Hook, a squall came upon them that forced the Committee of Safety boat that was charged with watching them to find shelter or risk being sunk.⁶⁹ The Murray brothers took the opportunity and commenced their plan of deception. As the boat lay anchored, it was approached by another vessel. This unnamed vessel was mastered by Samuel Lee and had been hired by Ichabod Barnet to approach the *Beulah*. This scene was witnessed by another ship in the area, whose captain, Isaac Sears, reported that the second vessel hovered nearby for a few hours then left.⁷⁰ The vessel proceeded to Staten Island, where Mr. Graham disembarked, then continued on to Elizabeth-Town, New Jersey. The conduct of the vessel raised questions among the Committee of Observation of Elizabeth-Town who started an investigation on March 10. Over the course of the next three days, they would interview Mr. Graham, both Murray brothers, Ichabod Barnet (who they would

⁶⁸ “Deposition of John Graham,” 7 March 1775, *NDAR*, NHHHC, Volume 1, 130-31.

⁶⁹ Charles Monaghan, “The Murrays of Murray Hill: A New York Quaker Family Before, During, and After the Revolution,” *Quaker History* 87, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 43.

⁷⁰ “Jonathan Hampton, Chairman of the Committee of Observation of Elizabeth Town, to the Committee of Observation of New York,” 10 March 1775, *NDAR*, NHHHC, Volume 1, 132.

discover was Robert Murray's son-in-law), and Samuel Lee. At first Lee was afraid to report what he had seen and done for fear of reprisals against him by both the Murray brothers and Barnet, as well as reprisals from the Continental Association.⁷¹ However, it was quickly determined that Lee was an unwilling conspirator and "he was unwarily led to act the part he did."⁷² It was also determined that John Graham had no knowledge of the unloading of goods and was pronounced innocent.⁷³ John and Robert Murray and Ichabod Barnet, were far from innocent.

Afraid of what could happen to them or their business ventures if found guilty during the course of the inquiry, they deemed it prudent to confess and apologize first. In a letter to the General Committee of New York, dated March 13, 1775, the Murray brothers confessed to taking a portion of the cargo off the *Beulah* in an attempt to salvage some of the financial loss they were facing. They continued their explanation avowing, "upon mature reflection, and with a view to satisfy the public, and this Committee, as well as to prevent the trouble of any further enquiries upon this subject: we are led to make this declaration, and to acknowledge, that we are sorry for the imprudent step we have taken, and that we do condemn the same as an unjustifiable measure; and as a further proof of our willingness to conform to the resolution of the Congress, as far as is now in our power, we do hereby engage to re-ship all the said goods, according to the tenor of the association, and to give the Committee full and satisfactory proof thereof within seven days of this time."⁷⁴ Over the course of the next few days, all three men were interrogated,

⁷¹ "Jonathan Hampton, Chairman of the Committee of Observation of Elizabeth Town, to the Committee of Observation of New York," 11 March 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 138.

⁷² "Jonathan Hampton, Chairman of the Committee of Observation of Elizabeth Town, to Francis Lewis, Chairman of the Sub-Committee of the New York Committee of Observation," 14 March 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 144.

⁷³ "Deposition of John Murray," 15 March 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 145-47.

⁷⁴ "Robert and John Murray to the General Committee of New York," 13 March 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 140.

and found guilty of violating the Continental Association Agreement. As such, and in accordance with Article Eleven of the Agreement, they were deemed, “Enemies of American Liberty” and lost their commercial privileges in all associated colonies.⁷⁵ To make matters worse, the Murray brothers boarded the *Beulah*, and sailed her to Halifax, where they sold what cargo they could and put the rest in storage,⁷⁶ further violating Article Fourteen of the Continental Association.⁷⁷

A few months later, in May 1775, the Murray brothers appealed the decision of the Continental Association and pleaded with them to have their commercial privileges restored in the colonies. It was resolved during the May 27 meeting of the Continental Congress, that it lay in the hands of the Committees and colonies that were wronged to restore privileges in instances such as this one.⁷⁸ Over the course of the next month, the Murray brothers donated money to help pay for a hospital that burnt down,⁷⁹ voluntarily paid for all the expenses of the Committee of Observation in New York to prevent the cargo from being removed from the *Beulah* as well as the expenses incurred by the Committee of Observation of Elizabeth-Town’s investigation,⁸⁰ and published a handbill that promised to unequivocally obey all the rules set forth by the Continental Association going forward.⁸¹ Finally, on June 10, 1775, the brothers’ plea was brought before the Provincial Government in New York, who by this time had seized control from the king’s men, and it was decided that the Murray brothers had made appropriate restitution and expressed sufficient contrition of their actions. It was “Resolved...Robert and

⁷⁵ Jefferson, “Continental Association, 20 October 1774,” 149–154.

⁷⁶ “Frances Legge, Governor of Nova Scotia to Lord Dartmouth,” 24 April 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 212.

⁷⁷ Article 14 states that there was to be no Trade, Commerce, or Dealings with any Colony or Province in North America that did not support the Association, and Nova Scotia did not. Jefferson, “Continental Association, 20 October 1774,” 149–154.

⁷⁸ “Journal of the Continental Congress,” 27 May 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 550.

⁷⁹ “Robert and John Murray to the General Committee of New York,” 13 March 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 140.

⁸⁰ “Journal of the Provincial Congress in New York,” 10 June 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 648.

⁸¹ “Handbill printed by the Murray brothers,” 9 June 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 1061.

John Murray shall be, and they are hereby fully restored to their commercial privileges and declared to be entitled to the forgiveness of the public.”⁸² Thus ended the saga of the *Beulah* and the actions of the Murray brothers to circumvent the non-importation agreement. Conversely, though the incident was concluded, the consequences and effects remained.

The Long Road to Founding the Continental Navy

The event with the *Beulah* illustrates the growing contentions and the importance of smuggling in the colonies. The *Beulah* incident also shows the importance of having a navy to both enforce the will of the colonies aligned with the Continental Association and also to protect their interests and people from the actions of the Royal Navy for crimes real or perceived. The Murray brothers were Irish Quakers who emigrated to Pennsylvania from Ireland in 1732 where Robert learned the trade of a miller (milling wheat into flour).⁸³ By in 1745, he decided to take to the seas as a merchant, transporting wheat and flour to the West Indies.⁸⁴ Robert migrated to New York in 1753 where he made a fortune. Owning a dock on the East River, he dealt in a variety of cargos including “marine insurance...whaling ventures...indigo... and sold imported goods.”⁸⁵ After the Seven Years’ War, Robert’s businesses began to collapse as the colonies faced a major financial crisis. Not only were they in an economic depression with ebbing trade, but they were also being forced by the British to pay taxes to cover the large amount of war debts the British Empire was facing. Having not put much of his wealth aside, Robert was facing an economic crash of his own if he did not find a way to salvage his business ventures.⁸⁶

⁸² “Journal of the Provincial Congress in New York,” 10 June 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 648.

⁸³ Monaghan, “The Murrays of Murray Hill,” 35-36.

⁸⁴ Monaghan, “The Murrays of Murray Hill,” 37.

⁸⁵ Monaghan, “The Murrays of Murray Hill,” 38.

⁸⁶ Monaghan, “The Murrays of Murray Hill,” 40.

Deciding Britain was a surefire way to relaunch his fortune, Robert moved to London in 1765 and left the New York business dealings in the hands of his brother, John.⁸⁷ In London, Robert started a new company with another Quaker Friend, and the company seemed to see a profit quite quickly.⁸⁸ He came back to the colonies in 1768 where he helped to establish the New York Chamber of Commerce, then returned again to London in 1773.⁸⁹ During these years, it became apparent that Robert was willing to do whatever it took to stay on top financially and socially. He did everything in his power to strengthen his finances, his position in society, and his own self-worth. Similarly, during this time, that is exactly what the colonies were doing.

Prior to the Seven Years' War, the colonists were enjoying a great deal of prosperity.⁹⁰ Trade was good, and an air of conspicuous consumption had overtaken nearly every community. People were, for the most part, living the highest life their finances would allow them to. Thrift was not a word often heard bandied about the shops and markets. The colonies were strong and proud. Then the war came, and everything changed. The colonies took a beating both physically, with battles being fought in North America, but most especially financially. After the war, the British colonies were hurting, but managing to still make ends meet. The real problem came when the British government attempted to make the colonies pay the majority of the war debt. To already hurting pocketbooks, this was more than they could take, especially when they had no say in the matter.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Monaghan, "The Murrays of Murray Hill," 40.

⁸⁸ Monaghan, "The Murrays of Murray Hill," 40.

⁸⁹ Monaghan, "The Murrays of Murray Hill," 40.

⁹⁰ For information on the Seven Year's War/French and Indian War, especially as it pertains to issues between the colonists and Great Britain, please see Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2000).

⁹¹ There are many causes that can be attributed to the start of the Revolutionary War in America. Those causes are not going to be debated here. Suffice it to say, raised taxes were one of those causes and one that the colonist in British North America cared deeply about.

Just like Robert Murray had done, the patriot colonists sought out ways to strengthen themselves economically and as the years progressed, physically against the British. Though “forgiven” for the incident with the *Beulah*, the Murray brothers were not able to accomplish their goals of regaining the power and respect they had once garnered. Their reputations were forever tarnished, causing them, through a series of business ventures and financial decisions, tied mightily to their new status as social and economic pariahs, to eventually become staunch allies of the British in 1779.⁹² The brothers had failed, but their actions with the *Beulah* left a legacy that would determine if the colonies would fail in their venture or reclaim their own sense of power and respect in their relationship with Britain. That would only come by winning the Revolution, and that would only happen if they had some way of overcoming the might of the Royal Navy.

Before any of that could happen though, the rebels had to overcome the consequences caused by the incident with the *Beulah*. First, the reputation of New York as a solid member of the Continental Association had been shaken. Because the incident occurred in New York and because the committees involved contained large numbers of Quaker volunteers, there were some who believed that the Committee had allowed the Murray brothers to break the nonimportation agreement simply because of their connections.⁹³ The problem arose because the people and the government were not aligned. On April 11, 1775, M. Garnier wrote to London of a meeting of the “legal Assembly of New York” in early February, wherein it was “discussed whether it would conform itself to the resolution of non-importation as recommended by the

⁹² Monaghan, “The Murrays of Murray Hill,” 48.

⁹³ Monaghan, “The Murrays of Murray Hill,” 46. This idea of committee’s allowing some people to pass and others to not, was not an isolated incident, nor was it specific to this region. It had been happening for quite some time, particularly with smuggling. For information on this please see Park, *Burning of His Majesty’s Schooner Gaspee* and Tyson Reeder, *Smugglers, Pirates, and Patriots: Free Trade in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

Congress, this question has been determined in the negative by a majority of 4 voices. Next it entertained the motion that a ship recently arrived from London [the *Beulah*] should be allowed to unload her goods and the motion passed with a majority of 5 voices.”⁹⁴ He goes on to further explain that the Committee of Safety voted the opposite way and forced the ship to depart. With the government siding one way and the Committee siding the other, New York’s reputation began to wane and John Jay was forced to write a letter assuring the other Committees connected to the Continental Association that “the People in general are zealous in the Cause.”⁹⁵ The New York Committees continued to vigilantly uphold the nonimportation agreement to the best of their ability, but they struggled, as did the other colonies, as smuggling became more and more prevalent and Britain became bolder and began flexing their naval prowess through blockades and cargo seizures.

The second issue caused by the actions of the Murray brothers complicated trade agreements with Nova Scotia. Prior to the nonimportation agreement, it was believed that Nova Scotia stood with the rest of the colonies in their attitudes toward Great Britain. Theodorick Bland, a retired physician and planter from Virginia wrote to a merchant in Bristol on December 1, 1774, “the determined resolution of every American as far as I can hear from Nova Scotia to Georgia, ... are determined that that day which deprives them of their liberties, shall also deprive them of their existence.”⁹⁶ Whatever rumors about loyalty to the cause Bland had heard were put to rest in a letter from Frances Legge, Governor of Nova Scotia to Lord Dartmouth on March 6, 1775. In this letter Legge explains that the Continental Association had:

⁹⁴ “M. Garnier to Count de Vergennes,” 11 April 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 452.

⁹⁵ John Jay. “The New York Committee of Sixty to the New Haven Committee,” April 17, 1775, in *John Jay: The Making of a Revolutionary: Unpublished Papers, 1745-1780*, edited by Richard B. Morris (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 143.

⁹⁶ “Theodorick Bland to Farrel & Jones, Briston Merchants,” 1 December 1774, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 1.

“Reached out to the Speaker of the Assembly here, but no Answer has been given them, nor any Notice taken of their Transactions, in this Province. This I am informed has been resented, and the Trade of this Province with them is like to be suppressed...Fishery carried on by the Inhabitants of the Massachusetts and New Hampshire is principally on the Coasts of Nova Scotia...[and from this] Fishery they are inabled from these Colonies to supply Spain & Portugal, & other European Powers in the Mediterranean, the principal returns from thence are the products and Manufactures of those Powers which are imported into their Provinces by which means they are fully Supplied with those Goods prohibited by Acts of Parliament, to be imported directly from thence into any part of America.”⁹⁷

Legge goes on to suggest one of two options; either allow the Fisheries to continue as long as they agree to withdraw from the Continental Association and abide by the rules set forth by the British Empire, or they be forcefully banned by the Royal Navy from fishing in the waters.⁹⁸ It is obvious here that Nova Scotia, while not necessarily an important figure in the actual trade routes, was very important to the fishing industries on which the majority of Massachusetts and New Hampshire relied economically. Regardless, by the end of May 1775, trade with Nova Scotia had been officially suspended and the economies of the fisheries were in trouble.⁹⁹

Finally, as with the instance of the *Hannah*, the incident involving the *Beulah* showed the need for a decisive voice in maritime matters – in other words they needed a navy. Obviously, there was a great deal of differing opinions on most topics during these early prewar years. “Common consensus” was not a term that could be applied to the time. As shown from the example with New York, the people did not necessarily agree with those who were governing them, and there was yet other opposition coming from those, whether British or colonial, who were assigned the task of enforcing the rules set before them. The people living in New York

⁹⁷ “Frances Legge, Governor of Nova Scotia, to Lord Dartmouth,” 6 March, 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 126-127.

⁹⁸ “Frances Legge, Governor of Nova Scotia, to Lord Dartmouth,” 6 March, 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 127.

⁹⁹ “Proceedings of the Committee for the Town of Newbern and County of Craven (North Carolina),” 31 May 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 581.

were divided amongst themselves as well as amongst the other colonies. Everyone had an opinion about how things should be handled, and no one had any real authority to tell anyone else how to do it, though the Continental Association tried through the Agreement. However, no one had any real authority to act. The Committees of Safety of each area were nothing more than a group of volunteers staunchly committed to the Continental Association and the ending of British interference in colonial activities. Even the leaders in any given area were either British appointed or Patriot rebels, neither of which could boast full authority among the populace who was struggling to come to terms with the entire situation and what they believed was the right course of action regarding the quickly advancing confrontation with Britain. Since the British were strongest through their navy, authority to challenge them and all things related to maritime commerce would have to come through a colonial navy.

The Continental Congress, eventually, came to the same conclusion, though in a roundabout way. The Revolutionary War broke out in April 1775, and the Continental Congress was almost immediately beset with letters from various colonies asking for maritime support. The first resolution regarding a naval force came from the Congress on July 18, 1775. “Resolved – That each colony, at their own expence, make such provision by armed vessels or otherwise, as their respective assemblies, conventions, or committees of safety shall judge expedient and suitable to their circumstances and situation for the protection of their harbours and navigation on their sea coasts, against all unlawful invasions, attacks, and depredations, from cutters and ships of war.”¹⁰⁰ While these individual colonial navies worked hard in their missions to protect the ports and shorelines within their respective colonies, this still did not address the issue of cohesion and consistency. Some colonies were better equipped with ships than men to sail them.

¹⁰⁰ “Journal of the Continental Congress,” 18 July 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 916 (pdf 960).

Some had the sailors, but not enough ships for their vast shorelines. Most did not have the funds to provide a naval force sufficient to take on the Royal Navy. Regardless of their circumstances, every colony attempted to outfit and crew a navy in an effort to provide support for the militia and Continental Army forces waging campaigns on shore.

Rhode Island was the first to appeal directly to the Continental Congress for a formal navy, asserting on August 26, 1775:

Whereas notwithstanding the humble and dutiful petition...for obtaining a happy reconciliation between Great Britain and the Colonies; the ministry, lost to every sentiment of justice, liberty and humanity, continue to send troops and ships of war into America, which destroy our trade, plunder and burn our towns, and murder the good people of these colonies – It is therefore voted and resolved...for obtaining this most desirable purpose [which is peace], this Assembly is persuaded, that the building and equipping an American fleet, as soon as possible, would greatly and essentially conduce to the preservation of the lives, liberty and property of the good people of these Colonies and therefore instruct their delegates to use their whole influence at the ensuing congress for building at the Continental expenses a fleet of sufficient force, for the protection of these colonies, and for employing them in such manner and places as will most effectually annoy our enemies, and contribute to the common defence of these colonies, and they are also instructed to use all their influence for carrying on the war in the most vigorous manner, until peace, liberty and safety, are restored and secured to these Colonies upon an equitable and permanent basis.¹⁰¹

Despite their request, the discussion for a Continental Navy was not presented on the Congressional agenda until October 3, 1775. In the meantime, General Washington set about creating his own naval support system.

Washington's Schooners and the Colonial Navies

Washington's ideas were more for a floating army than an actual navy. As seen with the *Hannah*, it was crewed with soldiers who had very limited sailing experience, if any. Their mission was one of covert operations – stealing supplies and interrupting communications – that

¹⁰¹ “Journal of the Rhode Island General Assembly,” 26 August 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 1236.

were better suited to land maneuvers than naval operations. The men themselves were still considered soldiers in the Continental Army, even drawing their normal army pay. After the mutinous results of the *Hannah*, Washington commissioned four other ships, the *Hancock*, the *Franklin*, the *Warren*, and the *Lee*. Each of these ships were crewed with the same types of men as the *Hannah*; men who were soldiers not sailors and more excited about earning the one-third share promised them, than actually providing protection to the colonies.¹⁰² It would seem that nothing had been learned from the *Hannah* incident, as Washington did not change his tactics in crewing these newest ships.

One case in point occurred in November 1775. The *Hancock* (under the command of Nicholson Broughton since the decommission of the *Hannah*) and the *Franklin* (under the command of John Selman another soldier from the Marblehead Regiment) were ordered to intercept two British Brigantines sailing from England to Quebec.¹⁰³ They sailed to Nova Scotia only to learn that the two brigs they had been sent to intercept had passed nearly a month earlier.¹⁰⁴ The two captains remained near Canso, Nova Scotia and over the course of the next eight days, captured seven British vessels.¹⁰⁵ While waiting in Canso and harassing British ships, the two men heard tell that the Governor of St. John's Island was recruiting for the British. Without orders, and in fact going against Washington's orders to remain at sea and only attack

¹⁰² While not the motivation for all soldiers, two letters lead me to believe that a promise of reward in addition to their regular pay was a major inducement to join Washington's Navy. They are both found in Dennis P. Ryan, ed., *A Salute to Courage: The American Revolution as Seen Through Wartime Writings of Officers of the Continental Army and Navy* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1979). The first is a note in a letter from James Van Rensselaer (Washington's Aid de Camp) on November 13, 1775, that discusses the number of men appealing to Washington for leave to go home or for permission to join the boats (17). The second is a letter written May 16, 1775, by Nicholas Fish (Captain of a New York regiment of the Army) stating that he was proud of his men who were fighting for patriotism and honor, "and whose Motive is not mercenary, as with most soldiers" (27).

¹⁰³ "Additional Instructions from George Washington to Captain Nicholson Broughton," 16 October 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 474.

¹⁰⁴ "Captains Nicholson Broughton and John Selman to George Washington," 6 November 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 899.

¹⁰⁵ There are various accounts of these captures in the letters and news articles found in the *NDAR* 29 October 1775 – 5 November 1775, 636-978.

British ships if they are suspected of carrying orders and/or ammunitions, they each took a small contingent of six men, attacked the Governor's home, and took him and several other British officials prisoner with the intension of trading them for American prisoners of war in Quebec.¹⁰⁶ However, that never happened as they were censured by both the Canadian government as well as General Washington. The Governor and other prisoners were released and their papers and possessions returned.¹⁰⁷ While some "meet with general disapprobation" the attack on St. John's Island, others, like Benjamin Hichborn, lauded their actions declaring, "[they] may perhaps deserve censure for going counter to [Washington's] orders, but I think in justice to ourselves we ought to seize every officer in the Service of Government wherever they may be found."¹⁰⁸ After this incident, Broughton and Selman were both reassigned as were the *Hancock* and *Franklin*.

Though Washington's Armed Vessels had served their purpose, for the most part, they were still nothing more than privateers, more focused on earning their one third share than actually making a difference in the Revolution. In fact, once Washington authorized the *Hannah*, a slew of privateers began approaching the various colonial assemblies offering their services in exchange for contracted shares of captured vessels. By the end of the war, nearly 800 American privateers had been commissioned.¹⁰⁹ A historian from the time, Thomas Clark, credited the privateers with much of the maritime victories of the Revolution. He declared, "The success of the American privateers...in the capture of English merchantmen, was extremely great. Their daring spirit and boldness was unparalleled. Their enterprizes were [not] confined to the American seas. The coasts of Europe were covered with them. The shores of Great Britain were

¹⁰⁶ "Francis Legge to Lord Dartmouth," 5 December 1775, *NDAR*, NHHHC, Volume 2, 1280.

¹⁰⁷ "Minutes of the Executive Council of Nova Scotia," 8 February 1776, *NDAR*, NHHHC, Volume 3, 1168.

¹⁰⁸ "Benjamin Hichborn to John Adams," 10 December 1775, *NDAR*, NHHHC, Volume 3, 34.

¹⁰⁹ Douglas L. Stein, archivist, "Letters of Marque/Privateer Collection: American Maritime Documents 1776-1860," *Mystic Seaport Museum*. <https://research.mysticseaport.org/item/1006405/1006405-c023/>

insulted by these privateers, in a manner their hardiest of enemies had never dared to attempt.”¹¹⁰ These were men bound and determined to prove their prowess and become a power to be reckoned with.

The good thing about the privateers was that they could go anywhere they wanted and do whatever they wanted. They weren't hampered by the rules and boundaries as the colonial navies were. They were free to prey on any ship flying the British flag, especially merchants, whom they seemed to particularly target. The thing about merchants was that they didn't tend to sail heavily armed as the Royal Navy ships did, there was only a very minute chance they would be considered recaptured American vessels, and they tended to carry very pricey cargos for which the crew was rewarded nicely through their shares. The prospect of financial gain was so great, Clark commented, “No difficulty was experienced in obtaining crews. It is asserted that [the] privateers were never detained an hour for want of men.”¹¹¹ The same could not be said for the colonial navies.

The various navies of the colonies were hard-pressed to find enough men and ships to suit their needs. On May 10, 1775, the Massachusetts Committee of Safety stated, “there are not a sufficient number of vessels to be now obtained” and implored “to have one or more Master Carpenters immediately engaged in that service.”¹¹² The problem with gathering men, was that most of them were already engaged in fighting either with the Continental Army or the colonial militias.¹¹³ To crew a ship, meant taking men away from one battlefield to use them on another. In most cases this was not a problem, as the war was still in its early stages and had not completely begun in earnest, except in places where the British Army could be backed by the

¹¹⁰ Clark, *Naval History*, 60.

¹¹¹ Clark, *Naval History*, 112.

¹¹² “Minutes of the Massachusetts Committee of Safety,” 10 May 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 302.

¹¹³ “Massachusetts Provincial Congress Committee Report,” 4 October 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 291.

Royal Navy, namely the port cities. On the one hand, it meant that men familiar with the water were close by and available. However, it also meant large ships had already been neutralized and they were forced instead to use small crafts of any caliber they could find.

James Lyons of Machias, Maine, tells of just such an incident when he and several other men were threatened by three British ships with the burning of their town if they did not allow the ships to continue up the West River into Boston to deliver supplies. Lyons and his men refused and were able to incapacitate two of the ships. As for the third ship, Lyons' men "went down in boats and canoes, lined the shore directly opposite the Tender, and having demanded her to surrender to America, received for an answer, "fire and be damn'd": they immediately fired upon her, which she returned, and a smart engagement ensued."¹¹⁴ The tender retreated and during the night, forty men snuck aboard one of the incapacitated ships, and "armed with guns, swords, axes & pick forks," went out to meet the larger ship.¹¹⁵ The tender tried to run, but the smaller ship was faster and overtook them before they could leave the bay, at which point "a most obstinate engagement ensued, both sides being determined to conquer or die."¹¹⁶ The battle actually lasted no more than an hour before, their captain gravely wounded, the British ship surrendered.¹¹⁷ Lyons and his men immediately turned to the Massachusetts Provincial Congress for advice; they had angered the dreaded Royal Navy and they were certain revenge was on the horizon and were ill equipped to defend themselves.

¹¹⁴ "James Lyons, Chairman of the Machias Committee, to the Massachusetts Provincial Congress," 14 June 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 677.

¹¹⁵ "James Lyons, Chairman of the Machias Committee, to the Massachusetts Provincial Congress," 14 June 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 677.

¹¹⁶ "James Lyons, Chairman of the Machias Committee, to the Massachusetts Provincial Congress," 14 June 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 677.

¹¹⁷ "James Lyons, Chairman of the Machias Committee, to the Massachusetts Provincial Congress," 14 June 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 1, 677.

Once again, the need for an actual navy was being demonstrated. Small skirmishes such as these were occurring up and down the Atlantic seaboard. The British were becoming more and more concerned. “The Rebels,” Vice Admiral Samuel Graves warned, “are fortifying their Sea Port Towns and are endeavouring to equip a Naval Force; they will really become formidable from their unwearied Application and from remaining unmolested.”¹¹⁸ Graves issued orders to Captain James Wallace of the *HMS Rose*, to stop the rebels in their tracks commanding:

Whereas many Rebel armed Vessels infest the Coast of America...and whereas there are undoubted preparations to put to Sea a Naval force to oppose his Majestys Arms, in the like rebellious manner as they have done on Land: You are therefore hereby required and directed to use every means in your power to take, burn, sink and destroy all and every Pirate or Rebel you meet in Arms whether on Shore or at Sea; And you are to do your utmost to lay waste and destroy every Town or Place from whence Pirates are fitted out, or shall presume to harbour or shelter them, together with all the Vessels of what kind soever therein; Protecting and defending all People who shall upon your Summons return to their Duty and give immediate Proofs of their Sincerity by aiding and assisting you to their utmost, or by otherwise taking an active part against his Majestys Enemies.¹¹⁹

Prior to this point, the British were trying to end the conflict with the colonies without too much bloodshed and ill feelings. They understood there was still a large portion of the population that was loyal to the British Government. Nevertheless, they were dangerously low on supplies and ammunitions, their men were starving and sick, and they were being attacked everywhere they went. Enough was enough. The British had now decided it was time to put the rebellion down once and for all, even if that meant casualties of innocent civilians, though the they were going to attempt to avoid the innocent bystanders if at all possible. The British were determined to strike before the Americans successfully organized a naval force capable of strategically

¹¹⁸ “Vice Admiral Samuel Graves to Captain James Wallace, *HMS Rose*,” 17 September 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 129.

¹¹⁹ “Vice Admiral Samuel Graves’s Order to Captain James Wallace,” 17 September 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 129-130.

outmaneuvering them. As experts at naval organization, the Royal Navy knew the chaos of the colonial navies was working in their favor. The chance of being unsuccessful would only come if the colonial naval force was being directed by one general commander. The time had come to form a Continental Navy.

Forming the Continental Navy

Those few delegates of the Continental Congress eager to organize a Continental Navy would not find it so easy a task as they might assume. The representatives from Rhode Island introduced the idea on October 3, 1775, as per the request issued to them from the General Assembly on August 26.¹²⁰ However, it was decided that the Congress would discuss it in a couple of weeks as other more pressing matters were on the agenda. That did not stop advocates of a navy from bringing it up any chance they could. On October 5, a committee was formed to determine what a navy might look like, whether it would be allowed the same leeway as privateers in terms of receiving shares of prizes in addition to wages, and what its role would be in the war overall. John Adams volunteered to be on the committee and could not hide his excitement or eagerness that a Continental Navy could soon be realized. “I had conversed much with the gentlemen who conducted our cod and whale fisheries,” he wrote, “as well as the other navigation of the country, and had heard much of the activity, enterprise, patience, perseverance, and daring intrepidity of our seamen. I had formed a confident opinion that, if they were once let loose upon the ocean, they would contribute greatly to the relief of our wants as well as to the distress of the enemy.”¹²¹ Everyone in the Continental Congress did not share his enthusiasm.

¹²⁰ “Journal of the Continental Congress,” 3 October 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 285.

¹²¹ “Journal of the Continental Congress: footnote 2 from John Adams Autobiography *The Works of John Adams*,” 5 October 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 308.

Those against the idea called it “the most wild, visionary, mad project that had ever been imagined” and claimed “it would ruin the character, and corrupt the morals of all our seamen...[making] them selfish, piratical, mercenary, bent wholly upon plunder, &c. &c.”¹²² The image of ‘Jack Tar’ is what most people thought of when they thought of sailors at all. Though the colonies relied heavily on maritime trade, men who chose a life at sea on merchant ships had a sordid reputation as “notorious drinkers and fighters.”¹²³ One historian paints a very vivid image of how people seemed to view common sailors:

Here comes Jack Tar, his bowed legs bracing him as if the very Broadway beneath his feet might begin to pitch and roll.' In his dress he is, in the words of a superior, "very nasty and negligent," his black stockings ragged, his long, baggy trousers tarred to make them waterproof. Bred in "that very shambles of language," the merchant marine, he is foul-mouthed, his talk alien and suspect. He is Jolly Jack, a bull in a china shop, always, in his words, “for a Short life and a Merry one," and, in the concurring words of his superiors, “concerned only for the present . . . incapable of thinking of, or inattentive to, future welfare," "like froward Childeren not knowing how to judge for themselves.¹²⁴

Many of these men were “fleeing apprentices, dissatisfied with bondage of work ashore, runaway slaves...deserted soldiers, bail-jumpers, thieves, and murderers [who] had gotten into trouble with the law. And others went to sea entirely unwillingly impressed...or tricked into the merchant service.”¹²⁵ Prior to the establishment of the navy, this class of sailors was considered “the resource of necessity, accident, or indulgence.”¹²⁶

By comparison, seamen were distinguished as being the gentlemen of the sea. These were the men who chose to go so sea as “adventure-seeking boys,” at a young age, usually between

¹²² “Journal of the Continental Congress: footnote 2 from John Adams Autobiography *The Works of John Adams*,” 5 October 1775, *NDAR*, NHHHC, Volume 2, 308.

¹²³ Richard Stott, *Jolly Fellows: Male Milieus in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 99.

¹²⁴ Jesse Lemisch, “Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 25 no. 3 (July 1968): 371-372.

¹²⁵ Lemisch, “Jack Tar in the Streets,” 374-375.

¹²⁶ Lemisch, “Jack Tar in the Streets,” 375.

eight and thirteen years of age, and who had become “masters of their own vessels; later, while their sons and grandsons added to their wealth, they retired, perhaps to their farms, and wrote proud histories of their successes.”¹²⁷ It was the seamen and not the common sailors, those against the navy were worried about corrupting. Though these seamen might make good captains for the naval vessels, there was still unsurety about who would fill the ranks of the naval crew. Two choices were clear; either fill them with ‘Jack Tars’ and risk mutiny and insubordination or fill them with men who had experience with the waters, but no real desire to go to sea.¹²⁸ Neither choice was optimal in their minds and the Continental Congress further delayed making a decision regarding a colonial navy.

The biggest argument, however, about whether a navy was actually needed was more about whether the colonies were really ready and capable of opening themselves up for Atlantic Trade without the assistance of the British Empire. There was question as to whether any other nation in the world would want to trade with the colonies. “Has any Merchant received a Letter from Abroad, that they will come?” asked one appointee during the debate. “Very doubtfull and precarious whether and French or Spanish Vessell would be cleared out to America. It is a Breach of the Treaty of Peace.”¹²⁹ Regardless of the reason behind their argument, whether it be foreign trade or virtue of the sailors themselves, once again the question of America’s power was being tested. Were their men strong enough to stay true to their principles and virtues? Were they strong enough to withstand the might of the Royal Navy? Were they clever enough to outthink

¹²⁷ Lemisch, “Jack Tar in the Streets,” 373.

¹²⁸ As seen with the *Hannah*, the risk for mutiny was a real concern. This is a topic discussed in great detail in Thomas Sheppard, *Commanding Petty Despots: The American Navy in the New Republic* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2022). In this book he shows the importance of having men willing to take orders as well as commanding officers willing to earn the respect of the men. Unfortunately, neither ‘Jack Tars’ nor the merchant captains were capable of their roles.

¹²⁹ “John Adams’ Notes of the Debates in the Continental Congress,” 5 October 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 309.

and outmaneuver them? Were they proud enough to stand before the world and wait patiently to be recognized as a formidable ally? Only time would tell, and that time was soon approaching.

Finally, on October 13, 1775, the Continental Congress agreed to outfitting two vessels to act on behalf of all the colonies, but only after a suitable budget had been agreed upon.¹³⁰ The budget committee finally returned with a proposal for ten ships that would cost the colonies \$180,000.¹³¹ That amount was to acquire, outfit, supply, and crew ten ships - four with thirty-six guns, two with twenty-four guns, two with eighteen guns, and two with fourteen guns.¹³² Comparatively, Washington's four Armed Vessels ended up costing the colonies just over £148 over three months, but did not include the crew wages which were paid through the Continental Army.¹³³ In the end, the price was deemed too high, and only four ships were authorized to be outfitted and crewed immediately - one with ten guns, one with fourteen guns, one with twenty guns, and one with thirty-six guns.¹³⁴ John Adams, while happy the navy had finally been approved and was moving forward, lamented, "We can't get Seamen to man 4 Vessells. We could not get Seamen to man our Boats or Gallies."¹³⁵ Now that they had the approval to get commission and outfit the ships, where would the men to crew those ships come from and what sort of character would they have? Could the committee afford to be choosy about the men who enlisted or would they be forced to crew their ships with common sailors?

There were at that time an estimated ten thousand sailors who had lost their jobs and trades and were in want of work.¹³⁶ It was assumed that those men would want revenge on the

¹³⁰ "Journal of the Continental Congress," 13 October 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 442.

¹³¹ For comparison this amounts to £67,500 only £16,035 coming from outfitting alone.

¹³² "Estimate for Fitting out Warships for a Three Month Cruise," 30 October 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 649.

¹³³ "Bills for Outfitting Washington's Four Schooners at Beverly," March 1776, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, Appendix E, 1379.

¹³⁴ "Journal of the Continental Congress," 30 October 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 647.

¹³⁵ "Journal of the Continental Congress, footnote 6," 30 October 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 647.

¹³⁶ "Journal of the Continental Congress," 30 October 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 650.

British who had ultimately, even if not directly, forced them to their shameful emasculated state and to further regain their honor, dignity, and fortunes by accepting the “adventure” it would be in taking on the Royal Navy.¹³⁷ The Congress was afraid, though, that “this will at best be a kind of Justifiable piracy...and may be very pernicious.”¹³⁸ Instead, they determined that if a Continental Navy was to be established as an official entity under the governing control of the Congress, it would be “more prudent, where the Loss can, at most, be so trifling to Turn this Spirit, this Temper, the Necessity of the Times down its right and proper Channel, and reduce it while in its infancy to Rule and Order before it become thro Want of Regulation, unmanageable.”¹³⁹ They were determined that the Navy would not operate the same way the privateers did, with little regard for who got hurt as long as they received their money. The Continental Navy would not be a bunch of vicious, “licentious,” rabble-rousers, as was the popular opinion about the Royal Navy.¹⁴⁰ There was a great fear that if left unchecked and unregulated, the Continental Navy would have the power to one day rise up against the colonies and become the enemy of the very people they were created to protect.¹⁴¹

As opposed to being a permanent fixture in the protection of the states, the Continental Navy had one objective to support the various states militias and the Continental Army from the many water ports and routes to defeat the British and claim independence for the states. It would then be disbanded. Several addendums were agreed upon in relation to the creation of the Navy to make sure it was sufficient to meet the needs of the colonies, but not strong enough to rise up in mutiny when it was disbanded. Decisions were made and it looked like the Navy might

¹³⁷ “Journal of the Continental Congress,” 30 October 1775, *NDAR*, NHHHC, Volume 2, 650.

¹³⁸ “Journal of the Continental Congress,” 30 October 1775, *NDAR*, NHHHC, Volume 2, 650.

¹³⁹ “Journal of the Continental Congress,” 30 October 1775, *NDAR*, NHHHC, Volume 2, 650.

¹⁴⁰ “Journal of the Continental Congress,” 30 October 1775, *NDAR*, NHHHC, Volume 2, 650.

¹⁴¹ “Journal of the Continental Congress,” 30 October 1775, *NDAR*, NHHHC, Volume 2, 650. This fear will be further discussed in Chapter 2 where the debate about a standing military becomes one of the biggest hurdles to formally creating the United States Navy.

actually have the power and backing to fulfill its purpose – something lacking in the various colonial navies and privateers.

The first rule regarding the Navy was that it needed to be commanded by a person “skill’d in Maritime Affairs.”¹⁴² That person was Esek Hopkins. He was described as a “successful and experienced master mariner.”¹⁴³ In the letter informing him of his appointment as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Fleet, his brother wrote, “I suppose you may be more serviceable to your Country, in this very dangerous Crisis of its affairs, by taking upon you this Command than you can in any other Way.”¹⁴⁴ At the time of his appointment, Hopkins was serving as a Commander in the Army in Newport. It would take until December for him to be relieved and officially take his place with the Navy. This gave the Naval Committee time to acquire the four approved ships and outfit them. Upon assuming command Hopkins appointed as the captains of those ships Dudley Saltonstall, Abraham Whipple (who was involved in orchestrating the *Gaspee* affair), Nicholas Biddle, and John Burroughs Hopkins.¹⁴⁵ Each of these men grew up in port towns, spent a great deal of time on the water and among sailors and merchants. Most importantly, they had connections with other men who could act as officers and seaman to crew the ships.

The second decree stated, “These Vessels shall cruise, only to protect the Trade of these Colonies from the insults of Ministerial Cutters, & Shippes of Warr, & for intercepting, & seizing such Vessels as shall be employed to Transport Stores, or shall have Stores on board for the Ministerial Forces employed against these Colonies.”¹⁴⁶ They were not to be privateers. The

¹⁴² “Journal of the Continental Congress,” 30 October 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 651.

¹⁴³ Field, *Esek Hopkins*, 77.

¹⁴⁴ “Stephen Hopkins to Esek Hopkins,” 6 November 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 909.

¹⁴⁵ Field, *Esek Hopkins*, 80.

¹⁴⁶ “Journal of the Continental Congress,” 30 October 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 651.

ships they were on belonged, as long as they were paying for them, to the Confederation of Colonies and they were to remain near the Atlantic seaboard. They were not allowed to attack without grounds any ship just for flying British colors. If they did not have sound proof the vessel under question was attempting to deliver supplies to the British Army or Navy, they were to be dealt with by the Committees of Safety in the colonies ports. Being only four ships in strength, the Continental Navy could not afford to enter an engagement unnecessarily. Their enemies were to be chosen wisely.

To ensure the naval crews did not go the way of the privateers and begin attacking merchant ships, the third decree firmly states that in addition to regular wages, which for a regular sailor was \$5 per month, they would receive a one-half share of the cost of the captured ship to be divided among them according to their rank.¹⁴⁷ The difference here, between the Navy and privateers, is that any money, freight, or stores on those ships would be sold and belonged solely to the Congress to help fund the cost of the Navy, and none of those proceeds would belong to any member of the crew.¹⁴⁸ Their “bonus” would only come from the cost of selling the captured ship and having nothing to do with the cargo. This was done in the hopes of keeping the seaman honest and kind in the actions towards other vessels they would meet. If there was no advantage or benefit to attacking ships indiscriminately, the sailors would not be tempted to disobey orders or mutiny against their officers.

By December 22, 1775, the first four ships were ready to sail. The *Alfred* (30 guns – 20 nine-pound guns and 10 six-pound guns) would be captained by Dudley Saltonstall, with John Paul Jones and Jonathan Pitcher as First Lieutenants, Benjamin Seabury as Second Lieutenant, and John Fanning as Third Lieutenant. The *Columbus* (28 guns – 18 nine-pound guns and 10 six-

¹⁴⁷ “Journal of the Continental Congress,” 30 October 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 651.

¹⁴⁸ “Journal of the Continental Congress,” 30 October 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 2, 651.

pound guns) would be captained by Abraham Whipple, with Rhodes Arnold as First Lieutenant, Joseph Olney as Second Lieutenant, and Ezekiel Burroughs as Third Lieutenant. Nicholas Biddle would captain the *Andrew Doria* (14 four-pound guns), with Elisha Warner and John M'Dougal acting as Second Lieutenants. Finally, John Burrow Hopkins would be the captain of the *Cabot* (14 six-pound guns), with Hoysteed Hacker as First Lieutenant, Thomas Weaver as Second Lieutenant, and Daniel Vaughan as Third Lieutenant.¹⁴⁹ They were authorized to hire an additional three hundred marines and officers to crew the four ships.¹⁵⁰ By comparison, the “naval force destined to act against America will, we hear, consist of fifty-six ships of war, from 50 to 15 guns each, besides of sloops, bombs, &c. and will be manned by 16,000 seamen and 3000 marines.”¹⁵¹ The Continental Navy was severely outnumbered and they knew it.

One of the biggest problems that lay before the Continental Navy was that General Washington himself refused to accept them. Washington opted to keep commissioning Army Officers to take command of his floating army of schooners. When the Continental Congress forwarded their plans to create a Continental Navy and sent him copies of the commissions for Hopkins and the other officers, Washington rejected them and devised his own.¹⁵² He states in a letter written in January 1776, the “fleet has been so long in fitting, and the destination of it so well known, that the end will be defeated, if the vessels escape.”¹⁵³ Washington believed that the Royal Navy had too much knowledge of the small colonial navy and their plans, and would easily overtake and destroy them, if the ships were even able to get out of their ports, which he

¹⁴⁹ “Journal of the Continental Congress,” 22 December 1775, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 3, 207-208.

¹⁵⁰ “Public Advertiser, Monday, January 15, 1776,” 15 January 1776, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 3, 510.

¹⁵¹ “London Chronicle, Saturday, January 13 to Tuesday, January 16, 1776,” 15 January 1776, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 3, 510.

¹⁵² Clark, *George Washington's Navy*, 105-106.

¹⁵³ “George Washington to Colonel Joseph Reed,” 4 January 1776, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 3, 599.

also doubted. With this vast chasm seeming to stand between Washington and Hopkins, both Commanders in Chief, the question remained how it would be breached.

The answer came in the men themselves. Those who chose to stand as men and fight for the liberty they believed in did not care one iota about the politics and posturing happening between Hopkins and Washington. All they cared about was victory and serving their country with honor. Nothing embodies this more than the memory of Joshua Barney, a consummate sailor and merchantman, as he described his first experience with the Continental Navy and the pride he felt at being a part of it:

On my arrival at Baltimore I found the whole country had taken up arms against the Injustice of England, my heart soon caught the flame; there was then fitting out at Philadelphia a small Squadron of Vessels under Commodore Hopkins & orders had been given to fit out two small Vessels from Balt; one a sloop of ten guns called the *Hornet* commanded by Capt Wm Stone (a Bermudian by Birth) I immediately offered myself & was received as Master's Mate, a few days afterwards the American Flag was sent from Commodore Hopkins for our Sloop, early the next morning I put it on a staff, & with drums & fifes beat up for Volunteers & in one day engaged the crew for our Vessel, this was the first flag of the U States & the first time it was seen in the State of Maryland & which I had the honor of carrying.¹⁵⁴

The flag Barney spoke of was the Grand Union, the official flag of the Thirteen United Colonies until the Stars and Stripes was introduced in 1777.¹⁵⁵ The flag represented what most men had a hard time revealing. It evoked feelings of hope, unity, and perseverance. As long as the flag was hoisted and remained flying, it meant there were still men willing to fight.¹⁵⁶

The men chosen to join the Continental Navy needed to be men of adventurous spirit, strong in character, and patriotic, but still gentlemen. The idea of a gentleman came from the British but was adopted to fit the colonials' ideals of the Revolution. To them a gentleman was a

¹⁵⁴ "Autobiography of Joshua Barney," 23 October 1775 to 13 February 1776, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 3, 1263.

¹⁵⁵ "Autobiography of Joshua Barney, footnote 3," 23 October 1775 to 13 February 1776, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 3, 1263.

¹⁵⁶ "George Washington to the Continental Agents," 4 January 1776, *NDAR*, NHHC, Volume 3, 599.

man of honor, capable of both gentility and strength when called for, and a man who kept his word, no matter what it cost him, even if that resulted in the loss of his fortune or even his life.¹⁵⁷

One of the earliest recruitment advertisements for the Continental Navy was placed by First Lieutenant John Hancock in Danvers, Massachusetts in 1777. The ad was recruiting for the *Ranger* (an 18-gun ship), preparing to sail out of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. It addressed “All GENTLEMEN SEAMEN and able-bodied LANDSMEN who have a Mind to distinguish themselves in the GLORIOUS CAUSE of their Country, and make their Fortunes.”¹⁵⁸ They were invited to “take an agreeable Voyage, in this pleasant Season of the Year” on a ship that “in the Opinion of every Person who has seen her is looked upon to be one of the best Cruizers in America... will be always able to Fight her Guns under excellent Cover; and not Vessel yet built was ever calculated for sailing faster, and making good Weather.”¹⁵⁹ The wording of the advertisement is very telling for what kind of man the Continental Navy was looking for and the importance of attaining only those brand of men. Here they are in the midst of a war with the strongest Navy in the world. One would assume they would take whatever men came to volunteer.

That’s not what they asked for though. They wanted patriotic men who were willing to fight for glory and their country. That means they wanted men who believed in the cause and found it worthy enough to die for. They also wanted men who were not motivated by greed, but understood the importance of providing for their families. While they tempted men to “make their Fortunes,” they also promised that their wages, which were forty dollars for able-bodied

¹⁵⁷ Tom Cutterham, *Gentlemen Revolutionaries: Power and Justice in the New American Republic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 2.

¹⁵⁸ This advertisement has no real listing for its publication other than it is a broadside issued by the Continental Congress in 1777, sometime after March 29. “Great Encouragement for Seamen,” Ezekiel Russell, publisher, Boston, Massachusetts, 1777.

¹⁵⁹ “Great Encouragement for Seamen,” Ezekiel Russell, publisher, Boston, Massachusetts, 1777.

seamen and twenty dollars for ordinary seamen and landmen, would be advanced to them, “paid on their Appearance on Board...[and would] be deducted from their future Prize-Money.” While it was important to have men who were capable and willing to fight, they didn’t want men who were simply running away from home and abandoning their families. Having forty or even twenty dollars paid up front to care for your family in your absence was a boon at that time. It meant, if you died in service of the cause your family would have some money to get them through until they were able to reevaluate their finances and situation.

Ultimately, these sailors were the personification of the changing ideas of manhood and masculinity. As men who had lost their jobs and were struggling to provide for their families, were tired of feeling emasculated. They were tired of feeling weak. They were tired of being used. They needed an opportunity to use their skills and fight back against their oppressors. If they could prove their loyalty and independence while doing it, all the better. Some may argue that because of the rules and regulations forced on them by the Continental Naval Committee, the sailors were simply trading one form of oppression for another. However, there was a difference in involuntarily being oppressed by the laws and Acts of British Parliament, or being marked a traitor, weakling, or lazy, if you were not able or were unwilling to meet their demands. On the other hand they could choose to voluntarily follow rules meant to make you stronger, more focused, and capable of fulfilling your mission and creating a safer, more secure future for yourself and your family. These men were not motivated by money as the privateers were. These men were not motivated by status as those in the Army seeking promotion and recognition were. Victories at sea were won by ships (entire crews of men), not individuals who got off a few good shots. These men battled men, ships, land-based attacks from the British Army, the very seabed itself, and even mother nature and the ever changing and sometimes devastating weather.

There were fifty-seven ships acquired for the Continental Navy through the course of the Revolutionary War. Of those ships forty-one were either capture or destroyed¹⁶⁰ by the Royal Navy or horrible weather.¹⁶¹ They dared to take on the strongest navy in the world and, undoubtedly with a great deal of luck and help from allies, they managed to win. How were they rewarded? The navy was disbanded, what few ships remained were sold, and the seamen were sent home, many without the pay they were promised as the Continental Congress was broke. However, they earned their place in history and became heroes of songs sung in taverns and on the street. They were men to be emulated. Nothing shows this better than a poem/song published in honor of the Continental Navy.

A New Song (published April 19, 1776)

*The Watry God*¹⁶²

The watry God, great Neptune, lay
 In Dalliance soft and am'rous Play
 On Amphitritis Breast;
 When up he rear'd his hoary Head,
 The Tritons shrunk, the Nereids fled,
 And all their Fears confess.

II

Loud Thunder shook the vast Domain,
 The liquid World was wrapt in Flame,
 The God amazed spoke;
 "Go forth, ye Winds, and make it known

¹⁶⁰ I am not going to go into details about the various Naval battles of the Revolutionary War in my dissertation. I feel that there are several excellent books available of the subject. The point here is to discuss the need for a Continental Navy and the men who were recruited and to analyze why those particular men were chosen when there were so many other men fighting in other ways (Army and Privateers). Here the point is that they needed gentleman seamen to man the navy...a new breed of sailor and the very brand of American identity that will come into play in the ensuing chapters.

¹⁶¹ "Vessels of the Continental Navy," *Naval History and Heritage Command*, 23 August 2017.

<https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/v/vessels-of-the-continental-navy.html>

¹⁶² "Poetry." *Connecticut Gazette* (New London, Connecticut) XIII, no. 649, April 19, 1776: [4]. *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

<https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A1036CCAC76876960%40EANX-103BC129F86F9E4C%402369840-103BC12A5975F0B0%403-103BC12AFA67DC9E%40Poetry>

Who dares thus shake my coral Throne
And fill my Realms with Smoke.”

III

The Winds, obsequious at his Word,
Sprung strongly up t’obey their Lord,
And saw two Fleets away.
Hopkins commanded one brave Line,
The other Navy, Howe, was thine,
In Terror and Dismay.

IV

They view America’s bold Sons
Deal Death and Slaughter from their Guns,
And strike the dreadful Blow,
That made ill-fated British Slaves
Seek Life by flying o’er the Waves,
Or sink to Shades below.

