

The Birth of a Navy



IN THE SUMMER of 1775 the need for a Continental Navy was less urgent than that of an army, and the establishment of a navy was not discussed in Congress. Outside of that body, however, suggestions for a naval force were made as early as July.

On October 5 sundry letters from London, conveying the information that two transports laden with stores and ammunition for the British Army had sailed for America, were laid before Congress, and that body on the same day appointed a committee to prepare a plan for intercepting the two vessels. Thus the "Naval Committee" came into existence. When enlarged to its full size it consisted of seven members, with John Adams the leading member.

During October-December, 1775, the subject of naval affairs was frequently before Congress. For a time there was much opposition among the members of Congress to a Continental Navy; and the recommendations of the committee, since they appeared to involve little expense, were the first to receive the sanction of Congress. In October four vessels were authorized, and later this number was increased to eight. Provision for a naval personnel was made and much fundamental legislation was adopted. Officers

HOWARD PYLE



A young man is recruited for naval service.



John Adams



NOWLAND VAN POWELL

The Continental Navy frigate Randolph, 32 guns, is launched at a Philadelphia shipyard in 1776.

were appointed, seamen were engaged, and the ships were fitted out for sea. About the middle of December the decision [was] reached to build thirteen frigates. A marine committee was chosen to take charge of their construction.

The Continental Navy originated in these several measures of October-December, 1775. The most fundamental of them was that of November 28 which provided for a naval establishment with a full line of officers and which fixed their pay and put in force for their control and discipline a complete set of naval rules and regulations. By this measure Congress committed itself to the creation and maintenance of a navy. As the material of the Navy had its beginning on October 13 when Congress authorized the fitting out of the first vessels, this date must be regarded as an initial one of much importance.

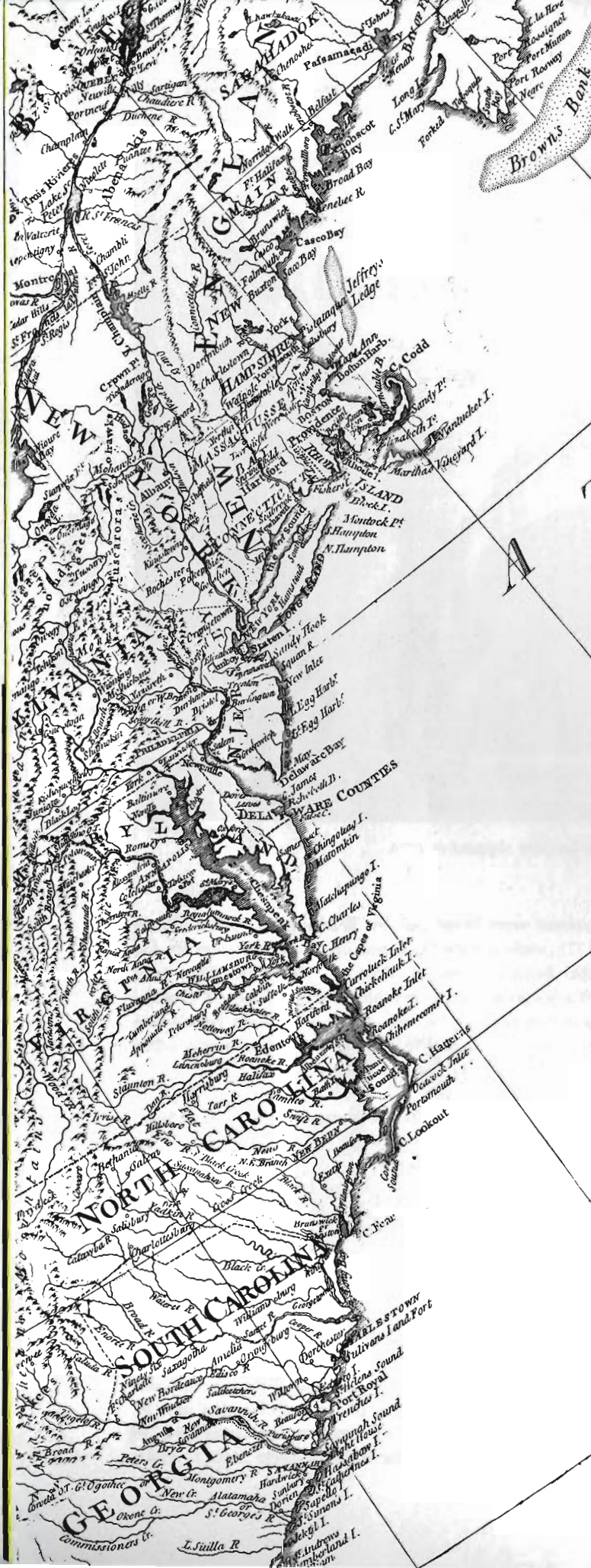
The little fleet of the Naval Committee went to sea early in January, 1776, and, after capturing New Providence in the Bahama Islands, returned to New England, having made its first captures early in April. These were not the first ships to go to sea nor the first prizes to be captured. The first vessels under Continental pay and

control were fitted out by Washington in the fall of 1775 with a view to capturing British transports for the British Army at Boston. The little fleet gave Washington much trouble and vexation. Notwithstanding their shortcomings, Washington's vessels had considerable success in capturing transports and other lightly-armed craft of the enemy.

This excerpt is from Charles O. Paullin, "Origin of the Continental Navy," pp. 1158-1159, November 1927 *Proceedings*.



IN 1775 America was a mere strip of seacoast cut into a series of peninsulas by the lower courses of a number of navigable rivers. Her interests and her wealth were largely maritime. In the Colonial period communication between the towns of the colonies was best by water. The inhabitants of America during this period were amphibious. In the light of these facts it seems



somewhat singular that the lack of sailors constituted the chief obstacle to the success of the Continental navy.

The same causes that prevented seamen from enlisting lowered the quality of those that did enlist, and kept them from entering for longer than a single cruise. A ship's complement of sailors was often ill-assorted. In order to obtain seamen many measures were resorted to by Congress, the States, the Marine Committee, Navy Boards, and commanders of vessels.

All these efforts were defeated by the seductive allurements of privateering. The Revolutionary Congress was poor and paid poor wages. After its seamen had enlisted, they were toled away by mercenary privateersmen. The owners and commanders of privateers, as they received the whole of their captures, could afford to treat their crews liberally. It was generally asserted that they paid higher wages than did Congress or the States. Privateering was more popular, more elastic, and more irregular than the other naval services. Privateers could devote all their time and energy to commerce-destroying, unfettered by the miscellaneous duties which often fell to naval ships. Boston was the chief center for fitting out privateers and for selling their prizes, although towns like Salem and Marblehead did a thriving business.

Not a few of the failures and misfortunes of the Continental navy are to be laid at the doors of the Yankee privateersmen. A more patriotic course was to have been expected of certain substantial merchants

The following letter was written by Captain John Clouston of the armed sloop *Freedom* on May 23, 1777, from Paimboeuf, France.

"Gentlemen:
I have the pleasure of Informing your Honours by Capt. Fisk of the Massachusetts That on the first Instant I arrived safe in Port after taking twelve Sail of Englis Vessels Seven of which I despatched for Boston Burnt three gave one smal Brigg to our Prisoners . . . I have Cleaned & Refited my Vessel and Taken in forty Tons of War like Stores and have bin waiting for a wind to go this fore days—Capt. Fisk being short of Provisions I have supplied him with foreteen Barels of Pork and Eleven of Beef and have Suffisantse for my Vessel left."

who embarked in the business of commerce-destroying.

Due credit must always be given to the hardy and venturesome privateersmen for supplying the army and navy with the sinews of war, which they captured. To be sure, if Congress or the States wished their captured property, it was to be had by paying a good round price for it in the open market. The privateersmen were engaged not in patriotic, but business ventures. Could one-half of this irregular service have been enlisted in

the Continental and State navies, the other half could not have been better employed than in its work of distressing the enemy's commerce, transports, and small letters of marque. Zealous eulogists of the privateers have over-run the cup of their merit. They have not always pointed out that the number of American privateersmen, merchantmen, fishermen, and whalers captured by British privateers and small naval craft was comparable to the number of similar British vessels taken by the American privateers. It is worthy of note that the supplies captured from the British were often almost indispensable to the Colonists; while similar captures made by the British had to them little value.

Another factor in the naval situation of the Americans was the existence of State navies in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The fleet of Massachusetts comprising sixteen armed vessels was the most active and effective of the State fleets. The Virginia navy numbering about fifty vessels was poorly equipped and rendered little service. Only some sixty of these vessels of the State navies were well adapted for deep-sea navigation.

To a limited extent both privateers and State vessels were placed at the service of the Marine Committee. To the extent that State vessels and privateers might be concerted with the Continental vessels, it would

seem at first blush, that they undoubtedly were elements of naval strength to the Marine Committee. This was by no means true. These concerted expeditions proved disappointing, and when too late the committee became wary of them. Proper subordination, upon which naval success so much depends, could not be obtained in these mixed fleets.

"The following is an extract from a letter dated May 16, 1779, written from a Massachusetts seaport:

"Privateering was never more in vogue than at present; two or three privateers sail every week from this port, and men seem as plenty as grasshoppers in the field; no vessel being detained an hour for want of them. We have near 1,000 prisoners on board the guard-ships in Boston, and a great balance due us from the enemy. Cruisers from New York &c are daily brought in, and often by vessels of inferior force; our privateers—men being as confident of victory, when upon an equal footing with the English, as these were of gaining it of the French in the last war."