V

Amaz’d they fly and tell their Chief,
That Howe is ruin’d past Relief,
And Hopkins conquering rode.
“Hopkins!” says Amphy, “Who is he,
That dares usurp this Pow’r at Sea,
And thus insult a God?”

VI

The Winds relpy, “In distant Land
A Congress sits, whose martial Bands
Defy all Britain’s Force.
And when their floating Castles roll
From Sea to Sea, from Pole to Pole,
Hopkins directs their Course.”

VII

“And when their winged Bullets fly
To reinstate fair Liberty,
Or scourge oppressive Bands,
Then gallant Hopkins, calmly great,
Tho’ Death and Carnage round him wait,
Performs their dread Commands.”

VIII

Neptune with vast Amazement hears,
How great this infant State appears,

What Feats their Heroes do;
Washington's Deeds and Putnam's Fame,
Join'd to great Lee's immortal Name,
And cries "Can this be true?"

IX

"A Congress! Sure they're Brother Gods
Who have such Heroes at their Nods
To govern Earth and Sea;
I yield my Trident and my Crown
A Tribute due to such Renown;
These Gods shall rule for me."

Chapter 2

Launching the U.S. Navy: The First War with the Barbary Powers

The year was 1804, and the United States was in a power struggle with Tripoli, one of the Barbary Powers that controlled most of the Mediterranean Sea. The Bey of Tripoli continuously attempted to pirate U.S. merchants, going so far as to capture their ships, confiscate and sell their cargo, and then ransom the crew back to the U.S. government. This had been going on for years and even though money had been paid, the piracy continued. The U.S. Navy was sent to the Mediterranean with a threefold mission: stop the piracy, protect the U.S. merchants, and most importantly, convince the world that the United States was a legitimate entity to either ally with or a force to be reckoned with.

Unfortunately, while there were some small successes, there were more major disasters. The burning of the *USS Philadelphia* can actually be classified as both. The *Philadelphia* had been captured and claimed as a prize by the Bey of Tripoli, and the crew was held captive for ransom in October 1803. The decision was made by the naval leaders stationed in the Mediterranean that the *Philadelphia* could not remain in the hands of the Tripolitans to be used against the other ships of the United States Navy. Lieutenant Stephen Decatur came up with a plan to save the ship, and Commodore Edward Preble approved the daring rescue.

On February 7, 1804, darkness loomed and a favorable gale allowed Decatur, twelve naval officers, and an additional forty-eight naval seamen, to sail the *Intrepid* into the harbor at Tripoli under the ruse of a British flag. Decatur explained to the men at the port that they were in need of assistance. He was told they could dock their ship for one night, make their repairs, then they would have to leave. As soon as the *Intrepid* docked alongside the *Philadelphia*, Decatur and fifty of the accompanying seamen boarded the captured ship and proceeded to attack the

Tripolitan guards in an effort to retake the ship and sail her out of the Harbor to the open sea where other Navy ships were waiting to assist them. However, the noise of the battle alerted the guards on shore that something was amiss, and the alarm was sounded. Understanding that there would be no possible way to save the *Philadelphia*, Decatur determined to burn to keep it from being turned into an enemy frigate.

As guns and cannons were being fired upon them, the naval seamen continued to fight and protect the *Intrepid*, while Decatur set the *Philadelphia* on fire. As he was setting fire to the ship, he was attacked by a Tripolitan guard with a saber. Decatur would have died, had one of his men, an ordinary seaman with no rank, not stepped in and taken the blow meant for Decatur. The seaman suffered a blow to the head from the saber, but miraculously survived. Decatur finally called retreat and escaped from the *Philadelphia*, with the fire blazing clear up to the “riggings and tops.” They were able to sail out of the harbor with no further issues to make their escape back to the protection of the squadron waiting a few miles away.

When U.S. Navy burned the *Philadelphia* it was deemed a resounding success as the ship remained free from the hands of the enemy and no lives were lost. In fact, the only injury sustained by any of the naval seaman was to the young man who had bravely saved Decatur’s life. However, the Americans needed to ask the question, was the mission really a success if the end result was the burning of one of their own naval frigates by one of their own naval officers. Some would say, yes. Others would resoundingly disagree! Whether a success or a failure, the burning of the *Philadelphia* was an example of the struggles the United States Navy faced as they attempted to launch themselves as one of the key forces in U.S. military. Regardless of these struggles and the failures and successes they faced, the naval seamen and officers of the U.S. Navy used this time to begin to define the new ideals of American manhood and

masculinity as well as introducing a new American identity. They were standing as examples of who and what America was going to be on a global scale, and it was the Barbary Wars that began to truly solidify that image.

Historiography of the Barbary Wars

The Barbary Wars have been of great interest to historians for one main purpose: they represented the beginning of the United States Navy. Most histories of the war focus on the men that played a prominent role, such as Edward Preble, Stephen Decatur, Richard Dale, and William Bainbridge. Others focus on the ships, such as the *USS Constitution*, *Congress*, or the *Philadelphia*. It wasn't until the early twenty-first century when the history of the Barbary Wars peaked as the government tried to make sense of the growing unrest in the Middle East and America's possible role in managing it.

One of the first attempts at creating a complete, comprehensive, and chronological history of the Barbary Wars was written in 1905 by Gardner Allen. His book, *Our Navy and Barbary Corsairs*, offered a comprehensive history beginning with the capture of the *Dolphin* and ending with the final peace treaty signed in 1816. His book is a comprehensive, chronological who's who within the United States and the Barbary Powers and focuses solely on the events that transpired in an attempt to free the American captives being held there. Rather than looking at the diplomacy of the interactions, Allen simply related the events as they took place, with no regard to further relations with the people in the Middle East.¹⁶³

After WWI, the government realized what Woodrow Wilson realized when he asked Congress to allow him to get involved in the conflict – namely that the world was becoming ever more connected and America, whose commerce and economy relied heavily on trade with other

¹⁶³ Gardner Weld Allen, *Our Navy and the Barbary Corsairs* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1905).

nations, needed to have some sort of presence in the outcome of a world war, even though they still wanted to remain mostly in isolation in regards to their own policies.¹⁶⁴ Understanding this, the government finally came to realize what Theodore Roosevelt had been touting for years; the United States needed to strengthen their navy if they wanted to ensure their security in the world.¹⁶⁵ President Franklin Delano Roosevelt authorized, and Congress approved the funding, of the first compilation of naval documents in an effort that historians might finally have the resources to understand how America not only survived but thrived in the Early Republic when it seemed they were constantly at war with one entity or another. He stated in the foreword to the series:

The many-sided lessons locked up in old navy manuscripts are well worthy of public attention. Our early naval and maritime history is closely associated with the country's pioneer settlement and expansion, with the winning of its independence and with its subsequent security in very precarious times...Our exasperating experiences with the Barbary States of northern Africa, continuing for a generation after the United States had won its independence, constitute an interesting chapter of American history and one from which we may derive permanently valuable lessons. Heretofore a proper understanding and interpretation of those intricate events has been clouded by the dispersion and inaccessibility of documentary source material. It is the aim of the present work to remedy this deficiency: more especially in the naval aspects of case, but also with due regard for the interwoven political, economic, and diplomatic relationships...In all of this long period of disturbed foreign relations the naval aspect was of great prominence and was closely associated with matters of diplomacy, neutrality, international law, freedom of the seas, economics, and international politics. The documents of the period, therefore, have a broader interest and value than merely naval, and their publication obviously amounts to an important contribution to the general history of the Nation.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ For more information on Wilson's ideas see Woodrow Wilson, "President Wilson's Message to Congress." January 8, 1918. *Records of the United States Senate*; Record Group 46; Records of the United States Senate; National Archives. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/president-woodrow-wilsons-14-points#transcript> and Thomas J. Knock, *To End all Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992).

¹⁶⁵ Please see Roosevelt's speech from April 2, 1903, that was quoted in the preface. Also see Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812*.

¹⁶⁶ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, preface to *Naval Documents of the Related to the Wars with the Barbary Powers (NDBW)*, Volume 1, iii.

The project to gather and publish the documents for both the Quasi-War with France and the Barbary Wars took ten years, from 1934 to 1944 and comprised thirteen volumes. Historians were finally able to begin looking at more of the political side of the Barbary Wars rather than the events and people involved.

Unfortunately, Roosevelt's ambitions for the results of the project were unrealized until much later after the turn of the century. The Barbary War continued to be written about sporadically, but they were just more of the same stories of the men, ships, and actions. The lessons to be learned from the Barbary Wars remained a neglected part of American history.

After the unrest of the Persian Gulf War, Desert Storm, and the catastrophe of September 11, 2001, historians finally turned their attention to fulfilling Roosevelt's wish and writing about the early diplomacy and foreign policies with the Middle Eastern states.¹⁶⁷ These books have proved most useful in understanding the early efforts to negotiate with the Barbary Powers and have given people a deeper understanding of the complicated relationship not only between Middle Eastern States, but also of where the United States has historically fit in those relationships.

This dissertation does not fully fit into either category of writings, but instead covers a little bit of both. In this chapter, the Barbary Wars are presented more in a way that highlights some of the actions and diplomatic endeavors of the early United States Navy, but they are analyzed through a social history viewpoint. Rather than studying the men and situations based on their heroics and their victories, this chapter looks at the role those men played in

¹⁶⁷ These books include, Joshua London, *Victory in Tripoli: How America's War with the Barbary Pirates Established the U.S. Navy and Shaped a Nation* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2005); Joseph Wheelan, *Jefferson's War: America's First War on Terror 1801-1805* (New York, NY: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2003); Frank Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2005); Richard Bordeaux Parker *Uncle Sam in Barbary: A Diplomatic History* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008); and Richard Zacks, *The Pirate Coast: Thomas Jefferson, the First Marines, and the Secret Mission of 1805* (New York, NY: Hyperion, 2005).

exemplifying the new American man and creating a reputation of gentleman sailors that were not only capable of protecting their own merchants, but willing to put their lives on the line to assist others, and show the Atlantic World that America was a worthy addition to their trade agreements, even without the support of Great Britain.

The Debate for a Navy

Before discussing the Barbary Wars and the role of the U.S. Navy in America's first attempt at diplomacy and foreign policy, it is important to understand why it took so long for Congress to approve a navy in the first place. Having just fought the American Revolution and declared their independence from British rule, the Americans struggled to develop a strategy to secure their independence. Naval strategies were especially difficult. The Continental Navy had been disbanded, the ships decommissioned, and the sailors retired or reassigned to government positions or given Army Commissions. As a war between Britain and France once again loomed on the horizon in the late eighteenth century, the United States issued an order of neutrality insisting that they would not take sides and declared their right to trade commodities with either side. Unfortunately, neither side accepted the statement of neutrality and continued to harass and detain U.S. merchant ships throughout the Atlantic.

There was a semi-unanimous agreement between the leading political parties of the time that if they were going to operate on a global scale, the United States needed at least a small navy to protect their merchants and interests in foreign waters and ports.¹⁶⁸ This became especially true in the Mediterranean. However, the newly formed United States was undergoing a great deal

¹⁶⁸ For more information on this see: Ian Toll, *Six Frigates: The Epic History of the Founding of the U.S. Navy* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006); A. B. C. Whipple, *To the Shores of Tripoli: The Birth of the U.S. Navy and Marines* (New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, 1991); and London, *Victory in Tripoli*.

of turmoil, disunity and near collapse during the era – especially regarding the topic of a permanent standing federal military force. The agreement to form a navy was not easily attained.

After the Revolutionary War, there was much conflict between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists/Democratic-Republicans, mostly relating back to the power of the federal government. The Federalists supported a strong central government, while the Democratic-Republicans favored more power staying with the individual state governments. This is a fairly simplistic description of the situation as the various issues were heatedly debated throughout the Constitutional Convention and during the following months as states decided whether or not to ratify the constitution. The debate regarding a standing military, especially concerning the necessity of a navy, continued long after the Constitution was ratified and instituted.

For their part, the Federalists understood and supported the need for a navy to ensure global commerce was to become a big part of the United States economy. Always one of the most outspoken members of the Federalist party, Alexander Hamilton dedicated one of the essays of what would later be called the Federalist Papers, to the issue. In Federalist Paper #11, *The Utility of the Union in Respect to Commercial Relations and a Navy*, Hamilton issued a warning to his readers that now that the United States had garnered its freedom, the various European powers that still held colonies in the Americas would seek to curtail the maritime activities and power of the United States:

Those of them which have colonies in America look forward to what this country is capable of becoming with painful solicitude. They foresee the dangers that may threaten their American dominions from the neighborhood of States, which have all the dispositions and would possess all the means requisite to the creation of a powerful marine. Impressions of this kind will naturally indicate the policy of fostering divisions among us and of depriving us, as far as possible, of an ACTIVE COMMERCE in our own bottoms. This would answer the threefold purpose of preventing our interference in their navigation, of monopolizing the

profits of our trade, and of clipping the wings by which we might soar to a dangerous greatness.¹⁶⁹

What Hamilton meant by a “dangerous greatness” that other countries would fear, was the power the United States could wield in terms of commerce. Under British rule, the colonies were highly productive and supplied both agricultural and manufactured goods to both European nations as well as to the West Indies. Without the restraints impressed upon them by Britain’s Navigation Acts and economic policy of mercantilism, America could enter into new trade agreements and commerce treaties, and ultimately, to the detriment of other nations, exclude those nations they chose not to trade with. This exclusion was the power Hamilton alluded to as becoming a “dangerous greatness” that put U.S. merchants in jeopardy and the reason a navy would be necessary. It is important to note that Hamilton did not advocate for a large navy, but rather “a navy which, if it could not vie with those great maritime powers, would at least be of respectable weight if thrown into the scale of either of two contending parties.”¹⁷⁰ He advised that if the United States had a small navy capable of intervening in foreign affairs, it would give them power to add military force to one side, resulting in “a situation so favorable [it] would enable us to bargain with great advantage for commercial privileges. A price would be set not only upon our friendship, but upon our neutrality. By a steady adherence to the Union, we may hope, ere long, to become the arbiter of Europe in America, and to be able to incline the balance of European competitions in this part of the world as our interest may dictate.”¹⁷¹

Hamilton went on to detail the dangers of withholding a navy as part of the nation’s defense, claiming that without a navy, the European nations could and would prey upon U.S.

¹⁶⁹ Alexander Hamilton, Federalist Paper #11, *The Federalist Papers: Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay*, (Penguin Group: New York, NY, 1961), Clinton Rossiter, ed., 80.

¹⁷⁰ Hamilton, *Federalist Papers*, 81.

¹⁷¹ Hamilton, *Federalist Papers*, 82.

merchants and steal their products. “The rights of neutrality,” he stated, “will only be respected when they are defended by an adequate power. A nation, despicable by its weakness, forfeits even the privilege of being neutral.”¹⁷² Ultimately, the argument of the Federalists was that a standing navy was necessary to operate on a global scale and compete with the major European powers who were already established throughout the world. This conception would become increasingly clear in the ensuing years.

On the other side of the debate, the Democratic-Republicans, led by James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, were staunchly against the creation of a standing military, especially a navy. They firmly believed that the defense of the nation belonged strictly to the state militias. In the event of a foreign blockade or water invasion along the coasts, they believed the merchants should be required to band together to protect their interests. Should the state militias and merchants fail to gain an advantage over the enemy and be in danger of failing, then, and only then, should the weak federal government call forth a temporary army or navy to assist. Their fears of a standing military were best expressed by the author known as “Brutus,” whom historians now believe was actually New York judge, Robert Yates.¹⁷³ In a letter printed in the *New York Journal* on October 17, 1787, addressed to the Citizens of the State of New York, he warned, “In despotic governments...standing armies are kept up to execute the commands of the prince or the magistrate, and are employed for this purpose when occasion requires. But they have always proved the destruction of liberty and are abhorrent to the spirit of a free republic...A free republic will never keep a standing army to execute its laws. It must depend upon the

¹⁷² Hamilton, *Federalist Papers*, 82.

¹⁷³ Several sites state this assumption including the Historical Society of NY Courts https://history.nycourts.gov/about_period/antifederalist-papers/ or <https://history.nycourts.gov/figure/robert-yates/> and the National Archives. <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/founding-fathers-new-york#toc-robert-yates-new-york>

support of its citizens.”¹⁷⁴ While the Federalists were concerned with maintaining a freedom from foreign entities and securing a global presence, the Democratic-Republicans were more concerned with maintaining freedoms at home from a domineering and autocratic federal government. They were much more concerned, it seemed, with the idea of trouble brewing from within the United States, than with any sort of aggression coming from without the borders.

The Democratic-Republicans’ fear stemmed from the idea that a standing military would have the power to overthrow the federal government in a coup d’état. A seizure of power, they believed, would effectively kill the new nation and severely limit the liberties of the people. “The evil to be feared from a large standing army,” Brutus argued in a letter dated January 24, 1788, “does not arise solely from the apprehension, that the rulers may employ them for the purpose of promoting their own ambitious views, but that equal, and perhaps greater danger, is to be apprehended from their [the military] overturning the constitutional powers of the government, and assuming the power to dictate any form they please.”¹⁷⁵ He went on to explain that while the army of the Revolution was a great and “patriotic army,”¹⁷⁶ the only reason they were not a danger to the nation at large was because General George Washington was “a patriot as well as a general” and that the majority of those who served under him “had not abandoned the character of citizens by assuming that of soldiers.”¹⁷⁷ Brutus further admonished the people that it would be asking for trouble to believe that a standing military would ever give up its power if asked to by the federal government. He argued that the legislature should have the power to raise an army

¹⁷⁴ Ralph Ketcham, ed., *The Anti-Federalist Papers and the Constitutional Convention Debates: The Clashes and Compromises that gave Birth to Our Government* (Penguin Books: New York, NY, 1986), 291.

¹⁷⁵ Ketcham, *Anti-Federalist Papers*, 304.

¹⁷⁶ Ketcham, *Anti-Federalist Papers*, 303.

¹⁷⁷ Ketcham, *Anti-Federalist Papers*, 303-304.

and navy if the need arose, but not to keep a permanent military presence with the foundation of the United States government.

Patrick Henry, an avid supporter of the Democratic-Republicans, in a very outspoken speech in Petersburg, Virginia on June 5, 1788, further argued the case specifically against Hamilton's assertion that a standing navy was necessary to protect the reputation of the United States from a global standpoint. While Hamilton had argued that without a navy, merchants would become prey, and the U.S. would be seen as weak for their inability to protect its foreign commerce, Henry asserted the opposite. "The Honorable Gentleman," Henry argued referring specifically to Hamilton, "went on to the figure we make with foreign nations; the contemptible one we make in France and Holland; which...he attributes to the present feeble Government. An opinion has gone forth, we find, that we are a contemptible people: The time has been when we were thought otherwise: Under this same despised Government, we commanded the respect of all Europe: Wherefore are we now reckoned otherwise?"¹⁷⁸ According to Henry, there was no need to change neither the current form of a government composed of a confederation of states, nor the necessity of a standing military during times of peace just to gain a reputation among other nations. The debate surrounding the necessity of a standing military continued far past the ratification of the Constitution on June 21, 1788.

On June 3, 1784, the United States Army was officially established as the first branch of a standing military in the United States. However, there are many discrepancies in understanding why it took so long to establish the United States Navy. The Constitution itself reads that Congress has the power to "provide and *maintain* a navy,"¹⁷⁹ while it only has the power to

¹⁷⁸ Ketcham, *Anti-Federalist Papers*, 209.

¹⁷⁹ United States Constitution, Article I, Section 8, Clause 13. Emphasis has been added to the word "maintain" that does not appear in the original document. <https://constitutioncenter.org/media/files/constitution.pdf>

“raise and support Armies,” but not for a period longer than two years.¹⁸⁰ The direct implication of the difference in wording here between “maintain” and “raise and support...for two years,” shows that the state delegates at the Constitutional Convention were far less worried about a permanent navy than they were about a permanent army. One of the main reasons for this was because, they were mostly thinking in terms of freedom and liberty and not economics. They were more concerned about what was going to happen on American shores than they were about what might happen on the seas. I believe this was because they did not fully realize the implications of not having the support of the Royal Navy in their commerce.

In Federalist Paper #41, while defending the Constitution and arguing in favor of its ratification, James Madison wrote about the call for a navy:

The palpable necessity of the power to provide and maintain a navy has protected that part of the Constitution against a spirit of censure, which has spared few other parts. It must, indeed, be numbered among the greatest blessings of America, that as her Union will be the only source of her maritime strength, so this will be a principal source of her security against danger from abroad. The batteries most capable of repelling foreign enterprises on our safety [namely the navy], are happily such as can never be turned by a perfidious government against our liberties. The inhabitants of the Atlantic frontier are all of them deeply interested in this provision for naval protection, and if they have hitherto been suffered to sleep quietly in their beds; if their property has remained safe against the predatory spirit of licentious adventurers; if their maritime towns have not yet been compelled to ransom themselves from the terrors of a conflagration, by yielding to the exactions of daring and sudden invaders, these instances of good fortune are not to be ascribed to the capacity of the existing government for the protection of those from whom it claims allegiance, but to causes that are fugitive and fallacious...The great emporium of its commerce, the great reservoir of its wealth, lies every moment at the mercy of events, and may almost be regarded as a hostage for ignominious compliances with the dictates of a foreign enemy, or even with the rapacious demands of pirates and barbarians. Should a war be the result of the precarious situation of European affairs, and all the unruly passions attending it be let loose on the ocean, our escape from insults and depredations, not only on that element, but every part of the other bordering on it, will be truly miraculous.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ United States Constitution, Article I, Section 8, Clause 12.

¹⁸¹ James Madison, Federalist Paper #41, *Library of Congress*. <https://guides.loc.gov/federalist-papers/text-41-50>

Madison believed that the real dangers to the United States would not come in the form of a coup d'état designed to limit the personal freedoms and liberties of the people, but rather from other nations whether through direct attacks on trade and commerce or through indirect complications arising from situations happening in other parts of the world. He understood that the United States was deeply dependent on foreign trade. Nearly all goods were imported as was much of the food. Raw materials were the chief source of exports. As an example, "by the mid-1780s, 100 ships and 1,200 American sailors carried 20,000 tons of sugar, flour, rice, salted fish, and lumber to ports in the Mediterranean each year," alone, and returned with "cargoes of wine, lemons, oranges, figs, opium, and olive oil."¹⁸² Madison believed that the only way to truly harm the United States was to hamper their ability to trade.¹⁸³

One of the main problems with this way of thinking was that not everyone had equal relations with the import/export maritime economy, nor would they benefit equally from a new naval force. In New England, for example, the maritime economy was mostly imports, while in the southern states the economy revolved most heavily in favor of exports. That meant that the southern states were less worried about their economy being derailed by outside forces as they knew other nations needed the commodities they were supplying. Conversely, those living in New England were more concerned about the lack of imports a possible port siege or blockade could cause. Furthermore, creating a navy would increase revenues in the New England states as they had the ship building knowledge, shipyards, and lumber necessary to build the required ships, whereas the south had very limited resources the navy would need, except for when it

¹⁸² Toll, *Six Frigates*, 24.

¹⁸³ I would like to note here that this is a statement from a very specific context and moment in time. James Madison, while seeming to agree with Alexander Hamilton in this instance, actually had very few common ideas. Also, while Madison makes this argument in this particular paper, the use of it here in no way is meant to show that he would always believe this way or make these assertions. Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge that I, personally, understand that American history has proven on more than one occasion the error in Madison's argument regarding the dangers from within its own borders.

came to supplying men to fill the naval ranks. To really understand how the United States navy was finally approved and launched each of these ideas, protecting Americans, building ships, and producing sailors, need to be considered separately.

Protecting Merchants and the Economy

A major contributing factor to creating a permanent navy was the fact that the standing army could do nothing to protect U.S. merchants throughout the world, especially in the Mediterranean where pirates attacked trading vessels without prejudice. These pirates worked under the orders of the various Barbary States – a group of loosely connected independent kingdoms along the north-African shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The most influential, and ultimately problematic for merchants, were Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. Their pirates would attack merchants from any nation they deemed weaker than themselves. A few nations, like Portugal and Spain, signed treaties with the pirates to protect their merchants. Some, like the U.S., tried to fight back. Most were unsuccessful in taming the scourge of pirates tyrannizing the Mediterranean Sea. To protect their own merchants and minimize disruptions to their trade economies, many nations simply paid the necessary tributes that would allow their ships to traverse the Mediterranean unmolested.¹⁸⁴

After the Revolutionary War, the British made it known that the Americans were no longer under their protection. As Ian Toll puts it, “the wolves were hungry; the sheep were fat, numerous, and slow; and there was no shepherd in sight.”¹⁸⁵ Seeing the United States as a weak nation with little to no power to stop them, the Barbary Powers sought to target U.S. merchant

¹⁸⁴ It was a common habit of the Barbary Powers to insist on tributes being paid annually to maintain a treaty. This will be discussed more in Chapter 5 when it comes time for Algiers to renegotiate a treaty with the United States. For more information on this see: Toll, *Six Frigates*; Whipple, *To the Shores of Tripoli*; and London, *Victory in Tripoli*.

¹⁸⁵ Toll, *Six Frigates*, 25.

ships for their cargos and crews which were used in forced labor camps until a ransom was paid or they were sold as slaves.¹⁸⁶ The U.S. relied heavily on foreign powers, mostly Holland, France, and Portugal, to act on their behalf to protect U.S. merchant ships as they had no navy to protect themselves.¹⁸⁷ However, as the Barbary Powers grew and gained control of the Mediterranean waters, many of these foreign powers, in an effort to protect their own merchant ships, signed treaties that stated they would not intervene on behalf of the United States.

The situation in the Mediterranean became a national issue on July 25, 1785 when Algerian corsairs captured the American merchant ship *Maria* and when again, five days later on July 30, they captured the American merchant ship *Dauphin*. Along with the cargos, twenty-one Americans were taken prisoner. An envoy was sent to Algiers to attempt a peace treaty to stop the assault on U.S. merchant ships and to free the captives. The envoy offered \$200 per person. The Dey of Algiers demanded a total of \$59,496 for all twenty-one men (about \$2,800 per person).¹⁸⁸ Opposed to paying the money, Thomas Jefferson, then Secretary of State, advised President George Washington:

But, should it be thought better to repress force, by force, another expedient for their liberation may perhaps offer. Captures made on the enemy, may perhaps put us in possession of some of their mariners, and exchange be substituted for ransom. It is not indeed a fixed usage with them to exchange prisoners. It is rather their custom to refuse it. However, such exchanges are sometimes effected, by allowing them more or less of advantage...Exchange, too, will be more practicable, in our case, as our captives have not been sold to private individuals, but are retained at the hand of the government. The liberation of our captives, has an intimate connection with the liberation of our commerce in the Mediterranean. The distresses of both proceed from the same cause, and the measures which shall

¹⁸⁶ For information on this see Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth*.

¹⁸⁷ Michael J. Crawford and Christine F Hughes, "The Reestablishment of the Navy, 1787-1801: Historical Overview and Select Bibliography, *NHHC*.
<https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/research/library/bibliographies/reestablishment-navy-1787-1801.html#need>

¹⁸⁸ Goldsborough, *The United States Naval Chronicles*, 38. This information comes from a letter addressed to President George Washington from Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson dated December 28, 1790.

be adopted for the relief of the one, may, very probably, involve the relief of the other.¹⁸⁹

Jefferson wanted to fight back and find a way to take some of the Algerian corsairs prisoner to use as bargaining chips to free the American prisoners. However, President Washington did not heed Secretary Jefferson's advice, and continued to send men in to negotiate the release of the prisoners. After several years of attempts to negotiate their release through foreign dignitaries, on May 8, 1792, President Washington asked the Senate to approve \$40,000 for thirteen prisoners (seven had died and one had been ransomed by his friends with private funds) as well as \$25,000 to be paid every year for peace and a cessation of hostilities against American merchants. Congress agreed and the funds were gathered.¹⁹⁰ However, on December 25, 1793, Colonel David Humphreys, who had been charged with transporting the requisite funds to Algiers and freeing the American captives wrote a letter to Secretary Jefferson explaining the Dey of Algiers would listen to no terms whatsoever. According to Humphreys the Dey had told him, "If I were to make peace with everybody, what should I do with my corsairs? What should I do with my soldiers? They would take off my head, for the want of other prizes, not being able to live upon their miserable allowance."¹⁹¹ Colonel Humphreys further stated that since their last communication, and over the seven years the negotiations had been taking place, the corsairs had captured another ten American vessels and currently held one hundred twelve Americans captive. Colonel Humphreys, in his frustration, wrote to Jefferson:

It appears absurd to trust to the fleets of Portugal, or any other nation, to protect and convoy our trade. If we mean to have a commerce, we must have a naval force to defend it...I see no alternative, but for the United States, with all possible speed, to fit out ten sail of forty-gun frigates, six brigs of war of eighteen guns each, and four schooners of sixteen guns each. These to be the fastest sailing vessels ever built in America, well appointed, and manned; and to proceed

¹⁸⁹ Goldsborough, *Naval Chronicles*, 41.

¹⁹⁰ Goldsborough, *Naval Chronicles*, 46.

¹⁹¹ Goldsborough, *Naval Chronicles*, 50.

towards Gibraltar, Algeria and Mahon; there to rendezvous, and to carry on a vigilant offensive cruising. They will give more security to our commerce than all the marine of Portugal did. And depend sir, that if this plan is not adopted speedily, the corsairs of Algiers and Tunis will remain masters of the western ocean. They will cruise in the channel of the western islands and be tempted to go on to the coasts of the United States. Then sir, what will be the consequences?¹⁹²

It was in great part Humphreys' letter that prompted Congress, regardless of their demographic, economic, or regional affiliations, to finally exercise their power to "provide and maintain a navy" based specifically "on account of the depredations committed by Algerian corsairs."¹⁹³ The Act to Provide a Naval Armament issued on March 27, 1794, finally allowed President Washington to reestablish the United States Navy. Congress had finally come to realize that both New England and the southern states were being impacted in their trade because of the actions of the Barbary Powers, and unless something drastic changed, the situation looked to continue as it was and quite possibly spread to other parts of the Atlantic World.

The Naval Act expressly allowed for four 44-gun ships and two 36-gun ships to be either bought or built. President Washington, in an effort to ensure that they had the best ships possible for their navy, opted to have all six ships built from scratch. However, he remained hopeful that a peace treaty could be made while the ships were being built. Regardless, designing and constructing the frigates commenced almost immediately. Herein, is where the issue of who benefits most from the creation of a navy really comes to light.

Building the Frigates

Congress had approved six ships for the reestablishment of the United States Navy. At the time of their construction there was no Department of the Navy, so the building of the ships fell under the responsibility of the Secretary of War, Henry Knox. It was Knox who suggested to

¹⁹² Goldsborough, *Naval Chronicles*, 51.

¹⁹³ Clark, *Naval History*, 93.

Washington that it would be better to build the ships from the hull up, rather than convert merchant ships into men-of-war. Fresh construction would allow the ships to be designed better than any vessel currently serving in any of the European navies.¹⁹⁴ Congress and Washington did not want their navy to be as good as any other navy, but rather better than any navy in the world. Having the federal capital based in Philadelphia at the time proved fortunate for the overwhelmed and struggling Knox, who had no real knowledge of ships or shipbuilding. Home to the largest shipbuilding community in the United States, Philadelphia offered Knox some of the most respected ship architects and builders in the country. He consulted them at length and finally decided to trust the majority of the architecture and plans to Joshua Humphreys.

Humphreys proposed the building of a frigate that caused a great deal of concern among the more conservative shipbuilders of the time. His proposed vessels would be “exceptionally large, heavily armed, fast-sailing frigates.”¹⁹⁵ They would be better equipped to either run or fight than any of the naval ships of any European navy. The key was that the U.S. Navy ships would have a choice in which they wanted to do, whereas other vessels had little choice; they were either built to fight as most naval man-of-war ships were, or they were built to run, as most merchant ships were. In response to the criticism of his design being so different from any other European vessel, Humphreys declared, “It is determined of importance to this country to take the lead in a class of ships not in use in Europe, which would be the only means of making our little navy of any importance. It would oblige other powers to follow us intact, instead of our following them....It will in some degree give us the lead in naval affairs.”¹⁹⁶ Knox agreed and

¹⁹⁴ Michael J. Crawford and Christine F Hughes, “The Reestablishment of the Navy, 1787-1801: Historical Overview and Select Bibliography, *NHHC*.
<https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/research/library/bibliographies/reestablishment-navy-1787-1801.html#need>

¹⁹⁵ Toll, *Six Frigates*, 49.

¹⁹⁶ Toll, *Six Frigates*, 53.

forwarded the plans to Washington who quickly approved them and initiated the actual construction.

The construction of the ships sparked further debate about who would ultimately benefit from the construction of a navy. Both New England and the southern states eventually agreed that it was important to have a navy to defend their foreign economic interests. Now the question was raised, whose domestic economy would benefit more from building the naval ships. There was no doubt that New England had the better forest reserves for ship building – it was why they held the largest number of shipbuilding companies in the country. It would have been simple to hire the best shipbuilder, have them build the ships one at a time, using the supplies at hand, in one area. The crews would learn as they went, work out the bugs in the construction of the first ship, and speedily complete the other five. However, Washington determined that no one city or area should benefit more than another and decided that the ships would be constructed in six different cities, based on what areas would most provide for and benefit from a permanent naval force – Portsmouth, New Hampshire; Boston, Massachusetts; New York, New York; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Baltimore, Maryland; and Norfolk, Virginia.¹⁹⁷

To further complicate matters, it was determined that in order to make the ships last longer, they were to be constructed out of very specific wood. Humphreys' plans deemed the beams and decks would only be made from Carolina Pine; the planks would come only from red cedar; and, most importantly, the frame pieces would need to be built from live oak. Most of this wood did not come from the vast shipbuilding lumber found in the north, but rather the rare woods of the south. The live oak, for instance, could only be found “in the southeastern United States, and only in a twenty-mile-wide coastal zone stretching from southern Virginia to East

¹⁹⁷ Toll, *Six Frigates*, 55.

Texas...its extraordinary tensile strength and its resistance to both salt air and rot made it ideal for the key load-bearing sections of a ship's frame."¹⁹⁸ This caused a lot of contention and grumbling as northern lumber companies felt shorted by the emphasis on southern supplies. However, it was pointed out that four of the chosen sites were in New England ports.

The most controversial aspect regarding the building of the frigates came from Knox himself, and was done on purpose. In an effort to ensure that the ships were built quickly, and as close to Humphreys' specifications as they could be, Knox told the builders that their performance was being judged and would be used by the War Office in "ascertaining where similar work may in future be done to most advantage...and the place where the business shall be best performed may derive permanent and great benefits."¹⁹⁹ By placing the ports in competition with each other it ensured that each company would be looking out for themselves and not working to guarantee the quality of the actual ships. If problems were encountered and overcome, they wouldn't be shared with the others. Bribes would be paid in exchange for getting the best supplies first and fastest. The competitive nature of this new venture of naval shipbuilding was turning out to be a divisive enterprise, instead of the harmonious one Washington had envisioned where everyone benefited equally.

In addition to these complications, several issues arose that delayed the construction of the ships. First, having the ships being built in different ports delayed communications during a time when it would take weeks to receive letters. Second, having each ship built by different builders and managed by different agents, resulted in errors being duplicated and inconsistencies in following the blueprints. Third, the harvesting of the live oak was a long and slow process as the size and location of the trees made it difficult to produce and transport to the various ports

¹⁹⁸ Toll, *Six Frigates*, 58-59.

¹⁹⁹ Toll, *Six Frigates*, 55.

fast enough. In fact, the some of the trees necessary to building to Humphreys specifications were found in the uninhabited coastal islands of Georgia. Finally, weather became a problem as supply delays caused construction delays during the freezing, icy, northern winters and during hurricane season and the blistering hot, humid, southern summers.

As construction of the frigates progressed slowly, President Washington's hope for a peace treaty was finally realized in 1795. The terms stated that in exchange for allowing U.S. merchants to trade in the Mediterranean without harassment from any of the Barbary powers, the U.S. would pay \$25,000 upfront and agree to pay an additional \$21,600 annually to continue the treaty. In actuality, after all the transportation fees, ransom payments for all one hundred twelve citizens, and extra gifts to extend the Dey's patience while communications were sent across the Atlantic and the U.S. government was getting the funds together, the treaty ended up costing almost \$1 million upfront.²⁰⁰

The treaty prompted Congress to halt the construction on the six frigates, but President Washington convinced them that the ships were nearly completed, and they would be useful to have in reserve if they were needed. The conflict over whether or not to have a standing navy once again became a hot topic. Those in favor of continuing the construction of the six frigates and reestablishing a permanent navy argued that the treaty with Algiers had not been definitively settled, and that "our flag had been repeatedly insulted by the belligerent cruizers, particularly those of Great Britain and France; that our neutrality had not been respected; that even within our territorial jurisdiction, we had not escaped the most insulting treatment; that hundreds of our ships had been seized, stripped of their crews, carried into foreign ports, some condemned, others vexatiously detained, to the loss and utter ruin of their owners; that thousands of our mariners

²⁰⁰ Goldsborough, *Naval Chronicles*, 59; 64-65.

had been imprisoned and cruelly treated.”²⁰¹ On the other hand, those opposed to the creation of a naval force argued that negotiations were underway to provide reparations to those who lost cargoes to spoilation due to a seizure of their vessel; that the United States was not in a position to incur the cost of a standing navy; that merchants should protect themselves; and, most importantly to them, that “in the hands of an ambitious man, armies and navies, instead of affording security and protection, might put our liberties in jeopardy.”²⁰² A compromise between the two sides was effected and it was decided that three ships would be completed and outfitted, but the rest were suspended, and the supplies were to be sold. The *USS United States* was launched out of Philadelphia on May 10, 1797; the *USS Constellation* at Baltimore on September 7, 1797; and the *USS Constitution* at Boston on October 21, 1797.

It would not be long before Congress realized they had made a mistake in attempting to reduce the size of the already small navy. In their attempt to express their displeasure with the United States for defaulting on their war debts, the French Navy, in 1796, began seizing any and all American vessels they crossed paths with in the Atlantic. In 1798, in what would become known as the XYZ Affair, France attempted to blackmail the United States to reestablish relations between the two nations. Outraged, Congress officially appointed a Department of the Navy on April 30, 1798, and authorized them to take control of the situation by allowing the U.S. Navy to grow.

Congress resolved that the President could continue the work on the other original three frigates that had never been launched, while also having twelve more vessels, with not more than 22 guns each, built or bought for the naval force.²⁰³ On July 16, 1798, Congress approved an

²⁰¹ Goldsborough, *Naval Chronicles*, 61.

²⁰² Goldsborough, *Naval Chronicles*, 61.

²⁰³ Clark, *Naval History*, 96.

additional three vessels of not less than 32 guns each.²⁰⁴ Tensions between the United States and France continued to rise and on February 25, 1799, Congress authorized the construction of six 74-gun ships and six 18-gun ships.²⁰⁵ From 1798 to 1800, the navy grew to include 700 officers and nearly 5,000 able bodied seaman.²⁰⁶ Their commissions required their service for one year, unless they were at sea, in which case their commission was extended until they reached a U.S. port, at which point the seamen had to decide if they wanted to reenlist or retire. These men became not only the eyes and ears of the United States government in foreign ports, but also their mouthpiece. It was imperative, therefore, that the men who were selected for naval service embody the values and attributes the new United States wanted to be recognized for on a global scale. However, the question remained where the men were going to come from to fill the ranks of those ships.

Filling the Ranks – The First Naval Seamen

While a small victory had been won in establishing a navy, there was still a long way to go to get the navy believed capable of protecting the interests of the United States. It became obvious in a letter to Congress on April 16, 1794, that President Washington did not actually believe it was necessarily the number of guns or frigates that would ensure the navy was a success, but the men appointed to lead it. He knew that “good officers and bad ships would make a much better navy than good ships and bad officers.”²⁰⁷ Washington was constantly bombarded with requests from people to give an appointment to their son, brother, nephew, grandson, or good friend. Right before he retired his presidency, on December 7, 1796, he explained exactly

²⁰⁴ Clark, *Naval History*, 100.

²⁰⁵ Clark, *Naval History*, 101.

²⁰⁶ Clark, *Naval History*, 101.

²⁰⁷ Toll, *Six Frigates*, 56.

what values he envisioned the men serving as the agents of the new United States would carry, namely, “good sense, patriotism, self-respect, and fortitude of my countrymen.”²⁰⁸

To help facilitate both the building of the ships as well as the recruitment of seamen to fill them, Washington appointed six men as the first captains of the United States Navy – one for each of the six frigates. Thomas Truxtun was put in charge of the *Constellation* in Baltimore. Though he himself had very limited actual naval experience, what he did have made him hope for a better class of naval seamen and he set out to provide for just that. Truxtun had been sailing since the age of 12, when he joined the crew of a British merchant ship.²⁰⁹ By the time he was 20, he had command of this own American merchant vessel, *Andrew Caldwell*. His ship was attacked by the British during the antebellum years leading up to the Revolution and he was impressed in the Royal Navy. Having suffered greatly at their hands in the short time he was with them, he escaped and chose to fight on the side of the patriots in the Revolution as a privateer. By the time Washington had offered him a commission as one of the first captains in the new U.S. Navy, he had 30-years of experience at sea. He declared that money should not be the reason men enter into naval service, but rather, asked, “are not glory and fame the grand incentives?”²¹⁰

Truxtun knew that it was vital to the success of the navy that the officers were chosen with care. Though he himself had served as a merchantman for nearly the entire length of his maritime career, he knew that merchantmen were not the way to go if they wanted officers capable of managing the needs and direction the navy wanted to go in as they only sought to create the best experience and deal for themselves. He also knew, from the tales of the *Hannah*,

²⁰⁸ Goldsborough, *Naval Chronicles*, 72.

²⁰⁹ S.S. Robison, “Commodore Thomas Truxtun, U.S. Navy,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* 58 no. 4 (April 1932): 541.

²¹⁰ Toll, *Six Frigates*, 92.

and his own experiences as a privateer in the Revolution, that soldiers and privateers would not provide the level of dedication and character needed to extol the new persona of America throughout the world; soldier seek war, and privateers seek money. “The life of a naval officer,” he said, “was a life of unremitting toil, close attention to detail, and intense devotion to excellence in every aspect of his duty and deportment.”²¹¹ What was required were men who could be molded. They did not need to seek out men with maritime experience, as they had needed during the Revolution. The new United States Navy, needed men who were willing to learn, follow orders, and be gentlemen.²¹² Though he was speaking specifically of officers, these characteristics hold true for all the men they sought to recruit. After all, they were the men who would be offered promotions. To ensure everyone remained on the same page, Truxtun created what would be the precursor of the official Naval Regulations book, entitled “A Short Account of the Several General Duties of Officers, of Ships of War, From an Admiral, Down to the Most Inferior Officer.”²¹³ In it, Truxtun makes the point of declaring, once again that the United States is seeking to become better than any navy in the world by building on the knowledge of those who have already established themselves:

In the establishment of our young navy, the most skilful and experienced among us must acknowledge, that recourse for precedents and examples, to some maritime European nation, in very many points, will be found highly necessary, to secure a good organization of it; and as our customs and manners in the sea service are very familiar to those of the English, under whom many of us received our nautical education, I have selected from their system the general outlines of duty for all descriptions of officers, in a ship of war, with such additions and alterations as I found necessary to make: And notwithstanding the prejudice that exists in our nation against the British government, for their spolations and many unprovoked cruelties exhibited on our citizens, yet I think none can be so much so, as not to acknowledge them, at this time, the first maritime power on the

²¹¹ Toll, *Six Frigates*, 93.

²¹² Please see the definition of what is meant by gentlemen on pages 52-54 of Chapter 1.

²¹³ Thomas Truxtun, “A Short Account of the Several General Duties of Officers, of Ships of War, From an Admiral Down to the Most Inferior Officer,” *NHHC*, n.d. <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/s/short-account-of-the-several-general-duties-of-officers-of-ships-of-war.html>

globe, with respect to naval tactics, discipline, and the general management of ships of war; they are therefore a proper example for us to imitate in our infancy, in all those points of duty and regulation, in which precedents are wanting: and by a steady attention to their general naval system, we shall very early have our ships of war and marine affairs in good order, and our internal government on board the different ships, in the navy (of the United States of America) similar to each other, which must be very desirable to every officer; but what from the distance we are from each other in conferring, building, and equipping, cannot without some pains be reasonably expected.²¹⁴

Truxtun acknowledges here both the power and expertise of the Royal Navy, but also hints that there are areas to improve on. He then goes on to list out in great detail all of the duties of those officers that should be found for each of the six frigates being built. He believed the future of the navy would lie in the very heart and comportment of the first set of midshipmen to fill the ranks. It was his hope that they would have very limited experience at sea, so they could be molded into the “young gentlemen” the U.S. Navy wanted them to be. He wanted them to be different than the midshipmen he had seen in his own past. “If the dunces who are [a midshipmen’s] officers or messmates,” he declared, “are rattling the dice, roaring bad verses, hissing on the flute, or scraping discord from the fiddle, his attentions to more noble studies will sweeten the hours of relaxation. He should recollect that no example from fools ought to influence his conduct or seduce him from that laudable ambition which his honor and advantage are equally concerned to pursue.”²¹⁵ Truxtun understood that finding officers who knew how to run a ship were important for the higher commands, but the real naval seamen would be those at the bottom, seeking to make the navy their profession.

²¹⁴ Thomas Truxtun, “A Short Account of the Several General Duties of Officers, of Ships of War, From an Admiral Down to the Most Inferior Officer,” *NHHC*, n.d. <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/s/short-account-of-the-several-general-duties-of-officers-of-ships-of-war.html>

²¹⁵ Toll, *Six Frigates*, 93.

Several problems arose in the recruitment efforts of these first ships. Congress had declared that naval service had to be completely voluntary. Rules were in place to ensure that no one was impressed into service, enlisted while intoxicated, or was not completely sure of the commitment they were making.²¹⁶ Unfortunately, the frigates were being built in bustling port cities where there was a labor competition for anyone seeking to sail the seas. Merchants sought those with experience and offered higher wages. They also offered shorter two or three month voyages. The United States Navy typically had lower wages than merchants and required a signed contract for a year of service. Furthermore, many of the men and boys (though the U.S. Navy would not take anyone under 12-years of age) had experience or knew someone who had served, voluntarily or not, in the Royal Navy and abhorred the idea of the type of discipline meted out on board naval ships.²¹⁷

Congress set the recruitment specifications by age (12-40 years) and height (minimum of 5'6" in bare feet) requirements and indicated only that they must be "well-organized, healthy, robust, and free from scorbutic and consumptive Affections."²¹⁸ The captains, thanks in great part to Truxtun's lead, aimed higher. They wanted younger men, boys really. Boys were adventurous. They were brave, to the point of stupidity at times, but not lacking in courage. They were malleable and not set in their ways. They were willing and able to leave home for longer periods of time as they had no responsibilities, and thus would be dedicated to the navy. They

²¹⁶ Toll, *Six Frigates*, 94.

²¹⁷ For more information on the complicated history of naval discipline please see: John B. Bonds, "Punishment, Discipline, and the Naval Profession," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* 104 (December 1978): 43-49; James E. Valle, *Rocks and Shoals: Order and Discipline in the Old Navy 1800-1861* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1980); and John A. Lockwood, *An Essay on Flogging in the Navy; Containing Strictures upon Existing Naval Laws and Suggesting Substitutions for the Discipline of the Lash* (New York, NY: Pudney and Russell, Printers, 1849).

²¹⁸ Toll, *Six Frigates*, 94.

needed boys who desired honor above all and were ready and willing to fight and die for America.²¹⁹

Furthermore, boys were not ‘Jack Tars’ – the exact type of men, fathers and mothers worried their sons would become if they chose a life at sea. Truxtun’s own father, a country lawyer, hated the idea of his son going to sea. Benjamin Franklin and George Washington’s fathers, along with many others, forbade them from going to sea, lest they develop “sea fever” and disgrace themselves by becoming Jack Tars.²²⁰ It is important to reemphasize here, that not all men who went to sea were considered Jack Tars. If a sailor was able to rise through the ranks, overcome the “nasty habits” of the common sailor, they could be counted among the gentlemen captains, but few ever reached this high regard. The United States Navy sought not to change the image of the common sailor, but to allow for a different breed of sailor – a respectable option that allowed families to proudly declared their relation to such a man as they would become. In fact, many common sailors were just as respectable as the officers of a ship, with the ambition to be more, though they may not have had the opportunity to rise up the ranks. The key would come in finding fresh recruits with no experience and those common sailors with higher morals who were willing to take a chance and create a new American legacy.

It wasn’t easy to find the type of recruits they were seeking. In six months, Truxtun was only able to sign one hundred men, half of what he needed to man the *Constellation*.²²¹ It was harder for him to fill his ranks in the southern states than it was for the New England captains, accounting for one of the reasons those ships were able to launch before the others. In New England, young men were being encouraged to explore their own destinies, to make a name for

²¹⁹ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 51.

²²⁰ Lemisch, 374.

²²¹ Toll, *Six Frigates*, 96.

themselves. The industrial and city life that was more prevalent offered less options for those seeking to improve their lives. The ports were bigger and the tales of adventure and fortune more widespread than they were in the south. In the southern states, the agrarian life was more prominent, and men lived and died by tradition.²²² There were expectations that came with family names and disgrace could come from any form of deviation from that set course.

One thing the south had in abundance that the northern ports did not, however, were slaves. While southern men may have been hesitant to allow their sons to enlist in the navy, they were less hesitant about “renting” out their slaves to do so. Not only spared the expense of caring for the slaves, the slave owners were also offered pay for the service their slaves completed, as well as the honor of assisting the navy.²²³ While the U.S. Navy did not allow coerced men to join their ranks, they did allow slave owners this opportunity mostly because many of the slaves had experience with sailing and they did not consider them involuntarily serving.²²⁴ While it was never stated directly, the fact that slaves were accepted where ‘Jack Tars’ were often turned away shows where common sailors were often ranked in social hierarchies. Regardless of where the recruits came from, the U.S. Navy finally had the men needed to fill the ranks of the first ships. They were now ready to complete their mission – protect the American merchants in the Mediterranean, and to a smaller extent, from the British and French in the Atlantic.

The First Barbary War

There were two defining incidents occurring for the United States during this very crucial time. One was the Quasi-War with France (1798 -1800) and the other was the First Barbary War

²²² This is a situation that has caused much consternation in Congress since the early days of West Point and continued in the navy as well as other branches of the military. It wasn’t until 1844 that the situation was finally handled by law in the 28th Congress, Session 1, May 15, 1844, H.R. Bill 367, Section 7, page 4.