As has been pointed out, the territory of the revolting colonies comprised a narrow band of seacoast divided into a number of peninsulas. All the large towns were seaports. Had the revolting territory lain compactly, approaching a square in shape, with a narrow frontage on the sea, its naval defense would have been a simple problem.

Having decided late in 1775 to make a naval defense, Congress early in 1776 took into consideration the establishing of one or more bases for naval operations. There were needed one or more strongly fortified ports where the Continental fleet and its prizes would be comparatively secure from attack, and where the armed vessels could equip, man, and refit. Boston was by far the most available port. After its abandonment by the British in March, 1776, and the shifting of the theater of the war first to the Middle, and later to the Southern States, it was left comparatively free from British interference. It was the naval emporium of the Revolution, where naval stores, armament and equipment for vessels of war, seamen, and ships could be procured, if they were to be had at all.

The British had naval bases in America that left little to be desired. When they seized New York in September, 1776, they obtained not only a military point of the highest strategic value, but also a secure naval station for fitting out, and refitting their privateers and naval ships. From New York, centrally situated with reference to the revolting colonies, her vessels proceeded along the Atlantic coast both northward and southward on the lookout for American merchantmen, privateers, and naval craft. Their favorite patrolling



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Privateersmen capture a British ship.

grounds were off the entrances of Delaware, Chesapeake, and Narragansett Bays. British vessels were often to be found off Boston Bay, Ocracoke Inlet and Cape Fear in North Carolina, Charleston, and Savannah. The British occupation of Newport from 1776 to 1779, and of Savannah from 1778, and Charleston from 1780, to the end of the war, afforded other convenient stations for British operations against the shipping of the colonies. St. Augustine was a port of much importance in the movements of the enemy's smaller ships. The naval stations at Halifax, Jamaica, and Bermuda, while not so convenient as those enumerated, were sources of naval strength to the British. Halifax was a base for the naval operations against New England. It scarcely needs to be said that the ports mentioned were in a way secondary bases of operations, and that England's center for ships, seamen, and supplies of all sorts was the British Isles.

From this account of the respective naval stations in America of the two combatants one proceeds naturally to a comparison of their fleets. The rude naval craft of the Americans, two-thirds of which were made-over merchantmen, was outclassed by the vessels of the Royal navy at every point. All told, there were during the Revolution fifty-six armed vessels in the Continental navy, mounting on the average about twenty guns. The vessels in the British navy when the Revolution opened in 1775 numbered 270, and when it closed, 468. Of this latter number, 174 were ships of the line, each mounting between sixty and one hundred guns. The naval force of the Americans when it was at its maximum in the fall of 1776 consisted of 27 ships, mounting on the average twenty guns. At the same time the British had on the American station, besides a number of small craft, 71 ships, which mounted on the average twenty-eight guns. The British vessels, being so much larger than the American, were naturally armed with much heavier guns. British ships mounted 18's, 24's, 32's, and 42's.

The number of seamen and marines in the Continental navy is believed not to have exceeded at any time, three thousand men. The exact number of commissioned officers in the Continental navy and marine corps may not as yet have been ascertained. Owing to the diffusion of the power of appointment, the Naval Department of the Revolution seems to have prepared no perfect list of its officers. In 1775 the British navy contained 18,000 seamen and marines, and when the war closed in 1783 this number had risen to 110,000.

Both Continental and State naval services suffered from the lack of *esprit de corps*, naval traditions, and a proper subordination and concert of action between officers and crews. Bravery is often a poor substitute for organization and naval experience and skill. Navies

can be grown, but not created. The quality of the Continental naval officers, diluted it is true by the presence of a few "political skippers," was upon the whole as high as the circumstances of their choice, and the naval experience of the country admitted. Many of them were drawn from the merchant service, and a few had some months' experience in State navies.

This excerpt was from Charles O. Paullin, "The Conditions of the Continental Naval Service," pp. 585-595, June 1906 *Proceedings*.



THE AMERICAN Revolution, was a naval war to an extent seldom fully realized and never generally acknowledged. England was waging hostilities at a distance of some three thousand miles from home. For the maintenance of communication between her troops in America and their base in Great Britain, the command of the sea was an imperative necessity. Let that be lost and her armies in the colonies would infallibly perish; for military stores were not to be had in the theatre of operations, and other supplies were often difficult to obtain.

[The colonists], men of nautical bent and experience, found an appropriate field for activity in attacks on British transports and British merchantmen, provoking, in return, a large display of British naval force. The numbers engaged in these operations afloat were so much greater than those under arms ashore that the latter appear, by comparison, almost insignificant.

In actual organized collision between the King's forces and the colonists, the first blood was shed on the water in the *Gaspee* incident of 1772, the attempted enforcement of the odious Navigation Act by British armed vessels, charged with the duty of seeing that all colonial craft were provided with the stamps made requisite under the law. On June 9th, 1772, the *Hannah*, Captain [John] Linzee, a packet plying between New York and Providence, refused to come for examination alongside a British cruiser in Narragansett Bay, but, profiting by a fresh and favoring breeze, she ran off and stood up the bay. The sloop *Gaspee*, of 102 tons, a small armed tender to the cruiser, mounting four or six 3-pdrs., was signaled to chase. Capt. Linzee, familiar with the local navigation, led the *Gaspee* over a shoal where, drawing more water than the *Hannah*, the former struck, while the latter escaped to Providence. Capt. Linzee's account of the matter so incensed the inhabitants of that town that they planned and fitted out an expedition to avenge the fancied outrage.

Sixty-four men, disguised as Indians and led by Captain Abraham Whipple, later one of the first captains to be commissioned in the United States Navy, dropped down the river that night in eight boats, provided mainly with cobble-stones as missiles. The *Gaspee* was carried by boarding, and the vessel set on fire. Towards morning she blew up. The affair may, with propriety, be deemed the opening act of hostilities between England and her American possessions, preceding Lexington by nearly three years.

From a military point of view, the position of England on the continent of North America from 1775 to 1782 was alternately offensive and defensive; offensive so long as her command of the sea was practically unchallenged or undisturbed, defensive the moment her communications were seriously threatened or were interrupted.

Arguing from these facts, it becomes at least conceivable that measures directed towards naval control of the coast on our part might have materially shortened the war. A distressing absence of homogeneity is noticeable throughout all the American operations. If the word were permissible, amateurish would appear to be that best adapted to characterize them. Commerce-destroying shed its baleful light over the colonists, luring them on to a false policy. It [crippled] the crews of national vessels, and through frequent capture by the enemy followed by non-exchange of prisoners, it gradually [decimated] the seafaring population. Wars are brought to a conclusion by the defeat of armies and squadrons, not by guerillas, however successful, either afloat or ashore.

There seems to be no means of making an exact computation of the magnitude of the privateer fleet at any one moment, but it would probably be fair to say that during the war more than six hundred privateers were commissioned by Massachusetts alone. "The largest of these privateers," [wrote historian E. E. Hale], "at starting carried one hundred and fifty men. With each prize sent in the fighting force of the captor was reduced, and in such reduction is the reason to be found why at last a privateer captain was not able to fight his own ship and, after he had sent in many prizes, was himself taken. On the other hand, the smallest of these vessels, equipped for short cruises, carried but few guns and few men." That an amount of injury commensurate with this display of force was dealt to English transports and merchantmen is conceded.

Not the least of the bad results of privateering on such a large scale was the difficulty of obtaining crews for the national ships, the naval service holding out fewer and less specious attractions to recruits than did the privateer with its short trips, lax discipline and

chances of greater gain. The privateers were an excellent school of seamanship and battle. It would ill become us at this day to withhold our tribute of praise for their brave deeds, however much we may regret the misapplication of their valuable powers.

The work of [the] colonial cruisers was only less important than that of the national vessels. Indeed, the naval operations of the war were begun by the little schooner *Lee*, belonging to Massachusetts. The *Lee* was the first vessel of any kind to sail with authority to cruise on behalf of the entire republic. Her capture on November 29th, 1775, of the British brig *Nancy*, laden with military stores for General Gage, brought sorely needed supplies to the Colonial troops about Boston.

As to the national cruisers, history is somewhat more explicit, although doubts arise in certain cases touching the identity of individual vessels, the readiness with which a ship or an officer passed into or out of the general service obscuring the record.

The first effort at securing a navy bears date of October 13th, 1775, when Congress passed a law ordering one vessel of 10 guns and another of 14 guns, to be equipped and sent on a cruise to the eastward to intercept royal supplies. Two months later it directed the construction of thirteen ships, three of 24 guns,



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The Lee brings the captured Nancy into port, November 1775.

five of 28 guns and five of 32 guns. On October 3, 1776, it authorized another frigate and two cutters, and on November 9, 1776, three 74s, five more frigates, one sloop-of-war and a packet. The need of heavy ships was beginning to be perceived, at least in theory. Practically but one 74, the *America*, was laid down, and she was presented to France the day of her launching in 1782 to replace the [*Magnifique*] of [the Marquis] de Vaudreuil's squadron, lost while attempting to enter Boston harbor. On the 22d of December, 1775, Con-

gress appointed Esek Hopkins of Rhode Island, commander-in-chief, four captains, each by name, to the purchased vessels, *Alfred*, *Columbus*, *Andrea Doria* and *Cabot*, together with thirteen lieutenants. Of the latter, John Paul Jones was senior.