<https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llhb&fileName=028/llhb028.db&recNum=825>

²²³ Carl Herzog, “The Entwined History of Slavery and the U.S. Navy,” *USS Constitution Museum*, November 30, 2022. <https://ussconstitutionmuseum.org/2022/11/30/the-entwined-history-of-slavery-and-the-u-s-navy/>

²²⁴ The role of African-American men will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

(1801-1805). While the Quasi-War was indeed a naval engagement, it relied quite heavily on backing, though not in any official or recognized role, from the British Royal Navy, who were also at war with France. As such, the Quasi-War is not a good representative of the early years of the U.S. Navy. The First Barbary War serves as a much better example of the ways in which the United States Navy helped create and embody the changing ideas of manhood and masculinity of the new American gentleman, as well as to help spread those ideas of their new national identity and “increase American prestige” throughout the world.²²⁵

An incident involving *USS George Washington* in October 1800 provides a perfect case in point. The British had promised to supply a ship for the Dey of Algiers to send an ambassador and gifts to Constantinople. However, the promised ship was not yet in port on the day of departure and the Dey’s impatience had him ordering the *George Washington* to prepare in its stead. The captain, William Bainbridge, refused stating that he was not authorized for such a journey. This angered the Dey considerably and placed the treaty between the United States and Algiers, which President Washington had worked so hard to obtain, in jeopardy. Luckily, the promised British ship arrived a couple weeks later. However, the Dey is referenced in a letter from the American consul general, Mr. O’Brien, stating “the counselors of the Dey, it is presumed, advised him that the refusal [of Bainbridge] indicated a disinclination to cultivate his friendship; that we were a refractory people, and where an inch was yielded, would take a fathom; that we had not that respect for his highness which was due from every “Christian dog”; and that if he yielded, we should triumph to his dishonor.”²²⁶ While these conversations are only

²²⁵ Benjamin Stoddert the first Secretary of the Navy is described as a “classic Navalist” who “desired an American Navy which could, not only protect commerce, but which would increase American prestige.” Craig L. Symonds, *Navalists and Antinavalists: The Naval Policy Debate in the United States, 1785-1827* (Newark, Del.: University of Delaware Press, 1980), 72.

²²⁶ Goldsborough, *Naval Chronicles*, 176.

presumptions of the part of O'Brien and Bainbridge based on the time they had spent in the company of the Dey and his counselors, whatever the arguments, his advisors convinced the Dey to compel the *George Washington* to complete the mission. Though the British ship was there, the Dey insisted that the *George Washington* be sent in its stead. The Dey informed Mr. O'Brien that if they did not acquiesce, he would "no longer maintain relations of friendship with the United States."²²⁷ Captain Bainbridge had a difficult decision to make. According to Mr. O'Brien this was his decision:

When unavoidable evils are presented, with the liberty of choice, it is the province of wisdom to select that which may be the least; and individual feeling, however acute or chivalric, should never be permitted to adopt a measure in any way conflicting with the public interest. Bound down by duty to our country, the loftiest mind must sometimes sacrifice on its altar, and suffer even deprivations or indignities, rather than overstep the barrier which might compromit its interests. Hence, on this occasion, captain Bainbridge, after expostulating and protesting against the authority usurped by the Dey, finally consented to navigate and command the ship, while she was, by force, sent upon this service; and this he was constrained to do by the consideration, that at that moment, the Dey had our trade in the Mediterranean, and a great number of our citizens completely within his power; that his first act, after executing his threat of declaring war, might be to seize the ship *George Washington* herself, load her crew with chains, and doom them to the vilest servitude.²²⁸

The trip was a success in that it appeased the Dey, but more importantly impressed those of influence and power in Constantinople. While there, the Sultan and Captain Bainbridge signed a pact which resulted in a passport from the Sultan for any minister the United States might send upon such a mission, giving him safe conduct throughout the Turkish empire. The Sultan also required that Captain Bainbridge, his officers, and all who served aboard his ship should be shown the greatest respect and friendship. Mr. O'Brien recounts that "these demonstrations of personal and national respect, these friendly dispositions, were produced by the manly and

²²⁷ Goldsborough, *Naval Chronicles*, 177.

²²⁸ Goldsborough, *Naval Chronicles*, 177.

conciliatory deportment of Captain Bainbridge; and there is every reason to believe that a favorable treaty, might, without difficulty, be concluded with the Porte [Constantinople] if it suits the policy of our government to avail itself on the impressions thus made.”²²⁹

The honorable showing of integrity and gentlemanliness set by Captain Bainbridge did not end there. Upon his return to Algiers, he learned that the Dey had declared war with the French and there were several French ambassadors, consuls, and about sixty French citizens stuck in Algiers, with no way to leave, under the threat of being imprisoned and sold into slavery. They prevailed upon Captain Bainbridge for assistance as the Dey had given them a deadline for leaving the country before they were all imprisoned. Captain Bainbridge and every man serving under him on board the *George Washington* worked two days straight, day and night, to prepare the ship to set sail and managed to meet the deadline with an hour to spare and got every one of the Frenchmen to safety. While this rescue once again strained relations with the Dey, it improved the relations with the French and solidified the new peace treaty that had been drawn up on September 30, just weeks earlier.

Unfortunately, things in the Mediterranean were still not as stable as the U.S. government would hope. Not only was the Dey of Algiers frustrated at the outcome with the Turks and the French, but the United States was also facing problems with other Mediterranean leaders, most notably the Bashaw of Tripoli and the Emperor of Morocco. To make matters worse, the British were still resistant to offering assistance and most other nations had signed treaties of their own with the Mediterranean powers to protect their trade and ships.

Regardless of how they were viewed by others, the U.S. government recognized the need for a naval presence to both secure safe passage and trade for its merchants, and to send the

²²⁹ Goldsborough, *Naval Chronicles*, 178.

message that the United States of America would not tolerate interference nor the detainment of its citizens. In April of 1799, the Bashaw of Tripoli ordered that the Americans remove their consul stationed there and that if his demands were not met, he would renew his hostilities towards U.S. merchants. On the 10th of June, the Bashaw declared war with the U.S. and five American vessels were captured. The hostilities continued until August of 1801 when First Lieutenant Andrew Sterrett, acting captain and commander of the U.S. schooner *Enterprize*, a 12-gun ship with 90 men under his command, was attacked by the *Tripoli*, a 14-gun Tripolitan cruiser, off the coast of Malta. After two hours the *Tripoli* dropped its colors in an act of surrender.

When Lieutenant Sterrett came alongside the other vessel, the Tripolitan men again opened fire on the American vessel. The enemy continuously tried to board the *Enterprize*, brandishing sabers, but were “overcome by the brave and skillful crew of the *Enterprize*.”²³⁰ The captain of the *Tripoli* accepted Lieutenant Sterrett’s offer of quarter, but when the *Enterprize* drew near enough to offer assistance, the *Tripoli* once again began to fire their guns. Lieutenant Sterrett wrote that from every part of his ship came the cry of his crew, “Fight on and sink the perfidious villains to the bottom!”²³¹ When the Tripolitan captain finally realized he had no chance to win, he pled for quarter from Lieutenant Sterrett and threw the Tripolitan flag in the water to show his sincerity in finally surrendering. Lieutenant Sterrett, embodying the role of a gentleman sailor who shows gentility and honor when called for, “actuated by the sentiments of true bravery, stopped the effusion of blood though the treacherous conduct of the Tripolitans merited no mercy.”²³² The entire engagement lasted but three hours. However, during that time,

²³⁰ Clark, *Naval History*, 146.

²³¹ Clark, *Naval History*, 146.

²³² Clark, *Naval History*, 146.

the *Enterprize* did not lose one single sailor to the conflict, though many were injured. The battle, witnessed by other ships in the area and by those on the shore, convinced other Tripolitan soldiers to abandon their own vessels and they had a hard time finding replacements who could navigate them. For a time, the hostilities from the Bashaw of Tripoli were halted. When Congress heard what had happened, they passed the following Resolution:

“February 3rd, 1802. Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That they entertain a high sense of the gallant conduct of lieutenant Sterrett, and the other officers, seamen, and marines, on board the schooner *Enterprize*, in the capture of a Tripolitan corsair, of 14 guns and eighty men.

Resolved, That the President be requested to present to lieutenant Sterrett, a sword, commemorative of the aforesaid heroic action; and that one month’s pay be allowed to all the other officers, seamen, and marines who were on board the *Enterprize*, when the action took place.”²³³

By 1803 the U.S. government was fed up with the situation in the Mediterranean and deemed to end it once and for all. Commodore Preble set sail in August 1803 with a seven sail squadron consisting of the *USS Constitution*, *USS Philadelphia*, *USS Argus*, *USS Syren*, *USS Nautilus*, *USS Vixen* and the *USS Enterprize*. Meanwhile things near Morocco were heating up as well. After a brief altercation in which Captain Bainbridge was victorious, he ordered the enemy vessel searched and found among the captains papers an order, with no signature, commanding the vessel to cruise for and attack American vessels. The captain claimed it had been delivered to him by the Moorish governor of Tangiers. Both the Emperor of Morocco and the Governor of Tangier denied giving any such order or even supporting the order. When Commodore Preble arrived, he wrote to the American consul in Tangiers and instructed him to tell the Emperor that “peace was desirable...that since he disavowed the acts of hostility committed by his subjects he

²³³ Goldsborough, *Naval Chronicles*, 197.

should punish as pirates all Moorish cruisers attempting to capture American vessels.”²³⁴ The Emperor agreed to meet with Commodore Preble. As Preble left the ship, he ordered the commanding officer to “fire upon the town if he should be forcibly detained and not to enter into any treaty for his release, nor be influenced by and consideration for his personal safety.”²³⁵ The two men came to an accord, both agreeing to return any property and prisoners belonging to the other, and renewed the treaty made between the two nations/states in 1786.

Having confirmed peace with the Emperor of Morocco, Commodore Preble was free to then turn the attention of the squadron towards the Bashaw of Tripoli. While Preble had been dealing with the issues in Morocco, he had sent the *Philadelphia*, under the command of Captain William Bainbridge, on to Tripoli. On October 31, 1803, the *Philadelphia* was engaged in a battle with a Tripolitan cruiser. When they realized they were going to lose, the Tripolitans withdrew from the battle and made a run for the shore. The *Philadelphia* was in pursuit when it hit a rock that was not on the charts. Though they tried, the sailors could not get the ship unstuck before the Tripolitan cruiser returned with reinforcements. The sailors of the *Philadelphia* managed to withstand the attack for nearly four hours when they were finally defeated, and the three hundred American officers and sailors were taken as prisoners. To make matters worse, the Tripolitans, after 48-hours, managed to free the *Philadelphia* and claimed it as their prize.²³⁶ Rather than allow the ship to remain in enemy hands, Stephen Decatur and his crew of gallant seamen would later burn the ship.

While all of these battles were incredible in their might and power and showed great courage and bravery among the crews, they were not what wowed the Bashaw the most.

²³⁴ Clark, *Naval History*, 149.

²³⁵ Clark, *Naval History*, 150.

²³⁶ Clark, *Naval History*, 151.

Commodore Preble allowed the prisoners that had been taken captive to write a letter to the Bashaw. In that letter they stated that “the Americans in battle were fiercer than lions, but in the treatment of their prisoners they were even more kind than the mussulmen.”²³⁷ The Bashaw agreed to restore any Americans that were captured henceforth in the battle, but he still refused to release the imprisoned crew of the *Philadelphia*. On August 9, the Bashaw sent the French consul as a mediator and offered Commodore Preble a deal. He would release the crew of the *Philadelphia* for a ransom of \$500 per prisoner or \$150,000 total. Commodore Preble countered the offer with a total sum of \$90,000 instead.²³⁸ The Bashaw refused, and the fighting continued. On September 4, the U.S. Navy suffered one of its worst losses, yet one of the most heroic as well. It was decided that a fire ship needed to be sent into the harbor to destroy the Tripolitan flotilla and town. Captain Sommers, Lt. Wadsworth, and ten other men volunteered to sail the fire ship into the harbor, light the fuses, and then flee for their lives. The trip was dangerous at best, and deadly at worst. As fate would have it, the fire ship *Intrepid*, was surrounded by two vessels with one hundred men each as it entered the harbor. Commodore Preble wrote, “At this moment, she [meaning the *Intrepid*] exploded with the most awful effect. Every battery was silenced. Not a gun was fired during the remainder of the night. There is every reason to suppose that Captain Sommers, on perceiving no means of escape left, and that he would inevitably be doomed to an ignominious captivity, heroically resolved to die, and with his own hands set fire to the tram, when himself, his companions, and the enemy, met a common death.”²³⁹ On September 9, even the Pope stated, “The United States, though in their infancy, had in this affair done more to humble the Antichristian barbarians on that coast, than all the European states had

²³⁷ Clark, *Naval History*, 158.

²³⁸ Clark, *Naval History*, 160.

²³⁹ Clark, *Naval History*, 163.

done for a long series of time.”²⁴⁰ The twelve men who died on the *Intrepid* were considered the epitome of what it meant to be an American man – someone who would do whatever was necessary, including giving their own lives, for the protection and benefit of their country. Commodore Preble was relieved by Commodore Baron shortly thereafter, and on his return home was awarded an emblematic medal by President Jefferson to honor the men of the *Intrepid*. After another year of fighting the Bashaw finally came to an agreement with the United States in June 1805 and put an end to the hostilities thus ending the First Barbary War and the launching phase of the United States Navy.²⁴¹

In December of 1805, as many of the U.S. Navy ships began arriving home, Francis Scott Key wrote a song to be sung to the tune of *Anacreon in Heaven* called “When the Warrior Returns.”²⁴² Though the song was originally sung at a tribute held to honor Stephen Decatur and Charles Stewart and the other men responsible for the burning of the *Philadelphia*, it was sung at other engagements as well, by those wishing to show gratitude to the seamen on a job well done in the Mediterranean. Though only one specific example, the prominence of this one shows the overwhelming support for the United States Navy and the impact they were having on the populace and society at the time.

When the Warrior Returns²⁴³

When the warrior returns, from the battle afar,
To the home and country he nobly defended,
O! warm be the welcome to gladden his ear,
And loud be the joy that his perils are ended:
In the full tide of song let his fame roll along,
To the feast-flowing board let us gratefully throng,
Where, mixed with the olive, the laurel shall wave,
And form a bright wreath for the brows of the brave.

²⁴⁰ Clark, *Naval History*, 163.

²⁴¹ Clark, *Naval History*, 165.

²⁴² This song is set to the same music as the Star Spangled Banner would later be set to in 1814.

²⁴³ <https://starspangledmusic.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/SSME-FSKeyWarriorReturns-1805-Bbmajor.pdf>

Columbians! a band of your brothers behold,
 Who claim the reward of your hearts' warm emotion,
 When your cause, when your honor, urged onward the bold,
 In vain frowned the desert, in vain raged the ocean:
 To a far distant shore, to the battle's wild roar,
 They rushed, your fair fame and your rights to secure:
 Then, mixed with the olive, the laurel shall wave,
 And form a bright wreath for the brows of the brave.

In the conflict resistless, each toil they endured,
 'Till their foes fled dismayed from the war's desolation:
 And pale beamed the Crescent, its splendor obscured
 By the light of the Star Spangled flag of our nation.
 Where each radiant star gleamed a meteor of war,
 And the turbaned heads bowed to its terrible glare,
 Now, mixed with the olive, the laurel shall wave,
 And form a bright wreath for the brows of the brave.

Our fathers, who stand on the summit of fame,
 Shall exultingly hear of their sons the proud story:
 How their young bosoms glow'd with the patriot flame,
 How they fought, how they fell, in the blaze of their glory.
 How triumphant they rode o'er the wondering flood,
 And stained the blue waters with infidel blood;
 How, mixed with the olive, the laurel shall wave,
 And form a bright wreath for the brows of the brave.

Then welcome the warrior returned from afar
 To the home and the country he nobly defended:
 Let the thanks due to valor now gladden his ear,
 And loud be the joy that his perils are ended.
 In the full tide of song let his fame roll along,
 To the feast-flowing board let us gratefully throng,
 Where, mixed with the olive, the laurel shall wave,
 And form a bright wreath for the brows of the brave.

The creation of the United States Navy was a trying process. Despite the criticism and fear regarding a standing navy, Congress was under a great deal of pressure from merchants who were tired of being harassed by the British and French and attacked by the Barbary Powers. Still, it took a long time to get the Navy approved, built, and launched. In their infancy, the Navy's greatest successes involved the loss of one of their best ships and the loss of a great

leader and several brave men. Just as the United States was an experiment in creating a new form of government, the Navy was an experiment in creating a new brand of American man – a gentleman of honor, bravery, and virtue, who would fight to the death if necessary to protect his country. Furthermore, it quickly became obvious that the U.S. Navy were best suited to act as the prominent emissaries in diplomatic and foreign affairs, as long as the naval officers embodied the qualities of the new American. While consuls and dignitaries were still used, they were simply men with no power behind them. The U.S. Naval officers literally had a corps of men to support and sustain their foreign endeavors. The Barbary Wars were the first step in showing the world just who and what America was going to be.

Chapter 3

A Revolution Refought: Naval Conquest in the War of 1812

July 4, 1814, gathered in the courtyard of the cold, dank, Dartmoor Prison, were hundreds of American prisoners of war.²⁴⁴ These men were prisoners from naval vessels, privateers, and even British ships of war.²⁴⁵ The men were naked, starved, and beaten both physically and mentally. They had spent years appealing to the United States Congress for aid and money to make their living situation at least semi-tolerable, all to no avail. Many were ready to give up, and indeed, some had.²⁴⁶ However, on this day, they were imbued with a sense of patriotism and vigor that seemed to only occur once a year on what they understood to be the anniversary of their independence.

The previous year, in 1813, many of these same prisoners had managed to acquire two United States flags and had hung them in the courtyard.²⁴⁷ The British, taking offence at seeing their enemy's flag flying in their country, fought the prisoners. One of the flags was confiscated, but the American prisoners managed to secure the other and hide it away. Despite the dire circumstances in which they found themselves, not once did any of the prisoners resort to using the hidden flag as either material to cover themselves when it was freezing during the winter months, nor as a bartering chip with the British to get the provisions they so desperately needed when they were starving.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ This account is taken from the Journal of Charles Andrews, an American prisoner of war at Dartmoor Prison. This account was published as a book by Philip R. Hopkins of New York in October 1815 to detail the horrors of Dartmoor for the American people. This book will heretofore be known as simply the *Prisoner's Memoirs* as it has no official title or publication. The official book can be found here:

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcmassbookdig.prisonersmem00andrews/?st=pdf&pdfPage=30>

²⁴⁵ Charles Andrews, *The Prisoner's Memoirs* (New York, NY: Philip R. Hopkins, 1815), 1.

²⁴⁶ Andrews, *The Prisoner's Memoirs*, 48.

²⁴⁷ Andrews, *The Prisoner's Memoirs*, 18.

²⁴⁸ Andrews, *The Prisoner's Memoirs*, 52.

That July 4th in 1814, the flag they had so nobly fought for and protected, was once again raised in the heart of the prison courtyard for all to see. Before the British could react, a lone sailor stood upon an empty cask and spoke to his fellow countrymen. He spoke of the many great victories the United States Navy had won during the current war with Britain. He reminded them that the war was being fought for seamen like themselves and their freedom. He spoke of the defeat of the *HMS Guerrière* by the *USS Constitution*. He highlighted the bravery of the injured American seamen on board the *USS United States* as they defeated the *HMS Macedonian*. He applauded the actions of the sailors serving on the *USS Constitution* in their engagements against the *HMS Java*, *Cyane*, and *Levant*. He commended Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry and his great success on Lake Erie, as well as Commodore Isaac Chauncey's events leading to the British defeat on Lake Ontario. He then spoke of the defeat many of the men were feeling, and addressed the supposed betrayal they imagined they had received from the U.S. President and Congress. He reminded them that though their sufferings were great, they had received some small measure of relief sent to them in the form of pennies for food rations and soap. "Have the United States not assisted us in our unhappy situation," he inquired, "and much meliorated our sufferings, though illy able while carrying on so expensive a war?" He then concluded his speech with this:

And now, fellow-citizens, I conjure you to be patient, and consider your country to be using her utmost endeavor to bring about an honorable and speedy peace. In a state of war, many stories are circulated in this country [England] favorable to her success in arms, which have no foundation...and perhaps many of you may honestly believe the reports, but let them not make you despair of your country. No, depend upon it, she cannot be conquered. England may get momentary possession of one small city, or perhaps ten, but America is not conquered till every man is either taken prisoner or killed. The success of our naval arms is a sufficient proof, and our country is now in triumph at her great naval success...From the success of American arms, which have already astonished our enemies, we have nothing to fear; and we have the greatest reason to believe that the American cause is big with the most wonderful achievements; that the exploits

of our countrymen in arms, in the present contest, will astonish all nations, and be recorded on the pages of history, and remain in the choicest archives of posterity, with equal glory to those of Marathon and Thermopylæ. Fellow-prisoners, let us then be resigned to our present unhappy condition; and through the great exertion of our country, and the assistance of Divine Providence, who disposes of events and governs futurity, we may hope once more to revisit our native country in an honorable peace and live happy and free.²⁴⁹

As soon as the orator finished speaking, the prison officers entered the courtyard and expressed their disbelief at the foolishness of the prisoners' belief that the United States should be victorious over the British. The officers boasted that the British had already conquered France and they would next succeed in overthrowing America and "reducing them to colonies again."²⁵⁰ The prisoners, much invigorated and with hope rekindled by the preceding speech, argued back. They disputed the British claims of superiority by "[giving] them a particular account of the situation of America, her means of defence, and the spirit and determination of the people; the great superiority of gunnery which the American seamen possessed over those of Great Britain" and recalled the defeated *HMS Guerrière*, *Frolic*, *Java*, and other British naval ships as their evidence.²⁵¹ Dejected by these reminders of various Royal Navy failures, the prison officers left them alone for the remainder of their Fourth of July celebrations. The day did not hold much in way of festivities, but the prisoners believed they had gained a victory and had reason to celebrate. Not only could they keep their flag and allow it to fly that day, but they were reminded of what they had fought for before being taken prisoner, what their fathers had fought for during the Revolutionary War, and what the future could hold for America. They were renewed with a determination to remain strong, retain their hope, and restore their faith in their country and their ability to win the war.

²⁴⁹ Andrews, *The Prisoner's Memoirs*, 55-56.

²⁵⁰ Andrews, *The Prisoner's Memoirs*, 56.

²⁵¹ Andrews, *The Prisoner's Memoirs*, 56-57.

Unlike the Revolutionary War, the Quasi-war with France, or the Barbary Wars, the War of 1812 was a war of offense. The previous wars the United States had entered were justified to the populace as defensive wars; necessary for the survival of the nation and essential to ensuring the freedom and independence of the citizens while under a direct attack from an opposing foe. The War of 1812 was different in that this was the first time the United States openly and officially declared war on a country without direct provocation. President James Madison and Congress used the excuse that they were fighting to uphold their trade rights and to defend the sailor citizens of the United States that were being impressed and forced to serve on British naval ships during the Napoleonic Wars between Great Britain and France. However, as many historians and scholars have debated over the years, there was much more to the agenda than just keeping sailors safe. While it may not seem like a big deal two hundred years later, the reasons behind the conflict are directly related to both its success and failure and its influence on life in America, specifically in regard to naval influence.

In the last two chapters the role of the U.S. Navy in creating ideas of manhood and masculinity has been relatively small. Not only were the naval seamen challenging the preconceived conceptions of sailors in the United States, the impact they were having on society and the American populace revolved around more of a patriotic and inspiring nature. These men were proving that the navy was needed if the United States wanted to continue to do business in the Atlantic World. However, Congress was still hellbent on keeping them small and non-threatening to America's domestic security, thus limiting their public visibility. During the years from 1812 to 1815, the navy fully proved their necessity to both domestic and foreign security as they engaged in further conflicts with both Great Britain and the Barbary Powers of Tripoli,

Tunis, and Algiers.²⁵² This chapter will highlight not only the inevitability of the creation of a United States Navy in the Atlantic World during the Age of Sail, but also the way the men of that navy continued to inspire new ideas of manhood and masculinity. These new ideas incorporate the virtues of courage, independence, gentlemanliness, self-sacrifice, and patriotism as discussed in chapters 1 and 2, but are also expanded to include loyalty, perseverance, compassion, firmness, and intrepidity.

Historiography of the War of 1812

Donald Hickey, one of the foremost experts and historians on the War of 1812, called it the “forgotten conflict.”²⁵³ It is often obscured by more modern conflicts that resonate pride in the American psyche, such as WWII and the American Revolution. The War of 1812 was one of the few times prior to Vietnam that the American people would, at least limitedly, admit that they lost a war. When the war ended with the Treaty of Ghent on December 24, 1814, and the agreement was to return to *status quo antebellum*, there was great turmoil as to what that meant. The question remained, had the U.S. won the war or not? The answer could be interpreted differently depending on a variety of criteria, including one’s nationality and ethnicity.²⁵⁴

A good majority of the books written about the War of 1812 mention the fact that there was no real victor in the war, but America still seems to be the winner in the end. For instance, those who write about the impressment of sailors and British interference in American trade

²⁵² The Second Barbary War will be discussed in chapter 5.

²⁵³ Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 1-3.

²⁵⁴ Some examples of this debate are as follows: Brian Arthur wrote a book called *How Britain won the War of 1812: The Royal Navy’s Blockades of the United States* in 2011 wherein he claims the British won the war because they were successful in their ability to blockade various ports throughout the U.S. Claire Turenne Sjolander makes a compelling argument in her article, “Through the Looking Glass: Canadian Identity and the War of 1812” in 2014 that Canadians actually gained a great deal from the War of 1812 and could be considered winners of the conflict. The Chapter on the War of 1812 in Eliot Cohen’s 2011 book, *Conquered into Liberty*, seems to offer evidence that supports the same argument. Authors such as Daniel Walker Howe, Douglas Hurt, John Sugden, and Marshall Smelser all seem to agree that the one group to be the unanimous losers of the war were the indigenous peoples of North America. Another great book that details the difference in the war for various groups of people is Alan Taylor’s 2010 book, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, and Indian Allies*.

generally conclude the war a success as trade was no longer hampered and American sailors were safe.²⁵⁵ A common subgenre of the War of 1812 histories revolves around naval battles, with historians mainly choosing to expound upon the major successes in the beginning of the war, and not so much the multitude of smaller losses they sustained.²⁵⁶ These typically conclude with the reminder that these success led to other countries recognizing the United States Navy as a power to be respected and admired. A third major genre of histories of the War of 1812 are the books that focus on the heroes of the war like Stephen Decatur, Thomas Macdonough, Oliver Perry, and Isaac Chauncey. It is from these biographies that the character of the American man as a gallant, brave, honorable, and virtuous man emerge and definitively separate them from their past as English colonists.

It was at the beginning of the twenty-first century that the works most relevant to this dissertation were written. Surrounding the bicentennial of the War of 1812, many historians began writing about the patriotism and nationalism surrounding the war, a topic that had been largely disregarded in the past. One of those works was Nicole Eustace's *1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism*, a cultural history that tells the story of how the government was able to convince the public to not only concede to an expensive and long war with Great Britain once again, but to actually support it, by appealing to their emotions. Another was Donald Hickey's *Don't Give up the Ship!: Myths of the War of 1812* that challenged the many heroic versions of

²⁵⁵ Jasper Trautsch, "The Causes of the War of 1812: 200 Hundred Years of Debate," *Journal of Military History* 77 (January 2013), 274. Most historians do not specifically write about impressment in the War of 1812 as an entire book topic, but it almost always included in the subject of the causes of the war. One exception to this is Paul A. Gilje, *Free Trade and Sailors' Rights in the War of 1812* who specifically focuses his book on the impressment of sailors and the impact that had on the war.

²⁵⁶ Examples of these works include: Joseph F. Callo, "How the Battles of Lake Erie and Lake Champlain Influenced the American Narrative," *Hudson River Valley Review* 29 (September 2012): 97-115; C.S. Forester, "Victory on Lake Champlain," *American Heritage* 15 (December 1963): 4-90; David Curtis Skaggs and Gerard T. Altoff, *A Signal Victory: The Lake Erie Campaign 1812-1813* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997); and H.C. Washburn, "The Battle of Lake Champlain," *Naval Institute Proceedings* 40 no. 153 (September 1914): 1365-1386.

the War of 1812 and encouraged readers to explore and understand the sense of nationalism and pride that pervaded the American sense of the war and led to a firm belief that they had won the war, when they had actually suffered many great defeats.

Despite the examples given here, Hickey remains correct in stating that the War of 1812 is a forgotten conflict. American primary and secondary education history classes, and even some college history survey courses, do not spend a great deal of time on the subject, generally brushing over it briefly before moving onto expansion and the building tensions that led to the Civil War. Similarly, while there are many books that have been written about the War of 1812, they mostly all cover the same topics; heroic officers, ships, and battles. The only time that the War of 1812 really becomes a topic of interest is if it is an anniversary year of the conflict or if a historian is specifically looking at something connected to it, a battle or person, for research and finds something of interest that has never been told before.

This dissertation seeks to do just that in this chapter. As with the previous chapters, though the stories that are told here will focus heavily on battles and the men fighting them, it is the focus that is different. Rather than just focusing on the heroics for the sake of highlighting some of America's brightest naval heroes, they are told to showcase the impact they had on American society as examples of manhood and masculinity as well as the impression they made on foreign entities still curious about who and what America was going to become.²⁵⁷

The U.S. Navy in 1812

²⁵⁷ It is here that I would like to note a few of the sources you will find in this chapter. I quote and cite a lot from *Niles Weekly Register* and the *Port-Folio*, both of which are Democratic publications. The Federalists at this time had no use for praising the navy and rejoicing publicly over their victories. Therefore, the sources available that show the impact and reaction of the populace, come from the mostly Democratic publications. For more information on this please see John C. McCloskey, "The Campaign of Periodicals after the War of 1812 for National American Literature," *PMLA* 50 no. 1 (March 1935): 262-273.

After the Mediterranean conflicts ended with the signing of very tentative treaties with the various Barbary powers in 1806, President Thomas Jefferson called the navy home. They had effectively completed their mission of protecting trade in foreign ports, and now had to prove they could do so against a far greater enemy off their own coasts. One particular incident in the Spring of 1805 made this point very clear. The British were patrolling just past the United States three-mile territory line near Sandy Hook, Connecticut. They were stopping any ships suspected of carrying French goods as well as stopping all American ships to search for British deserters. On April 25, 1805, the *HMS Leander* attempted to stop a merchant ship by firing a cannon across the bow as a warning shot. However, on this occasion, rather than falling harmlessly into the water, events transpired that resulted in the helmsman of a small coasting sloop, John Pierce, being decapitated.²⁵⁸ Though the British would call it an accident, Pierce's captain, who happened to also be his brother, gathered his brother's body and head and, with his crew, paraded it through the streets of New York defaming the British for their atrocious actions that killed an innocent man. People continued to join the mob for several days until, law enforcement was forced to put some of the officers of the *Leander* in jail just to protect them. As soon as the mob was finally able to be dispersed to hold a very public and large burial for Pierce, the officers were quietly escorted back to their ship and told to leave and not come back. The situation fueled the political war between Jefferson's Democratic-Republicans, who focused on "British

²⁵⁸ There are varying accounts of what actually transpired during the event. One source states Pierce's ship was the one being warned to stop when the accident occurred (Hershkowitz, 308), while another states that it was a deliberate attempt to attack Pierce's ship (the trial account by "an eminent reporter," 18). Still another source states it was just an accident that the warning shot entered the harbor (Bradford, 40). The British account is different still in that the Pierce ship was the first to show belligerent activity and that Whitby was innocent and the Americans knew it (Hiscocks, Henry Whitby Biography). Whatever the account, the result was the same. The populace was outraged, and the entire incident was blown out of proportion and further served to heighten tensions between Great Britain and the United States. These sources are as follows: Leo Hershkowitz, "The Richard Affair: Rising tensions between the United States and the United Kingdom, 1806," *The Mariner's Mirror* 100 no. 3 (August 2014): 307-321; Bradford, *America, Sea Power and the World*; and Richard John Hiscocks, *The Royal Navy: A Biographical History and Chronicle 1776-1815*, Website (morethannelson.com), 2018.

arrogance, their interference in trade and their possession of Canada,” and the Federalists who “warned of the threat of French anarchy and Jeffersonian republicanism with its indifference to national security.”²⁵⁹ In an effort to placate the people, Thomas Jefferson demanded the British Captain of the *Leander*, Henry Whitby, be held accountable for the “murder on the body of John Pearce, a citizen of the U.S. then pursuing his lawful vocations within the same waters and jurisdiction of the U.S..”²⁶⁰ Whitby was arrested and tried in a U.S. court of law. During the trial, it was remarked that he never said a word and only looked haughtily about the room with disdain for both the people present and the court itself.²⁶¹ While awaiting his execution, in an effort to keep the peace between Great Britain and the United States, Whitby was ordered transferred back to British custody to await a court-martial. The court-martial commenced on April 16, 1807, aboard the *HMS Gladiator* just off the coast at Portsmouth. This time Whitby gave what amounted to twenty pages of testimony stating the trial was caused “by the violent attempts of the American Government to overwhelm one with crimes, which as a Christian and a Man, I would shudder at, and most ever hold in the greatest abhorrence.”²⁶² The court-martial lasted two days wherein Whitby was acquitted of the charge of murder. However, he was removed from active duty in the Royal Navy for two years, in an apparent effort to “mollify American feelings.”²⁶³ The incident slipped quietly out of thought as another even more inciting incident would soon take its place.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁹ Leo Hershkowitz, “The Richard Affair,” 309.

²⁶⁰ Thomas Jefferson, *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, Paul Leicester Ford, ed., volume 10, (New York, NY: The Knickerbocker Press, 1905), 257.

²⁶¹ A report of the court case can be read in *The Trial of Capt. Henry Whitby for the Murder of John Pierce with His Dying Declaration*, written in 1812. This account was written by “an eminent reporter” during the trial, but fails to tell the entire story, as it ends with the verdict of guilty and Whitby being sentenced to death, but says nothing about what transpired after – namely that he was never actually executed.

<https://memory.loc.gov/service/lawlib/law0001/2010/201000238009972/201000238009972.pdf>

²⁶² Hershkowitz, “The Richard Affair,” 315.

²⁶³ Hershkowitz, “The Richard Affair,” 319.

²⁶⁴ One final word in the *Leander* affair. While it seems to be highly insignificant today, the incident resulted in serious political unrest for the United States, especially in New York. The people though were divided. Some

As Britain continued to fight with France, both nations increasingly attempted to control the trade that American merchants were doing across the Atlantic and in the West Indies and Caribbean. French and British ships continuously stopped American ships they claimed were trading illegally with their enemy.²⁶⁵ These altercations frequently included cargo seizures, and in instances with the Royal Navy, the impressment of sailors. The United States attempted to remain neutral in the conflicts between the two nations and claimed a right to trade with whomever they wanted as they were not currently under any treaty agreement with either country to refrain from trading with their enemies. While not directly at war with either country, the United States was also not allied to either.²⁶⁶

remembered the help from the French during the Revolution and were sympathetic to their cause. The incident made them side with the French even more than the British. Others hated the British so much and the incident caused problems for the British consulate in New York to the tune of vandalism, mob riots, and even the burning of the British flag. Still others were fighting American against American as Republicans versus Federalists. Whatever the position people chose to take, the incident fired feelings of great unrest in many people. For more on this you can read Hershkowitz's account of the incident. It is interesting to note, however, some good came from it as well. In 1890, the New York Times posted a review of a book written by Col. Emmons Clark about the New York Seventh Regiment. In there he claims the regiment was created specifically in response to the *Leander* affair. He claims that after the death of John Pierce was made known "At once an indignation meeting was called in New York and the excitement was great. Young men joined the military organizations. Four new companies of artillery were formed, and these are now known as the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Companies of the Seventh Regiment" (<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1890/11/02/103275408.pdf>). Though not directly related to the U.S. Navy, the regiment was created to provide land support if needed by the ships in the harbor, including those of the U.S. Navy.

²⁶⁵ For further information on this topic please see: Bradford Perkins, *Prologue to War: England and the United States, 1805-1812* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1961); Harry C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations* (Long Acre, London, UK: Odhams Press Limited, 1969); Clifford Egan, *Neither Peace nor War: Franco-American Relations, 1803-1812* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1983); John Nye, *War, Wine and Taxes: The Political Economy of Anglo-French Trade, 1689-1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); and Erika Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

²⁶⁶ The two treaties that support this claim of neutrality are the Treaty of Mortefontaine and the Treaty of Amiens. The Treaty of Mortefontaine (September 30, 1800 – found in Miller, *Treaties*, Document 25, 457) protected trade agreements between the United States and France and allowed each other the concession of free trade with any other nation they choice, but gave one another a most favored nation trading status. The Treaty of Amiens (March 25, 1802 - <https://www.napoleon-empire.net/en/official-texts/treaty-of-amiens.php>) was a treaty between France and Great Britain, ending the War of the Second Coalition. Though this treaty did not specifically deal with trade, it was understood that in an effort to retain peace, trade between the two nations would resume and trade with other nations would once again be permitted without interference. By the time of the *Chesapeake* affair, both treaties had been broken, but the agreement were still thought by Americans to be binding – at least in terms of their neutrality status.

In response to America's continued trade, Great Britain and France both attempted to set up blockades along the eastern North American coastline. Attacks on U.S. merchant ships continued, but despite them, American commerce was on the rise. As such, little was actually done to prevent the seizures against the merchants' ships. That changed on June 22, 1807. While on a voyage to answer a rising situation in the Mediterranean, the *USS Chesapeake*, was attacked by the *HMS Leopard* off the coast of Norfolk, Virginia.²⁶⁷ The Royal Navy ship believed the U.S. Naval frigate was harboring deserters from the British Navy, and they were not wrong. Many deserters chose to join the U. S. Navy. Some were British subjects claiming better treatment than they received from the British. Others were American born and had been serving on board British naval ships but felt a greater allegiance to the up-and-coming United States. Unfortunately, Captain James Barron of the *Chesapeake* was not given an opportunity to make much of a showing for himself. The *Leopard*, fired several shots into the *Chesapeake*. Because they were prepared for a long cruise, and believing themselves safe, which was not a smart assumption on the part of Captain Barron, the *Chesapeake*, was only able to load and fire one shot at the *Leopard*. With three men dead and eighteen more wounded, including himself, Captain Barron, chose to surrender the ship to the enemy. Four naval crew members were taken captive by the British, before the *Chesapeake* was released.²⁶⁸

This incident between the *HMS Leopard* and the *USS Chesapeake* generated mixed emotions. The American citizens were furious that a United States Navy ship had been attacked by the Royal Navy. In his account of the aftermath, Thomas Clark records, "Great was the

²⁶⁷ Clark, *Naval History*, 166. The various first-hand accounts are given in *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 1, 49-52.

²⁶⁸ John Strachan and William Ware were both born in the United States. Jenkin Ratford was born in Britain. Daniel Martin was described as a "colored man" and believed to have been brought as a slave to the United States from Buenos Aries when he was six years old ["Regarding Daniel Martin," *Hampshire-Federalist*, Springfield, MA, October 1, 1807, pg 2.]

sensation occasioned in the United States by this affair. The inhabitants of almost every town throughout the union met in town meeting, and drew up resolutions reprobating in the strongest language so gross a violation of the laws of neutrality, and declaring their determination to support the government, with their lives and fortunes, in the measures it might adopt, to obtain reparation for the injury and insult offered to the country.”²⁶⁹ The people believe that international law stated official naval ships, unlike merchant or fishing ships, were to have the same status as embassy grounds in a foreign nation.²⁷⁰ The British had no right to attack, kill, wound, or capture any ship or crew of the United States Navy.²⁷¹ There was a general uproar and demand by the American citizens that war be declared against Great Britain, to uphold the nation’s honor.²⁷² In a letter to Pierre Samuel du Pont de Nemours, a French diplomat and close personal friend, Thomas Jefferson said of the aftermath of the affair, “Never, since the battle of Lexington have I seen this country in such a state of exasperation as at present: and even that did not produce such unanimity.”²⁷³ However, the general public were not only angry with the British. They were also disillusioned with the United States Navy.

²⁶⁹ Clark, *Naval History*, 156-157.

²⁷⁰ There was no actual international law at the time that stated warships could claim sovereignty or diplomatic immunity. However, this incident was a catalyst that would lead to what has become known as the Schooner Exchange vs. M’Faddon, a U.S. Supreme Court case from 1812 wherein it was decided that, “in the interest of friendly relations among nations a foreign sovereign should not be inconvenienced nor its dignity invaded through interference with property used in the exercise of its sovereignty” (*Columbia Law Review*, “International Law, Admiralty, Sovereign Immunity of Foreign Vessels,” 45, no. 1 (Jan 1945): 80-85), 80).

²⁷¹ This issue is debated quite effectively by James Cheetham in his 1807 book, *Peace or War? Thoughts on Our Affairs with England*. While quite a controversial man (he was arrested in 1793 for attempting to overthrow the government, acquitted, and later moved to New York where he became a Republican supporter), Cheetham was nonetheless known for his writing/editing talents and frequently provide verifiable evidence in his works, citing lawyers, speeches, and legislation. In this book he questions Jefferson’s choice not to go to war with Britain, particularly after the *Chesapeake* affair.

²⁷² Norman K Risjord discusses this in some detail in his 1961 article, “1812: Conservatives, War Hawks, and National Honor,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 18 no. 2 (April 1961): 196-210. In this article Risjord challenges the “common causes” idea and states that they only really apply to the Northern states and Great Lakes areas. He questions what then made the Southern and Middle States agree to declare war through their congressional appointees. His answer is most simply put that the men had “had a bellyful of England,” 200. National honor was the call. In his argument he states it was a choice of “either war or submission and national disgrace,” 200.

²⁷³ “From Thomas Jefferson to Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours, 14 July 1807,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/99-01-02-5960>.

While there were some definite high spots for the Continental Navy during the Revolutionary War, their overall performance was lacking and their successes could be considered nothing more than blind luck and the skills and bravery of the crews. The actions of the newly founded U.S. Navy in the Barbary Wars showed that they could certainly hold their own against the pirates of the Mediterranean world, but even then, suffered some heavy losses, like the *USS Philadelphia* and the *USS Intrepid*. While people were quick to sing the praises of the U.S. Navy in celebration of their homecomings, without a battle to actively engage in, they were quickly forgotten.²⁷⁴ Now, the *Chesapeake* affair had people questioning whether or not the Navy was capable of protecting the United States, or if they should be completely disbanded and merchant ships be armed instead.²⁷⁵ In an effort to resolve the situation, the blame was placed not on the Navy, but rather on the incompetency of Captain Barron himself. He was court-martialed and censured “for not having his ship cleared for action, when it was probable he might be attacked, and for not making exertions to defend her when attacked.” Captain Barron was relieved of command and suspended from serving for a period of five years. The results of the court-martial seemed to quell the voices of derision toward the U.S. Navy for the time being, however, the damage had been done and once again any hope of growing the small fleet was defeated.

Jefferson knew that the United States Navy was not prepared for another war with Great Britain. Unfortunately, every attempt he made to fortify it was defeated in Congress. They had already reduced the Navy ships and crews after calling them home from the Mediterranean and they were not about to allocate funds to building more. Jefferson knew the size of the U.S. Navy

²⁷⁴ This is a problem that would be a common occurrence for the U.S. Navy and one that will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 4.

²⁷⁵ Risjord, “1812,” 205-208.

was no match for the size of the Royal Navy squadron currently patrolling the North Atlantic region. War with Britain at the time was irresponsible and dangerous. To make matters worse, as soon as the naval fleet was called home from the Mediterranean in 1806, the Barbary Pirates ignored the treaties and began preying on American merchants once again. Jefferson faced a dilemma; he could either ask Congress to declare war on Britain for the *Chesapeake* affair and on the Barbary Powers for violating the treaty they had signed just a few years before, or he could try to diplomatically resolve the situations in the hopes that Congress would eventually agree to strengthen the navy so if war did come, the United States would be ready.

Ever the diplomat, Jefferson asked Congress to pass an Embargo Act in 1807 that would prohibit all foreign trade, both import and export. The Embargo Act was intended to force Britain and France to acknowledge American neutrality and stop preying on her merchant ships and sailors. Congress agreed, believing that an act similar to the non-importation/non-exportation agreement passed by the Continental Association prior to the Revolutionary War would be just as successful.²⁷⁶ However, it would seem they had forgotten the many issues the Association had in patrolling and maintaining the agreement throughout the various colonial ports.²⁷⁷ The Embargo Act fared even worse. The problem was that Jefferson was so focused on the impact that the loss of American goods would have on France and Great Britain, that he failed to realize the impact it would have on his own countrymen. Over the course of the sixteen months the Embargo Act was in effect, Americans suffered. Ships sat in harbors with cargoes they could not sell. Harvests rotted as they could not be transported. Government revenues themselves declined by \$9 million.²⁷⁸ Jefferson attempted to have both the Revenue Marines and the U.S. Navy

²⁷⁶ Enacted by the 10th Congress on December 26, 1807 and supplemented by an Act on January 9, 1808. <https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llhb&fileName=043/llhb043.db&recNum=359>

²⁷⁷ Remember the Murray brothers and the *Beulah* incident. For a reminder see Chapter 1.

²⁷⁸ Bradford, *America, Sea Power and the World*, 43.

intercept smugglers, but there were simply too many to stop. Jefferson ended up having to fight his own Republican party as the Federalists began to once again rise in power. The Embargo Act was finally repealed in 1809, just as Jefferson was leaving office, and Congress instead replaced it with the Non-Intercourse Act of March 1809.²⁷⁹

The Non-Intercourse Act allowed U.S. merchant ships to trade with anyone, anywhere, except in French and British ports. Believing this to be a good compromise, Congress failed to realize that once the ships left American waters, where the United States Navy and Revenue Marines were currently confined, the merchants were free to go where they chose and to trade with whomever they wanted. Still, it would be over another year before Congress, would once again repeal the Non-Intercourse Act and replace it with Macon's Bill Number 2 in May 1810.²⁸⁰ This bill promised to resume trading with Britain and France as long as they would stop attacking American merchant ships. Furthermore, if only one of the countries agreed to end their hostilities and respect America's trade neutrality the bill also promised to completely end trade with the opposing nation. France was quick to accept the deal, though time would later reveal that Napoleon had no intention of honoring the agreement.²⁸¹ Britain refused to concede and instead hostilities between the U.S. and Great Britain continued to mount as trade between the two was completely forbidden. The tensions continued to rise until finally President James Madison convinced Congress to declare war on Great Britain on June 18, 1812.

Prior to the start of the war, the people had lost whatever warmth they had towards the United States Navy from the Barbary Wars. The benefit was there, but thus far, they had not

²⁷⁹ Enacted by 10th Congress on February 11, 1809. <https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llhb&fileName=043/llhb043.db&recNum=484>

²⁸⁰ Enacted by the 11th Congress on May 1, 1810. <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/l1/llsl/llsl-c11/llsl-c11.pdf> The act itself is found on pages 605-606.

²⁸¹ For a complete discussion of France, Macon's Bill No. 2 and resulting War of 1812 see Lawrence Kaplan's "France and Madison's Decision for War, 1812," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 50 no. 4 (March 1964): 652-671.

made a great accounting for themselves in the protection of the United States in their own coastal waters. However, the fault was not entirely their own. Congress had severely limited the number the naval ships and seamen that were actively serving. In a report to the Navy Department on December 7, 1808, it shows that through Congressional limits, there can only be 150 midshipmen, 1,495 seamen, and 48 corporals allowed to be in active service. However, to carry out their orders and effectively protect the United States from the current hostilities they were facing, they needed 384 midshipmen, 3,425 seamen, and 192 corporals. The increase would have to be authorized by a special act of Congress.²⁸² After receiving the report, Congress approved the increase on December 12, 1808, to include 350 midshipmen, 4,447 able-semen, ordinary seamen, and boys, 191 corporals, and 659 privates.²⁸³ However, just seven months later, on July 19, 1809, the captains received a letter from the Naval Department to “forthwith cause to be paid off and discharged all the ordinary seamen and boys on board of the ____ ship, unless you should deem it especially necessary for the good of the service to retain a few as waiter for the cabin and wardroom. In this case you are permitted to retain as many as may be essentially necessary for this purpose.”²⁸⁴ The government, could not seem to make up their mind about how many men they needed to retain a navy capable of protecting the United States.

Instead, President Madison asked the Republican majority Congress to increase the size of the Army, which they did by authorizing an additional 75,000 men and appropriating \$2 million for ordinance, mostly to support the coming invasion they intended to lay against British occupied Canada.²⁸⁵ Congress believed that with their 111 ships currently guarding the North

²⁸² K. Jack Bauer, ed., *The New State Papers: Naval Affairs – Volume 7, Personnel*, (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1981), 14.

²⁸³ Bauer, ed., *The New State Papers-Vol 7*, 15. Also recorded in *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 272.

²⁸⁴ Bauer, ed., *The New State Papers-Vol 7*, 17.

²⁸⁵ Bradford, *America, Sea Power, and the World*, 44.

Atlantic, the Royal Navy was simply too big to ever fight a naval war with. The U.S. Navy had a mere seventeen ships at that time that could match the size of the Royal Navy ships-of-the-line and frigates, though the navy did have more gunboats than the Royal Navy. Congress believed that it was through an attack on Canada that Britain would be defeated and a naval campaign was not only futile, it was unnecessary.²⁸⁶ Time would show, though few had faith in the United States Navy, they were responsible for the few genuine victories in the War of 1812 and, though small, it was the men serving in the Navy that truly allowed the United States to emerge *status quo antebellum*, rather than defeated.

The Campaign of 1812 in Three Phases

The War of 1812 did not begin well for the United States. Congress began the war by ordering an invasion into Canada. However, the first attempt by General William Hull, resulted in the cowardly withdrawal of the United States Army at Detroit and subsequent surrender to British General Isaac Brock on August 17. The actions of General Hull resulted in the British control of the Great Lakes Huron, Michigan, and Superior.²⁸⁷ While the Army was struggling to carry out the campaign as set forth by Congress and the “war hawks”, the United States Navy, was faring better than anyone ever thought possible.

The *USS Constitution* was one of the first ships built when the United States Navy was first organized, and the original six frigates were commissioned under the Naval Act of 1794. She was launched in 1797 and served the Navy well in the Quasi-War with France as well as in the Mediterranean during the Barbary Wars. When she returned home in October 1807, she was refitted and repaired after her four-year cruise. The next few years the *Constitution* was used as a

²⁸⁶ Bradford, *America, Sea Power, and the World*, 44.