The *Hornet*, 10, sloop, and the *Wasp*, 8, schooner, were the first regular cruisers to get to sea. As time went on, others were purchased or borrowed or hired. Thus in October, 1776, the list comprised the thirteen building under the act of December, 1775, besides thirteen more otherwise acquired. From the beginning to the end of the war the United States had forty-one vessels in commission, including the *Bonhomme Richard* and her four Franco-American consorts. Some of these never got to sea.

It followed, inevitably as night follows day, with ships often hastily improvised, badly manned, poorly equipped, heterogeneous in type and handled without unity of purpose or clear notions of strategy, that there was a corresponding waste of energy and barrenness of result. Individual acts of brilliant seamanship and great gallantry abound. What could have been finer than Nicholas Biddle's behavior in the *Randolph*, 32, when, finding he had engaged, not an armed merchantman as he supposed the *Yarmouth*, 64, he pluckily fought his great antagonist until his own ship blew up? To mention John Paul Jones and the *Bonhomme Richard* is to recall to mind one of the most extraordinary and stubbornly contested naval battles recorded in history. Indeed, with scarcely an exception, the American flag was flown with such credit and defended with such vigor as to compel our adversaries to acknowledge that with equal ships their chances of victory were no greater than ours.

The navy of the United States, with but rare exceptions, was employed in disconnected cruises against British commerce and British transports. It deliberately declined the purely military role for which its weakness ill adapted it, and sought by desultory raids to compensate for its lack of strength. When a favorable opportunity offered, it did not hesitate to engage the enemy on even terms, but these opportunities were not so much by choice as by hazard. The prizes captured were often a welcome, if intermittent, source of revenue.

That British trade was hampered, not to say demoralized, is abundantly proved by contemporaneous reports, [but] it is yet open to question whether all these depredations had a direct military value at all comparable with the operations of a squadron of good vessels sailing with a correct strategic purpose.

The progress of the war was, naturally, marked by a steady decrease of our forces and as notable an increase of the British ships employed on our coast. Thus in 1776 we counted twenty-five vessels and four hundred

and twenty-two guns to the enemy's seventy-eight and two thousand and seventy-eight respectively. Two years later we had but fourteen ships and three hundred and thirty-two guns; the English, eighty-nine ships and two thousand five hundred and seventy-six guns.

During the autumn of [1775] Falmouth (now Portland) in Maine was burnt by a detachment under [Captain Henry] Mouat sent out by [Vice Admiral Samuel] Graves in the ship *Canceaux*, the schooner *Halifax*, the sloop *Spitfire*, each mounting 6 guns, and the 18-gun armed transport *Symmetry*.

On the shores of Virginia Lord Dunmore was playing a similar part. He and Mouat appear to have been worthy apostles of the doctrine of harrying and ravaging with which Benedict Arnold, after his treason, is most particularly identified. With the exception of blockading duty, the British navy seems to have acted largely as an auxiliary to the army until the advent of the French squadrons.

How seriously was regarded the naval task assumed by England on our coast is shown in the statement at this time by the First Lord of the Admiralty that "in America there were ninety-three ships and vessels of war, of which six were of the line." It naturally suggests itself that the all-important purpose of cutting off the colonies from their source of warlike supplies abroad would have been better served had fewer of these ninety-three vessels been employed as an adjunct to the British army and more set to guard the approaches to our ports. On the American side the only instance of strategic use of sea power is found in the Penobscot affair, where we failed miserably through neglect of tactical precautions. [See page 40.]

The error committed by Congress in not providing for a navy competent to wage serious war was, in a degree, repaired by the fortunate alliance with France, through which we obtained the presence of a French fleet in our waters and of French troops on our soil. Not having done for ourselves what should have been done, if humanly possible, we were obliged to find friends ready and willing to help us. On February 6, 1778, was concluded a treaty of commerce between France and the United States of America, together with a second and secret treaty in which the contracting parties agreed to unite their efforts against their common enemy, England. The news of the open treaty—a recognition of the independence of the colonies—was followed by the recall of the British ambassador at Paris and the outbreak of hostilities. On April 13, 1778, Count [Jean Baptiste] d'Estaing sailed from Toulon for America with eleven ships of the line, one of 50 guns, and five frigates. [See page 35.] D'Estaing paid us a brief visit the following year, 1779, on his way back to France. He tried to capture Savannah, then in the

hands of the English. This was one of those bits of soldierizing so fascinating to the sailor. It resulted in failure and much loss of life. The French historian Chevalier, however, remarks: "In spite of the check we suffered, the presence of the French squadron on the coast was not without value to the American cause. The English, ignorant of the point which we proposed to strike, were everywhere on the defensive."

On the 12th of July, 1780, the Chevalier de Ternay anchored in Narragansett Bay with seven line-of-battle ships and two frigates. Accompanying him were thirty transports carrying six thousand French troops under the Comte de Rochambeau.

The presence of the French squadron in Newport brought about a lasting change in England's naval position. From being free to act on the offensive, whenever and wherever it suited her purpose to move, she was at once thrown, in a measure, on the defensive. Whatever else she might undertake, this, at least, was imperative, that a sufficient number of powerful vessels should always lie off Narragansett Bay, or at some convenient anchorage near by, ready to engage on terms of superiority should de Ternay venture out. Graves [arrived] at New York, August 16 [1781]. There was yet time for an active commander-in-chief to arrange measures by which to profit by the coming of [Rear Admiral Sir Samuel] Hood's squadron from the West Indies and to consider what ought to be done in reply to [Comte François] de Grasse's possible attack. Not only did he neglect to take any precautions under this

head, but he seriously contemplated a joint expedition to Rhode Island.

Through Graves' return to New York a gap was left open into which de Grasse threw himself with a powerful force from the West Indies. A desultory action took place off the Chesapeake between de Grasse and Graves, of which the only result was to permit [Comte] de Barras, des Touches' successor, to join de Grasse from Newport and thus to secure for the latter an unquestioned preponderance. He entered the Chesapeake and completed the investment of [Major General Charles] Cornwallis, who surrendered on the 19th of October, 1781. On this day the war practically came to an end. Had Graves appreciated the paramount necessity of holding the Chesapeake in rear of Cornwallis, or had he met Hood at Cape Henry with his fourteen ships from Rodney's fleet instead of waiting for him at Sandy Hook, Cornwallis might have been saved. It is impossible to overestimate the value of de Grasse's share in the great result.

No naval event of importance took place during the remainder of hostilities. Raids were effected and single ships were taken, but the war ended at Yorktown. Fitful flames, as from the ruins of a freshly burned dwelling, alone indicated the existence of still smouldering embers. Parliament, in 1782, put a final stop to all offensive operations pending the negotiations of the terms of peace.

It may be alleged that the poverty of the colonies was an all-sufficient bar to the acquisition of a suitable

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Comte François de Grasse

The Bonhomme Richard fits out at L'Orient, France.

navy. To this it is difficult to make an answer other than to urge the imperative necessity, as proved by subsequent events, for proper ships under proper organization. At all costs and at all sacrifice they should have been obtained, for upon them ultimately depended our existence as a nation.

The fact is that Congress, at the outset, failed to appreciate the strategic form which the war was inevitably bound to assume. Herein lies a reason, cogent in itself, for the course which was actually adopted. When our public men finally came to a realization of our needs it was too late to repair the fault. Fortunate we were in securing from our friend and ally the means we had neglected to provide for ourselves.

This excerpt is from C. F. Goodrich, "The Sailor in the Revolution," pp. 469-494, No. 3, 1897 *Proceedings*.



IT SCARCELY NEEDS to be said that the Continental Naval Department did not engage its vessels in major primary operations. The Royal navy was vastly superior to the Continental navy in the number and size of vessels, in the number of guns to a ship, and in weight of metal. Indeed, the very existence of the Continental vessels depended upon their ability to keep outside of the range of the larger guns of the Royal navy. The Continental Naval Department sometimes gave specific orders to its captains to avoid encountering the British "two-deckers," or engaging their ships of war unless one could be found alone.

In the minor primary operations of the Revolution some thirty to thirty-five engagements may be counted. The honors here are upon the whole evenly divided. The Americans captured ten or twelve naval vessels of the enemy.

The secondary operations of the navy were more important than its primary. They mainly involved the protection of American commerce, the defense of certain Atlantic ports, the striking of the lines of communication of the British military forces, the attacking of the enemy's commerce at sea, and the threatening and assailing of her unprotected ports and coasts both at home and in her outlying dependencies. Each of these forms of secondary operations will be now briefly considered.

The Continental Naval Department defended American commerce by ordering its vessels to "attack, take, burn, or destroy" the enemy's privateers.

The engagements between Continental vessels and

British privateers were often as bloody and as hotly contested as any of the Revolution. [An illustration of this is the June 1780 fight between the American frigate *Trumbull* and the Liverpool privateer *Watt*.] The *Trumbull* mounted 28 guns and was commanded by Captain James Nicholson, the ranking officer of the Continental Navy, the *Watt* carried 32 guns and was under the command of Captain [John] Coulthard.

The fight was indecisive. Both vessels withdrew seriously disabled—the *Trumbull* to Boston, and the *Watt* to New York. A British account of the engagement places the loss of the *Watt* at eighty-eight, and that of the *Trumbull* at "considerable more." The Americans gave their loss as thirty-eight, and the British as ninety-two. The *Trumbull* had two lieutenants killed. Gilbert Saltonstall declared that there had not been a more close, obstinate, and bloody sea fight during the Revolution, not even excepting that of John Paul Jones off Flamborough Head.

It is significant that the only naval captains who lost their lives in the Continental service were killed in engagements with privateers. Captains Samuel Chew and John Skimmer, both New England men, fell in action while in command of their vessels.

In addition to defending the American commerce by cruising against the privateers and small naval ships of the enemy, the Continental vessels often threw their protecting arm directly around the trade of the states. The Continental Naval Department often detailed its vessels to convoy American merchantmen and packets, bound principally to the West Indies and to France. At times when the trade was bound for France, the Continental ships accompanied it even as far as the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, but as a rule their services did not extend beyond a few leagues from the American coast. Sometimes the naval department ordered its vessels to cruise off the Delaware Bay, or similar channel, to guide and protect incoming shipping.

The Continental Naval Department cooperated with Washington and the Continental army in the defense and the attack of certain ports. In the campaigns around Philadelphia in 1777 and 1778, the Continental vessels were united with the Pennsylvania state vessels, and the combined fleet was placed under the command of Commodore John Hazelwood of the Pennsylvania navy. For a time the American fleet and the two forts below Philadelphia on the Delaware held in check a British fleet which had ascended the river. On the capture of the forts the vessels could no longer hold their position. Some of the Continental vessels were burned to prevent their capture, while others escaped, passed the city under the cover of night, and took refuge to the northward of Philadelphia. These were later destroyed by the British in a raid which they made on

the shipping up the Delaware. The Continental navy lost some ten vessels in these campaigns.

In 1779 a Continental ship aided a Spanish fleet in capturing Mobile. As a rule, however, the Continental vessels were too small and weak to command success in the attack and defense of seaports. Several times the Naval Department placed part of its fleet under the control of Washington and the French Admiral, when they were planning an attack upon some port held by the enemy. Several vessels were ordered to cooperate in the joint American and French attack on Newport in 1778. In the fall of 1779 Washington and Count [Jean Baptiste] D'Estaing planned to attack Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. The Continental fleet at Boston was to render them what assistance it could. This expedition was abandoned.

The Continental ships struck at the enemy's lines of communication between its army and navy in America, and the British Isles, Canada, the Bermudas, Florida, and the West Indies. After the transfer of the war to the Southern states in 1778 and 1779, transports running between New York and Savannah and Charleston were vulnerable craft. The first important capture made during the Revolution was that of a transport. On one of the last days of November, 1775, Captain John Manly in the schooner *Lee*, one of the vessels fitted out by Washington during the siege of Boston, took the brigantine *Nancy*. Among other stores the

Nancy had on board 2000 muskets, 100,000 flints, 30,000 round shot, more than 30 tons of musket shot, 11 mortar beds, and a brass mortar weighing 10,000 pounds. This ordnance was of the greatest value to the Colonists.

The most successful haul of the enemy's transports was made in the spring of 1779. In order to protect the trade of the Southern states, which the British were ravaging, the naval department ordered the Continental vessels at Boston to sweep the coast from Cape May to the bar of South Carolina. On March 13 a fleet consisting of the *Warren*, 32, Captain J. B. Hopkins, *Queen of France*, 28, Captain Joseph Olney, and *Ranger*, 18, Captain Thomas Simpson, sailed from Boston for the coast of the Southern states. Captain Hopkins, a son of Commodore Esek Hopkins, was in command of the fleet. On April 7 he captured the privateer schooner *Hibernia*. He learned from this vessel of the sailing of a fleet of transports from New York, bound for Brigadier-General Campbell's army in Georgia, and laden with stores and supplies. On the next day, fifteen leagues off Cape Henry, Hopkins fell in with the fleet, and meeting with a trifling resistance, he made prizes of seven of its nine vessels. Hopkins now returned to New England with his eight prizes, and succeeded in bringing them all either into Boston or Portsmouth. The naval department congratulated Hopkins and his fellow captains on the successful out-

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The Continental frigate Trumbull, right, during her 1780 fight with the British Watt.

come of their cruise.

The most important objective of the Naval Department in its operations was the capture of British commerce in transit at sea. But generally it was fleets returning to England at which blows were aimed, for the many vessels which made up these fleets were like honey-laden bees flying homeward to their hives.

The British fishing fleet on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland and the homeward bound West Indiamen were found most vulnerable. It is not practicable for a combatant to prey upon commerce far from his base of operations. The frequent manning of prizes depletes his crews, and compels him to make an early return home. Then too, the chance of prizes being retaken is increased with the distance they must travel to reach safe ports. The operations of Continental ships in European waters was made practicable by their use of French ports as naval stations.

Two of these fortunate ventures were made in 1779 and the other in 1782. Early in 1779 the ship *General Gates* and the sloop *Providence* sent prizes into Boston which sold for £240,000. In August of that year a fleet of four vessels under the command of Captain Abraham Whipple fell in with the Jamaica fleet, bound for London, and convoyed by a 32-gun frigate, and three other armed vessels. Whipple without much difficulty captured ten large [merchantmen] laden with rum and sugar. Seven of these vessels arrived at Boston and one at Cape May, the other two were probably retaken. The prizes with their cargoes sold for more than £250,000. In the fall of 1782 Captain John Barry in the frigate *Alliance* carried four Jamaicamen richly laden with rum and sugar, into L'Orient, France, which sold for £620,610. This was the largest sum realized on any cruise during the Revolution.

The Continental Naval Department threatened and attacked the enemy's coasts and towns in the British Isles, Canada, and the West Indies. The movements of Captain [Lambert] Wickes, [Augustus] Conyngham, and [John Paul] Jones in attacking and alarming the British Isles are familiar to all. In November, 1775, two Continental captains captured Prince Edward Island. An attack on the shipping of the Bermudas was ordered to be made, if it was found practicable. Nassau, New Providence, was twice captured by Continental vessels, and once by a Spanish fleet and American privateers under the command of Commodore Gillon in the *South Carolina* of the South Carolina navy. Two Continental vessels visited the mouth of the Senegal river on the west coast of Africa. Robert Morris when vice-president of the Marine Committee of the Continental Congress planned to send a fleet of five ships against the British possessions in the West Indies and the Floridas.

These expeditions against British coasts, towns, and dependencies, had several objects in view. One of course was the capture of booty. To the extent that the expeditions were against the shipping and commerce of the attacked ports, their object was similar to that of fleets which cruised against shipping and commerce at sea. Another object was to force the enemy to withdraw part of his fleet from the coasts of the United States in order to defend his attacked possessions. To the extent that he did so the United States would be relieved. The cruises made in the waters around the British Isles had in view the lessening of the prestige of Great Britain, the shaking of her credit, the alarming of her inhabitants, and the raising of her marine insurance; and also the impressing of Europe with the power and courage of the new American nation, and perchance, creating a diversion in its favor. Both a psychological and a political element entered into the purpose of the cruises in British waters. These cruises brought home to both Britain and the Continent a knowledge of the existence of a new flag and a new state in the family of nations.

The naval plan devised by Robert Morris, the vice-president of the Marine Committee deserves additional notice. It was to be put into operation by John Paul Jones and a fleet of five vessels. Jones was first to proceed to St. Christopher in the West Indies, which was almost defenceless, capture the cannon, stores and merchandise there deposited, and then sail for Pensacola, Florida. Morris thought Jones might find it best to pass along the south side of Hispaniola, and alarm Jamaica by putting in to some of its ports. Arriving at Pensacola, he would find the town defended by two or three sloops of war, which could be easily silenced, when Pensacola would fall into his hands with its munitions of war, including one hundred pieces of artillery. Having reduced Pensacola, Jones should send a brigantine and a sloop to cruise at the mouth of the Mississippi, in order to waylay the British merchantmen leaving there in March and April of each year with cargoes of indigo, rice, tobacco, skins, and furs to the value of £100,000 sterling. Returning from the Gulf, Jones might alarm St. Augustine, and finally, he might refit in Georgia, South, or North Carolina. He was directed to carry as many marines as possible for his operations on shore.

Morris's object in this expedition involved a fine bit of naval policy. He proposed not so much the taking of booty, as the alarming of the whole British nation, and forcing the enemy to withdraw some of her naval forces from the coast of the United States. "It has long been clear to me," he said, "that our infant fleet cannot protect our coasts, and the only effectual relief it can afford us, is to attack the enemy's defenceless places,

and thereby oblige them to station more of their own ships in their own countries, or to keep them employed in following ours, and either way we are relieved so far as they do it." Morris proposed his plan as a substitute for one of Jones', which contemplated a descent on the west coast of Africa, and to the carrying out of which the Marine Committee had given its consent. Morris thought that the same results, as Jones sought, could be obtained with less risk by "cruizing windward of Barbadoes as all their Guineamen fall in there."

The Naval Department naturally planned and carried out enterprises which involved two or more forms of secondary operations, or both minor primary and secondary operations. Sometimes it ordered its vessels to take stations at sea such that they would be in position to intercept both the West India trade and the enemy's transports plying between New York and England. Commanders often cruised on the lookout for both the small naval vessels of the enemy and his privateers. Often the Naval Department left the specific object of a cruise to the Navy Board at Boston or the commander of a vessel, and issued merely the general order to proceed to sea and cruise against the enemy.

This excerpt is from Charles O. Paullin, "Classes of Operations of the Continental Navy of the American Revolution," pp. 153-164, March 1905 *Proceedings*.