²⁸⁷ For a more comprehensive account of the attempts made to invade Canada in 1812 please see Alec Gilpin, *The War of 1812 in the Old Northwest* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1958) and Richard Felton, *The Call to Arms: The 1812 Invasions of Upper Canada* (Toronto, ON, Canada: Dundurn Press, 2012).

training ship and sometimes escort for ambassadors going to foreign countries. As tension with Britain rose, she was permanently called home in February 1812 and placed under the command of Isaac Hull, nephew of the soon-to-be-disgraced General William Hull. The first impressive showing of the crew of the *Constitution* came just as the war began.²⁸⁸

On July 12, 1812, Captain Isaac Hull set out to join a larger squadron of naval frigates meant to protect the Atlantic seaboard. However, five days into their journey they came across a British squadron of five ships. Knowing they would never be able to fight off five enemies at once, Hull ordered a retreat. The *Constitution* was making headway when nature decided to intervene. When the British ships were about twelve miles off and it seemed the *Constitution* would be able to make her escape, Captain Hull reports “the wind entirely left us and the ship would not steer.”²⁸⁹ After discussing it with his other officers they decided to attempt to tow the ship forward until they once again caught a favorable wind. The crew of the *Constitution* gallantly worked hard to tow the nearly 2,200 tons of weight with just eight of the ship’s boats. However, the British ships continued to gain and Hull reported, “It now appeared that we must be taken, and that our escape was impossible—four heavy ships nearly within gunshot, and coming up fast, and not the least hope of a breeze to give us a chance of getting off by outsailing them.”²⁹⁰ One of the Lieutenants, Charles Morris, suggested kedging the anchors so as to move the *Constitution* forward faster. The process was arduous and risky as it required “taking an anchor attached to a strong cable in a cutter and rowing it ahead some distance, dropping it, and

²⁸⁸ For a full account of the adventures of the *USS Constitution* during the War of 1812 see Tyrone Martin, *A Most Fortunate Ship: A Narrative History of Old Ironside* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1980); George Daughan, *If by Sea: The Forging of the American Navy from the Revolution to the War of 1812* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2008); and Alex Roland, et. al., *The Way of the Ship: America’s Maritime History Reenvisioned* (2008).

²⁸⁹ Daughan, *If By Sea*, 418.

²⁹⁰ Letter from Isaac Hull to Paul Hamilton, July 21, 1812. USS Constitution Museum Collection. <https://ussconstitutionmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/1296-2-transcript.pdf>

using the *Constitution*'s capstan to draw the ship to the anchor."²⁹¹ The tactic was an ingenious one, however, the British still had the advantage.

While the *Constitution* was on their own, the British had five ships and were able to lend one another aid, and indeed they did. Hull reports that the British ships sent all their cutters to the front most ship so that while the *Constitution* had only eight boats to pull her forward, the nearest British ship had double or more that number.²⁹² The British quickly closed the distance between themselves and the Americans and began firing their canons. However, Hull reported that not one of the shots fired ever hit them. The *Constitution*, on the other hand, returned fire and they had "every reason to believe that some of ours went on board her, as we could not see them strike the water."²⁹³ As the day continued and the crew worked tirelessly to move the *Constitution* forward so the British could not overtake them, a breeze finally picked up and they were able to allow two of the boats at a time to rest while the others continued their towing and kedging maneuvers. Unfortunately, the British caught the same breeze and were able to continue their pursuit. Hull determined it best to rid the ship of any weight it could possibly lose and opted to pump out the fresh drinking water the men had, knowing that if he were to break free of the British pursuit he could resupply and, if not, the British would be forced to give them provisions as prisoners of war.

Hull's actions paid off and during the night, with the wind picking up slightly, the *Constitution* began moving forward on her own faster than the men towing her could row. Everyone was brought back on board for some much needed rest, as a skeleton crew worked the

²⁹¹ Daughan, *If By Sea*, 418.

²⁹² Letter from Isaac Hull to Paul Hamilton, July 21, 1812. USS Constitution Museum Collection. <https://ussconstitutionmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/1296-2-transcript.pdf>

²⁹³ Letter from Isaac Hull to Paul Hamilton, July 21, 1812. USS Constitution Museum Collection. <https://ussconstitutionmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/1296-2-transcript.pdf>

ship. When the dawn broke, however, the wind died down and the cutters and crew were once again lowered to the ocean to do what they could to keep the *Constitution* ahead of the British war ships. All day they continued their game of cat and mouse with the *Constitution* just barely managing to widen her lead. They caught another favorable wind that night and the men once again were able to take a small rest. This time the wind held and, slowly, the *Constitution* widened her gap until, by July 19, Hull was about twelve miles ahead again and the British ships “gave over chase, and hauled their wind to the northward probably for the station off New York.”²⁹⁴

The chase had been long and the crew were worked tirelessly, in the hot July sun, with no breeze to cool them, and “notwithstanding the length of the chase, and the officers and crew being deprived of sleep, and allowing but little refreshment during the time, not a murmur was heard to escape them.”²⁹⁵ Hull commended his crew, many of whom were newly recruited to the U.S. Navy, writing, “I cannot in justice to the brave officers and crew under my command, close without expressing to you the confidence I have in them, and assuring you that their conduct while under the guns of the enemy, was such as might have been expected from American officers and seamen.”²⁹⁶ Congress may not have had confidence in their navy, but Captain Hull certainly did, and it wouldn’t be long before the *Constitution* would have occasion to prove once and for all that the United States Navy was not to be so easily dismissed.

Over the course of the next month, Hull continued to drill the new recruits so they would be ready when it came time to fight. During that time, he managed to subdue a few small British

²⁹⁴Letter from Isaac Hull to Paul Hamilton, July 21, 1812. USS Constitution Museum Collection. <https://ussconstitutionmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/1296-2-transcript.pdf>

²⁹⁵ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 2, 381. Words spoken by Hull to the people of Boston in a tavern one night as he retold the story and sought provisions for their next trip.

²⁹⁶ Letter from Isaac Hull to Paul Hamilton, July 21, 1812. USS Constitution Museum Collection. <https://ussconstitutionmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/1296-2-transcript.pdf>

ships and send them back to port as prizes, but nothing that came close to matching the size of the *Constitution*. On August 19, 1812, a mere two days after his uncle had surrendered to the British in Detroit without having fired a single shot, Captain Hull and the crew of the *Constitution* once again found themselves facing down one the ships that had chased them back in July. It was the *HMS Guerrière*, under the command of Royal Navy Captain James Dacres. The *Guerrière* was a heavy 38-gun frigate the British had captured from the French Navy and considered to be “among the best in her class...[and] consistently victorious in individual fights with similar warships of every other European country.”²⁹⁷ Captain Dacres, knew the *Constitution* had been built specifically to “combine the greatest possible force, with adequate strength, and swiftness of sailing, as to render [it] equal or superior, to any ships of their description belonging to the Powers of Europe”²⁹⁸ and he was anxious to put her to the test against one of the Royal Navy’s best frigates.

Captain Dacres, initiated the invitation to battle by dropping his sails and stopping his ship. Hull accepted the challenge and gave his account of what happened to Secretary of the Navy, Paul Hamilton as follows:

As soon as the *Constitution* was ready for action, I bore down with an intention to bring him to close action immediately; but on our coming within gun shot, she gave us a broad side, and filled away, and wore, giving us a broadside on the other tack, but without effect, her shot falling short. She continued wearing and manœuvring for about three quarters of an hour, to get a raking position – but finding she could not, she bore up and run under her topsails and gib...I immediately made sail to bring the ship up with her, and 5 minutes before 6 P.M. being alongside within half pistol shot, we commenced a heavy fire from all our guns, double-shotted with round and grape, and so well directed were they, and so warmly kept up, that in 16 minutes his mizen-mast went by the board and his main yard in the slings, and the hull, rigging and sails, very much torn to pieces. The fire was kept up with equal warmth 15 minutes longer, when his mainmast

²⁹⁷ Daughan, *If By Sea*, 420-421.

²⁹⁸ In a letter from Secretary of War Henry Knox to President George Washington, April 15, 1794. *George Washington Papers, Series 4, General Correspondence: Henry Knox, Report and Estimate on Building Frigates*. 1794. Manuscript/Mixed Material. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mgw438590/>.

and foremast went, taking with them every spar, excepting the bowsprit; on seeing this we ceased firing, so that in thirty minutes after we got fairly alongside the enemy, she surrendered...After informing that so fine a ship as the *Guerrière*, commanded by an able and experienced officer, had been totally dismasted and otherwise cut to pieces...you can have no doubt of the gallantry and good conduct of the officers and ship's company I have the honor to command. It only remains, therefore, for me to assure you, that they all fought with great bravery; and it gives me great pleasure to say, that from the smallest boy in the ship, to the oldest seaman, not a look of fear was seen. They all went into action, giving three cheers, and requesting to be laid close alongside the enemy.²⁹⁹

The incident resulted in seven dead and another seven wounded from the crew of the *Constitution*, and fifteen killed and sixty-two wounded from the *Guerrière*, including Captain Dacres.³⁰⁰ After the action, the *Guerrière* was deemed unsalvageable and after rescuing the British crew, Captain Hull had her set on fire and sunk to the bottom of the Atlantic. The *Constitution* was received back in Boston with “every demonstration of affection and respect...[and] an immense assemblage of citizens... [cheering them] with loud and unanimous huzzahs.”³⁰¹ The *Constitution* had won over the people and showed that the United States Navy was strong enough to challenge the Royal Navy, and win!

Following the incident between the *Constitution* and the *Guerrière*, the American public become enamored with the U.S. Navy once again. Several poems were written about the battle to honor Captain Hull and the men under his command.³⁰² They ring with sentiments of bravery and patriotism as well as the gentlemanly show of mercy when the enemy had finally conceded defeat. “Now success to the good CONSTITUTION, a boat, / Which her crew will defend while a plank is afloat, / Who never will flinch, or in duty e'er lag, / But will stick to the last by the

²⁹⁹ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 28.

³⁰⁰ A complete list of names and rankings of those killed and wounded from both ships can be found in *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 28-29.

³⁰¹ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 29.

³⁰² Two of these poems are found in Appendix II (Huzza for the Constitution) and III (Hull's Victory) .

American flag.”³⁰³ Though the war was just beginning, the U.S. Navy was once again inspiring patriotism in the people and encouraging them to act as Captain Hull had done, in showing mercy to the enemy. In addition, this battle was like to fuel to the fire for those who were fighting so desperately to ensure the growth and survival of the young navy.

While the proponents of the navy continuously challenged those who were anti-navy to find any instance when the U.S. Navy was beaten by the enemy when matched with a ship of equal size, their argument was fairly ridiculous.³⁰⁴ Rarely in battle are ships of equal size called upon to fight. As is more common, one combatant is usually larger in size or has better munitions than their opponent. History would be hard pressed to find more than a small handful of instances when a nautical rival was attacked by a far less superior adversary. When fighting on the water, the stakes are even higher than when fighting on land. Many times, a maritime victor has had to be rescued from peril by the defeated foe when the victor’s ship sunk from damages sustained during the battle. On the high seas, officers are taught to pick their battles wisely...if you can’t win, run, but fight bravely when it’s necessary to engage. As the British had not only more ships than the Americans, but also bigger ships than most of those contracted by the Navy, Congress hoped to protect the fleet by sending them out in squadrons rather than facing the enemy alone.³⁰⁵ The *Constitution* brought the debate to a close and more solo missions were soon authorized.

The battle between the *Constitution* and the *Guerrière* was not just eye opening for Congress and the people of America, but it also showed the British just how far the U.S. Navy

³⁰³ “Huzza for the Constitution,” broadside printed in 1812 to commemorate the victory of the *USS Constitution* over the *HMS Guerrière*. <https://ussconstitutionmuseum.org/collection-items/hulls-victory-or-huzza-for-the-constitution/>

³⁰⁴ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 2, 351.

³⁰⁵ The debate over this is best detailed by Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan in his book *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812*, 316-319.

had come from its Continental origins. The Royal Navy was often referred to as “the sovereignty of the ocean” and “the mistress of every sea.”³⁰⁶ They were the force to be wary of throughout the Atlantic World. They had little to no respect for what the Americans could muster up in terms of a navy. However, after the battle with the *Constitution*, the British gained a new found respect for the U.S. Navy. The *London Traveller* reported on a Parliamentary bill to build four more 74-gun ships, stating, “We do not scrupie to confess that we view with great uneasiness every advance made by Americans towards the formation of a formidable maritime force...Every man of common sense must indeed perceive the immense superiority of the naval power of Great Britain; but at the same time, surely no one will deny that if the Americans were to form a naval force of twenty frigates it would be to this country a most serious mischief...This is the moment for crushing the power, now in its infancy, which if allowed to attain virile strength, may baffle our endeavors.”³⁰⁷ In the United States Navy, the British had found a worthy foe.³⁰⁸ However, that meant the Royal Navy would be coming on even stronger than ever, so the Americans would have to answer back.

Their time would come, but before they did, the Army would make another attempt to complete their three-part phase of invading Canada. However, as the United States Navy celebrated their first great victory of the war, the Army once again suffered a devastating defeat. In mid-October, General Alexander Smyth took his troops into Canada across the Niagara River. Unfortunately, they were quickly defeated in the Battle of Queensland Heights on October 13, 1812, partly because the large number of New York militiamen sent to support the regular

³⁰⁶ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 61.

³⁰⁷ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 4, 28.

³⁰⁸ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 157. A British reporter in the *Quebec Mercury* wrote of Captain Isaac Hull and the crew of the *Constitution*, “From it the inference may be drawn, that a contest with the Americans is more worthy of our arms than was at first imagined. How often have we heard our military officers deplore their being obliged to vanquish men whose conquest would do then no credit. The behavior of the captain and crew of the *Constitution*, may serve to convince them of their error.”

contingent of army soldiers refused to cross into Canada stating, “their contractual obligation was limited to defense of their state and did not include offensive operations in another country.”³⁰⁹ The remainder of the blame for the loss on the Niagara River lies with General Smyth himself. When seeing the number of British soldiers they were up against and the depleted forces he was left with, Smyth, acting as a “coward and a traitor”³¹⁰ ordered all the men to winter quarters and refused to continue the operation. The actions of the militiamen and General Smyth resulted in a decided decline in respect for the United States Army and their effectiveness in protecting the United States. The *Ontario Messenger*, published in Canandaigua, New York reported on the action stating, “The old scenes of imbecility, treachery, and cowardice, have been again displayed upon our frontier. With grief and shame do we report that Smyth...who was to convince the American people that all their generals were not base, cowardly and treacherous...must be added to the catalogue of infamy which began with the name of [General William] Hull. Our minds are depressed with shame and our hands tremble with indignation at this final prostration of our dearest and fondest hopes...Never was a nation so cursed with worse generals than the American people seem to have been.”³¹¹ The loss of the battle was devastating to the military strategy as it gave controlled access of Lake Erie from the Atlantic completely over to the British, and also devastating with respect to the people’s support for the war in general, but the U.S. Army in particular. This left President Madison and Congress under attack by the media for the apparent ineptitude of the Army and militia. With the effectiveness and usefulness of the Army in question, the actions of the U.S. Navy were more pronounced and scrutinized than ever before.

³⁰⁹ Bradford, *America, Sea Power, and the World*, 46. See also, <https://armyhistory.org/the-war-of-1812-on-the-niagara-river/>.

³¹⁰ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 252.

³¹¹ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 251-252.

Shortly after Smyth's disgraceful showing on the Niagara River, Captain Stephen Decatur and the *USS United States* were presented with an opportunity to once again show the necessity and merit of the U.S. Navy. On October 25, 1812, the *United States* was sailing south of the Azores (an archipelago in the mid-Atlantic settled by the Portuguese), when they caught sight of a sail about twelve miles from their position.³¹² Though the *United States* was a 44-gun frigate, she carried 56, and she was known as the "Old Waggoner" because she was the slowest of the six frigates that had been constructed for the navy under George Washington. As such, Decatur recognized that he had power but not speed against the other vessel. As he was weighing his options on whether to attack or not, the other vessel made the choice for him.

Captain John Surman Carden of the Royal Navy was sailing the *HMS Macedonian*, a 38-gun ship carrying 49, to her port in the West Indies when he saw the sail of a ship near the Azores. Believing as most British did in the superiority of the Royal Navy and British ships, Carden took stock of the situation. He had received word that the *USS Essex* had been spotted in the region recently, and erroneously believed the ship in the distance to be the smaller, less well-manned, frigate.³¹³ Carden used the advantage he had of being in the windward position, and changed course to intercept the opposing vessel. It wasn't until they got closer that he realized his mistake. By then it was too late, and he had no choice but to attempt to overcome the slightly larger American vessel. However, the *Macedonian* also had in her favor "a decidedly superiority of speed; and, being just from England after a period of refit, was in excellent sailing trim."³¹⁴

³¹² Mahan, *Sea Power*, 416.

³¹³ John Latimer, *1812: War with America*, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 104.

³¹⁴ Mahan, *Sea Power*, 416.

As the two ships drew closer, Decatur understood that he was at a disadvantage in terms of speed and weather as there was also a squall brewing.³¹⁵ However, he was patient, and waited until the British frigate was about three miles away before beginning his maneuver to cross the *Macedonian's* bow.

Decatur's patience paid off. As the approaching ship drew closer, he realized that the *United States* had the advantage in terms of long-distance gun capabilities. Decatur fired the first round of broadside and the mizzen topmast was destroyed on the enemy's ship. The battle continued for ninety minutes, during which time the *Macedonian* crew "fought like tigers"³¹⁶ but the *United States* had completely destroyed the British ship, while having virtually no damage done to herself. In a letter reporting the battle to Secretary of the Navy, Paul Hamilton, Decatur wrote, "The *Macedonian* lost her mizzen-mast, fore and main-top-masts and main-yard, and was much cut up in her hull. The damage sustained by this ship [the *United States*] was not such as to render her return into port necessary, and had I not deemed it important that we should see our prize in, should have continued our cruise."³¹⁷

The *Macedonian* "dropped her colors" and surrendered the battle at noon. Decatur boarded the enemy ship and met Carden with respect and admiration. When Carden offered his officer's sword to Decatur in defeat, the American Captain told him that he would not accept such a token from "a man who has so bravely defended his ship. But I will receive your hand."³¹⁸ Decatur and his crew were quick to attend to the wounded of the enemy and offer them what succor they could. Carden was so distraught over the loss of the battle, that Decatur had felt it his duty to console him, but later remarked to one of his lieutenants that "half the pleasure of victory

³¹⁵ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 253.

³¹⁶ Latimer, 1812, 105. Also reported in *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 268.

³¹⁷ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 253. Letter from October 30, 1812.

³¹⁸ Latimer, 1812, 105.

was spoiled by his opponent's unhappiness."³¹⁹ Regardless, the men of the ship, though "the enthusiasm of every officer, seaman, and marine onboard this ship, on discovering the enemy – their steady conduct in battle, and precision of their fire, could not be surpassed," showed compassion and care for the crew of the *Macedonian*.³²⁰ It took a month of work to repair the *Macedonian* for sail back to the United States, during which time the two crews worked side by side in the middle of the Atlantic. After their return to Newport harbor,³²¹ Carden would go on to exaggerate the inequality between the two ships as an excuse for why he lost the battle, but there is no record that can be found of him ever disparaging the treatment he or his crew received in the aftermath from Captain Decatur or the crew of the *United States*. This example would continue to be seen in other naval battles and would become a major difference between the U.S. Navy and the privateers also patrolling the waters; a difference which will be discussed in detail later.

As with Hull's earlier victory, Decatur and the crew of the *United States* were hailed as heroes in broadsides as soon as the news of their victory arrived back in America. Heralding the virtues of valor and patriotism, the recounting of the battle in correlation with Hull's victory and the memory of the Revolution, once again inspired people to rally behind the U.S. Navy and to embody their same passion and character. "Ye heroes who bled for the rights of mankind, / Whose virtues and valor by freedom are shrin'd, / In the hearts of your sons – we swear by your fame, / That we never will tarnish our country's bright name. / For Columbia still generous, and brave, just and free, / Ere long of the ocean the mistress shall be."³²² Despite all odds, the U.S.

³¹⁹ Latimer, *1812*, 105.

³²⁰ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 253.

³²¹ According to Donald Hickey, this would be "the only time a British frigate has ever been brought in an American port as a prize of war" (*War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, 95).

³²² "Decatur's Victory," printed as a broadside in 1812. The entirety of the poem can be read in Appendix IV. http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-Yhs6TmY21Nk/UJb_CLoy1dI/AAAAAAAAA8s/pDUb_aCkaBk/s1600/3-decatursvictory.jpg

Navy was doing what everyone believed to be impossible and what had never happened before. They were actually defeating the Royal Navy. As can be seen in these broadsides, the American people believed that their success was due to the character of the American seamen, rather than the superiority of the ships as the British believed.

Once again, the United States Navy had excelled in their mission, and claimed a great victory (and a new ship) in the war Congress had deemed the navy was not prepared to fight, let alone win. Instead, Congress and Madison were still focused on invading Canada to get their foothold to the Great Lakes back again. In one last ditch effort the Army was ordered to Montreal to stifle British access to Lake Ontario by gaining complete control over the St. Lawrence River. However, when General Henry Dearborn, a hero in the Revolutionary War, Jefferson's Secretary of War, and Madison's Commander-in-Chief of the Army, led his troops to Montreal, the militia once again refused to cross into Canada. Rather than advancing with the 6,000 army regulars under his command, wintering at the Isle Aux Noix where he could establish a direct threat to Montreal, and awaiting reinforcements for a Spring attack, Dearborn instead retreated and cancelled the entire campaign. His actions would be later deemed a "miscarriage, without even heroism of disaster [that] afflicted the friends of war with conviction that they were doomed to defeat."³²³ While the 1812 campaign into Canada had ended in disaster with the British controlling all access to the Great Lakes, the year would end on a high note, as the *USS Constitution* would once again rise to glory in her second major battle of the war.

On December 29, 1812, the *Constitution*, now under the command of Captain William Bainbridge and carrying 54-guns, was cruising off the coast of Brazil about thirty-five miles

³²³ Charles J. Ingersoll, *Historical Sketch of the Second War Between the United States of America and Great Britain, declared by an Act of Congress, the 18th of June 1812, and Concluded by Peace, the 15 of February, 1815*, volume 1 of 3, (Philadelphia, PA: Lea and Blanchard, 1845), 102.

from St. Salvador, when a mast was seen in the distance. Both ships were eager to engage and shifted course to intercept the enemy. As they got closer, Bainbridge realized he was about to go up against the *HMS Java*, a 49-gun ship under the command of British Captain Henry Lambert.³²⁴ At about 1:50 PM the *Constitution* fired the first of shot over the bow as a warning to desist and surrender, wherein the *Java* responded by firing a full broadside. The *Constitution* was hit, destroying the wheel and instantly killing four midshipmen. At that point the fight commenced in earnest with both sides firing as often and with as much force as they could muster. The *Constitution* was much better prepared for the fight, with more seasoned men, more guns, and a more sturdily built ship.

After two hours of fighting, the guns from the *Java* had quieted, so the *Constitution* sailed a slight distance away to attend to their sails and wreckage. As they began pulling away, they heard sounds of cheering coming from the *Java*, and realized the enemy believed them to be retreating in surrender. The *Constitution* quickly returned and the fighting recommenced until the *Java* was decimated and Lieutenant Henry Chads, acting captain after Lambert was mortally wounded, ordered the men to surrender. Chads later reported his defeat to his superiors as an effort to save the lives of those on board, stating, “feeling that on having the great part of our crew killed, our bowsprit and three masts gone, several guns useless, we should not be justified in wasting the lives of more of those remaining.”³²⁵ On board the *Java* were not just sailors in the Royal Navy, but also the distinguished Lieutenant-General Thomas Hislop of the British Army, recently appointed to serve as the new governor of Bombay in India.

³²⁴ Fletcher Pratt, *The Compact History of the United States Navy* (New York, NY: Hawthorn Books, Inc, 1957), 81.

³²⁵ This account of the battle between the *USS Constitution* and the *HMS Java* is an amalgamation of information gathered from Lambert’s *1812* (152-153), Hickey’s *Forgotten Conflict* (95), and the personal account written by William Bainbridge to Secretary of the Navy Paul Hamilton on January 3, 1813, found in the *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3 (410-412).

The *Java* was so badly damaged that Bainbridge decided it would be best to ignite the powder and send the ship to the depths of the ocean. He wrote to Navy Secretary Hamilton, “The great distance from our own coast and the perfect wreck we made of the enemy’s frigate forbid every idea of attempting to take her to the United States; I had therefore no alternative but burning her.”³²⁶ After destroying the *Java*, Bainbridge was then left with his own crew, numbering between four and five-hundred men, and the enemy, which added another nearly four-hundred souls for which he was responsible. While the *Constitution* had lost nine men in the action, with twenty-five more wounded, including Bainbridge himself, and the *Java*, adding additional one-hundred-seventy wounded, it was decided they would make sail for St. Salvador. There Bainbridge reported, “I have landed all the prisoners on their parole, to return to England and there remain until regularly exchanged, and not to serve in their professional capacities in any place or in any manner whatever against the United States of America, until said exchange is effected.”³²⁷ After paroling the prisoners, Governor Lieutenant-General Hislop presented Captain Bainbridge with an “elegant sword...in compliment to his magnanimity and humanity towards the prisoners.”³²⁸ The U.S. Navy had lost another opportunity to grow their navy with an additional ship, but they had gained something far more valuable – the begrudging respect and fear of the enemy. Once news of the defeat of the *Java* reached England, the British Admiralty sent out a proclamation to all their naval ships forbidding them from engaging in one-on-one battles against any American frigates.³²⁹ In addition, they made plans to send a full contingent of ships to North America to deal with the problematic United States Navy.

³²⁶ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 410.

³²⁷ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 410.

³²⁸ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 412.

³²⁹ Hickey, *Forgotten Conflict*, 99.

The bigger issue faced by both sides was winter. The winter of 1812-1813 was particularly grueling; however, it was especially so for the United States Navy. With most of their ships trapped in the frozen harbors, it gave the British an opportunity to sail their squadron across the Atlantic. However, the British were still facing war with Napoleon and, with the winter storms on the North Atlantic, they were not able to send as many ships as the Admiralty would have liked. They were, nonetheless, able to set up effective blockades at most of the major harbors along the United States eastern seaboard, trapping many of the naval ships, like the *Constitution*, in port and keeping them from preying on British ships.³³⁰ To make matters worse, those few naval ships that were able to escape found themselves facing British squadrons, instead of single ships. The British, it seems, had found their weakness and corrected it, while the United States Navy was incapable of doing so due to a decided lack of ships and men – something that will be discussed in more detail in a later section of this chapter.

Suffice it to say, the Atlantic theater was a huge disappointment for the U.S. Navy in 1813 and 1814. Rather than the major successes they had seen in the first three months of the war, they were faced with nothing but tragedy. One highlight, that became a battle cry in later encounters, occurred when the *USS Chesapeake* (50 guns) was demolished by the *HMS Shannon* (52 guns) on June 1, 1813. Royal Navy Captain Philip Broke was able to entice U.S. Naval Captain James Lawrence into a battle, though Lawrence only accepted on condition that it was to be a single “ship to ship” battle to “try the fortunes of [their] respective flags.”³³¹ However, Lawrence’s crew was fairly new and untrained, and had not had opportunity to practice their fighting drills before engaging with the enemy. What they did have was bravery, courage,

³³⁰ For detailed information on the blockades see Hickey’s *A Forgotten Conflict*, pages 152-154 and 169-170, as well as Latimer’s *1812*, Chapter 7.

³³¹ Hickey, *Forgotten Conflict*, 157. Also mentioned in *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 4, 227.

perseverance, and intrepidity. Even as Lawrence lay mortally wounded on the deck of the ship, he kept telling his men, “Don’t give up the ship.”³³² Not long after, there was an explosion on the *Chesapeake*, though “whether the enemy threw on board a quantity of combustibles, or the explosion was accidental,” was unsure, though reports favor the explosion a “highly dishonorable” act of the British.³³³ It was at that point the crew, having most of their officers dead or wounded, realized that the fight was over and the ship was lost. They surrendered and in doing so opened the United States Navy to ridicule and defamation, just as the army had when they had surrendered in the 1812 Campaign. As it turned out, that is not what happened. The earlier actions of the *Constitution* and *United States* had garnered enough credibility that the reputation of the United States Navy would not be so easily censured. Captain William Bainbridge, in reporting the incident to Secretary of the Navy William Jones, wrote:

The well proved courage and skill of captain Lawrence, and the bravery of the officers and crew, justify a full belief that the loss of the *Chesapeake* has been entirely owing to some fortuitous event happening on board her, and not to any superiority of skill or bravery in the enemy. But should they [the British] improperly impute it to the latter they will find it necessary to give more than one solitary instance to convince our officers and brave tars that they are superior. We have lost one frigate, but in losing her, I am confident we have lost no reputation.³³⁴

The United States Navy would not have any more victories on the Atlantic front until late in the war in the early months of 1815. With the blockades in place, the majority of the focus would instead shift to what was happening in the Great Lakes region, where Captain Bainbridge’s comments implying the superiority of the U.S. Navy officers and crew would be put to the test.

Great Lakes Theater

³³² Hickey, *Forgotten Conflict*, 158.

³³³ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 4, 246. Confirmed to be a hand grenade by Lieutenant George Budd of the *Chesapeake* in a letter to Sec. Nav. William Jones, June 15, 1813, as prisoner of war in Halifax, *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 4, 290.

³³⁴ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 4, 246.

The earlier defeats of the U.S. Army during the first three phases of the 1812 campaign resulted in severe problems in the Great Lakes region. Access to the Great Lakes was blocked off in three different areas. That meant the armed forces had little to no naval support for future endeavors to gain ground into Canada. Furthermore, by blocking access to the Great Lakes, the British also controlled both the military and commercial supply lines of the entire Northwest frontier area. This meant food, ammunition, and reinforcements could only be brought to the U.S. forces by the much slower, cumbersome, and dangerous route – overland through lands controlled by British supported indigenous tribes. Meanwhile, the British had no such problems receiving what they needed by using the St. Lawrence River passage to the Great Lakes.

Though a small area in comparison to the mainland of Canada and the United States and the vastness of the Atlantic Ocean, all places where battles were frequently engaged in during the war, the Great Lakes area was the most important to its outcome. Captain A.T. Mahan of the United States Navy, in his two-volume dissertation on the value of sea power during the War of 1812, wrote, “The importance of the lakes to military operations must always be great, but it was much enhanced in 1812 by the undeveloped condition of land communications. With the roads in the state they then were, the movement of men, and still more of supplies, was vastly more rapid by water than by land.”³³⁵ The lakes were the main supply and communication route for both the British and American ground troops in the U.S. and Canada. Whoever controlled the lakes, controlled everything. Without the water routes, what took two days by ship, would take sixteen to twenty days – more in the winter and spring months – to deliver. When troops were waiting for instructions and food, the additional two to three weeks could not only prove fatal to the soldiers but could mean the difference between a substantial victory or an obliterating defeat.³³⁶

³³⁵ Mahan, *Sea Power*, 301.

³³⁶ Mahan, *Sea Power*, 301-307.

Understanding this importance, the campaign of 1813 was focused once again on invading Canada and forcing the British to the negotiation tables, only this time, the army would have support from the navy. Madison placed Commodore Isaac Chauncey in charge of the Great Lakes region. Chauncey opted to focus his attentions on Lake Ontario and place Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry in charge of Lake Erie. The first obstacle to overcome would be getting a fleet into the lakes. Chauncey had a very small force already stationed near Sackett's Harbour in New York, while there were no U.S. ships at all on Lake Erie. Perry was able to acquire and outfit eight ships, four converted merchant ships, two brigs, and two gunboats, at Black Rock, New York, on Lake Erie. Though the ships were not of the same caliber as the *Constitution*, specifically built for the United States Navy, they would prove sufficient. Part of the success of the naval operations in the Great Lakes area must be attributed to the fact that the Royal Navy also did not have any official naval ships in the area, though they had done as the Americans had and commandeered ships then filled them with British sailors and soldiers. A major part of the success should be attributed to the masterful ability of the U.S. Naval crews to capitalize on the mistakes the British made, and use them to their advantage. In the Great Lakes area, it was not so much the superiority of the U.S. Navy that conquered, but rather the ineptitude of the British. These successes not only show the ingenuity of those serving in the U.S. Navy, but also their perseverance, intrepidity, and loyalty.

The Battle of York, the Upper Canadian capital, was the first major loss for the British troops.³³⁷ Fought on April 27, 1813, on Lake Ontario, the battle began in Great Britain's favor.

³³⁷ There are three different incursions into York. The incident related here is the first. The next occurred in July 1813 when Commodore Chauncey, working with the U.S. Army Colonel Winifred Scott, landed a contingent of men and successfully acquired stores of food and munitions while the British troops were otherwise engaged with a different part of Chauncey's squadron on the western end of Lake Ontario. The third incursion resulted in the loss of a schooner sent under the guise of a white flag to determine the newly built reinforcements around York, and no actual U.S. Navy battle ensued.

General Sir Roger Sheaffe commanded the British forces at York, which consisted of ground troops as well as six naval vessels with ninety-six guns. Brigadier-General Zebulon Pike led the U.S. Army force which was to be assisted by Commodore Isaac Chauncey's U.S. Naval force which entailed three ships, fourteen schooners, and a combined force of 111 guns. Historian John K. Mahon is quick to point out that, "the broadside weight of these [guns] was no more than the British."³³⁸ Though the naval forces were fairly equal, the fact that the British forces controlled the shoreline with several heavily armed battlements gave them the advantage.³³⁹

When the U.S. Navy arrived at York, the wind was so strong it pushed them about three miles down the shoreline from where they wanted to be. This did not deter Pike, however, who took a small portion of his men ashore (700 of the 1700 soldiers in the troop) on April 27 and had Chauncey continue with the remainder of his troops.³⁴⁰ While the land troops engaged the British troops in land skirmishes, Chauncey slowly rowed the naval force into position along the shores of York. When the flotilla finally came into view of the battlements, the Americans found themselves under heavy fire and were forced to halt their progress. With the British naval force quickly approaching firing range, Pike and Chauncey were out of options. The combined force of the British Navy and land battlements were too great for an American victory. The U.S. commanders had two choices – attack the battlements or surrender. They decided to attack, though they were never actually made to.³⁴¹

Just as the Americans were preparing to disembark and attack, the closest battlement suddenly exploded because "someone had carelessly ignited an open powder magazine."³⁴² The

³³⁸ John K. Mahon, *The War of 1812*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 141.

³³⁹ Mahon, *The War of 1812*, 141-142.

³⁴⁰ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 4, 179.

³⁴¹ Mahon, *The War of 1812*, 142-143. This encounter is also related in *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 4, 178-179.

³⁴² Mahon, *The War of 1812*, 142.

explosion caused panic and confusion among the other British battlements along the shore and Pike was quick to take advantage of this. While leading the ground troops, he gave orders for Chauncey and the naval vessels “at a range of 600 yards rained grapeshot upon the artillery positions and upon Fort York.”³⁴³ Sheaffe knew it was only a matter of time before York fell into American hands. He ordered a general retreat and the British forces fled to the inland town of Kingston. This caused a break in the battle and Pike ordered a cease fire. As his men moved into the city to claim dominion, Pike stayed on the shore to observe the actions and progress of the approaching British naval fleet. Before the ships arrived, a wounded British soldier, hiding within one of the abandoned battlements, purposely ignited the ammunitions, resulting in another explosion with “the force of a volcano.”³⁴⁴

Pike was hit in the head by a large stone and died of his injuries within hours, thus leaving the Army forces, for a short time, in the command of Colonel Cromwell Pearce. If ever there was a time to for the British to strike and regain control of York, it was then. The U.S. Army was in a state of confused leadership, the navy was focused on the approaching ships, and the British had forces that could easily surround the fort, the Royal Navy having finally arrived. Instead, Sheaffe continued towards Kingston and the Royal Navy departed without firing a single shot. The battle could have easily belonged to the British, but they gave it up.³⁴⁵ The naval crews were commended by U.S. Army General Henry Dearborn for their “able and indefatigable exertions in every possible manner which could give facility and effect to the expedition” and for their “sound judgement, bravery, and industry.”³⁴⁶

³⁴³ Mahon, *The War of 1812*, 142.

³⁴⁴ Mahon, *The War of 1812*, 413.

³⁴⁵ Mahon, *The War of 1812*, 412-414.

³⁴⁶ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 4, 179.

It wasn't just the Army commending the actions of the navy during the Battle of York. In the broadside, *Capture of Little York*, the navy is praised for their bravery, valor, and national pride alongside the soldiers.

On the Lakes of the West, full of national pride,
See our brave little fleet most triumphantly riding,
And behold the brave tars on the fresh water-tide,
In a noble commander, brave CHAUNCEY, confiding.
Our foes on the ocean have been forced to yield,
And fresh laurels we now gather up in the field.

Their deeds of proud valor shall long stand enroll'd,
On the bright shining page of our national glory,
And oft in the deep winter's night shall be told,
The exploits of the tars of American story.
Our foes on the ocean have been forced to yield,
And fresh laurels we now gather up in the field.³⁴⁷

In addition to praising the navy and soldiers for their victory at the Battle of York, the poem also, with every one of the twelve stanzas, reminded the American people of the victories of the United States Navy in the Atlantic. The poem ends with a verse that encourages the people to act as the seamen and soldiers, lauded in the poem, to “arise, and gird on your sword, / And declare while you still have the means of resistance, / That you ne'er will give up at the threatening of words, / Nor of arms, those dear rights which you prize as existence,” and to never forget the valor and self-sacrifice of the men who had made those rights and that existence possible.

The next great battle in the Great Lakes region came just five short months later. Fought in September 1813, the Battle of Lake Erie resulted from the recent victory of the U.S. Army gaining control of the British Fort Malden, and the supply line that brought in food, ammunition, and reinforcements. This was a strategic victory for the Americans because it also weakened the British alliance with the Ohio Valley Indigenous tribes. Master Commandant Oliver Hazard

³⁴⁷ This poem was written in 1813 after the battle and printed on broadsides. *Capture of Little York* can be read in its entirety in Appendix V. <https://www.americanantiquarian.org/thomasballads/items/show/279>

Perry led the attack at Lake Erie commanding nine naval vessels with a total of fifty-four guns.³⁴⁸ His opponent was British Naval officer Robert Heriot Barclay, who commanded six ships that housed sixty-three pieces of artillery.³⁴⁹ Although the American guns were bigger – 32-pounders to the British 24-pounders – Great Britain had long range cannons on its side.³⁵⁰ As long as the British could stay out of the reach of the Americans they could demolish the U.S. Navy presence on Lake Erie without taking much damage to their own ships.

The British, nervous because of their shortage of men to crew the ships, refused to leave the stronghold of Amherstburg Navy Yard at the mouth of the Detroit River. Perry was in no hurry to engage Barclay since his own ships were also short on men, an issue that was common at the time and will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Finally, on September 9, with only one day worth of flour left, Barclay had a decision to make; they could go to battle and attempt to regain control of Lake Erie and reopen their supply lines, or they could abandon their position altogether in a cowardly act of retreat.³⁵¹ After a brief conference with his commanding officer, a joint decision was made that Barclay would engage the American ships and reclaim Lake Erie.

The battle that ensued was very nearly a British victory, despite Barclay's hesitation. The wind favored the British, at first nearly halting the advance of the American ships as they tried to sail into a mighty head wind. This allowed the British to decimate the U.S. fleet one at a time with long guns, while remaining unscathed. When the wind finally turned in favor of the Americans, there was barely enough of a breeze to maneuver the ships. The British continued a

³⁴⁸ William Jeffrey Welsh and David Curtis Skaggs, *War on the Great Lakes: Essays Commemorating the 175th Anniversary of the Battle of Lake Erie*, (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1991), 6.

³⁴⁹ Welsh and Skaggs, *War on the Great Lakes*, 7.

³⁵⁰ Welsh and Skaggs, *War on the Great Lakes*, 7.

³⁵¹ Welsh and Skaggs, *War on the Great Lakes*, 8.

steady barrage of gunfire against Perry on his flagship, *Lawrence*, named in honor of Captain James Lawrence who had so bravely died in the battle between the *USS Chesapeake* and the *HMS Shannon*. The British managed to sink one American vessel, before Perry decided to retreat and regroup. However, the British kept moving forward, disallowing the retreat. As the British approached, Perry, finding his forces finally in range of the British, commanded his ships to begin firing their heavier cannonades.³⁵²

Barclay's flagship, *Detroit*, took some heavy damage, but still managed to maintain the upper hand in the fight. Perry, realizing the *Lawrence* "could no longer annoy the enemy" due to "every brace and bow line being shot away...every gun rendered useless, and the greater part of her crew either killed or wounded," climbed in a small boat with a minimal crew and began oaring his way towards his next largest ship, *Niagara*.³⁵³ Barclay realized that if Perry reached the *Niagara*, then the onslaught would continue. Unsure that the *Detroit* could withstand another round of American cannonade, he ordered that Perry's small boat be blasted out of the water. Their actions were in vain. Providence seemed to be on Perry's side, as fifteen minutes later he boarded the *Niagara* and took command. Of the *Lawrence* Perry wrote, "It was with unspeakable pain that I saw, soon after I got on board the *Niagara*, the flag of the *Lawrence* come down, although I was perfectly sensible that she had been defended to the last, and that to have continued to make a shew of resistance would have been a wanton sacrifice of the remains of her brave crew. But the enemy was not able to take possession of her, and circumstances soon permitted her flag again to be hoisted."³⁵⁴ Using both the courage of the men he had left behind and the rallying cry of Captain Lawrence as his guide, Perry wrote the words, "Don't Give up the

³⁵² Welsh and Skaggs, *War on the Great Lakes*, 9-13.

³⁵³ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 5, 61.

³⁵⁴ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 5, 61.

Ship!” on a flag and had it hoisted as a battle flag for the remainder of the fight. With what remained of the U.S. Naval ships rallying to his position, he ordered the *Niagara* to move into position so that he might resume his barrage on the *Detroit*.³⁵⁵

Barclay knew that if Perry and his troops got within range, the British would lose the battle. The *Detroit* could simply take no more abuse and stay afloat. An assault with the long guns was not an option, as most of the guns on the port side had been damaged or lost during the last onslaught. As the *Niagara* approached, Barclay, though horribly wounded and on the surgeon’s table, ordered the *Detroit* and the second largest British ship, the *Queen Charlotte*, to turn, so that their starboard guns were in a position to fire. What commenced was a comedy of errors so great the British would lose because of them.

The lack of communication between the two British vessels resulted in the *Detroit* turning to the right and the *Queen Charlotte* turning to the left. Before anyone really understood what was happening, the *Queen Charlotte* rammed the *Detroit*, destroying the mizzen mast and rigging. “Now, at the most critical phase of the battle, the two largest British ships were locked together and helpless.”³⁵⁶ Perry was quick to monopolize the error in his favor, and after a few bloody minutes in which hundreds of British sailors lost their lives, Barclay ordered the white flag be raised. The British had lost another battle through their own errors and incompetence.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ Welsh and Skaggs, *War on the Great Lakes*, 12-13.

³⁵⁶ Welsh and Skaggs, *War on the Great Lakes*, 15.

³⁵⁷ Welsh and Skaggs, *War on the Great Lakes*, 13-15. For more information on the Battle of Lake Erie see: Charles E. Brodine Jr, "The War's Pervasive: Naval Dimensions," *Naval History* 26 (2012): 18-23; Joseph F. Callo, "How the Battles of Lake Erie and Lake Champlain Influenced the American Narrative," *Hudson River Valley Review* 29, (September 2012): 97-115; Donald R. Hickey, *Don't Give Up the Ship!: Myths of the War of 1812*, (Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2006); A.T. Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812: Volume Two*, (London, Marston & Company, 1905); David Curtis Skaggs, *Oliver Hazard Perry: Honor, Courage, and Patriotism in the Early U.S. Navy*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006); David Curtis Skaggs and Gerard T. Altoff, *A Signal Victory: The Lake Erie Campaign 1812-1813*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1997); Oliver Hazard Perry, "Oliver Perry's letter to the Secretary of the Navy," Prologue: Pieces of History, National Archives; and William H. White, "The War of 1812 Year Two, 1813," *Sea History* no. 136 (October 2011): 10-15.

Of the U.S. Naval crews, Perry commended, “Those officers and men who were immediately under my observation evinced the greatest gallantry, and I have no doubt that all the others conducted themselves as became American officers and seamen.”³⁵⁸ Throughout the action, only twenty-seven naval seamen were killed, with an additional ninety-six wounded.³⁵⁹ As for the British, the number of killed and wounded was not ascertained at the time of Perry’s report, but he sent the unwounded British to the Army for them to deal with, and the wounded he cared for “governed by humanity” and paroled them on their recognizance.³⁶⁰ Of the battle itself, Perry simply reported to Chauncey, “We have met the enemy, and they are ours.”³⁶¹ All in all, the battle showed the courage, perseverance, intrepidity, and compassion that the U.S. Navy was becoming known for.

This was something that was noticed by the populace as well. After the battle another broadside was printed, this time to honor Perry and the men he commanded in the Battle of Lake Erie. The majority of the poem focuses on the actions of Perry and his men. The poem calls the seaman of the U.S. Navy the “true sons of Mars” meaning that they had the hearts and souls for war and fighting. Many may recognize Mars as the Roman god of war, but he was also the god of agriculture and in the Roman culture was not seen as a defender and protector, which was his sole reason for going to war. By calling the seamen the “true sons of Mars” they are being lauded as protectors and defenders which implies a level of justice and compassion behind their actions. They are not made out to be fighters, but rather men fighting for a cause – namely to protect and defend their country. Other words used to describe Perry and his men are brave, valor, undaunted, proud, hero, and gallant. It is the beginning of the last two stanzas that really echo the

³⁵⁸ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 5, 61.

³⁵⁹ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 5, 62.

³⁶⁰ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 5, 61.

³⁶¹ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 5, 60.

pride the people had in the United States Navy. “Great Britain may boast of her conquering heroes, / Her Rodney, her Nelson, and all the whole crew, / But none in her glory have told such a story, / Nor boasted such feats as Columbians do.”³⁶² It was obvious the United States Navy had made their impact on society and were becoming the heroes to be emulated and admired, examples of what an American man should strive to be.

The final, highly influential Great Lakes maritime battle that will be discussed here occurred on Lake Champlain on September 10, 1814 – just a year and day after the Battle of Lake Erie. Lieutenant Thomas Macdonough (a midshipman under Decatur in the Mediterranean and one of the men who participated in the burning of the *USS Philadelphia*)³⁶³ led the U.S. Navy during this battle while Commodore George Downie led the British Navy, though he was still under the command of Admiral James Yeo. Once again, the British defeat came at their own hands. It was Admiral Yeo’s overconfidence and pride that led to defeat and not the ship captains’ forced surrender to Macdonough after a gruesome and bloody battle.

During the first two years of the war, Macdonough was ignored by the British Navy and left to rule the water of Lake Champlain with no interference. Yeo assumed that Lake Champlain could wait; there were other more important conquests to make first. However, he was wrong in his estimation. Skaggs explains, “In effect, Lake Champlain constituted a freshwater sallyport from which an army could strike at the economic heartland of either country, but its military use required naval superiority.”³⁶⁴ Left to his own devices, Macdonough, under the instruction of Commodore Chauncey, used the time to build a naval force, the likes of which the British had

³⁶² “Perry’s Victory” was printed as a broadside in 1813 to honor Commodore Perry and the Battle of Lake Erie. <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/glc05511> The entirety of the poem can be found in Appendix VI.

³⁶³ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 7, 42.

³⁶⁴ David Curtis Skaggs, “More Important Than Perry’s Victory.” *Naval History* 27 (October 2013): 20-28.

not previously seen. When Yeo finally became aware and concerned, he also began constructing more ships leading to a race to see who could build the largest force the fastest.³⁶⁵

After April 1814, when Napoleon had finally been exiled to Elba, the British decided to change their tactics and go on the offensive with the United States, rather than the defensive. With Napoleon out of the picture, the war with France was concluded and the British decided it was time to focus their attentions on the United States. It was at that time, Yeo decided that “Lake Champlain became a major focus for a joint army-navy attack designed to reconfigure the American-Canadian boundary in Britain's favor.”³⁶⁶ The plan was to have the British Army march south through Plattsburg and Albany, New York, in an effort to cut off New England from the rest of the United States and claim the land for Great Britain. The British Navy would provide the necessary support from the water. Downie instigated the attack on the U.S. Navy on Lake Champlain at Yeo’s insistence, with reinforcements of about 10,000 soldiers arriving to shore up the British numbers. Though Macdonough had managed to build a strong naval support, the British had more ships and more firepower.³⁶⁷

Macdonough knew that he stood no chance of winning an engagement against a British Navy force of seventeen ships (with a total of 95-guns) on the open waters of Lake Champlain.³⁶⁸ Instead, using fine honed strategic methods, he placed his fleet of fourteen ships (with a total of 86-guns) in a narrow channel, off the Cumberland Head, and dropped anchor. If the British wanted to attack, they would have to enter the channel on the offensive. General Andrew Macomb was launching his own attack to attempt to thwart the arrival of the British reinforcements, but they were also greatly outnumbered. Macdonough “effectively

³⁶⁵ Skaggs, "More Important Than Perry's Victory", 20-28.

³⁶⁶ Skaggs, "More Important Than Perry's Victory", 20-28.

³⁶⁷ Skaggs, "More Important Than Perry's Victory", 20-28.

³⁶⁸ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 7, 41.

communicated his desires and objectives to his subordinates and inspired them with not only an effective battle plan but also the broader objective of supporting General Macomb's land troops and the national objective of repelling the British invaders."³⁶⁹ Macdonough's ploy worked and the British engaged.

The wind, as it had on Lake Erie, played a vital role in Macdonough's tactics. His unencumbered time spent on Lake Champlain had afforded him a chance to strategize and determine the best possible place to center his fleet. The Cumberland Head was protected on one side by a peninsula enshrouded in high rock formations. Macdonough knew that the rock formations served to change the direction of the wind – they did not blow in towards land, they blew out towards open water. It was there that Macdonough laid anchor with his squadron. Downie sailed his ships around the tip of Cumberland Head and found that he had to fight nature to remain in position. Macdonough took advantage of the British's preoccupation with trying to gain a fighting position and let the American cannonade fly.³⁷⁰ He wrote to Secretary of the Navy, William Jones, that though his ship and crew were taking heavy fire, "I could perceive at the same time, however, that our fire was very destructive to [them]."³⁷¹

The battle which ensued lasted "without intermission for two hours and twenty minutes."³⁷² The first onslaught of heavy fire resulted in Downie's death and command of the *Confiance* was transferred to Lieutenant James Robertson. He continued to fight the bloody battle until both ships finally relented their assault so that they could assess for damages. Macdonough reported, "Our [ships] were about obeying with alacrity the signal to [fight] when all the vessels were reported to me to be in a sinking state...I could only look at the enemy's

³⁶⁹ Skaggs, "More Important Than Perry's Victory", 20-28.

³⁷⁰ Skaggs, "More Important Than Perry's Victory", 20-28.

³⁷¹ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 7, 41.

³⁷² *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 7, 42.