THE NAVAL VESSELS which composed the Continental fleet from 1775 to the end of the War of Independence are variously estimated to have numbered from 42 to 53. The disparity of 11 ships is owing to whether or not a compiler includes as Continental vessels those lent by France, those which were laid down to Congressional order but never completed as American men-of-war (if at all), British prizes recaptured before they could be formally taken into the American service, private ships commanded by Continental officers on waiting orders, etc. In the present tabulation 52 craft are listed, including the vessels in all the above-mentioned categories with the exception of the last. The prizes *Drake*, 20, *Serapis*, 44, and *Countess of Scarborough*, 22, taken by John Paul Jones, are not included as they were turned over to France.

In the tabulation the names of the converted merchantmen commissioned in 1775 to form, under Commodore Esek Hopkins, the original Continental fleet are marked (*). With the exception of the sloops specifically mentioned as not having taken part, the ships so indicated participated in Hopkins' raid on New

Providence in 1776. Vessels built to order in France for the Continental Navy are marked (**). The four French men-of-war furnished to John Paul Jones and taken back after short terms of service are indicated (***). While in American service they flew the Stars and Stripes.

In the case of any ship which had more than one captain, the first commander is listed at the top and the last at the bottom of the column. If a captain served twice in the ship his name is listed twice. In ships listed as "lost" the last name in the captain's column is that of the officer who surrendered, destroyed, or wrecked her. Vessels "sold" were of course disposed of by higher authority. Officers listed as prize masters are in most cases the first lieutenants of the capturing vessels.

In the "Year Commissioned" column appears the date of the actual commissioning for Continental service and not—in the cases of former merchantmen, French ships, and prizes—the year of completion. In the next column all ships which were not in hand when the war ended are listed as "lost," the manner in which this occurred being duly noted under "remarks." Ships sold out of service *during* the war are considered as having been "lost."

The battery in each case is the largest number of guns known to have been carried at any given time.

It will be observed that of the 52 ships listed only 6 (2 of which were not yet ready for sea when peace was made) survived the war. Of the remaining 46 vessels, 2 were sunk in action, 16 captured, 14 (or 11) destroyed by their own captains to prevent capture, 1 burned by the enemy, 2 interned in France before the alliance, 2 (possibly 5) sold out of service, 4 returned to France, 3 wrecked (2 of them by a single captain), and 2 foundered. The fact that so few succumbed to the normal perils of navigation speaks more than well for the seamanlike qualities of the American captains, whatever they may have lacked in a purely military sense. The corvettes which foundered, having both been commanded by exceptionally able men, their loss was unquestionably unavoidable.

The first name of that daring Irish adventurer, Captain Conyngham, is herein given as Augustus instead of the traditional Gustavus. The latter is most unusual among the Irish, whereas Augustus (by which name the man in question was generally known in Europe) is comparatively common. Conyngham was hardly known in America at the time he got his commission, so that a clerical error in regard to his name might well have gone uncorrected.

This article and the tables appearing on pages 30-32 are reprinted from Harrison P. Martin's, "The Ships and Captains of the Continental Navy," pp. 879-883, June 1939 *Proceedings*.

NAME	NO. GUNS	CAPTAIN(S)	YR. COM.	YR. LOST	REMARKS
SHIP OF THE LINE					
<i>America</i>	74	John Barry John Paul Jones	'82	...	Laid down in '76. Ready for sea at end of war, was presented to France.
FRIGATES					
<i>Alfred*</i>	30	Dudley Saltonstall John Paul Jones Elisha Hinman	'75	'78	Flagship of Commodore Esek Hopkins. Captured.
<i>Alliance</i>	32	Pierre Landais John Paul Jones James Degge John Barry	'78	...	Carried Lafayette to France in '79 and '81. Took part in <i>Bon Homme Richard-Serapis</i> duel. Lieut. Degge took over command from Landais, but not confirmed in it. A 15-knotter. Sold, '85.
<i>Bon Homme Richard</i>	42	John Paul Jones	'79	'79	Superannuated merchantman, ex <i>Duc de Duras</i> . Needs no comment. Sunk.
<i>Boston</i>	24	Hector McNeil Samuel Tucker	'76	'80	A 13-knotter. Captured at Charleston, S. C.
<i>Bourbon</i>	30	None?	Never completed as warship. Sold, '83.
<i>Confederacy</i>	32	Samuel Tucker Seth Harding	'79	'81	Radical design. Used only as ocean dispatch vessel. Captured.
<i>Congress</i>	28	Thomas Grennall	...	'77	Burned at Poughkeepsie before completion, to prevent capture.
<i>Deane**</i>	32	Samuel Nicholson John Manly	'78	...	Renamed <i>Hague</i> , '82. Sold, '83.
<i>Delaware</i>	24	Charles Alexander	'77	'77	Captured in Delaware on first attempt to put to sea.
<i>Effingham</i>	28	John Barry	...	'77	Burned at Philadelphia by British raiding party.
<i>Fox</i>	28	Richard Stiles	'77	'77	H.M.S. <i>Fox</i> , captured by <i>Hancock</i> and <i>Boston</i> . Recaptured a month later.
<i>Hancock</i>	36	John Manly	'76	'77	Reputed finest of her class afloat, also fastest (12 knots with ease, 15 on occasion). Captured, became H.M.S. <i>Iris</i> . Captured by French, '81.
<i>Indien</i>	40	No federal captain	'79	'82	Most powerful frigate afloat. Begun in Holland to U. S. order, sold before completion to state of South Carolina and renamed in its honor. Captured.
<i>Montgomery</i>	24	John Hodge	...	'77	See <i>Congress</i> .
<i>Providence</i>	28	Abraham Whipple	'76	'80	Do not confuse with sloop. Made several successful cruises. Captured at Charleston.
<i>Queen of France**</i>	28	Joseph Olney John P. Rathburn (Rathbourne or Rathburne)	'78	'80	Scuttled at Charleston to avoid fate of rest of Whipple's squadron.
<i>Raleigh</i>	32	Thomas Thompson John Barry	'76	'78	Captured after Barry's unsuccessful attempt to wreck her.

NAME	NO. GUNS	CAPTAIN(S)	YR. COM.	YR. LOST	REMARKS
FRIGATES					
<i>Randolph</i>	32	Nicholas Biddle	'76	'78	Blown up while in action with H.M.S. <i>Yarmouth</i> , 64. Four survivors.
<i>Trumbull</i>	32	Dudley Saltonstall James Nicholson	'78	'81	Captured by H.M.S. <i>Iris</i> (ex <i>Hancock</i>) and H.M.S. <i>General Monk</i> (ex American privateer <i>General Washington</i>).
<i>Virginia</i>	32	James Nicholson	'78	'78	Captured in Chesapeake on maiden voyage.
<i>Warren</i>	32	John B. Hopkins Dudley Saltonstall	'76	'79	Had some success as a cruiser. Flagship of expedition to Penobscot, burned there to prevent capture.
<i>Washington</i>	32	Thomas Read	...	'77	Burned at Philadelphia before completion, to prevent capture.
CORVETTES (SHIP-RIGGED)					
<i>Ariel****</i>	20	John Paul Jones ?	'80	'81	After losing the <i>Alliance</i> to Landais, Jones returned to America in this ship.
<i>Atalanta</i>	16	Hezekiah Welch	'81	'81	H.M.S. <i>Atalanta</i> , captured by <i>Alliance</i> . Recaptured on way to port.
<i>Columbus*</i>	20	Abraham Whipple Josiah James Hoysted Hacker	'75	'78	Wrecked by bad seamanship. Name of second captain listed officially as "James Josiah"—printer's error?
<i>Duc de Lauzun</i>	20	John Green	'82	...	Old French merchantman, purchased. Cruised with Barry. Too rotten and slow to be of much service. Sold, '83.
<i>General Gates</i>	18	?	'78	'79	Poor construction. Sold.
<i>General Washington</i>	24	Joshua Barney	'82	...	American privateer <i>General Washington</i> captured, became H.M.S. <i>General Monk</i> . Recaptured by Pennsylvania cruiser <i>Hyder Ally</i> (Ali), Joshua Barney, and bought into federal service. Sold, '84.
<i>Pallas****</i>	30	Denis N. Cottineau	'79	'79	Rendered good account of self in Jones's squadron. Captured H.M.S. <i>Countess of Scarborough</i> , 22. A big ship for a corvette.
<i>Ranger</i>	18	John Paul Jones Thomas Simpson	'77	'80	First vessel to fly Stars and Stripes and be saluted abroad. After successes under Jones, cruised with Whipple. Captured at Charleston, became H.M.S. <i>Halifax</i> .
<i>Reprisal</i>	16	Lambert Wickes	'76	'77	Carried Franklin to France. With <i>Lexington</i> and <i>Dolphin</i> cruised very successfully around British isles. Foundered on way home. One survivor. A brig?
<i>Saratoga</i>	18	James Young	'80	'81	Lost at sea with all hands.
BRIGS					
<i>Andrea Doria*</i>	14	Nicholas Biddle Isaiah Robinson	'75	'77	Burned at Philadelphia.
<i>Cabot*</i>	12	John B. Hopkins Elisha Hinman Joseph Olney	'75	'77	Captured.