[ships] going off in a shattered condition, for there was not a mast in either squadron that could stand to make sail on."³⁷³ Both the *USS Saratoga* and the *HMS Confiance* had lost most of their guns. However, Macdonough quickly devised a strategy to end the battle in victory. He had his crew drop the anchor on one side of the ship, forcing the *Saratoga*, from the movements of the churning waters only, to spin 180-degrees so that her starboard side was now bearing down on what was left of the mangled starboard side of the *Confiance*. Robertson, realizing the fight was futile and victory impossible, dropped his colors and surrendered to Macdonough. The British Royal Navy had lost yet another victory, due to Yeo's underestimation of the capabilities and ingenuity of the U.S. Navy.³⁷⁴ A new reporter for the *Burlington Centinel* wrote of the incident:

In every thing but courage and good conduct, were the enemy our superiors. We must question if even a "British official" will dare to brazen us out of the glory of this victory in the eyes of the world. It is very certain that the British ships were manned with picked men; ours with the "common run" of our sailors, who are better than the best of the British. Ecce Signum! [Behold the proof!] The battle was exceedingly obstinate; the enemy fought gallantly; but the superiority of our gunnery was irresistible. We fired much oftener than they did...Salutes and illuminations, in all parts of the United States yet heard from, have celebrated Macdonough's glorious victory.³⁷⁵

The battle would prove to be one of the longest and bloodiest of the War of 1812 naval encounters.³⁷⁶ However, due to Macdonough's victory, the British Army, having lost their naval support and not willing to take the risk of invasion without control of Lake Champlain, retreated

³⁷³ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 7, 41-42.

³⁷⁴ Skaggs, "More Important Than Perry's Victory", 20-28. For information on the Battle of Lake Champlain see: Alan Axelrod, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to American History*, 3rd ed., (Indianapolis: Alpha Books, 2003); Charles E. Brodine Jr, "The War's Pervasive: Naval Dimensions," *Naval History* 26 (2012): 18-23; Joseph F. Callo, "How the Battles of Lake Erie and Lake Champlain Influenced the American Narrative," *Hudson River Valley Review* 29, (September 2012): 97-115; C.S. Forester, "Victory on Lake Champlain," *American Heritage* 15, (December 1963): 4-90; Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1989); and A.T. Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812: Volume Two*, (London, Marston & Company, 1905).

³⁷⁵ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 7, 43.

³⁷⁶ The *Chesapeake* vs. the *Shannon* is considered the bloodiest of the battles when comparing the number killed and wounded to the number of men in the engagement. However, this battle on Lake Champlain, which resulted in 52 killed and 58 wounded on the American side, and 84 killed and 110 wounded on the British side, ranks in the top 10 of bloodiest naval battles in the War of 1812.

back to Canada. It would later be remarked by “one of the [British] marines who was in the Trafalgar action with Lord Nelson, who says it was a mere flea-bite in comparison with this [Lake Champlain battle].”³⁷⁷ Even so, Macdonough met the defeated British commanders with every courtesy. When they presented him with their officer’s swords, Macdonough is reported to have told them, “Gentlemen, your gallant conduct makes you worthy to wear your weapons. Return them to their scabbards.”³⁷⁸ British Captain Wood extolled Macdonough as being “most delicate, honorable, and kind. Thus, the Americans are making themselves respected by their generosity of character, as well as their gallantry.”³⁷⁹ It would only be a few months later that the war would end with the signing of the Treaty of Ghent in December 1814. The battle on Lake Champlain, was a decisive victory that kept the United States from losing the War of 1812 and a major portion of New England – all thanks to the courage, bravery, perseverance, and intrepidity of the United States Navy.

From the battle Macdonough was exalted as a hero for reigning superior over a much larger Royal Navy force. One of the broadsides written about this battle places him in higher regard than any other naval officer of the day. “But, O! what chaplet can be found / MACDONOUGH’S brows to grace? / ‘Tis done! the glorious wreath is bound / Which time can ne’er efface. / And still a just – a rich reward, / His country has to give; / He shall be first in her regard, / And with her PERRY live!”³⁸⁰ Macdonough and his men had definitely earned the glory

³⁷⁷ Written in a letter home by Midshipman William Lee, as recorded in Willis J. Abbot’s *The Naval History of the United States*, Volume 2, (New York, NY: Peter Fenelon Collier, 2008), e-book, Chapter 8. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/26416/26416-h/26416-h.htm#page552> Also quoted in Hickey’s *Forgotten Conflict*, 198.

³⁷⁸ Abbot, *Naval History of the United States*, Chapter 8.

³⁷⁹ Latimer, *1812*, 359.

³⁸⁰ This broadside, printed in 1814, features both the poem “The Battle of Plattsburgh” and “Commodore Macdonough’s Victory.” The later can be found in its entirety in Appendix VII. [https://www.meisterdrucke.uk/fine-art-prints/American-School/430569/Broadside-from-the-War-of-1812,-featuring-Battle-of-Plattsburgh-and-Victory-on-Lake-Champlain-\(print\).html](https://www.meisterdrucke.uk/fine-art-prints/American-School/430569/Broadside-from-the-War-of-1812,-featuring-Battle-of-Plattsburgh-and-Victory-on-Lake-Champlain-(print).html)

and fame they deserved from this naval battle.³⁸¹ However, once again, it was the entire United States Navy glorified in the last two stanzas of the poem for not only their actions on the Great Lakes but for their actions on the ocean as well. “Columbia! though thy canon’s roar / On inland seas prevail, / And there alone – while round each shore / Outnumbering ships assail. / Yet deed with deed, and name with name / Thy gallant sons shall blend, / Till the bright arch of naval fame, / O’er the broad ocean bend.” The people believed in the might of their navy to conquer the ocean and completely displace the Royal Navy. Similarly, they felt the same way about their country. The United States Navy had become not just an example of the ideals of American manhood and masculinity of the time, they had become them emblem of American prowess and power to the people.

However, while the United States Navy was seeing a lot of success in the Great Lakes, the British Navy continued their successful campaign to blockade the Atlantic seaboard, expanding their blockade from Maine to Georgia after the defeat of Napoleon. The blockade reduced the United States export revenue from \$61 million in 1811 to less than \$7 million, and the import revenue from \$53 million to \$13 million.³⁸² In addition, the British Navy “having destroyed a great portion of the coasting craft whose owners were hardly enough to venture to

³⁸¹ In his *Manual of Naval Tactics*, Commander James Harmon Ward wrote in 1859, “...the careful student will find in history no general action fought at anchor more instructive, therefore more worthy of his attentive notice, close study indeed, than this, viewed in whatever aspect – whether in reference to the attack or the defence, the personal or the material, skill or science, gunnery or seamanship, or as furnishing examples, in most of these respects, as warning as well as for imitation...Let the service and the country render tardy justice, and make the name McDonough, as Perry’s and Decatur’s have long been, the synonym of heroic gallantry” (pg 119). Theodore Roosevelt said this about him in his book, *The Naval War of 1812*, “Macdonough in this battle won a higher fame than any other commander of the war, British or American. He had a decidedly superior force to contend against... and it was solely owing to his foresight and resource that we won the victory...His skill, seamanship, quick eye, readiness of resource, and indomitable pluck are beyond all praise. Down to the time of the Civil War he is the greatest figure in our naval history. A thoroughly religious man, he was as generous and humane as he was skilful and brave; one of the greatest of our sea-captains, he has left a stainless name behind him” (quoted in H.C. Washburn, “The Battle of Lake Champlain,” *Naval Institute Proceedings* 40 no. 153 (September 1914): 1365-1386, 1386).

³⁸² Hickey, *Forgotten Conflict*, 200.

sea, seem determined to enter the little out ports and villages, and burn every thing that floats...[However] these barbarisms [though] horrible; [would] have effect directly the reverse of what the enemy expects, and rouse the nation to every exertion.”³⁸³ The victory on Lake Champlain was a much needed victory to overcome the devastation of the burning of the capitol just a month earlier. As 1814 drew to a close, a broadside was circulating up and down the coast, the words of a poem by Francis Scott Key that gave renewed hope to the people and inspired them to take a stand.

O! thus be it ever when freemen shall stand,
 Between their lov'd home, and the war's desolation,
 Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the Heav'n rescued land,
 Praise the Power that hath made and preserv'd us a nation!
 Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
 And this be our motto –“In God is Our Trust.”³⁸⁴

The effects of the war, though they were greatly felt by all, were most especially felt by those that relied on the water for their support. Commercial and fishing operations in New England went bankrupt. Western cities like Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Lexington, required water ways for imports and exports. Most southern economy was directly tied to the Chesapeake Bay, which suffered the worst from British blockade and raids. On September 20, 1814, President Madison gave his state-of-the-union address to Congress stating, “It is not to be disguised that the situation of our country calls for its greatest efforts. Our enemy is powerful in men and money; on the land and on the water...From such an adversary, hostility in its greatest force and in its worst forms, may be looked for...[Regardless], the American people will face it with undaunted spirit...His threats and his barbarities, instead of dismay, will kindle in every bosom an indignation not to be extinguished but in the disaster and expulsion of such cruel

³⁸³ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 6, 317.

³⁸⁴ Francis Scott Key, “Defense of Fort McHenry,” September 14, 1814. Later to become the national anthem and renamed the Star-Spangled Banner.

invaders.”³⁸⁵ In his speech he highlighted the various naval battles, even more than he did the army victories, calling on the people to emulate the attributes of the U.S. Navy (brave, gallant, intrepid, heroic, daring, and valiant), claiming they had “merited all the effusions of gratitude which their country is ever ready to bestow on the champions of its rights and of its safety.”³⁸⁶ Throughout the War of 1812, the U.S. Navy was an inspiration to the people and in the wake of a *status quo antebellum peace* treaty, became a beacon of pride and patriotism in an otherwise desolate aftermath of a futile war.

Social Impact of the Naval Victories

The U.S. Navy in the War of 1812 faced some very stout competition both abroad and at home. It was obvious from the beginning that the United States Navy was out-manned, out-gunned, and out-financed in comparison with the Royal Navy. At the beginning of the war, not only was the U.S. Navy undermined and underrated, in the eyes of their own Congress, they were also fighting against a large portion of their populace, as the Federalists, who were once their strongest allies, did not believe they should be praised for participating in a war the Federalists claimed was “unholy – wicked – base – perfidious – and corrupt.”³⁸⁷ In fact, the State Senate of Massachusetts, controlled by the Federalists at the time, went on record stating, “It is not becoming a moral and religious people to express any approbation of military or naval exploits that are not immediately connected with the defense of our sea-coast and sail.”³⁸⁸ In their mind, the United States Navy, a representative of the United States, should not be participating in a war that was not supported by a large fraction of the people. However, what

³⁸⁵ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 7, 31-32.

³⁸⁶ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 7, 31.

³⁸⁷ McCloskey, “The Campaign of Periodicals,” 262-263.

³⁸⁸ McCloskey, “The Campaign of Periodicals,” 263.

they failed to realize was that the United States Navy was defending the sea-coast and sails in every action they had seen in the War of 1812.

The Royal Navy wanted to make a point to the rest of the world, after their failure to defeat the colonists in the Revolution. Though having had some inspiring moments in the Barbary Wars, they could easily be viewed as pure luck and happenstance, especially when, their greatest moments saw the loss of some of their best ships and bravest men. Prior to the War of 1812, the U.S. Navy was viewed by the British as less than worthy to even be considered a menace for the Royal Navy to deal with. In the *London Quarterly Review* in September 1812, it was written, “We will not stop to degrade the British Navy by condescending to enter into a comparison between high order, the discipline and comfort of an English man-of-war and an American frigate. We disdain any such comparison.”³⁸⁹

The British quickly changed their minds as they faced defeat after defeat in 1812 on the Atlantic front and then in the Great Lakes region in 1813 and early 1814. By July 2, 1814, the *London Times* reported, “There is but one way to turn the current of [the Americans’] thoughts and efforts from their present direction; and that is, to crush their growing navy to atoms. The enterprize may be twice as difficult now as it would have been (had our means then permitted) in the first month of the war; but it will infallibly be ten times as difficult, nay, it may become absolutely impossible, if it is delayed till a future war.”³⁹⁰ In response... Baltimore news reporter Hezekiah Niles wrote, “As to crushing our little navy...the British want better heels and better hands to do it...We acknowledge this is vexatious, and not a little humiliating to the pride of [the British Navy], and therefore allow him to grumble.”³⁹¹ Due to the early successes of the

³⁸⁹ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 414.

³⁹⁰ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 7 supplement, 192.

³⁹¹ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 7 supplement, 192.

Constitution, and the *United States*, the people rallied around the U.S. Navy and refused to admonish any of their efforts, even when they were defeated by the British.

One such incident came in the early months of 1815, on January 13. The *USS President* (56-guns), under the control of Commodore Stephen Decatur, having been blockaded in New York Harbor attempted to slip past the blockade during a winter storm. Unfortunately, the *President* ran aground on a sandbar and was stuck for nearly two hours. Before Decatur was able to free the *President*, they found themselves facing a quickly approaching British squadron of four other ships. The fastest of these ships, and the fastest in the British Navy, was the *HMS Endymion*, which reached Decatur and the *President* first on January 14. Decatur barely managed to free his ship from the sandbar when they were forced to engage with the *Endymion*. However, Decatur quickly discovered that his ship had been damaged in their efforts to free her from the sandbar and had severely diminished maneuverability, “having lost her sailing trim.”³⁹²

The *Endymion* opened fire on the *President* and attempted to overwhelm them. The *United States Gazette* reported on the incident writing, “The *Endymion* being the leading ship, come up to her, and getting close, under the quarter, kept up a destructive fire, cutting up and crippling the rigging of the *President*. To suffer this was to make capture certain, without inflicting any injury on the enemy. The commodore, therefore, bore up and engaged the *Endymion*, after a severe fight of two hours, silenced, and beat her off.”³⁹³ At that point, Decatur knew he had no choice but to attempt to return to port where he would have reinforcements and could repair his ship. However, his ship was so badly damaged that within three hours, he had made poor progress on his escape and was overcome by the *HMS Pomone* and the *HMS Tenedos*, followed closely by the *HMS Majestic* and the return of the *Endymion*. Decatur, in an

³⁹² *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 7, 365.

³⁹³ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 7, 365.

effort to save the lives of his crew, surrendered. However, this was not seen in the same vein as General Hull's cowardly surrender to the British Army in the early months of the war. Instead, it was seen as a noble sacrifice. The *United States Gazette* again reported:

Though it gives us cause to lament over the loss of valuable lives and a noble ship, [it] affords us fresh proof, if such are necessary, of the gallantry and skill of our navy. It was a fortunate circumstance for Decatur that the situation of the enemy gave him an opportunity of fighting a distinct battle with the *Endymion*, and accomplishing a positive and splendid victory over her, before the other force could come up and overwhelm him with numbers....However we may lament the loss of the brave men who fell in this contest, the services of those wounded or carried into captivity, or of the vessel herself (which, we can easily replace), we rejoice that our naval glory remains untarnished...and hail our tars as masters of the sea, ship to ship and man to man.³⁹⁴

Even after the struggles with the blockades and the basic ineffectiveness of the U.S. Navy in the Atlantic Theater past 1812, the reputation of American's new navy was positive, growing, and hard to tarnish. With this new found respect, all questions of whether the United States needed a navy or the restrictions necessary to growing the navy were put to rest. They had become a part of the American culture and were destined to remain that way.

Even more important than gaining the respect of the British, and by extension other countries with strong naval powers like the French and Dutch, was gaining the respect of the American people. As the example of the *President* shows, people were willing to excuse the failures of the U.S. Navy in light of the way they handled themselves in prior actions. In all their encounters with the British, the U.S. Navy had exhibited courage, bravery, loyalty, perseverance, intrepidity, and most especially compassion. These attributes became ideas that were then merged with the ideals of manhood and masculinity at the time. Those who deserted from the army, or were hesitant to fulfill their orders, or refused to fight at all, were labeled as cowards,

³⁹⁴ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 7, 365.

traitors, and feeble. They were deemed enemies of the United States, even if they were considered citizens.

To make matters worse, there were some who, in seeking to improve their own fortunes, were smuggling goods to whomever was willing to purchase them, including the enemy. Prior to the start of the war, and in spite of Jefferson's Embargo Acts, trade across the Canadian border was a booming business. The Atlantic and Great Lakes provided those in the northwest frontier region with "textiles, plaster of paris, pottery, salt, and sugar products," all provided by the British.³⁹⁵ In return, the British were given whatever other provisions they needed. The trade was so lucrative that when the war began, "British officials in Canada explicitly authorized the export of all goods to the United States and ordered British subjects in the Maritime provinces not to molest the goods or vessels of American citizens 'so long as they shall abstain, on their parts, from any Acts of Hostility'."³⁹⁶ The same illicit trading happening in the Atlantic North East and Great Lakes regions, was also occurring in Florida, Louisiana, and in some Southern ports as well.³⁹⁷

The problem was that no one was willing to prosecute the offenders, because most of those in the legal system and who would make up a jury of their peers, also had a hand in the smuggling operations.³⁹⁸ Madison tried to enforce new trade restrictions in 1813 by passing a new Embargo and Non-importation Act into law, but they were just as ineffective as Jefferson's had been. Madison simply did not have the naval or Revenue Marine support he needed, as the ships were all busy attempting to protect the United States from the Royal Navy.³⁹⁹ After

³⁹⁵ Hickey, *Forgotten Conflict*, 170.

³⁹⁶ Hickey, *Forgotten Conflict*, 170.

³⁹⁷ Hickey, *Forgotten Conflict*, 171.

³⁹⁸ Hickey, *Forgotten Conflict*, 172.

³⁹⁹ Hickey, *Forgotten Conflict*, 173.

Napoleon was defeated, and European trade was once again open, Madison asked Congress to repeal both acts and only make it illegal to trade directly with the enemy.⁴⁰⁰

While there were many who participated in smuggling operations, there were still plenty who did not support it and believed those who were smuggling were not only traitors to their country, but traitors to the navy and the reputation they were building. In a news article from February 5, 1814, Niles reported, “A smuggler to the eastward, on hearing of the tight provisions of the embargo law, set fire to his vessel, in great rage at the ‘destroyers of commerce,’ and she was consumed. Have the smugglers and neutrals determined to *give up the ship?* Goods to the value of 25 or \$30,000 were lately seized near Portland, Maine, but the gang of traitors made their escape.”⁴⁰¹ Sacket’s Harbour was set up as the base of operations for both the Army and Navy, in great part to attempt to squelch the smuggling operations with Canada.⁴⁰² The small band of men specifically sent to deal with the smugglers were led Navy Lieutenant Francis Gregory. Of Gregory and the men who served with him it was written they “displayed a degree of firmness, intrepidity, and patriotism on the occasion worthy the sons of freemen and defenders of republican government” that inspired others to act in the same manner.⁴⁰³

In addition to smuggling, the United States also had to contend with the privateers that nearly ruined the reputation of the good naval seamen. Niles writes an entire editorial piece on September 26, 1812, explicitly stating the fact that the United States needs a navy to protect it and that the current force was insufficient. He goes on to condemn Congress for not increasing the number of ships and seamen in the navy when “there are very few ports in the United States

⁴⁰⁰ Hickey, *Forgotten Conflict*, 175.

⁴⁰¹ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 5, 380.

⁴⁰² For more information on this please see Benjamin Armstrong, “‘Zeal Intelligence and Intrepidity’: Naval Irregular Warfare and the War of 1812 on the Lakes,” *The Mariner’s Mirror* 103 no. 1 (January 2017): 30-42.

⁴⁰³ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 2, 367.

that cannot furnish several stout and fast sailing ships capable of carrying from 20 to 30 heavy guns, and easily prepared to dispute the ‘sovereignty of the ocean’.”⁴⁰⁴ He further states that there are a considerable number of seamen, “80-100,000 men,” who “unanimously believe themselves capable of defeating the English, man for man, and gun for gun...[and] are a more numerous body than all Europe possesses, Great Britain excepted.”⁴⁰⁵ Unfortunately, because the treasury was nearing bankruptcy, Congress was unable to increase the size of the Navy by much, though they did authorize the building of sixteen new ships which “committed the nation to a large-scale, long term construction program,” and instead chose to issue over five hundred letters of marque to privateers.⁴⁰⁶

At the beginning of the war, there was a general good sentiment surrounding the role of privateers. During the Revolutionary War, privateers had worked hard to support the actions of the Continental Navy, specifically, and the efforts of the war generally. Niles wrote of them on August 8, 1812, “our privateers, in general, have conducted themselves with remarkable propriety... We trust this good name will be sustained.”⁴⁰⁷ However, his expectations were not to be realized. By September 24, 1814, the *London Statesmen* wrote, “the depredations committed by American [privateers], in capturing, plundering, and destroying vessels... have of late increased to a most alarming extent.”⁴⁰⁸ Keeping in mind that this is not just the rantings of an enemy, but rather a group who frequently acknowledged and esteemed the treatment they were shown after defeat by the U.S. Navy, and knowing the ruthless actions of their own Royal Navy and privateers, this criticism is harsh indeed.

⁴⁰⁴ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 61.

⁴⁰⁵ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 61.

⁴⁰⁶ Faye Margaret Kert, *Prize and Prejudice: Privateering and Naval Prize in Atlantic Canada in the War of 1812*, (Liverpool, England: Liverpool University Press, 1997), 78.

⁴⁰⁷ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 2, 384.

⁴⁰⁸ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 8, 186.

One example of this comes from a published list of privateer activities on October 29, 1814, and lists one hundred twenty-nine instances of privateer encounters. Of those, sixty-five, over half, of the ships that were engaged were stripped of their cargo and then burnt, sunk, or otherwise destroyed.⁴⁰⁹ While there are many reasons that a ship may have need to be destroyed, for privateers, it was only profitable to spare some of the crew to take the ships to a port to get prize money for it, if it was worth the trip. Most of the time, there was more money to be gained keeping the crew whole and simply sailing on to find another ship to plunder.⁴¹⁰ The simple matter was that for privateers it was profit before patriotism. Secretary of the Navy William Jones explained, “The adventure of a privateer is of the nature of a commercial project or speculation, conducted by commercial men upon principles of mercantile calculation and profit.”⁴¹¹

Thomas Jefferson explained the difference between a naval seaman and a privateer stating, “One man, [the naval seaman], fights for wages paid him by the government, for a patriotic zeal for the defence of his country...[while] another, [the privateer],...undertakes to pay himself at the expense of the foe and serve his country as effectually as the former.”⁴¹² While the crews of the United States Navy were sometimes granted prize money, most of the time, they were not, and those that did, it was only because they had captains who fought for them to receive it.⁴¹³ As a point of pride, the naval seamen chose to fight for honor and patriotism, and to

⁴⁰⁹ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 7, 118-120.

⁴¹⁰ Latimer, *1812*, does a great job explaining privateering in chapter 4, as does Kert, *Prize and Prejudice* in chapter 4, and Mahan, *Sea Power*, Vol 1, 396-401.

⁴¹¹ Mahan, *Sea Power*, vol 1, 396.

⁴¹² Kert, *Prize and Prejudice*, 80.

⁴¹³ Congress agreed to grant the crew of the *Constitution* \$100,000 for the *Guerrière*, even though the ship was destroyed (*Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 406). On the other hand, the crew of the *United States* was granted \$200,000 for the *Macedonian* which was successfully brought into port (*Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 412). Captain Bainbridge requested that the crew be paid for the *Java* as well (*Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 410), but Congress opted to grant them all medals instead (*Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 4, 9). I have no information regarding prizes in the Great Lakes region or other naval encounters.

defend their country, rather than risking so much for a venture that may not be profitable.⁴¹⁴

As Hezekiah Niles explained, there were no shortage of men to fill the ranks of the navy. There was no shortage of opportunities to fight for the country, whether in the army, navy, militia, or as a privateer. Men had choices, even across racial barriers.⁴¹⁵ However, it was the character of the naval seaman that inspired people to choose to fight, to choose their country, and to choose to do so with honor, intrepidity, and compassion. One example of this comes from a story printed in the *Boston Patriot* on July 25, 1814. The report began with the heroics of soldiers who were calling out for the comrades to use their munitions and guns when they, themselves, had fallen and lay dying at their feet. “The impulse which prompted the common soldier to conduct so truly glorious, was of the same noble character as that which induced the god-like Lawrence to exclaim, under similar agonies, ‘Don’t give up the ship!’ It was the effusion of pure and disinterested patriotism – of ardent love of country...every day affords additional proof of the correctness of the following patriotic toast:-viz- “Our Army, who only want opportunity, to rival the brightest glories of the Navy!”⁴¹⁶ The people were looking for a hero, similar to Washington from the first War of Independence, to guide them through this second War of Independence, and they found it in the U.S. Navy. They found one in young Daniel Hogan who, in the heat of the action with the *Guerrière*, “perceiving that the flag at the fore-top-mast-head had been shot away, went up and lashed it in such a manner as to make it

⁴¹⁴ Kert explains in her chapter 4 of *Prize and Prejudice*, that not even half the privateers made an actual profit. This just further explains why they tried so hard to just keep pillaging, even on the verge of piracy.

⁴¹⁵ Although there are great instances of African American and black men fighting in the navy alongside the white seamen, that issue is not explored here. I understand that this a chaotic and congested problem, but it is not one that I can do justice to here. The U.S. Navy had several laws that relate to the number of black sailors who were allowed to serve on board ships that changed over the coming decades. Two great books I recommend that do cover this topic are Gerald T. Altoff, *Amongst My Best Men: African-Americans and the War of 1812* (Put-in-Bay, OH: Perry Group, 1996) and Gene Allen Smith, *The Slave’s Gamble: Choosing Sides in the War of 1812* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 2013).

⁴¹⁶ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 8 supplement, 175.

impossible for shot to take it away without taking the mast with it.”⁴¹⁷ They found another in John Cheeves, who, though he “was mortally wounded in the late action with the *Java*, whilst lying on the deck apparently dying, the word was passed that the enemy had struck [and] he raised himself up with one hand, gave three cheers, fell back and expired, [an] heroic specimen of the genuine patriotism of American tars!”⁴¹⁸ They found some in the shipmates of John Archibald who after his death in the fight against the *Macedonian*, used a large portion of the prize money they received to support his three orphaned children and ailing father.⁴¹⁹

In January 1813, the *Port Folio*, printed the following article entitled “American Gallantry”:

The present war has again awakened energies of the nation; and already produced examples of single intrepidity among our countrymen. It is, however, on the navy of the United States that our national pride, and our hope of glory, at this moment repose. We have never been able to look without the highest satisfaction on that fearless profession; the nursery of generous courage, and the high-minded patriotism – to whose followers every form of danger is alike familiar and without terror.

*Nor toil, nor hazard, nor distress appear
To sink the seaman with unmanly fear;
Who from the face of danger strives to turn,
Indignant from the social hour they spurn;
No future ills, unknown, their souls appal,
They know no danger or they scorn it all.*

But we have no language to convey our admiration of the young and gallant spirits, who, in the first essays of their strength, have triumphed over the veteran science, and the disciplined valor, of the habitual conquerors of the ocean. They have retrieved all our disasters – they have shed new lustre on our arms, and sustained even in the midst of mortifying reverses, the loftiest tone of national enthusiasm. Their only anxiety has been to find the enemies of their country; and, wherever they have met them, their valor has rendered victory certain, whilst their skill has made it easy.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁷ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 29.

⁴¹⁸ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 4, 13.

⁴¹⁹ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 318.

⁴²⁰ *Niles Weekly Register*, Volume 3, 323.

Though a quote from a Democratic publication, it succinctly establishes the impact the United States Navy had on society in creating genuine ideas of manhood and masculinity as well as patriotism and a national identity that evidenced a determination to remain independent and fight for that right to the death if need be. They did such a good job and offering a vision of manhood for men to emulate, that they became a beacon of hope for parents who wanted their sons to become such men and encouraged, and sometimes forced, them to join the navy. But that is a story for the next chapter...

Chapter 4

The Navy Adrift: The First Moral and Intellectual Reformation of the U.S. Navy

On September 13, 1842, the *USS Somers* set sail for the coast of Africa. The ship was part of an educational experiment program that the U.S. Navy was trying to build wherein it took young men and set them on a training vessel to learn to prepare them for a life in the navy. This was meant to be a more educational setting than an actual working naval vessel, as the ship was smaller than most naval vessels and more time would be dedicated to teaching the young men than could be managed on a working ship. On this particular voyage, there were five officers, seven midshipmen, eight petty-officers, nineteen seamen, eight cooks, and seventy-four seamen apprentices.

The *Somers* was captained by Captain Alexander Slidell Mackenzie, a seasoned naval officer who had joined the Navy in 1814 as an eleven-year-old boy. Mackenzie was described as having an “amiable personality, studious demeanor,” and who had a “paternal interest in those under his command – looking after their health, seeing that they received the best food available, and granting liberty whenever possible.”⁴²¹ Mackenzie was often criticized for being too soft by navy standards and letting the young men get away with too much or being too lenient in his punishments, claiming the young sailors “were just boys.”⁴²² In addition to these characteristics, Mackenzie was also known as a prolific writer and naval historian and was considered the best possible captain for the educational experiment at sea. Unfortunately, the experiment would turn out to be a disaster.

Mostly to blame for the failure of the experiment was midshipman Philip Spencer. Spencer was eighteen at the time that he joined the *Somers*, but it was not his first time sailing

⁴²¹ Leeman, *The Long Road to Annapolis*, 173-175.

⁴²² Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 174.

with the navy. Prior to joining the navy, Spencer had attended both Hobart College in Geneva, New York and Union College in Schenectady, New York. He had been expelled from both for poor grades and disciplinary problems. Philip was described as “a highly intelligent, emotionally scarred child, with a distant, yet powerful and opinionated father, a family heritage of expectations, and a loving but obsessively close mother. To the outside world, especially fellow children and his classmates, he would show two sides of his nature; friendly, open, sensitive, even loving but also vicious.”⁴²³

His father, Secretary of War John C. Spencer, felt that the navy would be best suited for dealing with the troubled young man, and had him enlisted at age seventeen. Though this was older than most midshipmen usually joined the navy, his father used his political connections and young Spencer was assigned to serve on the *USS John Adams*.⁴²⁴ His first voyage was to Brazil, he got into a drunken fight with a Royal Navy officer and threatened to shoot him.⁴²⁵ Wanting to make an example of his drunken and disorderly conduct, Spencer was court-martialed. Rather than face the trial, Spencer offered to resign his commission as a midshipman if the captain would drop the charges, which he did.⁴²⁶

After returning to the United States, Spencer wrote a deeply apologetic letter to the Secretary of the Navy, Abel Upshur, claiming a sincere regret for his actions and a desire to serve his country in the navy.⁴²⁷ His request was approved, and he was reenlisted as a midshipman and assigned to sail with the *Somers*. When he arrived for his new posting, it was apparent that Spencer was not as regretful as he had claimed. He immediately set about causing

⁴²³ James P. Delgado, *The Curse of the Somers: The Secret History behind the U.S. Navy's Most Infamous Mutiny* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2023), 15.

⁴²⁴ Delgado, *Curse of the Somers*, 29.

⁴²⁵ Delgado, *Curse of the Somers*, 29.

⁴²⁶ Buckner F. Melton, *A Hanging Offense: The Strange Affair of the Warship Somers* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2003), 38.

⁴²⁷ Buckner, *A Hanging Offense*, 40.

trouble, threatening others, and disobeying rules. Knowing of his past disciplinary issues and seeing his alarming attitude, Mackenzie implored his commanding officer to have Spencer transferred to another ship, questioning whether it was wise to have him on board with the young impressionable apprentice seamen.⁴²⁸ The request was refused, as the navy believed the training vessel would be a good learning experience for Spencer, and a chance to reform him to be the kind of officer they wanted.⁴²⁹ Unfortunately, Spencer had no intention of reforming, or even remaining with the U.S. Navy.

One of the most important rules that Spencer broke was that midshipmen were not allowed to socialize with ordinary seamen. Spencer quickly began a friendship with two seamen who had their own reputations for bad attitudes and questionable behavior. Samuel Cromwell and Elisha Small were both experienced capable seamen, having served previously on slave ships, before the trade had been abolished. Cromwell, Small, and Spencer spent hours together talking and scheming. They were overheard at one point discussing how fit the *Somers* would be as a pirate ship. Their behavior and conversation were reported to Captain Mackenzie, who confronted Spencer about it. Spencer did nothing to change his ways and became even more outspoken against Mackenzie. As they drew closer to Africa, it was reported that Spencer was bragging to some of the officers that he could easily take over the ship with just six men.⁴³⁰

Things came to a head when their training mission was forced to change location and head towards the Caribbean. As the days went on, Spencer began talking more and more harshly about Captain Mackenzie, and was even overheard threatening to throw the captain overboard.⁴³¹ He was also heard often discussing pirate treasure buried in the West Indies and the fact that he

⁴²⁸ Buckner, *A Hanging Offense*, 60.

⁴²⁹ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 173.

⁴³⁰ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 174-175.

⁴³¹ Buckner, *A Hanging Offense*, 90.

would soon be in command of his own ship. As the rate of promotion within the U.S. Navy was particularly slow during this time, it alarmed the officers as to how he would achieve that accomplishment.⁴³² One night things came to a head when Spencer approached the ship's purser, Lieutenant Gansevoort, about joining him and twenty other men in mutiny and taking over the ship. Gansevoort pretended to agree but reported the incident as quickly as he could to his commanding officer, who reported it to the captain.⁴³³ Mackenzie at first questioned the validity of the statement wondering if it was just a fantasy. However, the other officers testified of Spencer's attitude, strange conversations, and disturbing behaviors, and urged Mackenzie to take the situation seriously.⁴³⁴

Captain Mackenzie had a very difficult decision to make. On the one hand, Spencer was a known troublemaker, and it wasn't hard to imagine him killing all the innocent young men on board, taking over the ship, and sailing the Atlantic preying on American vessels. On the other hand, was Spencer's father, the very powerful Secretary of War, who would undoubtedly have an issue with his son being arrested and court-martialed on charges of mutiny, for which the penalty was death. Mackenzie decided that the safety of his ship, his crew, and many other people that could possibly be harmed should the *Somers* be turned into a pirate ship, were more important than the discomfort he would face if the arrest was made and the allegations turned out to be false.⁴³⁵ On November 26, Spencer, Cromwell, and Small were arrested on charges of inciting a mutiny.⁴³⁶

⁴³² Delgado, *Curse of the Somers*, 24.

⁴³³ Buckner, *A Hanging Offense*, 101.

⁴³⁴ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 175-176.

⁴³⁵ *Proceedings from the Naval Court Martial in the Case of Alexander Slidell Mackenzie* (New York, NY: Henry C. Langley, 1844), 200-201.

⁴³⁶ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 176-177.

Arresting the three men did not have the effect Mackenzie had hoped for. Rather than returning order to the ship, incidences of disobedience, stealing, insubordination, and failing to report for duty became more and more frequent. In fact, four more men were arrested for their disturbing behavior. Mackenzie felt as though he was losing control of his ship. Spencer had stated there were twenty possible mutineers still unaccounted for, and the *Somers* was at least a week from making port, if the weather remained good and they didn't encounter any other potential issues. The dilemma Mackenzie faced was that mutiny was punishable by death, but "only a general court-martial could convict and impose the death penalty, and only the president, secretary of the navy, or commodore of a squadron could convene a court-martial."⁴³⁷ Mackenzie stepped aside and ordered his officers to investigate the incident and report back on their findings. After hearing testimony for more than a day, the officers reported that they found Spencer, Cromwell, and Small "guilty of conspiracy to commit mutiny" and recommended that they "should be executed immediately."⁴³⁸ On December 1, the three men were hanged from the yardarm, followed by a memorial service led by Mackenzie, and a quick burial at sea.⁴³⁹

Unfortunately for Mackenzie, the incident did not end there. When the *Somers* returned to New York, it would take a few days for the story to leak, but once it did the press was eager to find out all they could and ended up printing things far faster than they could verify them. For instance, on December 18, the *New York Herald* wrote, "This is the first occurrence of the kind in our Navy...These desperadoes might have eluded detection and pursuit for years...We can hardly find language to express our admiration of the conduct of Commander McKenzie...It is

⁴³⁷ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 177.

⁴³⁸ *Proceedings from the Naval Court Martial in the Case of Alexander Slidell Mackenzie* (New York, NY: Henry C. Langley, 1844), 202.

⁴³⁹ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 176-177.

indeed fortunate that on such a man...devolved the high responsibility of such a critical hour.”⁴⁴⁰ Another paper, the *New York Courier and Enquirer*, wrote on December 19, “Sufficient is known already to establish beyond a question the necessity, imperative and immediate, however dreadful, of the course pursued by commander Mackenzie, than whom, a more humane, conscientious and gallant officer does not hold a commission in the navy of the United States.”⁴⁴¹ Ultimately, the papers were positive in their depiction of how Mackenzie dealt with the situation, and the public seemed to follow their lead, mostly because they did not fully understand naval rules and court-martial procedures.⁴⁴²

It wasn’t long, however, before opposing viewpoints began to emerge. One of those newspapers was the *Madisonian*, a Washington D.C. newspaper, where an anonymous article was published on December 24 laying out a legal argument accusing Mackenzie of reacting to an “unmanly fear” and ultimately murdering a “‘mere boy’ who was ‘simply amusing himself’ by concocting an imaginary plot.”⁴⁴³ It was assumed that Spencer’s father wrote the article; regardless, the damage was done and the press began to question the validity of the ‘court-martial’ and subsequent execution. The problem was that the incident was not just garnering attention in the United States but in Europe as well. One such incident was reported in a letter from a British Naval Officer stationed in West India. After he had heard the news he wrote, “The firmness and decision of Captain Mackenzie...has been much commented upon in our squadron, and we think the officer who dares to step beyond the letter of the law when circumstances require it deserves well of his country.”⁴⁴⁴ An article in a Welsh newspaper described the mutiny

⁴⁴⁰ Harrison Hayford, ed., *The Somers Mutiny Affair: A Book of Primary Source Materials* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1959), 4.

⁴⁴¹ Hayford, *The Somers Mutiny Affair*, 7.

⁴⁴² Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 178.

⁴⁴³ Hayford, *The Somers Mutiny Affair*, 8-10.

⁴⁴⁴ Hayford, *The Somers Mutiny Affair*, 158.

as “events of a most appalling character,”⁴⁴⁵ while an English newspaper reported that “A court-martial was being held in Brooklyn, respecting the late mutiny on board the Somers, the horrifying details of which are already before the English public.”⁴⁴⁶

With all the national and international press⁴⁴⁷, the Navy’s reputation was in serious trouble. No longer seen as the heroes they were during the wars with Great Britain and the Barbary powers, the United States Navy needed a desperate change. That change came in the form of education. The biggest problem was that there were too many young men being sent their way and not enough options for training and teaching them. Just as Philip Spencer’s father sent him to the Navy as a last resort when he no longer knew how to handle the boy,⁴⁴⁸ so did many other parents, guardians, and court officials. The U.S. Navy was seen as an entity to take on the worst of the worst offenders that people still believed deserved a second chance at making something of their lives.⁴⁴⁹ What resulted was a navy “composed of the most disorderly corps” that required “a court-martial sitting nearly the entire year for their trial.”⁴⁵⁰ Furthermore, there was a concern that if the navy did not do something quickly to improve their reputation they would “not only lose the affections of the nation, but [become] the scorn and contempt of the world.”⁴⁵¹ This was not just a problem being faced by the navy. Throughout the states there was a worry pervading the minds of many adults fearful for the morality of the next generation.

⁴⁴⁵ “Horrible Mutiny on Board the United States Brig Somers – Hanging at the Yard-arm.” *The Welshman, and General Advertiser for the Principality of Wales* 12 no. 547 (January 20, 1843).

⁴⁴⁶ “America,” *Foreign Intelligence* 2 no. 38 (January 21, 1843): 34. – based in London, England

⁴⁴⁷ There is reference made in each of these articles about previous stories being relayed regarding the *Somers* incident, so there is precedent to state that the news was being relayed in other countries as well and not just these few instances that have been recorded here. There was a Spanish newspaper that printed the testimony of one of the midshipmen from the Somers in April of 1843 and a French newspaper that simply stated the court-martial had Mackenzie innocent of the charges.

⁴⁴⁸ One of the pieces of evidence that Mackenzie tried to lay before the court was a letter from Secretary Spencer when he first asked the Navy to give him a warrant wherein he stated Philip had stolen \$300 from him (Hayford, *Somers Mutiny Affair*, 28).

⁴⁴⁹ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 163-171.

⁴⁵⁰ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 164.

⁴⁵¹ From *Niles Weekly Register* as quoted in Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 164.

Many young people clung to the new ideals of the United States and the opportunities opened to them away from their homes and communities. As William Leeman stated, “America was changing rapidly because of expanding market capitalism, rapid industrialization, unprecedented urban growth, and expanding political democracy. Increased immorality – violence, murder, cruelty, drunkenness, gambling, prostitution, greed, corruption, and student unrest – accompanied these economic and social changes.”⁴⁵² Rather than becoming apprentices or staying to work with their families, young men particularly, were moving away from home to work in cities or attend one of the numerous new colleges that were opening. As such, they were being introduced to new vices their parents rather wished they wouldn’t experience. Alcohol, tobacco, gambling, and prostitutes were common vices that young men discovered after leaving home and voyaging out into new urban areas. As William Warren Sweet, renowned religious historian put it, “The unanimous testimony of all religious leaders of the all the religious bodies following the close of the Revolutionary War was that there was a rising tide of iniquities fast sweeping American youth to the brink of ruin; that the people were indulging in vices hitherto unknown among them...there was a lamentable decay of vital piety, a prevalence of vice and a degeneracy of manners that called loudly for repentance and reformation.”⁴⁵³ This worry for the morality of the youth spawned the Second Great Awakening and a major moral reform movement that lasted from about 1790 to 1840.

These moral reforms took on many issues.⁴⁵⁴ For instance, the Magdalene societies sought to rehabilitate prostitutes and keep men from soliciting them. The Temperance societies

⁴⁵² Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 184.

⁴⁵³ J. Thomas Jable, “Aspects of Moral Reform in Early Nineteenth-Century Pennsylvania,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 102 no. 3 (July 1978): 344-363, 344.

took on the vice of alcohol and attempted to get liquor banned. Others attempted to squash profanity and Sabbath breaking, and others continued to fight against slavery. Whatever they were fighting for, reformers seemed to be on every corner, in disreputable establishments, waiting to preach their agenda to all who were near them, whether they wanted to hear it or not. Some even took to utilizing the press to give names of men who were soliciting prostitutes or leaving saloons drunk, or any other vice. In addition, to these vices, the reform societies also sought to improve what they considered social causes for crime and vice. They lobbied for public schools, better prisons, and asylums for those who were deaf, blind, or had a mental illness or handicap. In short, they believed in “‘the inevitable dependence of [America’s] political on [their] moral prosperity’ and regularly insisted that a distinctly ‘virtuous and intelligent people’ must govern America.”⁴⁵⁵

Similarly, the United States Navy was struggling with the same vices among the young men they were seeking to recruit to become the next generation of naval leaders. Instead of reports of upstanding young men, news spread about midshipmen attacking civilians, dueling amongst themselves, drinking and causing chaos and fights in the cities, and all sorts of other disorderly conduct. The biggest problem, as far as the navy was concerned, was that there was not a formal sense of education to occupy and train the young men in their duties and

⁴⁵⁴ As a note, neither the reform movement nor the Second Great Awakening are to be the focus of this dissertation. Rather they are just mentioned here to illustrate that the ideas of what was wrong within the Navy were not isolated to just the navy but were a major cause of concern among the populace as a whole, especially in regard to the next generation of leaders. As such, I am not going to go into great detail about this movement but highly recommend the following sources for anyone interested in learning more about it. Steven Ruggles, “Fallen Women: Inmates of the Magdalen Society Asylum of Philadelphia, 1836-1908,” *Journal of Social History* 16 no. 4 (Summer 1983): 65-82; Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1997); Catherine Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America 1740-1845* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, Press, 1998); and Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nation’s Work: The Rise of Women’s Political Culture, 1830-1900* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

⁴⁵⁵ Kyle G. Volk, *Moral Minorities and the Making of American Democracy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 11-36.

responsibilities and help them to build the moral character necessary for their life in the navy. Leeman explains, “Character was innate – it had to be formed by creating social environments that imposed discipline, encouraged virtue, limited exposure to evil influences, and fostered habits of intellectual and moral self-improvement.”⁴⁵⁶ As such, most Secretaries of the Navy, since it was officially formed in 1798, implored Congress to build a naval academy to train the next generation of sailors and improve their character. However, it would take until 1845 for that request to finally be realized, and it would happen behind Congress’s back and without their consent.

Historiography

The history of military education in the United States is a complicated one. Just after the Revolutionary War, President George Washington and several other prominent cabinet members wanted to establish an institution that would teach warfare principles, techniques, and history to men who desired to serve in the United States Army. However, they were met with a lot of opposition from those who were hesitant about creating a standing army in the United States, Thomas Jefferson being one of the main opponents.⁴⁵⁷ Alexander Hamilton, as Inspector-General of the Army, proposed instituting five schools for military education in 1799.⁴⁵⁸ These schools would cover fundamental education, a school of engineers and artilleryists, a school of cavalry, a school of infantry, and a school for naval education. He proposed that all men volunteering for military service, as an officer, be sent to the fundamental school for two years, then they would choose which military track they would like to follow and attend that school to finish their

⁴⁵⁶ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 184.

⁴⁵⁷ For more information on the standing army/navy debate, please refer back to chapter 2.

⁴⁵⁸ Norman B. Wilkinson, “The Forgotten ‘Founder’ of West Point,” *Military Affairs* 24 no. 4 (Winter 1960), 182-183.

education.⁴⁵⁹ When Secretary of War James McHenry took Hamilton's plans to the president and Congress, the idea for the military schools was rejected.

After Jefferson became president, however, he gained a better appreciation for the fact that westward expansion was necessary for the growing United States and that an army would be crucial to protecting America's interests in that expansion. As such, he signed the legislation to create the United States Military Academy at West Point on March 16, 1802, making it the first military academy in the United States.⁴⁶⁰ The academy was great at training and preparing officers for the United States Army, but there was no place in it for those desiring to serve in the navy. The United States Navy, being still newly created and having yet to prove their usefulness, most people had no real care or concern for the navy in general, aside from victories they could and did revel in as citizens of the nation. Therefore, Congress determined that naval education should remain the responsibility of individual captains and happen onboard naval ships so as to be more hands on and useful to the training of officers.⁴⁶¹ It would remain that way for several decades, with a multitude of educational experiments within the navy, before a permanent academy was finally created.

Aside from some articles written in direct reaction to a request from the Navy Department or the Naval Academy at Annapolis, there has not been a lot of history written about the education of the early United States Navy. Most of the works one can find today revolves around the changes in education that occurred during the twentieth-century when the United States Navy went through another crucial shift in technology, personnel, and organization. One

⁴⁵⁹ Charles O. Paulin, "Beginnings of the United States Naval Academy," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, 50 no. 2 (Feb 1924): 173-194. <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/1924/february/beginnings-united-states-naval-academy> This article is viewed online with no page numbers.

⁴⁶⁰ <https://www.westpoint.edu/about/history-of-west-point>

⁴⁶¹ Paulin, "Beginnings of the United States Naval Academy."

impressive exception to this was a book written solely about the creation of the Naval Academy at Annapolis in 2010 by William P. Leeman. In this book, *The Long Road to Annapolis: The Founding of the Naval Academy and the Emerging American Republic*, Leeman gives a very comprehensive history of how the academy was formed. He goes through each and every attempt that was made to create a workable educational situation for the navy and why they ultimately failed, ending with the one success. As such, the information found within this chapter owes a lot to Leeman's book and the various articles published by the U.S. Naval Institute. Without them, nothing would be known about the educational journey of the United States Naval Academy.

One of the greatest barriers to writing about the establishment of the naval academy is the fact that not many primary source documents exist. While this can be frustrating at times, that itself tells a story. Unfortunately, it is a story of neglect and indifference towards the United States Navy. As will be shown, nearly all of the Secretaries of the Navy attempted to persuade Congress to allow them to set up an academy. Most of these instances can be found in the annual reports. However, Congress only actually added it to their agenda twice, and both times it was voted down. The issue of a naval academy was simply not relevant to a Congress and government that had their eyes firmly fixed on westward expansion, for which an army was a necessity instead.

While this complicated history of the establishment of an academy is important, and I will tell a portion of it here because I feel it necessary to the understanding of the struggle the navy faced even after all the times it proved itself in the prior years and wars, it is not the focus of this chapter. The mutiny on the *Somers*, and the subsequent issues it caused for Captain Mackenzie, brought to light several important issues. The first was that there was a deep misunderstanding of what was allowed and not allowed by officers and a resulting disunity

throughout the navy. This was mostly due to the fact that most officers had been educated during the early years of the navy, if at all, when there was chaos and confusion, and education happened on board a ship and depended on what the captain believed should be taught. Many times the laws as they understood them were carried over from the knowledge they had from their time as English colonies and from the Royal Navy.⁴⁶² The second issue brought to light was that there was no training or even a “tryout” for young men before they were sent off on a voyage to determine if they were a good fit for the navy or not. Spencer never would have been allowed on board the ship had his attitude been discovered prior to ever setting sail for the first time to Brazil. Finally, though the story focuses mostly on Mackenzie and Spencer, twelve other men were also arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit mutiny when they arrived back in the United States. They were not given an opportunity to learn any better or about the temptations sailing can lead to and how to overcome them before they set sail on their first mission. Rather than being taught what they needed to do and how to be a reputable sailor, they were influenced by Spencer, Cromwell, and Small and manipulated into joining the mutiny.

This chapter focuses on the negative aspect of the navy at this time and how it worked to overcome that image and return to its former glory from the times of war. In this sense, the United States Navy parallels the reform movement of the time. Naval officers were concerned by the growing number of problems being exhibited by their young charges but were unclear on how to handle them and incapable of making any successful plans to dissuade them. The reformers understood that the first step was to try to remove the temptations, while the second was to reform the person themselves to do and be better. This chapter will show how the navy

⁴⁶² As an example, in Mackenzie’s testimony of his actions, he cites the way that mutinies had been handled by the Royal Navy when, like he believed for his own situation, immediacy and necessity called for a captain to hold a court when the crew was in danger (Mackenzie, “Case of the Somers’s Mutiny”).

attempted to do just that and the role education played in not just training a better class of officer, but in creating a better class of citizen and a revitalized “brand” for the American man throughout the world.