NAME	NO. GUNS	CAPTAIN(S)	YR. COM.	YR. LOST	REMARKS
BRIGS					
<i>Diligent</i>	12	— Brown	'79	'79	H.M.S. <i>Diligent</i> , captured by <i>Providence</i> sloop. Burned in Penobscot.
<i>Hampden</i>	12	Hoysted Hacker	'76	'76	Damaged by grounding, and apparently not thought worth repairing.
<i>Independence</i>	10	James Young	'76	'78	Second American ship to be saluted abroad (day after <i>Ranger</i>). Wrecked.
<i>Lexington</i>	10	John Barry William Hallock Henry Johnston	'76	'77	Ex merchantman <i>Wicked Dick</i> . First naval command of Barry. Richard Dale served aboard under all three captains. Captured under Hallock, recovered by Dale. Captured in Channel.
<i>Racehorse</i>	12	?	'77	'77	H.M.S. <i>Racehorse</i> , captured by <i>Doria</i> . Burned at Philadelphia.
<i>Vengeance***</i>	12	Phillipe Ricot	'79	'79	Took no part in <i>Serapis</i> affair.
SLOOPS AND CUTTERS					
<i>Cerf***</i>	18	Joseph Varage	'79	'79	Armament seems excessive for a "cutter." Present at <i>Serapis</i> affair but took no part.
<i>Dolphin</i>	10	Samuel Nicholson	'77	'77	Cutter, bought in France. Cruised very successfully with Wickes. Interned.
<i>Fly*</i>	8	?	'75	'77?	Did not go with other ships on Bahama expedition. Probably they were thereafter used only as harbor tenders and were burned at Philadelphia if not sooner disposed of.
<i>Hornet*</i>	10				
<i>Mosquito*</i>	4				
<i>Providence*</i>	12	Thomas Hazard John Paul Jones Hoysted Hacker John Paul Jones John Peck Rathburn Hoysted Hacker	'75	'79	Presented by state of Rhode Island, in whose service she was commanded by Whipple. Jones's first naval command. Under Jones and Rathburn she was most successful. Burned in Penobscot. Not to be confused with frigate.
<i>Resistance</i>	8	Augustus Conyngham	'79	'79	Ex merchantman. Captured.
<i>Revenge</i>	10	Augustus Conyngham	'77	'79	Purchased in France. May have been brig or lugger, but probably cutter. Second naval command of Conyngham, and reputed fastest vessel afloat. Took about 70 prizes. Sold.
<i>Sachem</i>	10	James Robinson	'76	'77	Burned at Philadelphia.
<i>Surprise</i>	10	Augustus Conyngham	'77	'77	First command of Conyngham. Purchased in France. Interned.
<i>Wasp*</i>	8	Elisha Warner	'75	'77	Burned at Philadelphia.



IN 1776, the plight of the American Revolution appeared doomed to the ignominious designation of a suppressed insurrection. The invasion of Canada had collapsed with the assault on Quebec, 31 December 1775, when General Richard Montgomery was slain and the other colonial commander, Benedict Arnold, was severely wounded. General George Washington was about to commit the greatest tactical blunder of his career by entrenching his army in the confines of Brooklyn. On Staten Island, Major General Sir William Howe marshalled his British and Hessian regiments preparatory to penning up Washington on the western-most point of Long Island. In Canada, Sir Guy Carleton, Governor General of Canada and the British commander, had determined on a thrust southward down Lake Champlain, designed to capture Albany and split rebellious New England apart from New York and the remaining Colonies. Then rebellion would die between the Hammer and the Anvil. Carleton, after seeing Arnold's broken, miserable army, which had fled to Île Aux Noix, spurred construction of a fleet at St. Johns on the Richelieu River.

Arnold recognized the northern threat even as he watched the disintegration of his army by pestilence. Furiously written dispatches were sent south to General Philip Schuyler at Albany urging the construction of warships to repel the pending waterborne invasion. Lake Champlain, Arnold argued, was the key to the entire northern situation. The British must come by water since between Canada and Albany lay dense wilderness, impenetrable save for the narrow strip of Lake Champlain.

General Schuyler's role in the American Revolution is minimized by present-day historians, but nonetheless his reaction to Arnold's dispatch was admirable. He mobilized the meager industry of Skenesborough into

action, and by July 1776, four galleys and eight keelless gondolas (or gundelows) had been constructed. These vessels were specifically designed for operation on the lake where prevailing winds were steady along its narrow length.

General Arnold buried his three hundred dead at Île Aux Noix and hastened south. In late July, he arrived at Skenesborough to assume command. He inspected his fleet with a seaman's practiced eye, for before the Revolution he had owned and captained vessels trading in the West Indies. Fully assembled, the fleet consisted of a large schooner, the *Royal Savage*, captured from the British; four 10-gun galleys: the *Washington*, *Congress*, *Trumbull*, and *Lee*; eight 3-gun gondolas: the *New York*, *New Haven*, *Boston*, *Providence*, *Philadelphia*, *Connecticut*, *Jersey*, and *Spitfire*; the armed sloop *Enterprise*; and the small schooner *Revenge*. Seventy guns, in all, comprised the fleet's ordnance, but they represented a multitude of calibers. For instance, the galley *Congress* had for her armament two 18-pounders, two twelves, and six sixes. The problem of such diversified armament was worsened by the complement expected to man the vessels. A few sailors there were, but most of the crews were composed of undisciplined recruits drawn from militia regiments. Arnold's troubles began at once. There was little gunpowder to spare for practice. One Captain Jacobus Wynkoop disputed the fleet's command with Arnold. This worthy announced his appointment as Commodore of Lake Champlain though he provided no authority to prove his claim. He angered General Arnold

NOWLAND VAN POWELL



HIBERNIAN MAGAZINE

Brigadier General Benedict Arnold fought valiantly in the 1775 battle of Valcour Island on Lake Champlain.

when his vessel, the *Royal Savage*, plunged a shot after the *Congress* which was moving out under the General's order. In a towering rage, Arnold had Wynkoop arrested and removed from the schooner.

On 24 August, Arnold ordered his fleet to sail. He had heard rumors that the British forces were in motion down the lake.

Three days later at the battle of Long Island, Lord Howe heavily defeated General Washington, beginning three desperate months for the American cause.

Arnold's fleet moved up into the northern reaches of the lake. He intended to take station at Île Aux Têtes; however, that place was in the hands of the enemy. He then tried Windmill Point, but here he found his position insecure. Back down the Lake, he stopped briefly at Île La Motte, before deciding on Valcour Island as the best place to meet the enemy. Valcour Island lies approximately in the middle of the Lake's 110-mile length. The heavily wooded island is situated close to the New York shore, with the main lake channel running to the east. It has a fine harbor at its southern extremity, and it was here that Arnold lined up his vessels in a crescent, their mastheads screened by the forested island. In this formation, his flanks were secure; he could either fall upon the British rear or employ his full fleet broadside if they turned back towards him.

At eight in the morning of 11 October, the picket vessel that Arnold had left in the main channel returned, firing an alarm gun as she approached. Two hours later the British fleet hove in view. As the British swept by Arnold's position, the Americans were able to gauge their opponent's overwhelming strength. Their 300-ton, full-rigged ship *Inflexible* mounted 22 guns; a radeau or floating battery surpassed this with 26 24-pounders. Besides these two, the British had assembled two schooners, two gondolas, four long-boats, and 44 smaller craft manned by seven hundred picked seamen. This fleet possessed a total armament of 93 guns.

The British fleet, suddenly aware of their quarry, came about and beat back to windward. Arnold, on board the galley *Congress*, seeing the enemy's difficulty of clawing back against a perverse breeze, signaled the schooner *Royal Savage* and three galleys on the end of the line to up anchor, and gain a raking position on the close-packed British vessels. Incompetently handled, the *Royal Savage* grounded. The British seized upon this accident to empty every broadside gun into the schooner. Literally shot to pieces and afire, the *Royal Savage* was abandoned.

By noon both fleets were fully engaged. The Americans stood to their guns despite the frightful hammering of their opponents' heavier ordnance. On board

the *Congress*, Arnold was everywhere, training, elevating, firing each gun in his broadside, pausing only to fire his pistols while his inept gunners reloaded, all the while shouting encouragement to his crews. To add to the Americans' misery, several hundred Indians allied to the British cause had landed on Valcour and were maintaining a considerable volume of musket fire. Hour after hour through the long afternoon the unequal fight continued without abatement. The lighter American vessels were hard hit. The galley *Washington* had lost her mainmast. Every officer of the gondola *New York* was dead or wounded. The *Spitfire's* three guns were dismantled. The *Congress* had taken two shots in her mainmast, her rigging was in shreds; she had received seven shots between wind and water, and was hulled 12 times. The British, however, had suffered an equally severe mauling. The schooner *Carleton* and a number of the gunboats were riddled by the galling American fire. Unfortunately for the Americans, British strength still lay with the ship *Inflexible* and the massive radeau, *Thunderer*, both of which were comparatively undamaged.

At five in the afternoon, the British concluded that the following day would see the extinction of the American fleet. They drew out of range, anchoring in a confining semicircle about their now beleaguered foe. As they left, the gondola *Philadelphia* settled on the



The gondola *Philadelphia* on display at the Smithsonian Institution.

lake bottom. Arnold, welcoming the respite, summoned all his officers aboard the *Congress* for a Council of War. A few urged surrender. Arnold glowered them down; however, the majority agreed that the American fleet could not survive another day. Arnold resolved their doubts. There would be no surrender; they would make their escape during the night. They had not long to wait, for in October, darkness fell early on the

mountain-rimmed lake. When convinced that their foe slumbered, the balance of the battered fleet slipped around the shoreside end of the British line. Off Schuyler's Island ten miles to the southward, they anchored to effect repairs. Two of the gondolas were so battered it was decided they should be scuttled. Afternoon of the second day came, and they resumed their flight, but the wind turned against them. Their progress thus slowed, they anchored for the night, only to awaken the next morning in a dense fog. The sun in time burned this off, and disclosed the British Fleet under full canvas bearing down on them. The *Congress*, the *Washington*, and four gondolas slowed by their injuries fell astern. The British closed in, with the *Inflexible* leading. The crippled *Washington*, last in the American line, was overtaken and, receiving several broadsides from her heavily-gunned pursuers, she struck her flag. The British surrounded Arnold's galley, hurling broadside after broadside at close range. Passing close to the weather side of the *Congress*, seven British vessels blanketed her and proceeded to pound her to pieces. But they had not reckoned with Arnold's tenacity.

For two hours, the *Congress* had been returning a hot answering fire, despite her punishing ordeal. Even though his ship was disintegrating underfoot, Arnold now spurred his men beyond their natural endurance. Playing British overconfidence against them, the American general suddenly broke through the encirclement. Picking up the four crippled gondolas, he swung the *Congress*, now burning fiercely, onto the lake shore. Seeing all his men ashore, he stood awhile on his quarter deck glaring defiance at British vessels; their broadsides still slamming. Assuring himself that the *Congress* and the other four blazing gondola hulks were secure from capture, Arnold leaped ashore. Mustering the remnants of his crews, he set out overland for Crown Point some ten miles distant. Later, avoiding a large party of hostile Iroquois, he finally led his exhausted men to safety at Fort Ticonderoga.

The British dallied long enough to occupy the hastily abandoned Crown Point fort, but the first bite of winter was in the air, their ships were riddled, and their crews depleted by casualties. A number of their vessels were so shot torn they would never again see service. The British, therefore, retreated northward before the lake iced over, their victory hollow and barren, for it was plain that the invasion must wait until the following year.

The courageous Arnold, though rash and reckless, had bought precious time—time for raising the regiments that in 1777 would meet and crush General Burgoyne's invading armies at Saratoga, that would blunt St. Leger's diversionary force at Oriskany. When one contemplates the conduct of Benedict Arnold at

Valcour Island, the forlorn hope at Quebec, the wild charge that carried the day at Saratoga, one regrets that he was not struck down in battle before the genesis of his treason. He was impetuous, reckless, but he inspired the men who served under him to incredible conduct. His high courage has never been questioned. Treason has no advocate, however, and Arnold's triumphs must always bear his blemish.

This excerpt is from Arthur E. Gilligan, "The Battle of Valcour Island," pp. 157-160, October 1967 *Proceedings*.



THE MERE probability of the coming of [Comte Jean Baptiste] D'Estaing's fleet [to America] pulled the greatly superior British Army out of the perfect security of Philadelphia, and sent it scurrying on forced marches across New Jersey, in retreat before much smaller numbers of American troops weakened by the epic rigors at Valley Forge.

Arriving at the Delaware entrance barely too late to intercept the British transports carrying their army's heavy baggage from Philadelphia to New York, the French Admiral followed to the latter point but declined to attack there in co-operation with Washington's army, and chose instead an enterprise against Newport, then held by a second British army of 6,000 men.

At Rhode Island, D'Estaing allowed the unexpected appearance of an inferior British squadron to divert him from an apparently certain victory of major proportions ashore, and then was finally persuaded to abandon the promising opportunity there because of damages to his ships from a severe gale. After proceeding to Boston for repairs the fleet sailed for the winter operating theater in the West Indies.

The British frigate *Mermaid*, 28 guns, [was captured] in Delaware Bay, near Cape Henlopen, on July 8, 1778, the day of D'Estaing's arrival there. The *Mermaid* was chased ashore by several French frigates, and, after throwing overboard all her guns, struck to a small American ship which hailed her.

D'Estaing's failure to bag his enemy in the Delaware was partly due to his unusually long transatlantic passage, but a factor of equal importance was the wise energy with which the British Admiral [Lord Richard] Howe had taken precautionary measures. At the first warning of a probable Franco-American alliance and the fitting out of a French fleet at Toulon, Howe had concentrated his small forces from New York and Newport at Delaware Bay, where he was in position

to give protection to the vital water communications of the army in Philadelphia. Preparations were at once made to evacuate the latter place, the principal embarrassment being insufficient shipping to embark both the army and its baggage together with numerous civilian sympathizers.

It was consequently decided to march the army by land to New York and send the heavy artillery and stores by water. The very day that the sea forces reached New York, and with the army still but half way across New Jersey, a dispatch vessel arrived which had sighted and been chased by the French fleet near the American coast, probably near Chincoteague, Virginia, where D'Estaing took pilots. The situation had indeed been a precarious one for the British, and it continued to be critical because of the great naval inferiority of Howe. There was still the possibility of the French Admiral forcing his way into New York Harbor before the British army could cross to the city.

With great energy, Admiral Howe prepared to dispute the passage which would have meant ruin to the British cause in America. His heaviest ships were anchored in line across the deep channel just inside Sandy Hook, with springs on their cables. Here also was placed a large storeship, hastily armed with shore artillery, manned by soldiers. The frigates and smaller vessels formed a mobile reserve to give aid where most needed.

In this position Howe covered the movement of the British army by water from Sandy Hook to New York City on July 5, three days before D'Estaing reached the Delaware. Grimly Howe held and strengthened his position while word was received of the arrival of the French fleet and its passage towards New York. Here D'Estaing found him on July 12.

During the eleven days that D'Estaing remained at this anchorage there was an extremely interesting interchange of correspondence between him and Washington, the more important dispatches being delivered by the hand of Colonel [John] Laurens. Washington was eager for an immediate joint attack on New York, his army being then about to cross the Hudson some fifty miles north of the city. His sound and comprehensive plan included the use of Continental naval forces in Long Island Sound to cut off much-needed British supplies which were due from overseas, and which it was to be expected would be diverted to this route. It was Washington's first venture in naval strategy, a field in which subsequent experience was to give him great eminence.

Admiral D'Estaing, himself a soldier also, hesitated to force the passage in the face of Howe's determined preparations. There was some question as to the sufficiency of water over the bar for the larger French ships

which were of unusually deep draft, and the pilots furnished by Washington are said to have advised against the attempt. British officers who were present, on the other hand, maintained that at high tide there was thirty feet depth on the bar, compared with a maximum draft of twenty-four feet for the French ships. At any rate, D'Estaing finally decided against the New York enterprise and on July 22 sailed for Newport, then also held by a British army against American land forces to the north. With characteristic eagerness to do all in his power to cooperate with naval forces, Washington at once sent urgent orders to General [John] Sullivan, before Newport, to have pilots ready, to raise more troops, and to assist the Admiral in every way possible in a joint attack.

Upon arrival off Newport on July 29, D'Estaing anchored in the approaches to the central or main channel, which leads between Conanicut Island and the vicinity of what is now Fort Adams, and received a prompt call from General Sullivan. The next day two ships of the line under [Pierre-André de] Suffren were sent up the western channel, between Conanicut Island and the mainland, and anchored within it after sustaining slight damage from British batteries on the island. Two frigates and a corvette entered the eastern channel, or Sakonnet River, and caused the British to abandon and burn a small frigate and some galleys there. The investment of the British army of 6,000 men in Newport was now complete; all channels leading into the harbor being blocked by French ships, while Generals Sullivan and Lafayette occupied land positions to the north with nearly 10,000 American troops.

The British soon evacuated Conanicut Island, and on August 5 the two French ships in the western channel rounded the north end of that island and anchored, their former places in the channel being taken by two other ships of the line. At this stage the British burned or sank five frigates which drew too much water to enter the inner harbor of Newport.

Once past the batteries the Admiral anchored this squadron above Goat Island (where one battery stood) and was there joined by the four heavy ships which had operated in the western channel. The 4,000 troops embarked in the fleet were promptly landed on Conanicut Island for purposes of refreshment and organization, preliminary to a future junction with Sullivan's army. There seemed to be no alternative for the British forces in Newport except to surrender within a few days, and such a reverse coming ten months after [Major General John] Burgoyne's capitulation at Saratoga with 3,500 men may well have meant the loss of the war.

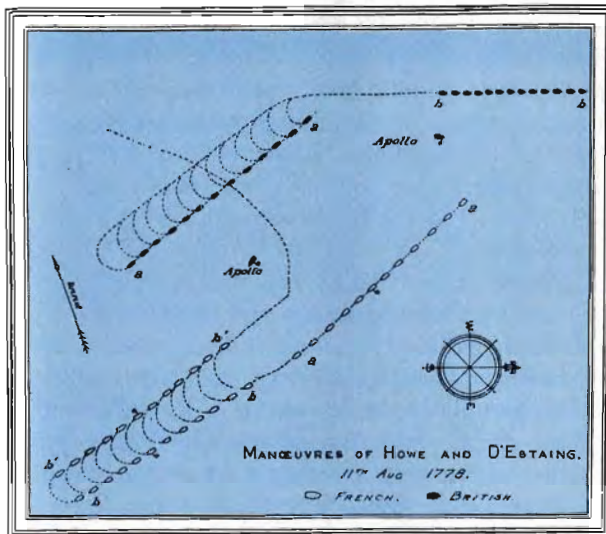
Here was a striking illustration of the profound influence which sea power may exert upon land opera-



Admiral Lord Howe



Comte Jean Baptiste D'Estaing



COURTESY SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON & CO.

tions. Another such example was the lightning-like rapidity with which sea power saved the apparently hopeless situation at Newport for the British. Most unexpectedly Howe's substantially re-enforced squadron arrived from New York on August 9 and anchored near Point Judith, only 8 miles away. Howe was still considerably weaker than the French fleet, his 13 ships of the line aggregating much less power than D'Estaing's 12. He had come merely on the chance of profiting by "an opportunity which might offer for taking advantage of the enemy" and on arrival reported to General [Sir Robert] Pigot, commanding at Newport, that it was "impracticable to afford the General any essential relief."