United States Military Philosophical Society – 1802-1813

After Jefferson approved the creation of the United States Military Academy, the United States Military Philosophical Society (USMPS) was organized within its structure to “select and preserve as far as possible the Military Science, which must still exist in the different States, among the veterans of our own revolutionary contest, and those of our fellow citizens, who have gathered scientific fruits in the course of their travels...for the purpose of establishing, and perpetuating a repository, as well for such knowledge, as may be furnished by past experience, as for what our Citizens, in any walk of life, may in future acquire.”⁴⁶³ The main purpose of the USMPS was to gather as much scientific knowledge and experience as it could from all walks of life. Under the direction of Jonathon Williams, first Academy Superintendent and grand-nephew of Benjamin Franklin, the USMPS supported and advised the Corps of Engineers at West Point. In addition to gathering ideas from the brightest scientific minds in the country, and personal experiences from as many Revolutionary War leaders as they could, they also sought information on technologies and ideas from foreign nations. As such, though they were not directly involved in the running of the USMPS, several foreign dignitaries such as Thomas Jefferson (Minister to France) and Tobias Lear (U.S. Consul at Algiers), leading educators like Nathaniel Smith (Dartmouth College) and John Williams (Harvard), and several naval officers of high reputation and prestige, namely Edward Preble, William Bainbridge, Stephen Decatur, and Isaac Hull were invaluable sources of expertise. These men were uniquely situated by order of their profession

⁴⁶³ Sydney Forman, “The United States Military Philosophical Society, 1802-1813: Scientia in Bello Pax,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 2 no 3 (July 1945), 275.

and power of their positions to learn from other countries and pass that knowledge on to the USMPS so that the Corps of Engineers might better prepare the U.S. Army in ways of protection.

The United States Military Philosophical Society was quite revolutionary for their time.

As the years progressed, Williams expanded the role of the USMPS into:

The broad province of collecting the theoretical and practical military knowledge resulting from the experience of the Revolution; of establishing a library, museum, and archives of military art; of encouraging the publication of military books and the manufacture of models of useful weapons; of stimulating American technical genius by offering a monetary reward for inventions; of promoting the study of natural philosophy and the mathematical sciences; and of fostering internal improvement, commerce, and industry...[ultimately] to introduce a new and scientific character into American life.⁴⁶⁴

While the technological advances and military knowledge were greatly beneficial to the United States Army, they did little to improve the education or technologies of the United States Navy. Though viewed as important members of the USMPS, those from the naval branch of the military were mostly only useful in what information they could relay from other nations, rather than in what they had to offer in terms of military strategy. Once again, naval education was not of main concern to the USMPS.

Nothing made this point clearer than an anonymous essay sent by the United States Military Philosophical Society to the *National Intelligencer* to be printed in 1808. The essay, entitled “On the Military Constitution of Nations,” expounded on the role of the army in protecting the nation and why there a necessary hazard, and not the bane of republican government that some deemed them to be. The essay brought back to light the long standing debate regarding permanent armies, and insisted that the “science of war” was the only

⁴⁶⁴ Forman, “The USMPS,” 278.

“guarantee of peace.”⁴⁶⁵ In the article, the author made the point that “numberless revolutions indeed are written with characters of blood in the annals of the world, but a single glance at them will be sufficient to convince us that the first steps in the fall of an empire are to be dated from the moment when a distinction has been made between its citizens and soldiers, and that this distinction has been the sole cause of those revolutions.”⁴⁶⁶ Throughout the essay, the author attempted to convince the reader that there was no harm in having a professional army and educating them in military science because they were to be trained to always put the protection of the nation ahead of any other obstacle by remembering that they were citizens themselves and that in protecting the nation they were protecting themselves, their families, and their communities.

The article overall is very positive in nature towards a standing army, with only one real negative side to professional military service. The author discusses in detail various armies that were sent out into the world, and that then return to their homeland to fight against their own nation and people. While the navy is never mentioned, it would not take a big leap to make the comparison that the early U.S. Army was meant to remain at home in the United States, while it was the U.S. Navy that was sent out into the world to confront foreign foes on their own turf. Whether or not the author meant to place doubt on the U.S. Navy, it can definitely be implied that there is a risk present in having a standing navy that does not apply to a standing army. The argument could be made that it was in great part due to this article that the navy had a much harder time finding purchase within the military ranks of the United States and proving their necessity.

⁴⁶⁵ “On the Military Constitution of Nations,” *National Intelligencer*, November 18, 1808, 8.

⁴⁶⁶ “On the Military Constitution of Nations,” *National Intelligencer*, November 18, 1808, 8.

Whether or not the navy would have ever taken a larger role in the United States Military Philosophical Society will never be known. Due to a dispute over Army leadership roles during the War of 1812, Williams resigned in 1813 and the USMPS was dissolved. After the war ended, the Military Academy resumed its normal operations of training military science to prospective army officers, but, again, there was no place for naval recruits within their walls. The decision made at the time was that naval training would best be conducted onboard ships, rather than in a classroom that discussed land tactics and technologies better suited for garrisons and forts than ships.

Shipbound Education at Sea

After the War of 1812 ended, and the United States Navy had guaranteed their permanent survival, the Navy Department once again appealed to Congress about the necessity of a naval academy. On November 15, 1814, Secretary of the Navy William Jones wrote that they “respectfully suggest the expediency of providing by law for the establishment of a naval academy, with suitable professors, for the instruction of the officers of the navy in those branches of the mathematics and experimental philosophy, and in the science and practice of gunnery, theory of naval architecture, and art of mechanical drawing which are necessary to the accomplishment of the naval officer.”⁴⁶⁷ Both the House and Senate debated the idea, but nothing came of the request and the subject was forgotten as attention turned more towards new technologies that were coming available and what direction the United States Navy was going to take.

Part of the problem as well, was that there was no general consensus among naval leaders as to the best way to educate the large number of young recruits that had joined the navy as their

⁴⁶⁷ Paulin, “Beginnings of the United States Naval Academy.”

size had been increased during the war.⁴⁶⁸ A few, like Secretary Jones, wanted an academy, but far more believed as Naval Captain Charles Stewart did, that “the best school for the instruction of youth in the profession is the deck of a ship.”⁴⁶⁹ Many captains felt that book learning, science, and the cultural refinement process of turning these young men into gentlemen were counterproductive to the tasks required of them as professional sea officers.⁴⁷⁰ Those who disagreed with their assessment felt that the government needed to do more to cultivate the national image and “elevate the character” of the young men, as they were representatives of the national image of the United States to the rest of the world.⁴⁷¹ Regardless of how the various captains felt, all but three of the Secretaries of the Navy made an effort to appeal to Congress over a thirty year period. Two of the bills they proposed, in 1827 and 1842, passed the Senate but failed the vote in the House.

In the interim, while waging their campaign for a naval academy, the Secretaries of the Navy did not give up entirely on any sort of education. In an Act of Congress on January 2, 1813, an additional four ships were authorized to be built for the U.S. Navy, and money was provided for each of those ships to employ a schoolmaster to teach the young recruits. By 1816, the law required all ships of the line to have schoolmasters onboard “if one can be had.”⁴⁷² These schoolmasters were only paid \$25 a month and received two rations a day. The captain was responsible for deciding school hours that corresponded with the changing of the shifts and also the curriculum that would be taught. For that reason, young men learned what one captain valued and expected, rather than what the United States Navy valued and expected, which resulted in a

⁴⁶⁸ Buckner, *A Hanging Offense*, 33.

⁴⁶⁹ Paulin, “Beginnings of the United States Naval Academy.”

⁴⁷⁰ Paulin, “Beginnings of the United States Naval Academy.”

⁴⁷¹ Paulin, “Beginnings of the United States Naval Academy.”

⁴⁷² Paulin, “Beginnings of the United States Naval Academy.”

lot of confusion and resentment as sailors were reassigned to varying ships year after year, cruise after cruise. The schoolmasters were deemed less than useful and no more than “professors of mathematics” and not really respected.⁴⁷³ In 1835, another Act of Congress would raise their wages to \$100 a month and require an examination by the naval board before they could be assigned to a ship to train young seamen as the Naval Corps of Professors of Mathematics. This change in status brought a much higher level of teacher onboard the ships to teach a more centralized and agreed upon curriculum.

For the most part, the curriculum taught on board the ships revolved around mathematics and navigation, and also included reading and writing for those who were illiterate. The most common book used to teach from was *The New American Practical Navigator*, written by Nathaniel Bowditch in 1802. The book covers topics of mathematics like geometry, trigonometry, and logarithms; astronomy; geography; sextant use and figuring latitude and longitude; navigation; surveying; winds, currents and tides; and meteorology.⁴⁷⁴ The instruction itself was mostly either offered in the dimly lit interior of the ship, or on the deck where a thin sheet of canvas was hung to separate the young men from the four to five hundred other sailors as they went about their duties.⁴⁷⁵ Needless to say, the teaching conditions were less than ideal, though the materials were quite useful. Because of this, official instruction typically lasted only two to three hours a day, and the remainder of the day was spent in practical application.⁴⁷⁶

When the young seamen returned to shore, their education did not end between cruises. At each naval yard, a school room was erected either onboard a ship not currently in use or in a

⁴⁷³ Paulin, “Beginnings of the United States Naval Academy.”

⁴⁷⁴ Nathaniel Bowditch, *The New American Practical Navigator* (Newbury Port, MA: Edmund M. Blunt, proprietor, 1802), xiii-xv. <https://archive.org/details/newamericanpract00bowd/page/n7/mode/2up?view=theater>

⁴⁷⁵ Paulin, “Beginnings of the United States Naval Academy.”

⁴⁷⁶ Paulin, “Beginnings of the United States Naval Academy.”

designated set of rooms if they were available. The first of these was established in 1807 at the Washington Naval Yard by Chaplain Robert Thompson.⁴⁷⁷ The curriculum used in the naval yard schools differed slightly from that offered on board the ships. In the naval yard, there were typically two or three teachers who covered all the same subjects in Bowditch's *Practical*, but also included "geography and the use of the globes, a short course of history and chronology, together with some parts of natural philosophy, particularly mechanics, hydraulics, and some selections of chymistry and electricity."⁴⁷⁸ Just as onboard the ship, however, instruction on land was difficult to implement, as young sailors were frequently called away to report for duty or chose to skip their instruction to instead participate in port activities while they were allowed on land.

The scenarios discussed here represent the ideal situation, as difficult as it was, and not necessarily the reality. Most of the time, captains were more apt to allow the young seamen to skip their classes in favor of performing other duties. While schoolmasters were required to be included onboard ships, they did not usually get the opportunity to perform their duties. Usually, they would begin a cruise attempting to hold regular study sessions and would eventually give up on them altogether. Instead, they would spend their time focusing on the few young men they deemed most promising, who took an interest in learning. The captains were usually fine with this arrangement as they did more hands-on training with the remainder of the recruits, but it was those who chose to study and learn their lessons that were recommended for the promotion examinations held once a year.⁴⁷⁹ It was these recruits that showed the most promise in terms of honor, improvement, learning and education, and self-value. They chose to improve themselves

⁴⁷⁷ Paulin, "Beginnings of the United States Naval Academy."

⁴⁷⁸ Paulin, "Beginnings of the United States Naval Academy."

⁴⁷⁹ Paulin, "Beginnings of the United States Naval Academy."

and their lives, and by extension, improved the outlook for their families, community, and nation.

While it may seem like a good idea to have training occur onboard a ship where practical skills can be taught, the problem was that the majority of the four to five hundred men onboard the ship were ordinary and able-bodied seamen, and not the gentlemen officers that the navy wanted the young recruits to emulate. The young recruits were required to learn both the duties of the officers and the jobs of the seaman. They spent time with both sets of men to learn to complete every task aboard the ship. That meant not only were they being taught valuable skills in seamanship, but they were also surrounded by every bad habit, vice, and attitude that many of the “Jack Tars” had acquired throughout their lifetime of sailing.⁴⁸⁰ These were not the attributes the navy wanted them to learn, but when those were the men and circumstances they were surrounded with, there was really nothing the navy could do to prevent it. Though many of the vices were not allowed by navy standards, most of the seamen either didn’t care and would take the flogging or other restrictions as they came rather than change their ways. It was, unfortunately, these very vices and attitudes that midshipmen returned to port with that caused them to seek out trouble in the port cities rather than attend to their studies in the makeshift naval yard classrooms.

The First Navy Schools

In 1825, Secretary of the Navy Samuel Southard, wrote to President John Quincy Adams, about his ideas for changes to be implemented within the Department of the Navy. In that letter

⁴⁸⁰ In a prior chapter I spoke of the navy seeking to only recruit men who were not classified as Jack Tars. That practice had to end as the navy grew and they needed more men. They were essentially forced to take what able-bodied and ordinary seamen they could and focus their efforts for creating gentlemanly seamen on the midshipmen.

he expressed his concern at the lack of educational efforts being made toward naval recruits. He implored the president:

There is still another alteration which, in my opinion, ought to be made, and which is even more important than those already mentioned, to promote discipline, efficiency, and economy, and to prevent the recurrence of courts-martial in the service - the establishment of an academy, or providing in some effectual mode for the instruction of the young officers...They are constantly employed on shipboard or in our navy yards, where much advancement in learning cannot be expected...The consequence necessarily is, and such is well known to be the fact, that very many advance in age and rise in grade much less cultivated and informed than their own reputation and that of the country require. For this evil there is but one remedy...It is the formation of a school which shall combine literary with professional instruction...The considerations which urge respect for this recommendation are connected with everything which the nation has to hope from the naval establishment...The situation of our country, the nature of its territory and its coasts, the extent of its commerce, the character of its institutions and its political connections, all point unerringly to that establishment as the security for its peace and honor...Our future national conflicts are to rest principally on it, come when they may. It is also the bearer of our honor and our fame to every foreign shore. The American naval officer is, in fact, the representative of his country in every port to which he goes, and by him is that country in a greater or less degree estimated.⁴⁸¹

Unfortunately, neither the President nor Congress would vote in favor of establishing a naval academy at that time. However, that did not stop the navy department from continuously trying to find better ways to educate their young sailors. The first attempt was to try to formalize the schools at the navy yards. Though there were five schools created that were operational at various times depending on whether there were midshipmen present or not, the two principal schools were at New York and Norfolk.⁴⁸² The main goal of the schools was to help midshipmen to pass their qualifying exams so that they could be ready for promotion.

⁴⁸¹ Walter Lowrie and Walter S. Franklin, eds. *American State Papers: Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States 1789-1825* (Washington D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1834) Naval Affairs, Volume 1, 907, January 1825.

⁴⁸² Paulin, "Beginnings of the United States Naval Academy."

There were several problems with these naval schools. One was that none of the schools taught the same curriculum. If a young sailor was reassigned, there was no guarantee that he would be taught the same things in a like manner as he had learned them at his last station. Another problem was that the schools were highly ineffective in their preparation for the lieutenant exams, much for the same reasons as the onboard and navy yard schools failed. There were simply too many distractions and no actual standardizations, structure, or rules regarding the education arrangement. Most midshipmen feared the lieutenant exam because a good majority of them were not sufficiently educated to pass it. A final problem with the schools was that there was no sense of discipline. The teachers had no power to discipline the students or to even require them to attend the classes. Much of the time, the midshipmen would simply choose not to go and would instead head into the city to find other amusements. These “amusements” would often result in trouble which did nothing to improve the reputation of the navy with the general populace.

U.S. Naval School at Annapolis – 1845

While the navy yard schoolrooms offered more learning opportunities than the onboard classes, they were still deemed by the navy department as inefficient at preparing midshipmen for their role as an officer in the United States Navy. The first attempt at making something more permanent occurred in 1839 when Commodore James Biddle set up a school at the U.S. Naval Asylum in Philadelphia. The Naval Asylum was a hospital and home for disabled and elderly naval veterans, and Biddle was its governor. He set up a series of rules and regulations for the school, as well as a strict schedule to be adhered to. However, things did not go as smoothly as Biddle had hoped. The young men who were sent to the school quickly learned that though Biddle had many rules and regulations, he was actually very acquiescent and lax when it came to

enforcing them. Furthermore, though the Asylum may have been viewed as a quiet place to hold classes, the residents were often belligerent, loud, and drunk. As an example, one elderly resident would often get drunk and run around the asylum naked. In addition, they would gamble, swear, and “engage in all manner of riotous behavior.”⁴⁸³ They were definitely not the role models, nor was that the environment Biddle had imagined it would be.

In 1842, William Chauvenet, a 22-year-old Yale graduate, came to work for the navy as a professor of mathematics at the Naval Asylum school. He quickly made note of some problems and offered Commodore James Barron, who had replaced Biddle as governor of the asylum, a reform plan. Barron was quick to approve all of the reforms Chauvenet had in mind, including moving the instruction to a well-lit room rather than the dimly lit basement, obtaining better educational equipment like blackboards, sextants, and chronometers, and requiring regular recitation sections for the midshipmen in addition to their lectures.⁴⁸⁴ Chauvenet also devised a plan that would require midshipman to attend the school for two-years rather than just eight months as Biddle had required. Unfortunately, while the Secretary of the Navy liked the ideas Chauvenet had, they were rejected on the grounds that the navy simply could not spare the midshipmen from duty for two years just to study. Over the next three years, Chauvenet would continue to make improvements to the school and try to work miracles with the eight months he had with the midshipmen.

The real miracle came in 1845, when James K. Polk was elected president and appointed George Bancroft as the Secretary of the Navy. Though Bancroft was not a navy man, being a historian and prominent politician in Massachusetts would prove most useful to the creation of an academy. Bancroft made it his mission during his appointment as Secretary to improve the

⁴⁸³ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 196.

⁴⁸⁴ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 197.

navy. He met with prior-president John Quincy Adams to discuss the navy and stated his determination to create “greater efficiency and professionalism” within its ranks.⁴⁸⁵ At the time, the United States was once again facing war, this time with Mexico over the annexation of Texas as well as another war with Britain over the boundary between Oregon and the Canadian Territory. While neither would necessarily require a navy war, Bancroft determined to focus on strengthening the navy from within instead of building it bigger, since all the Congress attention was focused on Army resources in the possible brewing battles. Everyone Bancroft spoke to agreed that he should begin with a reformation of the naval education system.

Bancroft did more research into the present educational system and the previous attempts at reform, and he concluded that there were several issues that had to be overcome before a formal reform could occur. The first obstacle would be Congress. Congress had shown their disregard for naval educational reform many times over in the preceding years. Bancroft knew he could not rely on them for support to build an academy. Instead, he determined to find a way to reform the navy with the money that he already had available to him for naval education. In this instance, he seemed to abide by the adage that it is easier to ask for forgiveness than it is to ask for permission.

Through a series of conversations, he found an old military fort that was no longer being used by the U.S. Army. Fort Severn, in Annapolis, Maryland, fit all Bancroft’s requirement for the new academy. It was relatively secluded from the surrounding community, so midshipmen would be less tempted to carouse in town rather than attend to their studies. It was built on the peninsula between the Severn River and Annapolis Harbor, and provided ample access to Chesapeake Bay making it easily accessible by water for training maneuvers. It had plenty of

⁴⁸⁵ John Quincy Adams diary 45, 1 January 1845 - 10 August 1846, page 101 [electronic edition]. *The Diaries of John Quincy Adams: A Digital Collection*. Boston, MA: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2005.

space for both the housing of students and classrooms, as well as room for expansion if needed. It was also located in the South, which would provide a preferred balance to West Point, which was located in the North. Finally, and most importantly, it would not cost the navy a single, solitary penny. Using his political connections, Bancroft was able to convince the Army that he would be doing them a favor taking the old fort off their hands and out of their budget, and they agreed to sign it over to the United States Navy instead.⁴⁸⁶

The second issue Bancroft encountered was getting the support of the naval corps of officers. Most of the younger officers were in favor of establishing an academy, but the older senior officers favored more traditional, shipboard education for young recruits, as they themselves had received. As Secretary of the Navy, Bancroft had power over the corps. However, he knew that though they would “accept the secretary’s plan publicly, they would do everything possible to undermine it privately if he did not consult them about its formation.”⁴⁸⁷ Rather than asking them to consider if there should *be* a new school, Bancroft requested they meet him at Fort Severn to determine if it was the right location for a school and to help him determine a more effective and extensive course of study for the midshipmen that would better prepare them to be officers and ambassadors of the United States Navy. In essence, he was offering them an “evolution in naval education rather than a revolution.”⁴⁸⁸ By June of 1845, the corps had developed a plan for the new naval school.⁴⁸⁹

It was obvious from the recommendations made by the senior corps of officers, though hesitant to admit it at first, they had serious concerns about both the character and reputation of the navy, and the way in which midshipmen were being educated. What they had learned on

⁴⁸⁶ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 203-205.

⁴⁸⁷ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 206.

⁴⁸⁸ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 206.

⁴⁸⁹ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 205-206.

board a ship during times of war, was just not possible during times of peace, when there was simply too much free time to contend with. In times of war, all the crew was constantly readying for battle, practicing their maneuvers for battle, or in a battle; sleep was hard to come by and free time was either sparse or nonexistent. During times of peace, free time was a luxury and while midshipmen were supposed to fill it with their studies, most of the time it was filled by spending time watching the ordinary and able-bodied seamen play games of chance, tell ribald stories, and other incorrigible pursuits.⁴⁹⁰ They determined that “by enforcing strict standards of academic performance, discipline, and morality,” things not commonly found on board a naval ship, “this new system of educating naval officers would more effectively rid the service of those young men who did not possess the intelligence, character, or physical constitution for a naval career.”⁴⁹¹ Bancroft chose a new superintendent for the school, Commander Franklin Buchanan, an officer with thirty years of experience in naval matters, and charged him to teach the midshipmen that “a warrant in the Navy, far from being an excuse for licentious freedom, is to be held a pledge for subordination, industry, and regularity, for sobriety and assiduous attention to duty.”⁴⁹²

The next hurdle for Bancroft was how to get midshipmen the time away from their duties for two years to complete the program. For the time being it was determined that midshipmen already in service would complete their current cruises and then be formally assigned to attend the school at Annapolis when they returned to port. Those who had only been with the Navy for one year would be considered the junior classman and those who had already served for two and were nearing their exams would be considered seniors. In addition to all that they were currently

⁴⁹⁰ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 138.

⁴⁹¹ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 207.

⁴⁹² Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 210.

learning, the new school opted to also include fencing and infantry drills as optional courses for midshipmen to take to help prepare them for times when fighting may require close combat. By offering these courses, and making the schooling mandatory, the school saw more enrollment of midshipman in the first few months than any of the other schools had seen at any one time.⁴⁹³

Bancroft and the naval officer corps realized that the first couple of years would be difficult as the current midshipmen would be coming and going throughout the academic year as their cruises would allow. However, they determined to begin a new chapter of naval education by creating a new rank for their newest recruits. “Naval Cadets” would rank below midshipman and only apply to those not on active duty but attending the school. This would allow them to complete their education before ever being officially assigned to a ship. After successfully completing both years of the program and passing their final examinations, cadets would be promoted to midshipmen and given an official naval assignment at sea. This idea actually came from the naval corps of officers who stated, “By making this grade the source from which all others shall spring, and by imposing upon it acquirements of a comparatively high character, most of the delinquencies now so common in the Navy would be unknown when the proposed system shall have been thoroughly incorporated into the service.”⁴⁹⁴ The corps further suggested that cadets remain at the school for two years, using summers to learn to sail a ship, then to be assigned to a ship at sea for three years, after which they would return to serve a year as officers in training on board the schools training ship. If they still desired to remain in the navy after those six years, they would then be eligible to take the lieutenants exam for promotion to an official officer in the United States Navy.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹³ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 212-215.

⁴⁹⁴ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 207.

⁴⁹⁵ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 206-207.

The naval school officially opened its doors on October 10, 1845. It was hoped that the new school would be able to act as a flood gate and stop the undesirable candidates from joining the navy. Professor Henry Lockwood, one of the first civilian instructors at the new naval school stated, “Before this time, every dismissed cadet from the Military Academy [at West Point], every third son whose father could do nothing else with him, every hopeless case for civil life, was considered a proper candidate for the navy.”⁴⁹⁶ Instead, the navy would now have the power to screen their cadets more carefully and only accept those who were deemed proper candidates to represent the United States of America around the world. The candidates they were looking for would “possess good character, be at least thirteen and no more than seventeen years old, be able to read and write, be proficient in geography and arithmetic, and be able to pass the physical examination conducted by the school’s surgeon.”⁴⁹⁷ What they did not want, however, was an elitist program like that at West Point, that had drawn much concern from the populace about militaristic aristocracy growing in the new democratic republic. They need not have worried, however, as the Mexican-American War in 1846 would solve the question of usefulness of the military academy once and for all and promote the U.S. Naval School to the rank of an academy in its own right.

From Naval School to Naval Academy – 1851

Though there may seem to be a lot of resentment towards West Point for their lack of resources available to the navy, it was actually West Point that made the naval academy a reality. When the naval school opened in 1845, there was not a lot of press coverage of fanfare surrounding the event. As far as most people were concerned, including Congress, the school at the Naval Asylum had simply been moved to a new location. No one truly understood the depth

⁴⁹⁶ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 217.

⁴⁹⁷ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 212.

of the endeavor to completely overhaul and officially open a naval school until December 1845 when Bancroft had to report to Congress on what he had accomplished.⁴⁹⁸ He stated that he set up the school without using money other than that which had already been approved for educational purposes by Congress. He further declared his aspirations for the school stating, “This institution, by giving some preliminary instruction to the midshipmen before their first cruise, by extending an affectionate but firm supervision over them as they return from sea, by providing for them suitable culture before they pass to a higher grade, by rejecting from the service all who fail in capacity or in good disposition to use their time well, will go far to renovate and improve the American Navy.”⁴⁹⁹ Congress was not really sure how to respond to the news and promised to reflect on the situation after seeing the results over the course of the school’s first year.

The school not only succeeded, but thrived. In the first year, fifty-two midshipmen were deemed ready to take the lieutenant’s exam. Of those fifty-two, only three were found to be deficient and were subsequently dismissed from the navy. Due to its successful year, on August 10, 1846, “Congress passed an appropriations act that authorized \$28,200 ‘for repairs, improvements, and instruction, at Fort Severn, Annapolis, Maryland.’”⁵⁰⁰ This wasn’t an increase to their educational allotment, but in making it an official Act of Congress and specifying it for Fort Severn at Annapolis, Congress was officially recognizing the naval school and agreeing to its financial support. Bancroft immediately ordered the monies used for

⁴⁹⁸ Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy to Congress, December 1, 1845.

<https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/a/secnav-reports/annual-report-secretary-of-the-navy-1845.html>

⁴⁹⁹ Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy to Congress, December 1, 1845.

<https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/a/secnav-reports/annual-report-secretary-of-the-navy-1845.html>

⁵⁰⁰ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 222.

expanding the program to allow for more students to attend. Unfortunately, the naval school would fall before those expansions could be realized.

With the Mexican-American War happening in 1846, the U.S. Navy became busy transporting supplies, troops, and assisting however they could in the Gulf of Mexico. Though not a naval war, many of the midshipmen stuck in school in Annapolis were jealous of their classmates that were called away to “fight.” Morale at the school plummeted. Bancroft was reassigned to serve as the U.S. Minister in Great Britain in September of 1846. Buchanan was called away in March of 1847 to assist in the fight in the Gulf of Mexico. The superintendent who replaced him, George Upshur, brother of the former Secretary of the Navy during the *Somers* mutiny affair, was not a disciplinarian in the least. He believed that “boys will be boys” and the school quickly fell into chaos and disarray, just as the previous school and classroom attempts had done. When things were at their worst, and the instructors had pleaded with Upshur to deal with the situation, he simply called the midshipmen together and implored of them, “I cannot not govern you, young Gentlemen; so if you will only govern yourselves I should be delighted.”⁵⁰¹ As the situation worsened, the naval officer corps, politicians, and even reformers grew concerned with what should be done with the school and the naval recruits.

After the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848, General Winfield Scott of the U.S. Army made the most compelling argument for reforming the naval academy, and it was completely unintended. Of his young army officers he stated, “But for the science of the Military Academy, this army, multiplied by four, could not have entered the capital of Mexico.”⁵⁰² It was obvious to many that it was the formal education they had received from West Point in technique, skill, discipline, and technology that allowed the U.S. Army to defeat the Mexican

⁵⁰¹ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 225.

⁵⁰² Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 226.

Army. In 1849, it was agreed upon by Congress and the Department of the Navy that the naval school needed to be overhauled to be more like West Point.⁵⁰³

A board was selected that included both naval personnel, naval and civilian instructors, and West Point faculty. The board concluded that the biggest change that needed to occur was for the school to change from two years to four years. It was determined that the cadets would attend school for two years, go to sea for three, then return and complete two more years of schooling. There were also much stricter regulations and rules put in place including, “prohibitions against dueling, forming social clubs, playing cards, visiting taverns and hotels in town without permission, marrying, and sporting facial hair...[They were also] permitted liberty only on Saturday afternoons until eight o’clock in the evening and could no longer wear civilian clothes in the Yard...Sunday chapel attendance became mandatory...[and] daily inspections of the cadet’s quarters by the superintendent or commandant became routine.”⁵⁰⁴ The age for new recruits also dropped to only include young men between thirteen and fifteen years of age and admissions would only be granted in October of each year.⁵⁰⁵ These new rules went into place in July 1850 with one small change in 1851 – the four years of study would no longer be interrupted by three years at sea, but be consecutive. With these changes the naval school officially became the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis.

Reforming the Navy and America

As has been stated numerous times throughout this chapter, the reformation of naval education was not just about improving the reputation of the United States Navy, though that was in serious need of an overhaul following the years after the War of 1812. During war time, the

⁵⁰³ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 225-226.

⁵⁰⁴ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 227.

⁵⁰⁵ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 227.

U.S. Navy had become both a beacon of hope for the new country as well as an echo of America as a whole. During the Barbary Wars, the United States Navy was struggling to find its way in a new world that didn't know quite what to make of it. The Royal Navy was still the power of the Atlantic and had the power to determine the success or failure of any ventures of the struggling U.S. Navy. That became quite clear when they chose to withdraw their support for American merchants in the Mediterranean, leaving civilians helpless prey for the Barbary Powers. When the United States created the Navy, amid great protest and divide within Congress and the populace, it did its best to resolve the situation as best as it could. However, other countries were not entirely sure of what to do with this new country that had dared to take on Great Britain and actually won. The feud with France, another strong force in the Atlantic, did not help matters.

At a time when communication across the ocean and between governments was difficult and slow, the United States Naval Officers became the face and voice of the nation. They were the identity of all America that became known throughout the world. During that time and during the War of 1812, the U.S. Navy became a character for people to take pride in and emulate. They showed honesty, bravery, integrity, perseverance, humility, and generosity towards others, even towards the defeated enemy in times of battle. Other countries, like France, Portugal, and the emissary of Constantinople chose to ally themselves with the Americans solely on the character they witnessed through the actions of the U.S. Navy.

After the War of 1812, when fighting was no longer necessary, the navy became a lost topic. People mostly forgot about them, except when the press reported on some bad behavior perpetrated by a young midshipman.⁵⁰⁶ Despite this, the navy tried to appease and offer something positive to the country in 1833 with the U.S. Naval Lyceum. The Lyceum was a type

⁵⁰⁶ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 127.

of library or museum. It was open to the public and offered a vast collection of reading materials, lectures on science, mathematics, maritime topics, and the natural world. The 1830s and 1840s, aside from being a time for moral reform, they were also a time of intellectual reform.⁵⁰⁷ Public schools for children were being set up to teach all young people to read, write, and learn basic mathematics and geography. Colleges and professional programs were increasing exponentially across the United States. The Lyceum offered a place where people who were not able to attend school or college could go to learn and expand their knowledge for free. The Lyceum was a way for the navy to “justify their role within American society and to prove they were essential to the nation’s well-being.”⁵⁰⁸

The Lyceum went far to garner respect and admiration with the public, but as it was only located in New York, it did nothing to improve the sentiments of the rest of the populace who continued to hear about the midshipmen’s antics in their local press all up and down the Eastern seaboard, wherever there was a naval yard or port. Unfortunately, with Congress refusing to approve any sort of educational reform bill, the United States Navy’s hand were metaphorically tied. It wasn’t until the *Somers* affair that the public really started understanding the extent of the problem the navy was facing and began to get involved in lobbying Congress for reform. It was then that they realized the impression officers like Spencer or even Mackenzie, whether one believed him guilty or innocent, would have on the rest of the world. Even though the affair was centered in America and had nothing to do with any other country, it received a fair amount of attention all the way across the Atlantic. That fact reminded people, that the United States Navy,

⁵⁰⁷ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 128. Leeman notes that in 1783 there were only 13 colleges in the United States. By 1831 there were 46 colleges, 22 seminaries, 16 medical schools, and 7 law schools. By 1850, there were 119 colleges, 44 seminaries, 36 medical schools, and 16 law schools. This growth definitely shows the important shift from apprenticeship to education during this time.

⁵⁰⁸ Leeman, *Long Road to Annapolis*, 129.

just as with the Royal Navy, and the French, Spanish, and Dutch Navies, were the main representation of a country before any other impressions are usually formed.

It was therefore essential that the United States Navy echo the reformation movement of the United States and find a way to fix its newest generation before the entire system failed. Andrew Jackson reminded the people when he became president in 1829 of “the first principle of our system –the majority is to govern.”⁵⁰⁹ Fearful because the majority were weighed down heavily in their vices of drunkenness, gambling, immorality, and a lack of “proper Christian behavior,” the reform movements attempted to put a stop to all of those behaviors.⁵¹⁰ Unfortunately, changing the habits of an entire nation is not only improbable, it is next to impossible, as no government had the power to place rules or laws on the type issues the reformers were attempting to correct. However, the U.S. Navy’s task was much easier, as they were not a democratic nation, but more of an oligarchy that *did* have the power to make change.⁵¹¹ They would face personal pushback from sailors and even some officers, but ultimately, whether through discipline or dismissal, the Navy had the power to reform their corps.

Take alcohol consumption as an example, since it was a serious matter for reformers at the time. It is estimated that the 1830s had the highest level of alcohol consumption seen in the history of the United States, with the average consumption of distilled spirits (meaning whiskey, rum, gin, and brandy) at over five gallons per year.⁵¹² This said nothing of other forms of alcohol including beer and ales. Because alcohol consumption was such a large part of American culture

⁵⁰⁹ Volk, *Moral Minorities*, 11-36.

⁵¹⁰ Volk, *Moral Minorities*, 11-36.

⁵¹¹ W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1979), discussed in detail in chapter 5.

⁵¹² Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic*, 7-9. For comparison, the average rate in 2021 was 1.89 gallons (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/463135/us-per-capita-consumption-of-distilled-spirits/>).

at the time, in 1801, Congress approved as part of the daily rations for all naval seamen “one half-pint of distilled spirits.”⁵¹³ However, the rules and regulations of the navy prohibited selling “any kind of beer, wines, or spiritous liquors on board to the ship’s company.”⁵¹⁴ The navy would allow the men to drink, just not in excess of what they felt would limit a man’s ability to quickly, efficiently, and safely fulfill his duties. On February 27, 1830, Congress debated whether to prohibit liquor in the U.S. Navy or not. It was determined that the delegates should take the question to the public and find out how they felt about it.⁵¹⁵ How the public felt is not recorded, but in 1831, rather than prohibiting alcohol, it was determined that if any man chose to give up their half-pint, they would receive an additional six cents per day added to their pay. The most important change regarding the reformation of alcohol consumption by the midshipmen came in 1842 when, on August 29, Congress passed a bill that not only reduced the amount of ration allowed each day to one-quarter pint for all the sailors, but forbade any enlisted man younger than twenty-one years of age to receive the ration.⁵¹⁶ During that same time some states and territories attempted to pass laws to ban or limit alcohol consumption. In 1838, Massachusetts attempted to ban the sale of alcohol, but liquor dealers found ways to charge for other things, while giving the alcohol away for free instead.⁵¹⁷ Wisconsin in 1839, restricted the

⁵¹³ *Naval History and Heritage Command*, “Alcohol in the Navy, 1794-1935,”

<https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/a/alcohol-in-the-navy.html>

⁵¹⁴ Naval Board of Commissioners, “Message from the President of the United States, transmitting a copy of the Rules, Regulations, and Instructions for the Naval Service of the United States,” April 20, 1818, 33.

⁵¹⁵ “Phenix Gazette, Alexandria, D.C. March 2, 1830,” *Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers*. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85025006/1830-03-02/ed-1/seq-3/#date1=1823&index=0&rows=20&words=liquors+Navy&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=&date2=1842&proxtext=navy+liquor&y=21&x=11&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1>

⁵¹⁶ As a note here, the United States did not enact legislature to limit drinking to persons over the age of 21 only, until 1984, when Ronald Reagan signed the National Minimum Drinking Age Act on July 17, 1984.

⁵¹⁷ Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic*, 234. (electronic version through Barnes and Noble Nook App) One example of this was a man who charged people to see his painted striped hog and gave them a free alcohol to drink while they did.

sale of distilled spirits to anyone younger than eighteen without a parent's consent.⁵¹⁸ By 1862, the Congress completely banned all distilled spirits from being on board ships, except for use as medical stores. Ale, beer, and wine were still allowed, but only as they were purchased by the ship and not sold to individual sailors.⁵¹⁹ Through this legislature, the Navy was able to be an example to the nation of temperance and modesty in drinking, which is saying something since those most commonly known for being the hardest drinkers were sailors in general.

The era of peace between 1820 and 1845 were difficult years for the United States Navy. Congress did not imagine another naval war happening again anytime soon, so they mostly dismissed the navy and their needs anytime a motion came across their agenda. The public's view of the navy fell as well to either complete disregard or actual shame based on what they were and were not seeing printed in the press. During a time when reform was the topic of the day, the U.S. Navy struggled to make the reforms necessary to ensure their usefulness and readiness for the country's security. However, through persistence and an eye toward the future, they were able to not only improve the education of their young midshipmen, but they were also able to professionalize the naval service, reform their sailors into the gentlemen they touted them to be, and reimagined the image of what Americans would be to the rest of the world. Rather than producing brash, alcoholic, rude, ignorant men, they reformed themselves into intelligent, confident, wholesome, knowledgeable, gentlemen not only capable of representing the United States, but doing so with honor and dignity.

⁵¹⁸ Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau, "The Minimum Drinking Age in Wisconsin," Brief 95-3, January 1995. <https://web.archive.org/web/20100528095420/http://www.legis.wisconsin.gov/lrb/pubs/wb/95wb3.pdf>

⁵¹⁹ *Naval History and Heritage Command*, "Alcohol in the Navy, 1794-1935," <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/a/alcohol-in-the-navy.html>

Chapter 5

America's Ensign: The U.S. Navy and an American Identity in the Atlantic World

After America separated from Great Britain following the Revolutionary War, the Americans needed to persuade the rest of the world that the United States was no longer simply another English colony, but a nation in their own right. They needed to create their own national identity that the rest of the world would come to see as American. The main goal behind this new identity was to sell themselves as a country based on equality, liberty, and republicanism. Though great as an idea, in practice it was not so simple. This chapter takes a step away from the creation and activities of the U.S. Navy and focuses instead on the role they played in creating this idea of a national identity through the concepts of masculinity that have been laid out in the previous chapters.

In essence, it is within these pages that the story of the United States Navy in the Age of Sail of the Early American Republic draws to a close. The U.S. Navy has three major phases of renewal and reconstruction, the Age of Sail being the first phase and the most important to the discussion of national identity in the early Republic.⁵²⁰ In an Act of Congress in April 1816, the country began seeking alternate forms of sailing power through the use of steam engines. This advent became more and more popular in the antebellum years and the Navy officially shifted their flotilla after the Civil War. At that time, not only did the United States Navy enter a new phase, but ideas of manhood and masculinity as well as a search for a more pronounced and nuanced national identity for America began. For that reason, this dissertation will end with the creation of Annapolis, prior to the American Age of Exploration, Imperialization, and Manifest Destiny as that tied more fully to the next phase of naval activity.

⁵²⁰ The other two phases are just after the Civil War when the navy adopts steam as its primary source of power in naval ships, and then after WWII when the navy again reforms its ships for a more nuclear age.

Historiography on American Nationalism

The topic of nationalism has greatly interested historians for many decades. Twentieth century studies in nationalism mostly focused on European, Asian, Middle Eastern, and African countries, but had not ventured into the realm of American nationalism, except for a few random outsiders. Jasper M. Trautsch, a nationalism scholar at the German Historical Institute in Paris, France, published an article answering the question of why scholars had seemingly ignored nationalism in the United States. “Nationalism,” he explained, “implied a doctrine or a specific form of consciousness conveying superiority or prestige and had often engendered exclusion, wars, displacements, and genocide, which, as such, had never come to pass in America.”⁵²¹ He furthered his claim that it had only been since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks that American nationalism had become a topic of serious consideration for historians, due to the intense display of it during this time of national tragedy.⁵²² Nationalism scholars finally conceded that American’s did in fact have a sense of nationalism, though it was very different from their previous studies in other countries.

American nationalism is different in that there were not multiple centuries worth of antagonistic ideas threatening it, as can be seen in other nations of the world. As the study of American nationalism has grown in popularity, many debates have gained attention within the historical community. The biggest of these has concerned the precise formation of American

⁵²¹ Jasper M. Trautsch, “The Origins and Nature of American Nationalism,” *National Identities* 17.2 (2015): 1-24,” 1. For similar discussions on nationalism throughout the world and how American nationalism differs see Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001); George Dangerfield, *The Awakening of American Nationalism, 1815-1828* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965); Michael Schwartz, “The Origins of Jeffersonian Nationalism: Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and the Sovereignty Question in the Anglo-American Commercial Dispute of the 1780s.” *Journal of Southern History* 79.3 (2013): 569-592”; Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1977); and Jasper M. Trautsch, “‘Mr. Madison’s War’ or the Dynamic of Early American Nationalism?” *Early American Studies* 10.3 (2012): 630-670.

⁵²² Trautsch, “The Origins and Nature of American Nationalism,” 2. For further discussion on the growth of nationalism post-September 11, 2001, see Phillip M. Bratta, “Flag Display Post-9/11: A Discourse on American Nationalism,” *The Journal of American Culture* 32.3 (2009): 232-243.

nationalism. In his article, Trautsch considers when nationalism emerged for the first time in American history. Ultimately, he concludes that it was the “period between the American Revolution and the Civil War that an American nationality emerged,” and that it “continues to be an ongoing process.”⁵²³ His findings, however, are by no means new to authors who have studied it for longer than it has been popular.

Most historians who study the War of 1812 and the post-war years concur that this period, as Donald Hickey proclaims, “promoted national self-confidence and encouraged the heady expansionism that lay at the heart of American foreign policy for the rest of the century... The war gave the fledgling republic a host of sayings, symbols, and songs that helped Americans define who they were and where the young republic was headed.”⁵²⁴ This was especially relevant to the United States Navy as a great many of the songs and symbols revolved around the men and ships that had victoriously conquered the Royal Navy.

Ernest Gellner counters this definition of emerging nationalism. “Nationalism,” he asserts, “is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do

⁵²³ Trautsch, “The Origins and Nature of American Nationalism,” 3. For more discussion on when American nationalism emerged see Mlada Bukovansky, “American Identity and Neutral Rights from Independence to the War of 1812,” *International Organization* 51.2 (1997): 209-243; J. Wade Caruthers, “Influence of Maritime Trade in Early American Development: 1750-1830,” *American Neptune* 29.3 (1969): 199-210; Dangerfield, *The Awakening of American Nationalism*; William Dudley, ed., *Antebellum America: 1784-1850* (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2003); Nicole Eustace, *1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Francois Furstenburg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington’s Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of the Nation* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006); Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: Writings from America’s Second War of Independence* (New York, NY: Literary Classics of the United States, Inc, 2013); Michael Lind, “The Case for American Nationalism,” *National Interest* 131 (2014): 9-20; Margaret A. Nash, “Contested Identities Nationalism, Regionalism, and Patriotism in Early American Textbooks,” *History of Education Quarterly* 49.4 (2009): 417-441; David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); and David Waldstreicher, “Rites of Rebellion, Rites of Assent: Celebrations, Print Culture, and the Origins of American Nationalism,” *Journal of American History* (1995): 37-61.

⁵²⁴ Hickey, *The War of 1812*, 3. For more information on the emergence of nationalism during the War of 1812 see also, Eustace, *1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism*, Edward Pessen, “American Nationalism and American Historians,” *OAH Magazine of History* 2.4 (1987): 4-7, 19; John D. Hicks, George E. Mowry, and Robert E. Burke. *A History of American Democracy*, 3rd ed., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966); and Homer Carey Hockett, *Political and Social Growth of the American People, 1492-1865* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1940).

not exist.”⁵²⁵ Despite semantics, both claims occurred in America during the War of 1812 and the years immediately following it. The fledgling country that had been torn apart by party politics since the ratification of the U.S. Constitution was finally drawn together in a fight for independence. Benedict Anderson, author of *Imagined Communities*, embraces the concept of nationalism as myth and is quick to point out that, “it is doubtful whether either social change or transformed consciousness, in themselves, do much to explain the attachment that peoples feel for the inventions of their [nation] or...why people are ready to die for these [nations].”⁵²⁶ Although the general population may come together for a common purpose, it is the concept of patriotism that really cements nationalism within nation-states.

Despite being the main antagonist in the Early American Republic, the United States actually owes a lot to Great Britain and the Royal Navy for bringing American’s together under a sense of nationalism and national identity.⁵²⁷ Even though the United States had claimed independence from Britain and won the American Revolution –the War for Independence – they were not really independent. Regardless of the impressions they made through their actions during the Barbary Wars, they were still very much subjugated by the British through the Royal Navy. As historian Bradford Perkins put it, “During the 1780’s [up through the War of 1812], the young [American] nation suffered humiliation at British hands while royalist France, midwife at

⁵²⁵ Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London, England: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 3, quoted by Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York, NY: Verso, 1983), 6.

⁵²⁶ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 141. See also, Jack Citrin, Ernst B. Haas, Christopher Muste, and Beth Reingold. “Is American Nationalism Changing? Implications for Foreign Policy.” *International Studies Quarterly* 38 (1994): 1-31.

⁵²⁷ A note on my definitions of nationalism and national identity for the purposes of this dissertation. Nationalism has a long and obscure history with definitions that shift depending on the nation under discussion. In short, these varying definitions usually revolve around devotion to one’s country or sovereignty to run a country as the inhabitants see fit. National identity is different in that it relates back to how the inhabitants and citizens view themselves as a collective, or in other words, what ties them together and makes them stand out from other countries.

America's birth, treated her as an upstart ingrate and sought to maneuver her as a satellite."⁵²⁸

The economy of every state in the nation relied on trade in foreign ports. Without that trade, the United States would fail economically and lose their independence. Other countries, especially Britain, would just be waiting in the wings, ready to take advantage when that happened.

Having a strong navy was important during this time to protect economic interests and ensure American independence. One historian went so far as to claim, "Lack of a navy unquestionably contributed to the sorry diplomatic record of the United States under the Articles of Confederation. Inability to back up demands with anything stronger than words was certainly important, if incommensurable, factor in the failure of American statesmen to hold Great Britain to the terms of the Peace Treaty of 1783."⁵²⁹ However, the Royal Navy did everything they could to interrupt and disrupt American trade. Losing their colonies in America was a major hardship for the British; more so than for the United States. While America had lost their protection, Britain had lost a major source of their revenue. Rather than just capitulate and accept the situation for what it was, they determined to harass the United States instead. In a letter to Harrison Otis, on March 31, 1808, John Quincy Adams complained that the British habit of stopping and boarding American merchant ships, even though the United States had claimed a state of neutrality in the war between Britain and France, was meant to "strike at the very root of our independence."⁵³⁰ Once again, the Americans had a choice to make – resist British rule or fight it. President James Madison chose to fight it, much to the discontent of a great many people, mostly those in New England and the Federalists.⁵³¹

⁵²⁸ Bradford Perkins, *Prologue to War: England and the United States, 1805-1812* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1961), 67.

⁵²⁹ Harold Hance Sprout and Margaret T. Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power, 1776-1918* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1939), 16.

⁵³⁰ Perkins, *Prologue to War*, 77.

⁵³¹ For more information on this topic of disharmony regarding the declaration of war in the War of 1812, please see: Nicole Euastace and Fredrika J. Teute, eds., *Warring for America: Cultural Contests in the Era of 1812* (Chapel

During the War of 1812, and to a lesser extent the Barbary Wars, patriotism, founded in the seemingly impossible naval victories, unified the country. The war with Great Britain, which had the world's most powerful and prominent Navy, brought a lot of internal criticism on the U.S. government. When the American Navy achieved victories in the Great Lakes and Atlantic campaigns, only one of the political parties, the Democratic Republicans, rejoiced. However, in these victories, the populace could find a common ground.⁵³² "What the celebration of naval victory shows," states political historian, Jennifer Clark, "is that the War of 1812 played a much larger role as a catalyst for nationalism than implied by [all of the other political movements of the time combined]."⁵³³ Despite the reasons behind the war, the American public believed it necessary to support the men who honored the call to arms. No longer were they men from individual states fighting in "Mr. Madison's War." They were *American* sailors and soldiers, fighting an *American* war, and they needed to be supported by their fellow Americans. From this time period, at least for a short time between 1820 and 1850, America the nation-state emerged, from the individual states, with a sense of nationalism.

Although there is plenty of evidence to support the claim that the events during and after the War of 1812 sparked a sense of nationalism, exactly when nationalistic sentiment spread to an expanding America remains problematic. One of the first and most basic ways was through public political festivities and patriotic celebrations. David Waldstreicher, Simon Newman, and Christopher Looby each discuss this concept from different angles.⁵³⁴ It is Newman that really

Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Perkins, *Prologue to War*; Ronald J. Drez's *The War of 1812, Conflict and Deception: The British Attempt to Seize New Orleans and Nullify the Louisiana Purchase* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2014); and Richard Buel, Jr., *Securing the Revolution: Ideology in American Politics, 1789-1815* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972).

⁵³² Jennifer Clark, "The Celebration of American Naval Victory: Popular Nationalism in the War of 1812," *Journal of the American Studies Association of Texas* 29, no. 1 (1998): 56-79, 56-65.

⁵³³ Clark, "The Celebration of American Naval Victory," 74.

⁵³⁴ Bruce Burgett, "American Nationalism: R.I.P.," *American Literary History* 13.2 (2001): 317-328. See also: Christopher Looby, *Voicing America: Language, Literary Form, and the Origins of the United States* (Urbana, IL:

shows how patriotic and political celebrations, like electoral candidate speeches, the Fourth of July, and George Washington's birthday, brought urban communities together for parties and parades. From the time of the Revolution these festivities reminded the populace of the sacrifices made in the cause of freedom. They featured guest speakers that would entreat the gathering with political ideas of unity, oneness, patriotism, and American exceptionalism. Each occasion was another chance for leaders to build a sense of nationalism. The problem was that most of these commemorative events did not reach the large number of rural communities or individual farmers who found few reasons to venture into larger metropolitan areas.

These political speeches became a highly useful way of circulating ideas among the people who were in a position to affect change, despite their inability to expand into many of the rural communities. The leading political party, and preferred guest speakers, at the end of the War of 1812, was the Democratic-Republicans.⁵³⁵ They posted numerous propaganda posters and pamphlets, declaring their platform and encouraging the people to stand together in unity.⁵³⁶ One of their greatest weapons was President Washington's Farewell Address, though he had typically associated and agreed more with the Federalists. His legendary treatise was reprinted in newspapers and political pamphlets for years after his resignation and death. In his speech, Washington urges the people to embrace one another as a nation and to not give in to the differences that would naturally separate them.⁵³⁷

It was not just Washington's great address that was being printed in the papers. Waldstreicher makes the claim that it was the newspapers spreading the news of these

University of Chicago Press, 1997); Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*; and Simon P. Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

⁵³⁵ John Ferling, *Jefferson and Hamilton: The Rivalry that Forged a Nation* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), Intro.

⁵³⁶ Schwarz, "The Origins of Jeffersonian Nationalism," 569-592.

⁵³⁷ Furstenburg, *In the Name of the Father*, 41-43.

celebrations that really helped to spread nationalism. “For answers,” he asserts, “to the great questions left by the American Revolution – who the people were, what their character was, what they believed – people looked to the festivals and the printed commentary that sought to persuade everyone how to act.”⁵³⁸ Although Waldstreicher refers more towards a Revolutionary time period, the concept pertains to other time periods as well. After the War of 1812, the people turned to the newspapers to show them how to proceed. The nation was still new and no one understood just how to progress out of state loyalties to that of a national loyalty. Newspapers, which were generally supportive of a particular political party, used their articles to form a unique American image and character. However, newspaper reports about the War of 1812 itself really brought American nationalism to the forefront of these stories and propelled the political ideals into the hearts of the populace. The popularity of the United States Navy during this time was of particular importance as the ideals of manhood and masculinity were used as descriptions of the heroes as their tales of adventure and triumph wowed the populace.

Although the celebrations and newspapers played an important role in the spreading of national ideas, Looby argues it was a literary and philosophical language that truly solidified a sense of nationalism in American culture. Drawing on the works of Benjamin Franklin, Charles Brockden Brown, and Henry Hugh Brackenridge, Looby shows how the ideas presented in these post-revolutionary texts not only impacted their readers, but also how philosophers and theologians in later years interpreted those ideas and then expounded on them.⁵³⁹ These

⁵³⁸ Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 225. For more information on the power and position of the presses during this time period see also, Thomas C. Leonard, *The Power of the Press: The Birth of American Political Reporting*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Eric Burns, *Infamous Scribblers: The Founding Fathers and the Rowdy Beginnings of American Journalism* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006); David Paul Nord, “Newspapers and American Nationhood, 1776-1826,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 100 no. 2 (1990): 391-405; and Jeffrey L. Pasley, *The Tyranny of Printers: Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2001).

⁵³⁹ Burgett, “American Nationalism, R.I.P.,” 323-324 and Looby, *Voicing America*.

expanded ideas were disseminated during the post-War of 1812 years via word of mouth, political speeches, or newspapers.

Some critics are quick to point out that this sense of nationalism, born from the War of 1812, centered only on the white male populace, as only they held any power within the government. The research of these contemporary critics focuses on racism within American nationalism stating that there has always been a level of division among the people based on race, ethnicity, religion, and culture.⁵⁴⁰ For this reason, I believe that the most important aspect of nationalism that really needs to be focused on is national identity.

The discussion for how a national identity emerged *needs* to begin with the fractured and divided America that these authors believe makes a unified concept of nationalism impossible. The question is what avenue should be taken to unify the nation under one identity? The economy and commerce were not the answer as the nation was divided between industrialization and agrarian societies. Religion was not a unifying factor either, especially with the Second Great Awakening beginning in the late eighteenth-century and continuing through the early part of the nineteenth, bringing with it a multitude of new churches and religious sentiments. Race was definitely not the answer as the northern states began freeing the many slaves they still held and fighting to have the slave trade abolished, while the southern states maintained what they claimed were their rights to slave labor. Culture and ethnicity were also taboo as immigration numbers soared from people looking to make their lives better in a place where opportunities seemed to abound. Simply put, the United States was and is a “melting pot” of cultures, nations,

⁵⁴⁰ For examples of recently conducted research that contribute to this idea see: Manuel Madriaga, “Why American Nationalism Should Never be Considered Postnationalist,” *National Identities* 12.1 (2010): 81-94, Gary Gerstle, “Theodore Roosevelt and the Divided Character of American Nationalism,” *The Journal of American History* (Dec. 1999): 1280-1307, Eileen Ka-May Cheng, “American Historical Writers and the Loyalists, 1788-1856: Dissent, Consensus, and American Nationality,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 23.4 (2003): 491-519; and Vernon D. Johnson and Elizabeth Frombgen, “Racial Contestation and the Emergence of Populist Nationalism in the United States,” *Social Identities* 15.5 (2009): 631-658.

racess, religions, genders, languages, and ideas. It is easy to see why some people might argue there was simply no possible way that Americans could ever become one unified nation under one identity.

Searching for a National Identity

The study of national identity is not a new one for historians to study. There have been several books and articles written discussing how an American identity was formed.⁵⁴¹ In recent years that discussion has been ever more important as America is becoming once again fractured and divided in the same ways it has always been, along the same lines.⁵⁴² Understanding how America came together under one identity in the past, could be the key to understanding how to bring it back together in the present.

After the Constitutional Convention of 1787, there was a great deal of debate regarding whether the states were willing to be more than just a Confederation of States, and instead become the United States of America. The Constitution had been drafted and was awaiting ratification from the various states. Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison took it upon themselves to attempt to sway the New York public by writing what would become the Federalist Papers. These anonymous letters were printed in the newspaper for all to read and hear. On November 30, 1787, in Federalist Paper #14, James Madison wrote about all the ways

⁵⁴¹ For a comprehensive look at those who laid the groundwork for discussions of national identity in America please see: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York, NY: Verso, 1983); David Leslie Miller, *On Nationality* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995); Charles Taylor, "The Dynamics of Democratic Exclusion," *Journal of Democracy* 9 no. 4 (1998): 143-156; Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams, *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1988); Henri Tajfel, ed., *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (London, England: Academic Press, 1978).

⁵⁴² More modern works that deal with American national identity include Jon Meacham, *The Soul of America: The Battle for our Better Angels* (New York, NY: Random House, 2018); Samuel P. Huntington, *Who are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2005); Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, *Who Counts as an American? The Boundaries of National Identity* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *This Violent Empire: The Birth of an American Identity* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

others would try to tear apart the government that the states were attempting to create. He warned the people not to let them do that, but more importantly, not to let the world unite against the states and alienate them from one another. He writes,

Hearken not to the unnatural voice which tells you that the people of America, knit together as they are by so many cords of affection, can no longer live together as members of the same family; can no longer continue the mutual guardians of their mutual happiness; can no longer be fellow citizens of one great, respectable, and flourishing empire...No, my countrymen, shut your ears against this unhallowed language. Shut your hearts against the poison which it conveys; the kindred blood which flows in the veins of American citizens, the mingled blood which they have shed in defense of their sacred rights, consecrate their Union, and excite horror at the idea of their becoming aliens, rivals, enemies.⁵⁴³

Madison understood that there was little to hold the new nation together under a combined identity other than a desire to not be a part of what they had left behind as they separated from Britain. He advised the people to look beyond all the reasons that could possibly pull them apart as an individual unit, and look instead to the reasons they were united. Namely, to look towards their actions in fighting for their independence, throughout all the wars they had fought in so far, and to those who fought and/or died to bring about that independence and to not let those lives go to waste by allowing the differences among them to matter more than their desire for America to rise as a nation among the nations of the world.⁵⁴⁴

One may ask why the Navy and not the Army? Were the men who served in the Army not just as honorable and masculine as those in the Navy? They certainly were, but after the Revolutionary War, the leaders of the United States Army did something that caused concern for the people and made them a more likely target for criticism and distrust, than as an example of what it meant to be American. Even before the Treaty of Paris was signed in September of 1783,

⁵⁴³ James Madison, *Federalist Paper #14*, November 30, 1787, Library of Congress, <https://guides.loc.gov/federalist-papers/text-11-20#s-lg-box-wrapper-25493285>

⁵⁴⁴ This is the idea that Tim Lanzendörfer argues in his essay “Naval Biography, the War of 1812, and the Contestation of American National Identity.” This essay is found in Eustace and Teute, *Warring for America*.

Congress had debated the merits of a standing military. As was discussed previously, this debate weighed heavily on many people's minds and was a major cause of divisive contention among the people. It was decided that both the Army and the Navy would be dissolved, and each individual state would be responsible for their own protection with state militias and navies.

When the debate was still under discussion, some of the officers of the U.S. Army felt that there needed to be a way to retain their honor and duty towards one another and their country, and they formed the Society of the Cincinnati.⁵⁴⁵ They named themselves after the Roman general Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus, “who voluntarily laid down his sword after his duty was performed, rather than retain power and become a dictator.”⁵⁴⁶ They stated they were founded on the principles of “civilian supremacy over the military” and their one objective was to “promote and cherish between the respective states, that Union and national honor so essentially necessary to their happiness, and the future dignity of the American Empire.”⁵⁴⁷ While this sounded great in theory, there were several aspects that many people took issue with, including founding fathers Samuel and John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson.

The first idea that caused concern was that the Society of the Cincinnati was (and still is to this day) a hereditary organization that includes a very limited membership, namely only those serving as officers in the Continental or French Armies during the Revolution.⁵⁴⁸ In a new democratic and republican based society that was meant to be void of any sort of hereditary hierarchy, the fact that membership was limited to a select few, but could be equally accessed by sons and grandsons who may not hold the same virtues as their fathers and grandfathers was

⁵⁴⁵ All the information gleaned and discussed regarding the Society of the Cincinnati here comes from the work of Craig Bruce Smith unless otherwise stated. Craig Bruce Smith, *American Honor: The Creation of the Nation's Ideals during the Revolutionary Era* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 167-191.

⁵⁴⁶ Smith, *American Honor*, 169.

⁵⁴⁷ Smith, *American Honor*, 169.

⁵⁴⁸ It is important to note here that it was solidly for army officers only. Officers from the Continental Navy were not invited to join.

upsetting. In a country that had just won a war through the use of state militias and navies, as well as the countless men who served in the U.S. Army, the idea that only officers of the army, could join the Society was abhorrent.

Another reason the people thought this way, was because it implied that national honor could only be defended and upheld by army officers. The idea that national honor would lie in the hands of only a select few men was unconscionable. Thomas Jefferson argued that “national honor...could only be achieved by the collective honor of individuals,” living within the nation. That honor was not to be limited by age, gender, or even race. Everyone could be honorable in doing their duty, performing their tasks, and honoring the independence of the American nation.⁵⁴⁹

The final reason people were distrustful of the Society was due to the overlap between Society members and the government. One of the main reasons people were so distrustful of standing militaries was because they feared the power of military might in relation to dictatorship and tyranny. The British Army had rained abuses on the colonials for many years prior to the Revolution and the people did not want a repeat of those atrocities. The fact that many of the members of the Society filled important state and later national roles within the government was a grave cause for concern. George Washington, beloved as he was, understood he needed to take a step back from the Society. As their president, he did not believe he could also serve the people as President of the United States. He did not leave the Society, but became a silent member, refrained from attending meetings, and did not participate in Society news or communications until after he left public office. While the Society professed that they had no authority and that

⁵⁴⁹ I do want to note here, that though I am using the term nation, at the time of the Society’s inception, the United States was not a nation, but a Confederation of individual states. However, it would not be long before the United States was born and the Constitution written and ratified, so to speak of the nation as it would become is easier for the sake of clarity.

“power is conferr’d by Congress and the representatives of the People,” they failed to see themselves as villains in the tragedy of the fall of America.⁵⁵⁰

When, in 1786, Daniel Shays led a group of outraged and struggling farmers against the democratic government they felt were responsible for the loss of their farms, the Society believed they had a chance to show they only meant well for the country. Under the direction of General Benjamin Lincoln of the Massachusetts chapter of the Society, a small army was organized to quell the rebellion. Though it took nearly a year to put a stop to the Shaysite’s antics, the Society had made their point. They were going to protect the new nation from anarchy and lawlessness. However, the very fact that they had stepped in was a cause for concern. It was believed that military and civilian matters should be distinct and separate. The idea that a group of people had the power and ability to rise against a group of civilians who were protesting against the government, defied many people’s ideas of what democracy in the new nation was meant to be. Would their voices be quelled as well? Who had the right to decide when the Society should use their skills and power in defense of national honor? The Constitution put to rest many of the concerns that were raised about military, civilian, and government overlaps. However, the Society placed a certain amount of mistrust in the military, especially in the army.

It was easier for the people to trust in the navy. For one, they were not often to be found actively around the everyday lives of the populace. Their place was at sea on ships, two places the majority of the American people had no need to be. Another thing the U.S. Navy did was offer an avenue for the people to embrace their nation and feel a part of the action and history of the United States. Throughout the previous chapters, this dissertation has chronologically explored the various wars and altercations the U.S. Navy has been a part of. Each of these

⁵⁵⁰ Smith, *American Honor*, 172.

engagements was a testament to the right of existence and stability of the United States. While the Navy had limits on enrollment numbers, and strict requirements for warranted officers (as discussed in Chapter 4), they were willing to take a risk on any male in order to fill the ranks of the ordinary and able-bodied sailors that made up the majority of their crews. That meant that regardless of class, ethnicity, and even race, the only people not able to connect directly through service with the navy were women, who could still connect indirectly through the men in their lives.

Manhood and Masculinity in National Identity

Throughout these preceding chapters, the qualities of honor, patriotism, integrity, self-sacrifice, adventurousness, bravery, courage, gentlemanliness, loyalty, perseverance, compassion, firmness, intrepidity, education, knowledge, and personal growth have been highlighted and explored in terms of ideals to be manifested and exemplified in American standards of manhood and masculinity to the rest of the world. It is on these ideals that the national identity was formed and applauded by all those who chose to embrace the United States Navy.

Women of every race, ethnicity, and class are the perfect example of how someone not typically associated with masculinity still embraced the ideals of the new American man. Recognized by their gender first and foremost, they were certainly not men, nor did they strive to be known for their masculine qualities. While they could not strive for gentlemanly behavior, they were certainly tasked with being ladylike. Just before 1850, two books were published in New York entitled *True Politeness*. The books related how one should comport themselves in common situations if one wanted to be viewed as a lady or gentleman. One version was based

around the men and the other specific to women.⁵⁵¹ Both covered the same range of topics, like introductions, communications, dress, and vices.

What was most promising about the books, was they each stated very clearly that class had nothing to do with whether one was to be considered a gentleman or a lady. “Gentility,” the author stated, was “neither in birth, manner, nor fashion, but in the mind. A high sense of honor...an adherence to truth, delicacy, and politeness towards those with whom you may have dealings – are the essential and distinguishing characteristics of a gentleman” and a lady.⁵⁵² Ladies, like their gentleman counterparts, were just as capable of exhibiting honor, patriotism, integrity, self-sacrifice, bravery, courage, loyalty, perseverance, compassion, firmness, intrepidity, education, knowledge, and personal growth, though the outward manifestation of those traits would quite possibly be different due to the limitations place on them by society at the time.

A lady would not have shown her courage and bravery as Stephen Decatur and his crew did when they burnt the *Philadelphia* off the shores of Tripoli. Rather, a lady would show courage and bravery by supporting her son, brother, or husband to enlist in the Navy instead, knowing there was every possibility that he would be in danger and may never come home again. The same holds true for every single person in the United States at the time. Just because they were not accepted into the naval service did not mean that they could not embody the same sense of American identity the U.S. Navy was attempting to typify in some way or another in their own landlocked lives.

⁵⁵¹ An American Gentleman, *True Politeness: A Handbook of Etiquette for Gentlemen* (New York, NY: Leavitt and Allen, 1848) and An American Lady, *True Politeness: A Handbook of Etiquette for Ladies* (New York, NY: Leavitt and Allen, 1847).

⁵⁵² *True Politeness...Gentlemen*, 64. Though this quote comes directly for the book for men, the women’s book says something very similar on page 64 as well.

The biggest problem faced comes back to diversity and differing opinions, the worse of which were the political ones. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg makes a great argument about this in her recent book, *This Violent Empire*. While she mostly focuses on the way national identity is developed by the press, she nevertheless lays the groundwork for the evolution of America's National Identity. She focuses mostly on citizens, as they were the ones with power, and especially on how politicians, like John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and early leaders of the U.S. attempted to evince an image of the American man that would inspire others to not only emulate them, if they could, but to "projecting the image of an educated, cultured America both at home and overseas."⁵⁵³ Though she agrees with the premise presented in this dissertation of American identity revolving around the "ideal new American" as "forceful, energetic, and masculine" with traits such as "strength, hardiness, courage, fortitude, and enterprise," *This Violent Empire* focuses mostly on those with power, and those deemed citizens of the United States.⁵⁵⁴ Contradicting that argument, this dissertation posits instead that the United States Navy was the perfect entity to exemplify the new ideals of America both at home and abroad, as they did not require American citizenship as a requisite for enlisting.⁵⁵⁵ Focusing on the U.S. Navy as a means of garnering nationalism and promoting an national identity did not result in a group of "others," as Smith-Rosenberg states is a result of any country that excludes a portion of its populace by citizenship status.

The question then is not who could represent this national identity, but rather how it was to be characterized. The United States Navy presented an avenue for everyone in America to exhibit nationalism and embody the ideals of manhood and masculinity. Those same ideals were

⁵⁵³ Smith-Rosenberg, *Violent Empire*, 369.

⁵⁵⁴ Smith-Rosenberg, *Violent Empire*, 57-59.

⁵⁵⁵ Only officers were required to be citizens of the United States. Often there were men from other countries serving on the naval ships.

used to create an American identity characterized by Equality, Liberty, and Republicanism – three pillars the “great American experiment” was founded on – to not only bring together a diverse populace, but also to ensure the rest of the world understood just who and what America was.⁵⁵⁶ While it was important for the people in America to feel connected to the nation, it was even more important that the United States develop an identity that had nothing to do with Britain or France in the international world. They had to develop an identity that would make other countries take notice of them. Just as a person would be hesitant to enter into business with a stranger without first learning a bit about their character, virtues, and vices, so it was with the young United States.

From the inception of their separation from Britain with the Declaration of Independence, the United States had claimed the ideals of a nation centered around Equality, Liberty, and Republicanism. Even when situations and contradictions arose that called those ideals into question, Americans remained adamant that they were the pillars their country was founded on.⁵⁵⁷ The expulsion and genocide committed against indigenous peoples, imperialism, and manifest destiny called into question whether “Equality” was really a tenet of their national identity. Slavery called into question the idea of “Liberty for All.” The question also remained if the government would uphold the values of Republicanism by being virtuous citizens and leaders and bending to the will of the majority despite their own personal feelings. With all these

⁵⁵⁶ Just to be clear, I am not making the argument that everyone in America was meant to be the same. Nor am I making the argument that the government, or even the citizens and populace, wanted all the people to be the same. There are plenty of accounts of violence against people due to their ethnicity, race, class, religion, job, or many other classifications. The argument that I am making here is about the image that people could agree on that would promote a positive image of America to the rest of the world.

⁵⁵⁷ I am not going to attempt to disprove or explain away these inconsistencies in this dissertation, something I do not believe can actually be accomplished. The double standards that this country holds today are rooted in its history. It is just a simple fact. Instead, I am going to focus this part of my dissertation on showing how these tenets of the national identity were exuded through the ideals of manhood and masculinity embodied by the gentlemen seamen of the United States Navy.

inconsistencies looming, it fell to the United States Navy, as the model of American identity seen the most by the rest of the world, to eschew the naysayers and prove that America was in fact the country it claimed to be.⁵⁵⁸

Equality

For those seeking to understand equality, one need look no further than the battle between the *USS United States* and the *HMS Macedonia*. Equality is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “on the same level in rank, dignity, power, ability, achievement, or excellence.”⁵⁵⁹ In terms of American identity it is found in the traits of honor, integrity, and compassion. When American Captain Decatur overcame British Captain Carden, there was no rule or maritime law that forbade the American captain from humiliating the enemy. However, in refusing Carden’s sword, Captain Decatur showed the enemy that they were viewed as equals. Because Decatur and other American Captains embraced the virtue of equality, British Captains began doing the same. The United States Navy, despite only having four really spectacular victories at sea during the War of 1812, allowed America to be viewed as a nation worthy of respect, thanks to the actions of the men involved in the fights.

Equality can also be found in the actions of Captain Bainbridge when he was ordered by the Dey of Algiers to fulfill the obligations of the British when they were unable to. Captain Bainbridge had no orders from his superiors to do so, nor any reason to get involved. While he acquiesced under protest, he finally agreed because he recognized the power and authority of the Dey as the supreme leader of that country and region. Though the Dey was currently an enemy

⁵⁵⁸ For clarities sake, I want to point out that not all countries have the same ideas of manhood and masculinity as America at this time, or at any time. The real argument here is whether or not, the other countries can recognize the ideals as characteristic of the American gentlemen seamen and if those characteristics help them understand and accept the tenets of American Identity.

⁵⁵⁹ This is just one of many definitions found of the root word “equal.” <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/63695>

of the United States, though one who was in negotiations to change that status, he was nevertheless a person of significant importance, and Captain Bainbridge did not want to diminish the Dey's authority any more than he would the authority of George Washington or Commodores Richard Dale or Edward Preble. Instead, Bainbridge chose to treat the Dey with the same equality he would those with direct authority over him. Though tensions remained high with the Dey, the actions of Captain Bainbridge impressed other leaders in the region and opened doors of trade that may not have otherwise been opened.

The third, and slightly more complicated way the United States Navy embodied equality is through issues of race. Racial history in the United States is complicated at best. It is no different when dealing with the racial history of the United States Navy. Throughout most of the Navy's existence from the Revolution up to the Civil War, the government made an attempt to limit and even ban black sailors from joining the navy. However, in true form as an example of equality, those restrictions and bans were never followed, except on official reports that would make their way to Congress.

African-American men began serving in the navy before it even was a navy, during the American Revolution. It is estimated that over ten percent of the Continental Navy was made up of both free and enslaved black men.⁵⁶⁰ That number was even higher on board the state navy vessels. For instance, on the Georgia State Navy ship *Congress*, there were fourteen white men listed by name on the register sent to the state secretary in March 1778, and an additional twelve black numbered, though their names were not listed.⁵⁶¹ On April 13, that same ship reported fifteen black sailors and only ten white, though it was the white men who were listed as officers

⁵⁶⁰ <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/diversity/african-americans/chronology.html>

⁵⁶¹ "Return of Officers and Men on board Georgia Navy Armed Galley *Congress* from March to April 1778, March 13, 1778, NHHC, *NDAR*, Volume 12, 100.

onboard the ship.⁵⁶² Though there is some inconsistency with this regarding if black men were actually considered equal if they were not actually listed as anything other than a number on the ship roster, the fact that they were serving in the Continental Navy was more equality than many of them received anywhere else in the United States at the time.

The service of African-American men in the Continental Navy is complicated and broad. For these men, there were five options when it came to deciding what to do when war broke out in 1775. First, they could take British Governor Lord Dunmore up on his offer of freeing any able-bodied slaves who opted to join the British in their fight against the rebellious colonials. This was a choice many slaves opted to take, though the British did not uphold Lord Dunmore's promise. The second choice they had was to simply hide. Some free men hid themselves, while some colonists fled west away from the fighting with their slaves, making the choice for them. The third option was for free black men to volunteer to fight in the Army. The fourth was to volunteer to serve in the Navy. The fifth was for enslaved men to be "rented" to the Navy for a set period of time.

African-American men were particularly coveted when it came to the navy. Many had more experience with the local waters than white men from the same area. One black man, Sampson, was an enslaved man who opted to take Lord Dunmore up on his promise. Several victories in Virginia are owed to his skill as "the best pilot in the Chesapeake."⁵⁶³ One of the most prominent British victories that can be attributed to Sampson was the capturing of Savannah, Georgia on December 29, 1778. It was Sampson who piloted the warships that carried

⁵⁶² "Provision Return for the Crew and Marines Serving in Georgia Navy Armed Galley *Congress*," April 13, 1778, NHHC, *NDAR*, Volume 12, 101.

⁵⁶³ "Extract of a Letter from Lord Wm Campbell to the Earl of Dartmouth Dated Charles Town 19th July, 1775", January 6, 1776, NHHC, *NDAR*, Volume 1, 931.

the British Army to within two miles of Savannah.⁵⁶⁴ It was Sampson's knowledge of the Savannah River and its tributaries that allowed the British to gain an early advantage in the siege. Unfortunately, Sampson's story ends with this battle and nothing more is known of him.

Another African-American slave was Cesar Tarrant who earned his freedom through his service to one of the state navies. Cesar was born a slave in 1740 and had lived his entire life in the Hampton, Virginia area. He was trained as a river pilot and rented out by his owner, Carter Tarrant, to guide larger merchant ships safely through the shallow Virginia waters. When war broke out, he was one of seven pilots appointed by the Virginia Navy Board in 1777. He continued to serve in the Virginia State Navy until 1781, when he was sent back to Carter Tarrant as nothing more than a slave. It was his actions during a battle between the Virginia Armed Schooner *Patriot* and the *HMS Lord Howe*, however, that Cesar earned his freedom; he did so by exemplifying those very qualities that have been discussed within these pages – honor, loyalty, courage, bravery, firmness, and intrepidity. When the *Lord Howe* came upon the *Patriot*, they were sailing with another ship. Realizing they were outgunned, the *Lord Howe*, attempted to flee. The *Patriot* gave chase and managed to catch them, volleying a broadside of cannon fire into the enemy ship. The *Lord Howe* attempted to once again run, and the captain ordered the *Patriot* to ram right into her. The *Patriot* was victorious that day, and Cesar was praised as he was the one who piloted the ship through the entirety of the fight.

After Cesar was returned to the Tarrant family as a slave in 1778, he would wait another eleven years to be freed from his turmoil. In 1789, the Virginia General Assembly finally recognized Cesar for his actions and service during the Revolutionary War, purchasing his

⁵⁶⁴ David K. Wilson, *The Southern Strategy: Britain's Conquest of South Carolina and Georgia, 1775-1780* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 72.

freedom from the Tarrant family for the “meritorious services” he provided for his country.⁵⁶⁵ Though Cesar and Sampson were not a part of the Continental Navy per se, they are excellent examples of the services performed by African-American men in the service of what they thought was right for themselves and their families, and in the case of Cesar, for their country. It is unfortunate that so many of the documents available today are rife with actions of black men, but are limited in description and details and very few are ever actually named. My research of naval roles has revealed that the rare times they are named, it is in relation to the receipts and clerks logs of rented slaves, a system banned in August of 1798, rather than as black men on ship rosters.

Unfortunately, this ban was not just against utilizing enslaved black men on naval ships and in naval shipyards. It was a complete ban against any and all black or mixed-race men serving in the navy.⁵⁶⁶ This ban came just five months after the United States Army banned African-American men from serving in their ranks as well. The ban did not, however, stop naval captains from utilizing their extensive maritime knowledge on board the ships. Just because the Secretary of the Navy, Benjamin Stoddard, chose to follow the suit of the Army and Marines, did not mean that naval captains felt the same way he did. In keeping with the idea of equality, they were willing to take able-bodied and knowledgeable seamen anyway they could get them, especially during times when they were issued orders to patrol around areas, like the Chesapeake Bay, that had many shallow tributaries and rivers that could pose a possible danger to the United States.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶⁵ The story here of Cesar Tarrant is found on the Colonial Williamsburg website and is one of their favorite stories to tell. The story was researched and put together by Michael Romero on January 22, 2020.

<https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/learn/deep-dives/pilot-patriot/>

⁵⁶⁶ “To Lieutenant Kenyon from Secretary of Navy,” August 8, 1798, Knox, ed., *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War Between the United States and France (NDQW)*, Volume 1, 281.

⁵⁶⁷ Again, there is not much written about these men, but they do show up in some records as proof that captains were ignoring the order. For instance, on January 24, 1799 in the Journal of James Pity, who served on the USS

The ban on black sailors serving in the United States Navy was lifted during the War of 1812. On March 3, 1813, Congress issued “An act for the regulation of seamen on board the public and private vessels of the United States” and declared that it was lawful to only employ on board naval or merchant marine vessels, “citizens of the United States, or persons of colour, natives of the United States.”⁵⁶⁸ Legally able to now employ black sailors, captains were much more open about writing about them in letters. For instance, in July of 1813, Oliver Perry wrote to Isaac Chauncey, both naval leaders fighting on the Great Lakes, that he needed men. Commodore Chauncey sent sixty men to fill his ranks, but Perry was dissatisfied with the men that arrived. “The men that came,” he tersely wrote, “are a motley set, blacks, Soldiers, and boys...I am however pleased to see anything in the shape of a man.”⁵⁶⁹ Chauncey’s response exudes the level of equality he expected from men serving in the navy when it came to race. He humbly replied:

I regret that you are not pleased with the men sent to you by Messrs. Champlin and Forrest, for to my knowledge a part of them are not surpassed by any seamen we have in the fleet, and I have yet to learn that the Colour of the skin, or cut and trimming of the coat, can affect a man’s qualifications or usefulness – I have nearly 50 Blacks on board this Ship and many of them are amongst my best men, and those people you call Soldiers have been to Sea from 2 to 17 years, and I presume you will find them as good and usefull as any men on board your vessel, at least if I can judge by comparison, for those that we have on board of this Ship, are attentive and obedient, and as far as I can judge many of them excellent seamen.⁵⁷⁰

Constitution, he states that “Cornelius Howard (Negro)” had died and they buried his body at sea (*NDQW*, Volume 2, 281). When the *HMS Leopold* attacked the *USS Chesapeake* in 1807, 3 of the 4 men that were taken by the British as being deserters were black men (Dennis Denmark Nelson, *The Integration of the Negro into the United States Navy, 1776-1947* (Washington D.C.: Government of the United States, 1948), 10. Another example can be found in a letter from Captain John H. Dent to Secretary of the Navy Hamilton, who writes about using all slave crews of ten slaves to patrol in Charleston area at night (*NW1812*, Volume 1, 194, July 17, 1812).

⁵⁶⁸ Thomas F. Gordon, ed., *A Collection of the Laws of the United States Relating to Revenue, Navigation and Commerce, and Lighthouses, upto March 4, 1813* (Philadelphia, PA: Isaac Ashmead and Company, 1844), 192.

⁵⁶⁹ “Master Commandant Oliver H. Perry to Commodore Isaac Chauncey,” July 27, 1813, NHC, *NW1812*, Volume 2, 530.

⁵⁷⁰ “Commodore Isaac Chauncey to Master Commandant Oliver H. Perry,” July 30, 1813, NHC, *NW1812*, Volume 2, 530.

Commodore Chauncey knew the value of sailors with experience and the African-American population had a proportionally higher concentration of sailors than any of the white populations in most cities built around a port or harbor.⁵⁷¹ The fact of the matter was, if you wanted good sailors, especially in a time of war when you didn't have a lot of time to train unseasoned men, African-Americans were the best men for the job. The United States Navy understood this, and it is estimated that nearly one in every six sailors in the U.S. Navy during the War of 1812 was black.⁵⁷²

Liberty

The virtue of Equality is more easily comprehended in its contradictions than that of Liberty in the overwhelming shadow of slavery. Even prior to the existence of the United States, slavery was a looming issue within the Americas, as well as other places throughout the world. During this time, many countries had, or were in the process of, limiting the existence of slavery and the slave trade. For example, Great Britain banned slavery in England and Wales in 1772 and Scotland in 1778, while France banned slavery in 1794 though Napoleon reinstated it in 1802. In the United States, Pennsylvania began the act of freeing slaves with the Act for Gradual Abolition of Slavery in 1780 and become a model for other northern states to follow, where most had put a system of gradual abolition in place by 1804, but even then continued to allow slavery until the 1830s.

Slavery has always been a touchy topic in the United States, and a major dividing factor. What most people don't realize however, is that it wasn't always African slavery that was causing contention. White slavery was also a problem that caused the United States government

⁵⁷¹ W. Jeffrey Bolster, "To Feel Like a Man': Black Seamen in the Northern States, 1800-1860," *Journal of American History* 76, no. 4 (March 1990): 1173-1199.

⁵⁷² Nelson, *The Integration of the Negro into the United States Navy*, 10.

endless conflict until after the War of 1812. For the average American populace, however, white slavery was at once both a divisive topic and a unifying one. It was divisive in that it bolstered the abolitionist claims against African slavery in the United States as well as causing political dissent against the government when white slaves were not freed in a timely manner. It was unifying, in that it brought people together under one cause and one national ideal – liberty for all the people who would call themselves American, no matter where they were in the world.⁵⁷³

During the Barbary Wars, the powers in the Mediterranean commonly sold or used their prisoners from the ships they seized as slave labor, either permanently or until ransom had been paid. While slavery was not a new concept for the Americans, it was certainly not one that they typically associated with the white race. However, as the communications began arriving from first the accosted crews of American merchant ships, and then naval commanders themselves, it was the terminology they used that began to open the eyes of the American government. “We are very sensible to your particular attention to us,” Captain Richard O’Bryen wrote to Secretary of State, Thomas Jefferson on June 8, 1786, “But still it is impossible for us to be content whilst we are under the character of slaves, so disagreeable is confinement to the men of the Land of Liberty. My crew go through the severities of slavery that is possible for men to endure.”⁵⁷⁴

Captain O’Bryen wrote another letter appealing to Congress directly on April 28, 1787, after nearly a year in slavery. He complained about the “lamentable situation of my crew in the

⁵⁷³ Though I make mention of abolition and African slavery, this is not a topic I am going to cover in this dissertation. Many great studies have been done that look at the impact white slavery had on the abolition movement. For information on this topic, please see: David Dzurec, “‘A Speedy Release to Our Suffering Captive Brethren in Algiers’: Captives, Debate, and Public Opinion in the Early American Republic,” *The Historian*, December 22, 2009; Hester Blum, *The View from the Masthead: Maritime Imagination and Antebellum American Sea Narratives* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Charles Sumner, *White Slavery in the Barbary States* (Boston, MA: John P. Hewett and Company, 1853); Paul Baepler, ed., *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

⁵⁷⁴ “To Thomas Jefferson, U.S. Minister to Paris, France, from Richard O’Brien, Algiers,” June 8, 1786, in *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers (NDBP)*, Office of Naval Records and Library Navy Department, directed by Claude A. Swanson, 1939, Volume 1, 6.

marine where they are employed on the most laborious work and so much exhausted that if some speedy measure in not adopted to redeem them from slavery, I am afraid they will be carried off by the pest, as it rages much.”⁵⁷⁵ He signed this letter, “Richard O’Bryen, Slave to the Regency of Algiers.” Captain O’Breyn’s plight with white slavery in the Mediterranean region was not unique. It was estimated that in “1786 there were three thousand Christian slaves in Algiers” the majority of which were white.⁵⁷⁶ One hundred and fifteen of those three thousand were reported to be from America.⁵⁷⁷ Those white sailor slaves from the United States, wrote letters home, to Congress, and to newspapers; basically, they wrote to anyone they could get to listen.

The government opted to attempt to negotiate a release of the captives and ended up paying hundreds of thousands of dollars to free the enslaved Americans, as was discussed in Chapter 1. However, the treaty that George Washington worked so hard to negotiate and secure in 1795 would not last. Though the money had been paid, as well as the yearly tribute, it would only be a few years before the powers of the Mediterranean world would once again begin enslaving American sailors. As tensions in the Mediterranean increased, and Congress struggled to find suitable solutions, the U.S. Navy stood ready to free their countrymen with any act of sacrifice it may cost them. In a letter from Master Commandant Charles Stewart of the *USS Siren*, he showed the eagerness and readiness of himself and his crew stating, “I trust we shall yet receive your orders to join the Squadron [in Tripoli] for effective service against the

⁵⁷⁵ “To whom not indicated on the manuscript, from Richard O’Brien, Algiers,” April 28, 1787, *NDBP*, Volume 1, 15. As a note, the “pest” refers to the bubonic plague. There was an outbreak in Algiers beginning in 1785 that lasted until 1789 (Gary E. Wilson, “American Prisoners in the Barbary Nations, 1784-1816,” Dissertation, North Texas State University, May 1979, 51-52).

⁵⁷⁶ “To the Congress of the United States from Richard O’Brien, Algiers,” April 28, 1791, *NDBP*, Volume 1, 29.

⁵⁷⁷ Charles Sumner, reference 92. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/35222/35222-h/35222-h.htm>

Enemy.”⁵⁷⁸ However, rather than allow the United States Navy to do what they had been created to do, Congress and President Jefferson opted to pay a ransom once again.

In June of 1805, on board the *USS Constitution*, with Commodore John Rodgers and U.S. Consul General to Algiers, Tobias Lear, a deal was struck with the Tripolitan Bashaw that required the United States to pay \$60,000 for the release of three hundred Americans being held, and in return the U.S. would release the one hundred Tripolitan subjects they were holding as prisoners.⁵⁷⁹ In addition, it was decreed in the treaty, that should the two countries ever break the “inviolable and universal peace” they agreed on, any prisoners of war would be treated and traded back as such, and not be made slaves by the opposing nation.⁵⁸⁰ The United States government encapsulated the notion of liberty into the treaty and thus, ensured it was promised in all future interactions with the Tripolitans.

However, with the government choosing to pay rather than fight, the men of the U.S. Navy took it upon themselves to show the honor, courage, and firmness idealized in the masculinity of the American man in gaining liberty for their countrymen. In a report to the Secretary of State, Consul Lear wrote, “I must pay here a tribute of Justice to Commodore [John] Rodgers, whose conduct, during the negotiation on board, was mixed with that manly firmness and evident wish to continue the war, if it could be done with propriety, while he display’d the magnanimity of an American in declaring that we fought not for conquest, but to maintain our just rights and national dignity, as fully convinced the negotiators that we did not ask for, but grant peace.”⁵⁸¹ The Bashaw, himself, went so far as to state that because of Commodore

⁵⁷⁸ “To Captain Samuel Barron, U.S. Navy, from Master Commandant Charles Stewart, U.S. Navy,” May 13, 1805, *NDBW*, Volume 6, 11.

⁵⁷⁹ Hunter Miller, ed., “Tripoli: June 4, 1805,” *Treaties and other International Acts of the United States of America (TIA/USA)*, Volume 2, Doc 31, 529-530.

⁵⁸⁰ Miller, *TIA/USA*, Volume 2, Doc 31, 529 and 533 (Article 1 and Article 16).

⁵⁸¹ “To Secretary of State from Tobias Lear, U.S. Consul General, Algiers,” July 5, 1805, *NDBW*, Volume 6, 162.

Rodgers' demeanor and character during the negotiations, he had "given stronger evidences of his confidence in us than he had ever before given to any nation."⁵⁸² Having successfully gained the release of the prisoners in Tripoli, Commodore Rodgers and Consul Lear traveled on to Tunis where the Bey was being particularly stubborn about agreeing to any sort of treaty.

The Bey of Tunis, Hamuda Bassa, was especially concerned that he be treated better than the Dey of Algiers or the Bashaw of Tripoli, "whom he never could feel himself inferior."⁵⁸³ The Bey demanded that President Jefferson, himself, travel to the Mediterranean to negotiate the terms of a treaty or declared that he would never agree to any terms of peace. In fact, when he was informed that Tobias Lear, the Consul that negotiated peace with both Algiers and Tripoli, would soon be arriving to negotiate with him too, the Bey threatened to commence a direct war against the United States naval ships and enslave them all if they didn't sail on and only return with the President.⁵⁸⁴ In response to this threat, Commodore Rodgers sent the Bey a letter urging him to rethink his position. It read:

To the Most Illustrious & most magnificent Prince the Bey of Tunis, the abode of happiness –

Sir, It is with equal pain and astonishment that I was yesterday made acquainted by George Davis Esqr Charge des Affaires to your Court; with your declarations, wherein you informed him that my appearance here with the Squadron under my command, would not only be blocking up every avenue to a reconciliation but would determine an immediate declaration of War on you part – If this be the case, those explanations which brought me here, and which I had hope would reestablish a good understanding between your Excellency and the Government of my Country, are unnecessary, as it now only rests for me in justification of my conduct, to request that your Excellency will have the goodness to inform me whether there has been any mistake in the application of your assertions tending to a declaration of War with the U. States, as your Excellency will without doubt see the propriety as also the necessity on my part of commencing both defensive

⁵⁸², "To Secretary of State from Tobias Lear, U.S. Consul General, Algiers," July 5, 1805, *NDBW*, Volume 6, 162.

⁵⁸³ "To Secretary of State from George Davis, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires, Tunis," July 18, 1805, *NDBW*, Volume 6, 189.

⁵⁸⁴ "To Secretary of State from George Davis, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires, Tunis," July 18, 1805, *NDBW*, Volume 6, 189.

and offensive operations against your regency in the course of 36 hours, should I not hear from you on this important & equally (to me) painful subject.⁵⁸⁵

While stated most eloquently, Commodore Rodgers left no room for doubt that he would not hesitate to unloose the full might of the United States Navy on Tunis if the Bey did not agree to sit down for peace talks. The Bey, responded stating, “Whereas the Commander in chief of the Squadron of the U. States of America...has been induced to believe that it was determination to declare War against the said U. States...I do hereby solemnly declare that it is not my Intention, and that I will not commence hostilities or declare War.”⁵⁸⁶ He also sent a letter along, humbly accepting Consul Lear to preside over the peace negotiations “in the character which is conferred on him by the President.”⁵⁸⁷ A treaty was made following the same conditions of liberty as set forth in the treaty with Tripoli stating that no Americans would be taken in slavery by the Tunisians, even in times of war.

Unfortunately, it was not as easy to work through the negotiations with the Dey of Algiers. The problem was in the frequent changing of leadership due to the political upheaval in Algiers. In 1805, the Dey, Mustapha Bashaw, was willing to be a part of the treaty between the Tripolitans and the Americans. In fact, he had sent his emissary to Tripoli with a letter, asking the Bashaw of Tripoli to “please discuss the new peace with him [the American agent, Tobias Lear] for my sake, because I shall not fail, for my part, to satisfy all his demands, and I hope that you will do the same, for my sake, since it is a matter of our being like faithful brothers.”⁵⁸⁸

However, word of an insurrection was received in August and it was reported in September that

⁵⁸⁵ “To the Bey of Tunis from Captain John Rodgers, U.S. Navy,” August 2, 1805, *NDBW*, Volume 6, 202.

⁵⁸⁶ “To George Davis, U.S. Chargé d’Affaires, Tunis, from Captain John Rodgers, U.S. Navy,” August 5, 1805, *NDBW*, Volume 6, 208.

⁵⁸⁷ “To Captain John Rodgers, U.S. Navy, from the Bey of Tunis,” August 5, 1805, *NDBW*, Volume 6, 208.

⁵⁸⁸ “To the Bashaw of Tripoli from the Dey of Algiers” May 15, 1805, *NDBW*, Volume 6, 17.

“the Dey and Minister of the Regency were murdered by Soldiers [and] that a new Dey was Elected.”⁵⁸⁹

Things with the new Dey went quite well, until he made a peace treaty with Portugal and chose to allow the American vessels to be attacked once again in late 1807. The United States Navy attempted to provide safe passage as well as they could to the merchants travelling through the Mediterranean, but with only having one to two-year service voyages, and an inability to get the supplies they needed, their presence was insufficient to quell the actions of the state sanctioned Algerine pirates. Fortunately, few captives were taken during this time, and most ships were simply plundered. Once Thomas Jefferson called the Navy home to protect the shores of America from British harassment, the Mediterranean became less and less secure for American merchants. The most the government could do was advise merchants against trading there, though they knew that was impossible as the United States needed all the trade they could get.

In 1812, with the United States at war with Great Britain, Algiers once again came under the rule of a new Dey, Hajji Ali. This Dey declared the tribute being paid them from the 1795 treaty was insufficient and they wanted more. Before any answer to the request could be made by Congress, Consul Lear was ejected from the country and the Dey declared war against the United States. In a letter to President James Madison, Tobias Lear alludes to the fact he believed the Dey was acting on pressure from others, namely Great Britain, when he declared war so abruptly. “I will observe,” he writes, “that good sometimes springs out of evil; for there can be no doubt but the determination of the Dey to break with the U.S. proceeded either from his own opinion, or from the persuasion of others, that his Cruizers could take any number of prizes, and

⁵⁸⁹ “To whom not indicated from Captain Hugh G. Campbell, U.S. Navy,” September 29, 1805, *NDBW*, Volume 6, 287.

that the U.S. would be ready to redeem the Captives, and renew the Treaty on his own terms. In this he will be sadly disappointed.”⁵⁹⁰ What the Dey failed to realize is that the War with Great Britain would require all the focus of the American Navy.

During the War of 1812, blockades and general matters of war, significantly limited the number of American ships sailing in the Mediterranean. Though he had declared war against the United States in 1812, no significance was paid to his declaration, except by Lear who was still stationed in the Mediterranean, but having taken refuge in Gibraltar, he cautioned the few American vessels that ventured so near before they entered the Sea. In the three years of the War of 1812, only one American ship had been taken, resulting in ten men being subjected to Algerine slavery. Knowing the importance of liberty to the people and the unrest the previous captivity of Americans had caused in the United States, in 1813, a representative was sent to offer \$3,000 a piece for the captives.⁵⁹¹ However, the Dey replied, “My policy and my views are to increase, not diminish the number of American slaves; and not for a million dollars would I release them.”⁵⁹² He continued to refuse any negotiation attempts to free the captives by even the Spanish, British, and Swedish consuls. The Dey was adamant that if he remained determined in his convictions, he would get the treaty he desired with the terms he wanted.

However, that was not to be. Tobias Lear, had reportedly told the Regency of Algiers on numerous occasions when the discussion of whether to break a treaty with a nation simply to have it renewed on better terms had arisen, “that while the U.S. would be faithful to such engagements as they had made, however disadvantageous to themselves, so long as the other party preserved their faith; yet, they might be assured, that, should they once break their Treaty

⁵⁹⁰ “To James Madison from Tobias Lear,” August 31, 1812, *National Archives*.

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/03-05-02-0176>

⁵⁹¹ Gardner Weld Allen, *Our Navy and the Barbary Corsairs* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1905), 279.

⁵⁹² Allen, *Our Navy and the Barbary Corsairs*, 279.

with the U.S. it would never be renewed again, but on terms of perfect reciprocity.”⁵⁹³ True to Lear’s word, as soon as peace with Britain had been restored, President Madison asked Congress to declare war against Algiers on February 23, 1815, to free the captives and put a stop to the Algerine tyranny once and for all. Congress agreed on March 3 and on May 20, newly promoted Commodore Stephen Decatur, hero of the burning of the *USS Philadelphia* and legendary captain of the *USS United States*, departed New York with a ten-ship squadron for Algiers. Another squadron, commanded by Commodore William Bainbridge was also set to leave Boston, but would be a few months behind them. Their only goal – liberty for all the American captives.

On June 15, Decatur, reached the Mediterranean and began searching for the Algerine naval flagship. He found it just two days later and a battle commenced. The U.S. Navy, having just claimed victory over the Royal Navy, saw the Algerine Navy as no problem. They attacked with all their might and the battle was over within no time. As the smoke cleared, Decatur found that thirty Algerine sailors had been killed, including the leader of their navy and hero of their country, Reis Hammida. He took the remaining 406 Algerines as captives.⁵⁹⁴ A couple days later, they encountered another smaller Algerine ship and captured it as well. At that point, Decatur adjusted his course and headed straight for Algiers, arriving on June 28. He was determined to settle the peace as quickly as possible before the remainder of the Algerine navy heard of their exploits and attempted to intervene. The Algerine captain of the port attempted to convince Decatur to come ashore to begin negotiations with the Dey, promising amnesty, but Decatur refused. Instead, he threatened that if any Algerine ships approached his squadron, they would be

⁵⁹³ “To James Madison from Tobias Lear,” August 31, 1812, *National Archives*.

⁵⁹⁴ Allen, *Our Navy and the Barbary Corsairs*, 282-284.

captured or sunk. The captain of the port went to speak with the Dey and returned the next day with the Swedish consul who had been appointed by the Dey to negotiate on his behalf.

Decatur presented them with a proposed treaty that not only freed all the American captives being held in Algiers, but also abolished any form of tribute paid to the Dey ever again and instead demanded the Dey pay \$10,000 for the property that had been stolen and damaged during his “war.” The consul and captain of the port declared that Algerine law would never allow the Dey to accept such terms and that a tribute must always be paid to the Dey in any treaty with Algiers. Decatur stood his ground and refused to yield, except to agree to return the two ships he had already seized, though that was not to be part of the treaty but instead a friendly gesture of good will. The designees asked for a temporary truce until the Dey could have a chance to process the information and discuss it with his council. Once again, Decatur refused the request. The designees then asked that he refrain from attacking any other ships for three hours, until the Dey could have some time to think about the terms. Decatur responded, “Not a minute. If your squadron appears in sight before the treaty is actually signed by the Dey, and the prisoners sent off, ours will capture them.”⁵⁹⁵ The Dey accepted the treaty as Decatur presented it and liberated all the hostages in under three hours.

Though the goal had been liberty for the captured crew, Decatur also managed to add an important article to the treaty that guaranteed liberty to all who sought it. The thirteenth article of the treaty signed on July 3, 1815 states, that after a U.S. Naval ship shall make itself properly known to the City of Algiers that it is in port, “any Christians whatever, Captive in Algiers make their escape and take refuge on board of the said ships of war, they shall not be required back again, nor shall the Consul of the United States, or commander of the said Ship be required to

⁵⁹⁵ This entire incident is reported here as it appears in Allen, *Our Navy and the Barbary Captives*, 286-287.

pay anything for the said Christians.”⁵⁹⁶ This essentially became a call for anyone, regardless of race or gender, that had been taken as a slave in Algiers. As long as they claimed to be Christian, liberty was within their grasp if they could make it to the safety provided by the U.S. Navy. This was the first time that the United States became a champion for all nations by guaranteeing liberty for all and it became solidified as a hallmark of the American national identity.

Republicanism

Republicanism is a much harder virtue as an aspect of the national identity to delineate. According to historian Richard Buel, republicanism in the early republican era revolved around the ideas of sovereignty of the people and not hereditary governance, virtue and faithfulness in fulfilling civic duties, and the vilification of corruption through personal morality.⁵⁹⁷ Because American’s perceived standing armies as a danger to the Republic, military service in state militias rather than as professional soldiers was also a trait of Republicanism. Soldiers were to be “citizens first and foremost.”⁵⁹⁸ As it became clear that a standing military was necessary in America, the role of the citizen soldier shifted, but remained true to the ideals of Republicanism. “The belief in the citizen’s duty to bear arms on behalf of the common weal reinforced the citizen-soldier’s conviction that he was a full member and participant in and of the ‘government and country’ he served. His was a ‘unique character,’ imbued with an idealized vision of the nation [and] its promise.”⁵⁹⁹ These citizen-soldiers understood that their duty was to their country first, their government second, and themselves third. The protection of the Republic was to

⁵⁹⁶ Miller, “Algiers: June 30 and July 3, 1815,” *TIA/USA*, Vol 2, Doc 34, 588.

⁵⁹⁷ This is a synopsis of ideas taken from Richard Buel, Jr. *Securing the Revolution: Ideology in American Politics, 1789-1815* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972).

⁵⁹⁸ Ricardo A. Herrera, *For Liberty and the Republic: The American Citizen as Soldier, 1775-1861* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2015), 1.

⁵⁹⁹ Herrera, *For Liberty and the Republic*, 27.

always come first and every operation and military action should only be to ensure that goal was met, no matter the cost or sacrifice.

Again, the United States Navy provided a great model for what these ideas of republicanism should look like. While ships belonged to the United States as a nation, and sailors were citizens of that nation, each vessel was also run as a nation unto itself for the time that it was on a particular cruise. There were set chains of command and duties that each person had to perform. If even one person failed to perform their duty, the entire system was at risk of failing. At sea or in battle that could mean defeat or even death. The captain is the leader and ultimate authority on the ship. However, he is not infallible. In the true spirit of republicanism, it is the right and duty of the individual sailors to have a voice, and to have the ability to censure the captain should the need arise. While mutiny is never encouraged, there are times when it is necessary, and it becomes the duty of the sailors.

One such incident occurred in September of 1776. A group of sailors serving in the Continental Navy on board the schooner *General Putnam*, sent a missive to the Congress of New York, claiming that their captain, Thomas Cregier, was a man unfit for service in the Navy. They charged him with hiding his ship in a small inlet for all but eleven days of the four months they had been given their orders. They stated that if the need of their services should arise, they would not be able to fulfill their duties “without great Difficulty, and often not at all” due to the place he had chosen to moor the ship. Furthermore, they stated that Cregier had “several Times insulted the officers when they have candidly advised him and gave them to understand that their business was only to answer a question when ask’d, and not attempt giving advice.” Finally, they condemned his moral character for holding pistols on the sailors and threatening to shoot them, “swearing, Lying and frequenting the company of the most contemptible women, Presenting the

Private Property of others to them, also at sundry Times giving the Ships stores away.” They further announced that they had mutinied and were very happy with the leadership instead of Lieutenant Thomas Quigley, but desired to be reassigned to a ship that had not been allowed to sit and rot for four months. At the time of the mutiny, Cregier left the ship and returned to his home, sending a letter, telling the Congress that the crew was rebellious because he wouldn’t give them larger rations of rum and that he wanted a new ship and crew. He was instead discharged.⁶⁰⁰

While mutiny of entire crews was rare in the navy, insubordination of individuals was not. Every person on board a ship, just as in a landed community, has a role to play. To make matters more difficult, sailors were isolated with only each other and the few possessions they had for months at a time. Surrounded by water, with not even the landscape to admire, tensions would frequently rise. The U.S. Navy had a very strict set of rules that the sailors were expected to follow to ensure that they remained healthy enough to perform their duties and were sufficiently edified to not cause a disturbance. For instance, they were required to bathe two to three times per week, and there were set amounts of spirits that they were allowed to consume, if they were old enough to drink them at all. Prayer services were held twice a day with a sermon being preached on Sundays, by the captain, clerk, or if they were lucky enough to have one, an actual chaplain. Everyone was required to attend these sessions, and they were only to be cancelled in times of battle or extreme weather. While shore liberty was allowed any time they made port, most amusement came onboard the ship by way of musical instruments, talking to

⁶⁰⁰ “Crew of the Schooner *General Putnam* to the New York Convention,” September 4, 1776, NHHC, *NDAR*, Volume 6, 680-681.

each other, or reading from the ship's library. These books were often dry reading meant for the edification and education of the officers and anyone else seeking to learn.⁶⁰¹

These opportunities for learning were seen as merits of virtue. While younger sailors were required to spend a good portion of their down time with the schoolmaster, education was encouraged for all sailors. Though it was easier to enter the service as a midshipman if you knew someone, or had a letter recommending you for service as an officer, it was not the only way to earn a promotion. There was no rule that stated an able-bodied or ordinary seaman could not one day prove himself capable and worthy of being an officer. Captain Thomas Truxtun while serving on the *USS Constellation*, wrote to one of his Lieutenants, ordering him to go recruit sixteen seamen in Norfolk. In the course of his letter, he advised the young lieutenant of the qualities that would lead to promotion, and thus the qualities he should look for in the men he was recruiting:

In Naval Life, no Man can look forward to become conspicuous, by rapid Promotion or otherwise, unless by his unremitting Attention to Duty, and from a regular deportment, he can signalize himself from the Slothfull, and inactive. It is an artful Imposition, often attempted to be practiced by Delinquents, in performing the Functions annexed their [position], which are assigned to them, to talk of Hardships, that do not exist; by Way of Extenuation of their Faults, or their Neglects, and like a Distemper similar to a contagious Fever, it spreads by their working Others into a Belief, that they are really aggrieved, the Fact is this. Every [man] that performs his Duty well, will be respected, those who neglects his Duty, must at least expect Rebuke.⁶⁰²

The navy was not seeking men with experience to fill their ranks. They wanted young men who could be molded. They wanted men who were serving their country out of a sense of patriotic duty. In exchange, they offered them what few other paths would, a chance for promotion and

⁶⁰¹ "Living Conditions in the 19th Century U.S. Navy," *Navy Department*, NHHC, March 17, 1869. <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/l/living-conditions-in-the-19th-century-us-navy.html>

⁶⁰² "To Lieutenant Cowper from Captain Thomas Truxtun, U.S. Navy," October 30, 1798, *NDQW*, Volume 1, 572.

advancement, and ultimately a chance to change their lives. All they had to do was uphold the ideals of republicanism by doing their duty and staying morally virtuous.

An American national identity was an important concept that seemed impossible in light of the diverse population living in America. However, the U.S. Navy helped to promote the ideas that embodied what this new American identity was. America meant Equality, Liberty, and Republicanism. Through the actions of the men who filled their ranks, and by embracing and exemplifying the qualities of manliness and masculinity put forth in previous chapters, the United States Navy succeeded in showing the world not only who they were, but what they were willing to do to earn the respect of other nations as well.

Epilogue

A Sailor's Prayer⁶⁰³

Dear Lord, I'm just a sailor
 A protector of our land.
 A servant called to battle
 When my country takes a stand.
 I pray for strength and courage
 And a heart that will forgive.
 For peace and understanding
 In a world for all to live.
 My family's prayers are with me.
 No matter where I roam.
 Please listen when I'm lonely
 And return me safely home.

John Barry was born in 1745 in Ireland to Roman Catholic parents.⁶⁰⁴ As they were not allowed to own land, they were soon evicted by a British nobleman and forced to move. The move, while hard, was exciting to young Barry, because it put his family closer to the sea. John's uncle, Nicholas Barry, worked a small fishing boat. John would go out with him every chance he had. John dreamed of going to sea. When he turned ten years old, his father and uncle managed to get him a position on a merchant ship as a cabin boy. As the years progressed, so did his station on board the ship. From cabin boy to ordinary seaman, from ordinary to able-bodied, and all the way up to a ship's mate rating. He took jobs on every different type of ship he could find so that he could learn them all. His desire to know everything about the sea and the sailing of every type of vessel drove his ambition.

Barry's hatred of the British for what they had done to his country and family prompted him to accept a position onboard a merchantman sailing to America in 1760. When he landed in

⁶⁰³ This poem is by an unknown author.

⁶⁰⁴ The story told here is retold from the William Bell Clark's account in his book *Gallant John Barry, 1745-1803: The Story of a Naval Hero of Two Wars* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1938). Unless a direct quote is used, this will be the only citation presented of this story.

Philadelphia, he knew he had found his new home among the colonists, especially those who were eager and willing to resist British taxes and various acts regarding imports and exports. It was there he continued to learn and eventually he was given command of his first ship, the *Barbadoes*, in 1766. The ship was one of the largest ever built at the time, weighing in at sixty tons, and John relished expanding his own knowledge while sailing her. He made several successful voyages to the West Indies, gaining him a reputation as a careful and industrious captain.

His reputation became so great that in 1768 he was offered a partnership with two other men to begin a merchant based industry of their own. He accepted, and while the other two men remained in Philadelphia to handle business, Barry sailed the *Industry* up and down the Eastern Seaboard and then to the Caribbean. After only four years, his partners decided they were just not cut out for the merchant line of business and dissolved the partnership. John was forced to sell his precious *Industry* but was just as quickly offered the captaincy of another ship, the *Peggy*.

In 1774, Barry's lifelong dream of being a master merchant seaman was finally realized. The leading merchant in Philadelphia, Robert Morris, requested a meeting with him. At that meeting it was stated that his "nautical skill, the steadiness of his habits, and the integrity of his character," had merited the invitation for John to sail one of the prized Morris ships.⁶⁰⁵ The ship he was selected to captain was a two-hundred-ton ship that was nearing completion. He took the *Peggy* on one more voyage while he awaited the completion of the new ship. When he arrived back in Philadelphia in June of 1774, however, he found out that the British Parliament had closed the Boston port as a punishment for the actions that culminated in the Boston Tea Party.

⁶⁰⁵ Clark, *Gallant John Barry*, 36.

By September the Continental Congress had implemented the Continental Association's nonimportation and nonexportation agreements.

In an effort to ensure that he was able to get to export routes to England before the September 10, 1775 deadline of the nonexportation agreement, Barry set sail on his new ship, the *Black Prince*, on December 28. His was the last clearance given that year, and with the unrest and brewing rebellion, Barry embraced the coming confrontation, stating, he was sailing out on "the finest Ship in the first Employ of America."⁶⁰⁶ He arrived back in America on April 25, 1775, just a few days after the Battle of Lexington and Concord. The colonies were openly in armed rebellion against Great Britain, and Barry couldn't have been happier. However, he wasn't given time to rejoice in the revenge he was hoping to partake in as the merchants were in chaos trying to get their storehouses emptied and sailing to England or the West Indies before the Royal Navy arrived to blockade the ports and leave their goods to rot.

Barry arrived back in Philadelphia on October 4, 1775. He found America fully at war with the British, Congress having approved an actual army and appointed George Washington its commander. The Navy was not yet formed, but as it happens, Barry would be instrumental in the decision to form a Continental Navy. He had been given a packet of letters before leaving London to be delivered to the governor upon his arrival. Instead, he delivered them to the Continental Congress, and in those letters, they learned of the Royal Navy's plan to send eight men-of-war ships and two powder brigantines, with the plan of "reducing the rebellious Colony of New England."⁶⁰⁷

After finally agreeing to create and outfit a Continental Navy, the Congress purchased the first of the ships to be outfitted for war, the *Black Prince*. To outfit her, they gave the task to the

⁶⁰⁶ Clark, *Gallant John Barry*, 42.

⁶⁰⁷ Clark, *Gallant John Barry*, 61.

only person who knew more about her than the builder, the only man to have ever captained her, John Barry. They also tasked him without fitting the other three war ships the Congress had approved. In his journal, Barry humbly wrote, “I was employed by the Congress to fit for Sea the first fleet that sailed from Philadelphia.”⁶⁰⁸ The ships were finally ready to sail on January 4, 1776. Barry was not chosen as one of the captains, however.

On March 4, 1776 his dream of fighting the British was finally realized. He was called before the Marine Committee and offered a commission to captain the *Lexington* and protect the mouth of the Delaware. John Hancock stated the commission was being offered based on his reputation as “an excellent seaman and a man of resolute courage.”⁶⁰⁹ Barry accepted the command “with a determined resolution of distressing the enemy as much as in [his] power.”⁶¹⁰

The first ship Barry came across was the *HMS Edward*, slightly smaller ship than the *Lexington*. However, the British Lieutenant manning her was altogether too cocky for Barry’s liking. When the Lieutenant ordered Barry to “Heave to, or I’ll sink you,” rather than responding Barry ordered the *Lexington* to fire her guns.⁶¹¹ The British crew was so surprised at the action, they fired a quick volley of their own and attempted to sail away. Barry gave chase and it wasn’t long before the *Edward* was in American hands and being sailed back to port as a prize. Barry continued to sail performing great feats of daring and courageous acts for the Continental Navy. At one point, he became such a nuisance to the Royal Navy, that they offered him 15,000 guineas to switch sides and command a ship for them instead.⁶¹² The traitorous suggestion enraged the usually docile Barry, but still he simply screamed at the man to get out! John

⁶⁰⁸ Clark, *Gallant John Barry*, 65.

⁶⁰⁹ Clark, *Gallant John Barry*, 73.

⁶¹⁰ Clark, *Gallant John Barry*, 73.

⁶¹¹ Clark, *Gallant John Barry*, 80.

⁶¹² Clark, *Gallant John Barry*, 124.

continued to serve honorable through the end of the war and when the navy was disbanded, he was simply sent back home.

From the day of his commission to the day of dismissal, the Congress had not paid John any of the \$2700 they owed him, and his finances were running low. Learning that the state of Pennsylvania was awarding half-pay and land grants to army soldiers who were struggling to regain their footing after the war, John applied for the same as a naval officer. The state responded that they “were in a quandary because of lack of knowledge of Captain Barry’s actual services.”⁶¹³ Barry sent them back a letter explaining exactly what he had done, including protecting their coasts and welfare, ensuring their trade, impeding a raid upon the city, and suffered a wound to his shoulder that still had not completely healed – and he did all that “to the best of his skill and abilities and performed all services with fidelity.”⁶¹⁴ Despite this letter, it still took eleven more months of repeated letters and meetings before the state finally agreed to grant not just John, but all the naval seamen from Pennsylvania the same concessions they were offering the soldiers. It would be another few years before he would be drawn into the fight for the same thing from the federal government, but in that battle he would lose.

Even with all the turmoil and financial stress Congress had put him through, John was ever ready to serve his country. When Washington and Henry Knox requested his consult on the new navy Congress finally approved to deal with the situation in the Mediterranean, Barry humbly accepted. As news of the creation of a United States Navy spread, letter after letter poured into Washington and Knox’s offices begging for the chance to captain one of the six frigates that had been commissioned. John did not write one of those letters. Instead, as the plans for the navy and strategy for how to proceed in the Mediterranean drew to a close, Barry told

⁶¹³ Clark, *Gallant John Barry*, 314.

⁶¹⁴ Clark, *Gallant John Barry*, 314.

Washington, “I beg leave to offer my self for the Commander of the Squadron conceiving my self competent thereto assuring your Excellency that should I be honored with your approbation my utmost Abilities and the most unremitting attention shall be exerted for the good of my Country, and also to approve my self Worthy of the high honor shown by your Excellency.”⁶¹⁵ Though there was no commander of the squadron appointed, Barry was given the honor of being Senior Captain of the Navy. Barry was called upon repeatedly by Washington and Knox about naval regulations and ship details.

Barry was put in charge of the *USS United States* and sailed her in the Quasi-war with France. As Congress realized they did not have the funds to provide for all they had approved and sought to shrink the navy, Barry fought hard to keep them afloat. He succeeded and eventually retired. He was granted the honorary title of Commodore as it would not be an actual rank until an Act of Congress in 1862. Barry died on September 13, 1803. When the *Philadelphia Aurora* reported his death they wrote, “Our infant navy is much indebted to his fostering care; it was ever his pride to establish its respectability in all quarters of the globe; and America may boast that most of the officers she now possesses were reared under her gallant Barry.”⁶¹⁶ It is for that reason that John Barry alone bears the title of Father of the American Navy.

Much has been discussed in this dissertation about the importance of the United States Navy in the Early American Republic. America as a nation owes much to the United States Navy in the Age of Sail. It is safe to say that without the U.S. Navy, the United States of America would not be here today. It is because of the actions and character of men like John Barry, Stephen Decatur, Oliver Perry, Daniel Hogan, and Cesar Tarrant, that American nationalism, an

⁶¹⁵ Clark, *Gallant John Barry*, 367.

⁶¹⁶ Clark, *Gallant John Barry*, 492.

American identity, and a lasting notion of the new gentleman seaman was established. It is their actions that opened doors with France and Constantinople. It was their actions that closed the book on Barbary tyranny. It was their actions that allowed America to, once and for all, free herself from British rule and claim their sovereignty as an independent nation.

America will forever be tied to the oceans. The Atlantic and Pacific oceans are the keys to American economy and prosperity. They are her security. However, none of that is possible without the United States Navy being on constant alert, sailing them, and protecting our interests abroad. Understanding how and why the U.S. Navy was created is not sufficient to understanding their importance. The United States Navy is not just an entity, a corps. At its heart, the United States Navy are citizen sailors – gentleman seaman, representing America in every port they enter. That may not seem as important today in a world where technology connects every corner of the globe, and Americans are viewed, and judged, throughout the world on social media platforms like TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. It does matter though. It matters because the truth always comes out in person, and the men and women of the United States Navy today offer a chance for other nations to know and understand the real American identity.

James Bradford wrote, “the Navy’s history is prologue to its present and future and to that of the United States.”⁶¹⁷ Before understanding our present and where we are going as a nation, we must first understand where we came from – what our origins as a nation. This dissertation has discussed those origins through the lens of the United States Navy. What does it teach us about who we are? We may have a rocky start. We may struggle a bit to find our footing. We may be torn down. We may suffer defeats. We will rise again. We will fight when the need arises. We are brave, strong, persistent, and intrepid. We are also compassionate,

⁶¹⁷ Bradford, *America, Sea Power, and the World*, xxi.

honorable, and worthy. We are the beneficiaries of their sacrifices and the heirs of their actions. The world today, would not be the same without the fortitude and perseverance of the United States Navy during those first few decades of its infancy.

Fair winds and following seas...

Appendix 1⁶¹⁸

Continental Association, 20 October 1774

The Association entered into by the American Continental Congress in Behalf of all the Colonies

We his Majesty's most dutiful and loyal Subjects, the Delegates of the several Colonies of New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, the Three Lower Counties of Newcastle, Kent, and Sussex, on Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, deputed to represent them in a Continental Congress, held in the City of Philadelphia on the 5th Day of September 1774, avowing our Allegiance to his Majesty, our Affection and Regard for our Fellow Subjects in Great Britain and elsewhere, affected with the deepest Anxiety, and most alarming Apprehensions at those Grievances and Distresses with which his Majesty's American Subjects are oppressed, and having taken under our most serious Deliberation the State of the whole Continent, find that the present unhappy Situation of our Affairs is occasioned by a ruinous System of Colony Administration, adopted by the British Ministry about the Year 1763, evidently calculated for enslaving these Colonies, and, with them, the British Empire: In Prosecution of which System, various Acts of Parliament have been passed for raising a Revenue in America, for depriving the American Subjects, in many Instances, of the constitutional Trial by Jury, exposing their Lives to Danger, by directing a new and illegal Trial beyond the Seas, for Crimes alledged to have been committed in America; and, in Prosecution of the same System, several late, cruel, and oppressive Acts, have been passed respecting the Town of Boston and the Massachusetts Bay, and also an Act for extending the Province of Quebeck, so as to border on

⁶¹⁸ Continental Association, 20 October 1774," *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-01-02-0094>. [Original source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1, 1760–1776, ed. Julian P. Boyd. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950, pp. 149–154.]

the western Frontiers of these Colonies, establishing an arbitrary Government therein, and discouraging the Settlement of British Subjects in that wide-extended Country; thus, by the Influence of civil Principles, and ancient Prejudices, to dispose the Inhabitants to act with Hostility against the free Protestant Colonies, whenever a wicked Ministry shall choose so to direct them.

To obtain Redress of these Grievances, which threaten Destruction to the Lives, Liberty, and Property, of his Majesty's Subjects in North America, we are of Opinion that a Non-importation, Non-consumption, and Non-exportation Agreement, faithfully adhered to, will prove the most speedy, effectual, and peaceable Measure; and therefore we do, for ourselves and the Inhabitants of the several Colonies whom we represent, firmly agree and associate, under the sacred Ties of Virtue, Honour, and Love of our Country, as follows:

First. That from and after the first Day of December next we will not import into British America, from Great Britain or Ireland, any Goods, Wares, or Merchandise whatsoever, or from any other Place, any such Goods, Wares, or Merchandise, as shall have been exported from Great Britain or Ireland; nor will we, after that Day, import any East India Tea from any Part of the World, nor any Molosses, Syrups, Paneles, Coffee, or Pimenta, from the British Plantations, or from Dominica, nor Wines from Madeira, or the Western Islands, nor foreign Indigo.

Second. That we will neither import nor purchase any Slave imported after the first Day of December next, after which Time we will wholly discontinue the Slave Trade, and will neither be concerned in it ourselves, nor will we hire our Vessels, nor sell our Commodities or Manufactures, to those who are concerned in it.

Third. As a Non-consumption Agreement, strictly adhered to, will be an effectual Security for the Observation of the Non-importation, we, as above, solemnly agree and associate, that,

from this Day, we will not purchase or use any Tea imported on Account of the East India Company, or any on which a Duty hath been or shall be paid; and, from and after the first Day of March next, we will not purchase or use any East India Tea whatever: Nor will we, nor shall any Person for or under us, purchase or use any of those Goods, Wares, or Merchandise, we have agreed not to import, which we shall know, or have Cause to suspect, were imported after the first Day of December, except such as come under the Rules and Directions of the tenth Article, hereafter mentioned.

Fourth. The earnest Desire we have not to injure our Fellow Subjects in Great Britain, Ireland, or the West Indies, induces us to suspend a Non-exportation until the tenth Day of September 1775; at which Time, if the said Acts, and Parts of Acts of the British Parliament herein after mentioned, are not repealed, we will not, directly or indirectly, export any Merchandise, or Commodity whatsoever, to Great Britain, Ireland, or the West Indies, except Rice, to Europe.

Fifth. Such as are Merchants, and use the British and Irish Trade, will give Orders, as soon as possible, to their Factors, Agents, and Correspondents, in Great Britain and Ireland, not to ship any Goods to them, on any Pretence whatsoever, as they cannot be received in America; and if any Merchant residing in Great Britain or Ireland shall, directly or indirectly, ship any Goods, Wares, or Merchandise, for America, in Order to break the said Non-importation Agreement, or in any Manner contravene the same, on such unworthy Conduct being well attested, it ought to be made publick; and, on the same being so done, we will not, from thenceforth, have any commercial Connexion with such Merchant.

Sixth. That such as are Ow[ners] of Vessels will give positive Orders to their Captains, or Masters, n[ot to] receive on Board their Vessels any Goods prohibited by the said Non-importation Agreement, on Pain of immediate Dismission from their Service.

Seventh. We will use our utmost Endeavours to improve the Breed of Sheep, and increase their Number to the greatest Extent; and to that End we will kill them as sparingly as may be, especially those of the most profitable Kind: Nor will we export any to the West Indies, or elsewhere. And those of us who are or may become overstocked with, or can conveniently spare any Sheep, will dispose of them to our Neighbours, especially to the poorer Sort, on moderate Terms.

Eighth. That we will, in our several Stations, encourage Frugality Economy, and Industry; and promote Agriculture, Arts, and the Manufactures of this Country, especially that of Wool; and will discountenance and discourage every Species of Extravagance and Dissipation, especially all Horse-racing, and all Kinds of Gaming, Cock-fighting, Exhibitions of Shows, Plays, and other expensive Diversions and Entertainments; and on the Death of any Relation, or Friend, none of us, or any of our Families, will go into any farther Mourning Dress than a black Crape or Riband on the Arm or Hat for Gentlemen, and a black Riband and Necklace for Ladies, and we will discontinue the giving of Gloves and Scarfs at Funerals.

Ninth. That such as are Venders of Goods or Merchandise will not take Advantage of the Scarcity of Goods that may be occasioned by this Associacion, but will sell the same at the Rates we have been respectively accustomed to do for twelve Months last past; and if any Venders of Goods or Merchandise shall sell any such Goods on higher Terms, or shall in any Manner, or by any Device whatsoever, violate or depart from this Agreement, no Person ought, nor will any of

us deal with any such Person, or his or her Factor or Agent, at any Time thereafter, for any Commodity whatever.

Tenth. In Case any Merchant, Trader, or other Persons, shall import any Goods or Merchandise after the first Day of December, and before the first Day of February next, the same ought forthwith, at the Election of the Owner, to be either reshipped or delivered up to the Committee of the County or Town wherein they shall be imported, to be stored at the Risk of the Importer, until the Non-importation Agreement shall cease, or be sold under the Direction of the Committee aforesaid: And, in the last mentioned Case, the Owne[r or owners of such goods shall be reim]bursed (out of the Sales) the [first cost and charges, the profit, if any,] to be applied towards relievi[ng and employing such poor inhabitants of] the Town of Boston as are im[mediate sufferers by the Boston Port Bill,] and a particular Account of all [goods so returned, stored, or sold, to be] inserted in the publick Papers. A[nd if any goods or merchandizes shall be] imported after the said first Day [of February the same ought forthwith] to be sent back again, without br[eaking any of the packages thereof.]

Eleventh. That a Committee b[e chosen in every County, City, and] Town, by those who are qualifi[ed to vote for representatives in the] Legislature, whose Business it shall [be attentively to observe the conduct] of all Persons touching this Assoc[iation; and when it shall be made to] appear, to the Satisfaction of a Maj[ority of any such Committee that any] Person within the Limits of their Ap[pointment has violated this associa]tion, that such Majority do forthwith [cause the truth of the case to be] published in the Gazette, to the End [that all such foes to the rights of] British America may be publickly known [and universally contemned as] the Enemies of American Liberty; and th[ence forth we respectively will] break off all Dealings with him, or her.

Twelfth. That the Committee of Corre[spondence, in the respective] Colonies do frequently inspect the Entries [of their Custom Houses, and] inform each other, from Time to Time, of t[he true state thereof and of] every other material Circumstance that ma[y occur relative to this asso]ciation.

Thirteenth. That all Manufactures of [this country be sold at reason]able Prices, so that no undue Advantage [be taken of a future scarcity of] Goods.

Fourteenth. And we do farther agr[ee and resolve, that we will have] no Trade, Commerce, Dealings, o[r intercourse whatsoever, with any] Colony or Province in North Ame[rica, which shall not accede to, or] which shall hereafter violate, thi[s association, but will hold them as] unworthy of the Rights of Free[men, and as inimical to the liberties of] their Country.

And we do solemnly bind [ourselves and our Constituents under the] Ties aforesaid, to adhere to th[is Association until such parts of the several] Acts of Parliament, passed sin[ce the Close of the last War as impose or] continue Duties on Tea, Wine, [Molosses, Syrups, paneles], Coffee, Sugar, Pimenta, Indigo, foreign Pap[er, glass] and Painters Colours, imported into America, and extend the Powers of the Admiralty Courts beyond their ancient Limits, deprive the American Subject of Trial by Jury, authorise the Judge's Certificate to indemnify the Prosecutor from Damages that he might otherwise be liable to from a Trial by his Peers, require oppressive Security from a Claimant of Ships or Goods seized before he shall be allowed to defend his Property, are repealed; and until that Part of the Act of the 12th of George III. Chapter 24th, entitled "An Act for the better securing his Majesty's Dockyards, Magazines, Ships, Ammunition, and Stores," by which any Persons charged with committing any of the Offences therein described in America may be tried in any Shire or County within the Realm, is repealed; and until the four Acts passed in the last Session of Parliament, viz. that for stopping the Port and

blocking up the Harbour of Boston, that for altering the Charter and Government of Massachusetts Bay; and that which is entitled “An Act for the better Administration of Justice, &c.” and that “For extending the Limits of Quebeck, &c.” are repealed. And we recommend it to the Provincial Conventions, and to the Committees in the respective Colonies, to establish such farther Regulations as they may think proper, for carrying into Execution this Association.

The foregoing Association being determined upon by the Congress, was ordered to be subscribed by the several Members thereof; and thereupon, we have hereunto set our respective Names accordingly.

IN CONGRESS, PHILADELPHIA, OCTOBER 20, 1774. *Signed, Peyton Randolph, President.*

John Sullivan,	}		Joseph Galloway,	}	
Nathaniel Folsom,			John Dickinson,		
		of New Hampshire.	Charles Humphreys,		
Thomas Cushing,	}		Thomas Mifflin,		
Samuel Adams,			Edward Biddle,		
John Adams,			John Morton,		
Robert Treat Paine,			George Ross,		
Stephen Hopkins,	}				
Samuel Ward,			Caesar Rodney,		
		of Rhode Island	Thomas M'Kean,		}
Eliphalet Dyer,	}		George Read,		
Roger Sherman,			Matthew Tilghman,		
Silas Deane,			Thomas Johnson,		
		of Connecticut.			of Maryland.
					of Pennsylvania
					of Newcastle, &c.

Isaac Low,

John Alsop,



William Paca,

Samuel Chase,



John Jay,

of New York.

James Duane,

Richard Henry Lee,

William Floyd,

George Washington,

Henry Weisner,

Patrick Henry,

S. Boerum,

Junior,

of Virginia.

Richard Bland,

James Kinsey,

Benjamin Harrison,

William Livingston,

Edmund Pendleton,

Stephen Crane

of New Jersey.

Richard Smith,

William Hooper,

Henry Middleton,

Joseph Hewes,

of North Carolina.

Thomas Lynch,

R. Caswell,

Christopher Gadsden,

of South Carolina.

John Rutledge,

Edward Rutledge,

Th: Jefferson

Francis Alberte

Randolph Jefferson

A. Bryan]

Val: Wood

Francis Eppes

Broadside (DLC), with six written signatures at end. This single-page printing of the Association appears to be unrecorded and was presumably a Williamsburg imprint. For other pamphlet and broadside printings, see Evans 13703–5, and [JCC](#), i, 127–8, Nos. 2–6. A large fragment of text has been torn away from TJ’s copy; the missing matter has here been supplied from the facsimile of the original Association (DLC: PCC) in the pocket at the back of [JCC](#), i.

For the circumstances under which the Continental Association was prepared and adopted, see [JCC](#), i, 53, 57, 62–3, 74–81; Burnett, *Continental Congress*, ch. iii. Burnett (p. 55) points out that “Both the name and the form appear to have been derived from the Virginia Association of August 1774” (printed above under 1–6 Aug. 1774). It appears from news items in the *Virginia Gazette* that meetings were held in the various counties during November and December, at which the Continental Association was read and approved, and local committees were elected to enforce observance of it ([Va. Gaz.](#) [Pinkney], 1 Dec., 22 Dec. 1774). See, further, [TJ to Cary and Harrison, 9 Dec. 1774](#).

1. From other evidence this name is known to be that of Anderson Bryan, but the fanciful form in which the first name or initials are written cannot be deciphered.

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SOURCE PROJECT: [Jefferson Papers](#)

TITLE: Continental Association, 20 October 1774

AUTHOR: [Continental Congress](#)

DATE: [20 October 1774](#)

Appendix II

Hull's Victory or Huzza for the Constitution⁶¹⁹

Ye true sons of freedom, give ear to my song,
While the praise of brave HULL I attempt to prolong:
Let each bold hearted hero now fill up his glass,
And our favorite sentiment rapidly pass.

*With our brave noble Captain, we'll still plow the main
"We'll fight, and we'll conquer, again and again."*

With a fine springing breeze, our sails we unbent,
And with hearts full of joy to the ocean we went,
In the fam'd CONSTITUTION, a taugt and staunch boat,
As ever was seen on the water afloat.

*With our brave noble Captain we plow'd the deep main,
And when he commands we are ready again.*

On the twentieth of August, a sail we espied,
We hove to, and soon she came up along side;
The drum beat to quarters, to quarters we run,
And each tar bravely swore to stand fast to his gun.

*Our Captain so brave, as we sail'd on the main,
Now bid us a harvest of glory to gain.*

A broadside the foe quickly into us pour'd,
We return'd 'em the favor direct on the word,
Each heart was undaunted, no bosom knew fear,
And we car'd not a snap for the saucy Guerrière.

*With our noble Commander we fought on the main,
And we'll conquer with him when he bids us again.*

The balls now flew thick, and quite warm was the play,
Their masts and their rigging we soon shot away,
We shatter'd their hulls with all possible speed,
With our good spunky bull-dogs, of true yankee breed.

*'Twas thus with our Captain we fought on the main,
With him a rich harvest of glory to gain.*

The blood from the enemy's scuppers ran fast,

⁶¹⁹ https://ussconstitutionmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/2409-1_001.jpg

All hopes of subduing us now were quite past:
 So they wisely concluded, "by hob or by nob,
 "That 'twas best to give o'er what they thought a bad job."

*With our true noble Captain, we'll fight on the main,
 And we hope that with him, we'll soon conquer again.*

The Britons had seldom before seen the like,
 For we rak'd 'em so clean, they'd no colours to strike;
 So a gun on their lee they were forc'd to let fly,
 To inform us they didn't quite all wish to die.

*'Twas thus with our Captain we fought on the main,
 And we're ready, brave boys, to fight with him again.*

In twenty-five minutes, the business was done,
 For they didn't quite relish such true Yankee fun;
 So we kindly received 'em on board our good ship,
 Many cursing the day when they took their last trip.

*With our brave noble Captain we'll still plow the main,
 We'll fight and we'll conquer again and again.*

Now homeward we're bound, with a favouring breeze,
 As full of good humor and mirth as you please,
 Each true-hearted sailor partakes of the glass,
 And drinks off a health to his favorite lass.

*With our brave noble Captain we've plow'd the deep main,
 With him we the laurels of glory did gain.*

Now success to the good CONSTITUTION, a boat,
 Which her crew will defend while a plank is afloat,
 Who never will flinch, or in duty's e'er lag,
 But stick to the last by the American flag.

*So true to our colors we'll ever remain,
 And we'll conquer for freedom again and again.*

When again we shall plow old Neptune's blue waves,
 May honors still circle the brows of the brave,
 And should our bold foes wish to give us a pull,
 We'll show 'em the good CONSTITUTION and HULL.

*And now with three cheers ere we sail to the main,
 We will greet our brave Captain again and again.*

Appendix III

Hull's Victory or The Constitution and the Guerrière⁶²⁰

Ye tars of Columbia! who seek on the main,
Redress for the wrongs which your brethren sustain;
Cheer up and be merry, for Mr. John BULL
Has got a sound drubbing from brave Captain HULL.

The bold CONSTITUTION, a ship of some fame,
Sure each jolly sailor remembers her name,
[this line is too tarnished to read]...GUERRIÈRE,
A frigate once captured by John from Monsieur.

At five past Meridian the action begun'
For she found 'twas in vain any longer to run,
So back'd her maintopsail, prepared for the fray,
As a stag when he's hunted will oft stand his bay.

Our drum beat to quarters — each jolly tar hears,
And hailed the glad signal with three hearty cheers;
All eager for glory, to quarters we fly'
Resolved for to conquer or bravely to die.

Proud *Dacres* commanded the enemy's ship,
Who often has sworn every Yankee to whip;
Who always has boasted 'twould be his delight
To meet an American frigate in fight.

This boasting commander his crew now address'd,
Which was partly composed of AMERICANS prest,
Says he, "my brave lads, now our wish is fullfill'd
For 'tis better to capture a ship than to build.

"And *you*, who are tired of our boatswain's mate's whip,
And wish to return to some d——d Yankee ship,
Twenty minutes or less of our fierce British fire,
Will gain me their ship and you *your* desire."

Then at it we went, in a deluge of fire,
Each party too stubborn an inch to retire,
Balls, grape-shot and langrage, promiscuously fly,
While the thunder of cannon shakes ocean and sky.

At a quarter past six, (Yankee shot told so well)

⁶²⁰ https://ussconstitutionmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/977-1_002.jpg

The enemy's mizenmast tottered and fell;
 While eager to board him, the order we wait,
 His foremast and mainmast both shared the same fate.

Our cabin had now from his guns taken fire,
 Yet danger but kindled our courage the higher;
 'Twas quickly extinguished, with Dacres' *lee gun*,
 Proclaimed his ship ours, and the bloody fight done.

Our prize we then boarded, all armed in a boat,
 But found her so riddled, she'd scarce keep afloat;
 Fifteen of her seamen lay dead in their gore,
 Where wounded and groaning lay sixty-four more.

Our loss was but seven, who died in the cause,
 Of Liberty, glory, religion, and laws;
 While the like little number, will bear to their grave,
 Indisputable marks that the Yankees are brave.

Now finding our prize lay a log on the main,
 A wreck that could ne'er be refitted again,
 We took out the prisoners, then set her on fire,
 And soon put an end to the famous GUERRIÈRE.

Now fill up your glasses, my lads, to the brim,
 And toast noble Hull, till in toddy you swim,
 Here's a health to that hero and his ship's crew,
 For a braver commander our navy ne'er knew.

Appendix IV

Decatur's Victory⁶²¹

Ye heroes who bled for the rights of mankind,
 Whose virtues and valor by freedom are shrin'd
 In the hearts of your sons — we swear by your fame,
 That we never will tarnish our country's bright name.
*For Columbia still generous, and brave, just and free,
 Ere long of the ocean the mistress shall be.*

Long time had our rights been by Britain disdain'd,
 Those rights which our fathers so nobly maintain'd;
 Our commerce the freebooters seiz'd as their prey,
 And hawk-like maliciously bore it away.
*Yet Columbia still generous and brave, just and free,
 Ere long of the ocean the Mistress shall be.*

Our Eagle in peace, as mild as a dove,
 With anger look'd down from the mountain above,
 And beheld Britain's Lion lie crouching to spring,
 So to pounce on his *Lordship* she quickly took wing.
*Then Columbia still generous and brave, just and free,
 Ere long of the ocean the mistress shall be.*

The word was now given, the war was begun,
 For battle, prepar'd, and united as one,
 Our seamen so brave soon repair'd to the main,
 Resolv'd from the enemy glory to gain.
*And Columbia still generous and brave, just and free,
 Ere long of the ocean the mistress shall be.*

Brave HULL and his crew bid defiance to fear,
 And soon did the job for their spanking *Guerrière*;
 While JONES full as brave, had a *Frolicsome* bout,
 Though not quite so lucky the *Frolic* turn'd out.
*But Columbia still generous, and brave, just, and free,
 Ere long of the ocean the mistress shall be.*

Now DECATUR, of heroes the pride and the boast,
 And the terror of old crazy king George's host,
 With a tight little frigate, and true Yankee crew,
 Swore to stick to the colors of red, white and blue.
For Columbia still generous, and brave just and free,

⁶²¹ http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-Yhs6TmY21Nk/UIb_CLoy1dI/AAAAAAAAA8s/pDUb_aCkaBk/s1600/3-decatursvictory.jpg

Ere long of the ocean the mistress shall be.

Not long had they cruis'd ere a frigate of size,
 Majestical sailing, attracted their eyes;
 To quarters each brave Yankee tar quickly hied,
 And managed it soon to come up alongside.
Then Columbia still generous, and brave, just, and free,
Ere long of the ocean the mistress shall be.

Now the battle commenced, and so fast play'd each gun,
 That the British poor devils tho't the fight was quite done
 For the fire from her sides was so brilliant and bright,
 They imagined our ship, in a blaze made the light.
For Columbia, still generous, and brave just and free,
Ere long of the ocean the mistress shall be.

But soon they found out 'twas a shocking mistake,
 For the shot still continued their vessel to rake.
 And thinking 'twas best to knock under quite soon,
 Their piece of red flannel they quickly haul'd down.
Then Columbia still generous, and brave, just and free,
Ere long of the ocean the mistress shall be.

Now Huzza for DECATUR, and all his brave crew,
 They will ne'er be ashamed their colors to shew;
 While a frigate of Britain on the ocean shall lie
 They will always be ready to give 'em a try.
For Columbia still generous, and brave, just and free,
Ere long of the ocean the mistress shall be.

Appendix V

Capture of Little York or Dearborn Victorious in Canada⁶²²

When Britain with envy and malice inflam'd,
 Dar'd dispute the dear rights of Columbia's blest union,
 We thought of the time when our freedom we claim'd,
 And fought 'gainst oppression with fullest communion.

*Our foes on the ocean have been forc'd to yield,
 And fresh laurels we now gather up in the field.*

Freedom's flag on the wilds of the West is unfurl'd,
 And our foes seem to find their resistance delusion,
 For our Eagle her arrows amongst them has hurl'd,
 And their ranks of bold veterans fill'd with confusion.

*Our foes on the ocean have been forc'd to yield,
 And fresh laurels we now gather up in the field.*

On the lakes of the West, full of national pride,
 See our brave little fleet most triumphantly riding,
 And behold the brave tars on the fresh water-tide,
 In a noble commander, brave CHAUNCEY, confiding.

*Our foes on the ocean have been forc'd to yield,
 And fresh laurels we now gather up in the field.*

Their deeds of proud valor shall long stand enroll'd,
 On the bright shining page of our national glory,
 And oft in the deep winter's night shall be told,
 The exploits of the tars of American story.

*Our foes on the ocean have been forc'd to yield,
 And fresh laurels we now gather up in the field.*

Nor less shall the Soldiers come in for their praise,
 Who engag'd to accomplish the great expedition,
 And a monument Fame, shall for them cheerly raise,
 And their deeds shall in history find repetition.

*Our foes on the ocean have been forc'd to yield,
 And fresh laurels we now gather up in the field.*

Let Britons still boast of their prowess and pluck,

⁶²² <https://www.americanantiquarian.org/thomasballads/items/show/279>

We care not a straw for their muskets and cannon,
 In the field we will beat them unless they've the luck,
 To run from their foes like *TENEDOS & SHANNON*.

*Our foes on the ocean have been forc'd to yield,
 And fresh laurels we now gather up in the field.*

Our sweet little bull-dogs, they thunder'd away,
 And our sailors and soldiers the foe still kept mauling,
 'Till they grew very sick of such tight yankey play,
 And poor SHEAFFE and his troops then ran away bawling.

*Our foes on the ocean have been forc'd to yield,
 And fresh laurels we now gather up in the field.*

But the rascals on malice quite fully were bent,
 And as from the fort they were cowardly going,
 In pursuance to what was at first their intent,
 The magazine they had resolv'd on up-blowing.

*Our foes on the ocean have been forc'd to yield,
 And fresh laurels we now gather up in the field.*

Two hundred brave soldiers there met with their death,
 And while for their country they nobly were dying,
 Full fifty bold Britons at once lost their breath,
 And with them in the air were their carcasses flying.

*Our foes on the ocean have been forc'd to yield,
 And fresh laurels we now gather up in the field.*

The brave General PIKE there met with his end,
 But his virtues his country forever will cherish,
 And while in his grave fair freedom shall bend,
 She will swear that his memory never shall perish.

*Our foes on the ocean have been forc'd to yield,
 And fresh laurels we now gather up in the field.*

Let the minions of Britain swarm over our coast,
 Columbians all cowardly conduct disdain,
 We'll teach the invaders how vain is their boast,
 And contend whilst a drop of their blood is remaining.

*Our foes on the ocean have been forc'd to yield,
 And fresh laurels we now gather up in the field.*

Then freemen arise, and gird on your sword,
And declare while you still have the means of resistance,
That you ne'er will give up at the threatening words,
Nor of arms, those dear rights which you prize as existence.

*Our foes on the ocean have been forc'd to yield,
And fresh laurels we now gather up in the field.*

Appendix VI

Perry's Victory or the Battle of Lake Erie⁶²³

YE Tars of Columbia give ear to my story
 Who fought with brave PERRY where cannons did roar;
 Your valor has gained you an immortal glory,
 A fame that shall last 'till time is no more.
 Columbian Tars are the true sons of Mars,
 They rake fore and aft when they fight on the deep;
 On the bed of lake Erie, commanded by PERRY,
 They caus'd many Britons to take their last sleep.

The tenth of September let us all remember,
 So long as the globe on her axis rolls round;
 Our Tars and Marines on lake Erie were seen,
 To make the proud flag of Great Britain come down;
 The van of our fleet the British to meet,
 Commanded by PERRY, the LAWRENCE bore down;
 Her guns they did roar, with such terrific power,
 That savages trembled at the dreadful sound.

The LAWRENCE sustained a most dreadful fire,
 She fought three to one for two glasses or more;
 While PERRY, undaunted, did firmly stand by her,
 The proud foe her heavy broadside did pour;
 Her mast being shatter'd, her rigging tattered,
 Her booms and her yards being all shot away,
 And few left on deck to manage the wreck,
 Our hero on board no longer could stay.

In this situation the pride of our nation,
 Sure Heaven had guarded unhurt all the while,
 While many a hero maintaining his station,
 Fell close by his side, and was thrown on the pile.
 But mark you and wonder when elements thunder,
 When death and destruction are stalking all round,
 His flag he did carry on board the NIAGARA -
 Such valor on record was never yet found.

There is one gallant act of our noble commander,
 While writing my song, I must notice with pride:
 While launch'd in the smack that carried the standard,
 A ball whistled through her, close by his side.
 Says PERRY, "the rascals intend for to drown us,

⁶²³ <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/glc05511>

But push on, my brave boys, you need never fear;"
 And with his own coat he plugg'd up the boat,
 And through fire and sulphur away he did steer.

The famed NIAGARA, now proud of her PERRY,
 Displayed all her banners in gallant array;
 And twenty-five guns on her deck she did carry,
 Which soon put an end to this bloody affray.
 The rear of our fleet was brought up complete,
 The signal was given to break through the line;
 While starboard and larboard from every quarter,
 The lamps of Columbia did gloriously shine.

The bold British Lion roar'd out his last thunder,
 When PERRY attacked him close in the rear;
 Columbia's Eagle soon made him crouch under,
 And roar out for quarter, as soon you shall hear.
 Oh had you been there, I vow and declare,
 Such a sight as you never has seen'd before;
 Six red bloody flags that no longer could wag,
 All lay at the feet of our brave Commodore.

Brave ELLIOT, whose valor must now be recorded,
 On board the NIAGARA so well play'd his part;
 His gallant assistance to PERRY afforded, -
 We'll place him the second on Lake Erie's Chart.
 In the midst of the battle, when guns they did rattle,
 The LAWRENCE a wreck, and the men most all slain,
 Away he did steer, and brought up the rear,
 And by this manœuvre the victory was gain'd.

Oh had you but seen those noble commanders,
 Embracing each other, when the conflict was o'er;
 And viewing all those invincible's standards,
 That never had yielded to any before.
 Says PERRY, "brave ELLIOT, come, give me your hand, sir,
 This day you have gain'd an immortal renown;
 So long as Columbia Lake Erie commands, Sir,
 Let brave Captain ELLIOT with laurels be crown'd."

Great Britain may boast of her conquering heroes,
 Her Rodney, her Nelson, and all the whole crew,
 But none in her glory have told such a story,
 Nor boasted such feats as Columbians do.
 The whole British fleet was captur'd complete,
 Not one single vessel from us got away;

And pris'ners, some hundred, Columbians wonder'd,
To see them all anchor'd and moor'd in our bay.

May heaven still smile on the shades of our heroes,
Who fought in that conflict their country to save;
And check the proud spirit of those murdering bracos,
Who wish to divide us and make us all slaves.
Columbians, sing and make the woods ring.
We'll toast those brave heroes by sea and by land;
While Britons drink sherry. Columbians, PERRY,
We'll toast them about, with full glass in hand.

Appendix VII

Macdonough's Victory or Victory on Lake Champlain⁶²⁴

O Freemen, raise a joyous strain!
 Aloft the Eagle towers,
 "We've met the enemy" again —
 Again have them 'ours!'

Champlain! the cannon's thundering voice,
 Proclaims they waters free;
 Thy forest-waving hills rejoice,
 And echo — Victory!

The striped flag upon they wave,
 Triumphantly appears,
 And to invested landsmen, brave,
 A star of promise bears.

Now to the world Fame's trumpet sounds
 The deeds with new applause,
 While from a Conquer'd Fleet resounds,
 Our seamen's loud huzzas!

Britannia, round thy haggard brows
 Bind bitter wormword still;
 For lo! again thy standard bows
 To valiant Yankee skill.

But O! what chaplet can be found
 MACDONOUGH's brows to grace?
 'Tis done! the glorious wreath is bound,
 Which time can ne'er efface.

And still a just — a rich reward,
 His country has to give;
 He shall be first in her regard,
 And with her PERRY live!

Columbia! Though they cannon's roar
 On inland seas prevail,
 And there alone — while round each shore
 Outnumbering ships assail.

⁶²⁴ [https://www.meisterdrucke.uk/fine-art-prints/American-School/430569/Broadside-from-the-War-of-1812,-featuring-Battle-of-Plattsburgh-and-Victory-on-Lake-Champlain-\(print\).html](https://www.meisterdrucke.uk/fine-art-prints/American-School/430569/Broadside-from-the-War-of-1812,-featuring-Battle-of-Plattsburgh-and-Victory-on-Lake-Champlain-(print).html)

Yet deed with deed, and name with name
Thy gallant sons shall blend,
'Till the bright arch of naval fame,
O'er the broad ocean bend!

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Dissertation: Building the New American Man: The Role of the United States Navy in
 Creating Ideas of Manhood, Masculinity, and an American Identity in the
 Early American Republic

M.Phil., Syracuse University, December 2019

B.A., Boise State University, May 2016

A.S., College of Western Idaho, May 2013

PUBLICATIONS

Poetic Myths: American Nationalism and the War of 1812, Ronald E. McNair Research Journal, Spring
 2016

PRESENTATIONS

2022 – Utica College Center for Historical Research Brown Bag Series; *April 13, 2022*

2022 – Daughters of the American Revolution Speaking Engagement, Syracuse, NY; *March 19, 2022*

2017 – Syracuse University History Graduate Conference, Syracuse, NY; *Freedom at Sea: African
 American Men and Maritime Activities, 1770-1830*

2016 – Boise State Undergraduate Research Conference, Boise, ID; *Poetic Myths: American
 Nationalism and the War of 1812*

2015 – McNair Summer Symposium, Boise, ID; *Poetic Myths: American Nationalism and the War of
 1812*

TEACHING & COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Syracuse University History Department – Teaching Assistant – 2016 to 2023

- HST 101 and 102: American History
- HST 111 and 112: European History
- HST 222: History of American Sexuality
- HST 349: History of the Modern US Presidency
- HST 305: Civil War and Reconstruction
- HST 392: Nazi Germany and the Holocaust

COMMUNITY SERVICE & LEADERSHIP

- History Graduate Student Organization, Syracuse University – Various Positions (2016-2022)
- Graduate Student Organization, Syracuse University – Academic Resources and Affairs
 Committee Chair (2021-2022)
- Graduate Student Organization, Syracuse University – Travel Grant Committee (2021-2022)
- Syracuse University, Office of Academic Integrity – Academic Integrity Panel (2021-2023)
- Framework for Accountability in Academic Research and Mentoring Member (2021-2022)
- Graduate Student Organization, Syracuse University – Graduate Student Life Committee (2019-
 2020)

GRANTS & FELLOWSHIPS

- New York Humanities Reading and Discussion Grant – Spring 2020, Fall 2020, Spring 2021, Spring 2022
 - Topics: The Vietnam War; James Baldwin’s America; The Writings of Audre Lorde; World War I
- Dobie-Kampel Fellowship – Fall 2018, Spring 2019, Fall 2020
- Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program Summer Fellowship – 2015