The effect upon Admiral D'Estaing, however, was quite astonishing. He temporarily abandoned his major mission, so clearly in course of early accomplishment, for the sake of an ill-considered diversion which in the end proved to be the undoing of the primary task. The French troops on Conanicut Island were immediately re-embarked in the fleet, and on the following morning D'Estaing hastily cut his cables and with a fresh wind astern ran past the batteries again.

The British fleet was too greatly inferior to accept

action and ran before the wind, followed by the faster French ships for two days and the intervening night. In the late afternoon of the second day, August 11, the French van had nearly overtaken the British rear.

Respecting this situation D'Estaing's report reads,

"The maneuvers of Lord Howe, who continued to run before the wind but closed up his intervals, showed that he no longer hoped to avoid battle. The wind and sea were rising. By a quarter of six our advance guard was strung out along behind the English rear guard, and engaged it as it came about, . . . the weather became worse and thicker with very heavy squalls. . . ."

During the succeeding night a severe gale scattered both fleets and damaged many ships. D'Estaing reported that on his flagship, the *Languedoc*, "the bowsprit broke, then the foremast, then the maintop, then the mizzenmast; finally the mainmast fell. Our rudder broke next. This last misfortune was the greatest of all." The *Marseillaise*, 74, had only her mainmast standing when the weather moderated. At an anchorage at sea, temporary repairs were made to the French fleet which then limped back to the offing of Newport, arriving on August 20, ten days after its dashing sally.

Meantime Howe had escaped to New York, and General Pigot had reported to him.

"The rebels had advanced their batteries within 1,500 yards of the British works. He was under no apprehension from any of their attempts in front, but should the French fleet come in, it would make an alarming change. Troops might be landed and advanced in his rear, and in that case he could not answer for the consequences."

This was the situation when D'Estaing arrived with his crippled ships just outside the harbor. Some of them were in no condition to force the main passage or even to work through the western channel unresisted. Yet there was reasonably good protection against weather in the approaches to both channels, where a favorable wind could be awaited to enter Narragansett Bay by the unfortified western route. Howe was not to be feared unless substantially re-enforced.

In any case, there were nearly 4,000 troops in the fleet whose effect would be decisive at an early date if brought properly to bear against British defenses ashore. Contrary to these weighty considerations D'Estaing decided in favor of immediately proceeding to Boston to refit his fleet in preparation for later operations in the West Indies which his instructions required. The West Indies at that period were the richest commercial region in the world; the chief ambitions of France lay there, and doubtless they were very

prominently in the Admiral's mind.

The decision to withdraw the fleet was communicated to General Sullivan on the 20th, and in spite of the earnest entreaties of the latter and other high officials, the Admiral sailed for Boston on the following day. The fleet arrived at Boston on August 28, mooring in Nantasket Roads. D'Estaing reported that:

"We needed above all else masts and bread . . . M. Ozanne, naval constructor, was sent to Portsmouth, a neighboring port which used to furnish masts for part of the English Navy, but with all his zeal and effort was able to secure only masts suitable for a vessel of 64 guns."

There were four ships of greater size in the fleet, including the lately dismasted flagship and the similarly damaged *Marseillaise*.

D'Estaing's difficulties in obtaining bread at Boston may have equalled those with respect to masts. Because of its untimely departure from Newport the fleet was coldly received at the "Hub," and heated criticism of its retreat was carried on in the Boston press, with rioting in the streets against the French. Lafayette made a special trip from Newport to urge D'Estaing's return there, and obtained an offer to march the French troops overland to that front, but without the support of the ships. Rather than accept this proposal, the American army was withdrawn from the island of Rhode Island to the mainland, Lafayette being the last person to cross over.

The general effect of D'Estaing's operations in our waters in 1778 was very naturally extremely disappointing to the struggling patriots of that day. Their hopes had been raised so high at the coming of the fleet that their chagrin and criticism were correspondingly sharper at its failure. Many bitter things were said and printed of the gallant D'Estaing and his brave fleet.

From the unemotional viewpoint of many decades afterwards we can be more generous and grateful, even while we point to mistakes which were made in spite of the best intentions and most earnest efforts. [Rear Admiral Alfred T.] Mahan avoided severe direct criticism of D'Estaing by eulogizing Howe.

Summarizing Howe's accomplishments in the campaign Mahan says:

"With a force inferior throughout, to have saved in one campaign the British fleet, New York, and Rhode Island, with the entire British army, which was divided between those two stations and dependent upon the sea, is an achievement unsurpassed in the annals of naval defensive warfare. It may be added that his accomplishment is the measure of his adversary's deficiencies."

The deficiencies are clear and Mahan has not overdrawn them by his indirect method. Unquestionably D'Estaing held both British armies, with their supporting fleet, in the hollow of his hand, and permitted all to escape him. Yet it seems but just to ascribe the deficiencies which brought about this sorry showing, very largely to the then already outworn system of often putting former soldiers in command afloat. D'Estaing was a victim of this practice.

Such training was obviously quite inadequate for the development of that mature naval judgment which is indispensable for success in high command afloat. It made for undue caution when the decision rested upon maritime technology, and for difficulty in differentiating between justifiable boldness and indiscreet rashness. It led to reliance upon the ever unreliable council of war, and to the undue influence of certain trusted subordinates whose own judgment might well have been faulty. The choice between conflicting advice is doubly difficult in the absence of competent judgment on the part of the chooser, who must then be perpetually torn between irresolution and blind action.

D'Estaing's conduct of the campaign was marked by these unfortunate characteristics, which necessarily had their origin in the deficiencies of his early training and in the administrative system which nevertheless placed him, more soldier than sailor, in command of the fleet.

But while pointing out the grave failures of this campaign for the sake of the lessons which lie therein we should not overlook its great accomplishments. The forced evacuation of Philadelphia was of highly important moral and material benefit to the American cause. Another result of inestimable value was the naval awakening of Washington.

The narrow margin by which the British had escaped complete defeat was a revelation to our great Commander in Chief regarding the decisive importance of sea power, and the one certain road to complete victory which it offered. Throughout the remaining three years of the war he thought only in terms of joint military-naval operations, and the sum and substance of his military strategy was to hold his army in readiness to co-operate with a superior French fleet, the coming of which he never ceased to hope, plead, and plan for.

After the 1778 naval operations we have discussed, D'Estaing went to the usual West Indian winter operating theater, where he had several inconclusive encounters with British forces. In early September of 1779 he made an unsuccessful attack on Savannah lasting six weeks. Washington begged him in vain to come up for a joint attack on New York, submitted a comprehensive plan, and promised to "exert all the resources of the country in a vigorous and decided opera-

tion." In preparation the Continental Army was greatly augmented, but Washington would not employ the troops actively after he learned that the fleet had sailed for France.

Upon the arrival of Rochambeau in July, 1780, with a large re-enforcement of French troops, Washington laid down as a cardinal condition for the active employment of that army, in co-operation with his own, that

"In any operations, and under all circumstances a decisive naval superiority is to be considered as a fundamental principle, and the basis upon which every hope of success must ultimately depend."

In summing up the succeeding campaign of 1780 he wrote to [Benjamin] Franklin,

"Disappointed . . . especially in the expected naval superiority, which was the pivot upon which everything turned, we have been compelled to spend an inactive campaign, after flattering prospects at the opening of it."

We need only refer to the campaign of the following year which culminated in the capitulation at Yorktown, after Washington had finally succeeded in obtaining his long sought naval superiority and carried out his own plan for using it in co-operation with the land forces. This was the final fruition of Washington's naval genius which was rooted in the operations of D'Estaing's fleet.

This excerpt is from Dudley W. Knox, "D'Estaing's Fleet Revealed," pp. 161-168, February 1935 *Proceedings*.



WITH THE EXCEPTION of New Jersey and Delaware each of the thirteen original states during the Revolution owned one or more armed vessels. Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina had the largest fleets. New Hampshire with its one ship and Georgia with its four galleys just escaped being in the same class with New Jersey and Delaware. The navies of Rhode Island, New York, and North Carolina were small. The navy of no one state was so large as that of Congress. The total number of state craft, however, greatly exceeded the number of vessels in the Continental navy. The state vessels on the average were smaller and not so well armed as the Continental vessels. The states generally had less means for naval purposes at their disposal than had Congress, and were

therefore not so well armed as the Continental vessels. The states generally had less means for naval purposes at their disposal than had Congress, and were therefore not so well able to build large vessels. Then, too, the chief need of each state for a navy was to defend its seaports, coasts, and trade. For such services small craft adapted for running in and out of shallow harbors, rivers, and bays, were demanded. The states, therefore, provided themselves with armed boats of various sizes, galleys with and without sails, half-galleys, floating



NAVAL ACADEMY MUSEUM

A gunboat of the Pennsylvania state navy passes in review at Philadelphia in 1776.

batteries, barges, and fire-ships. Besides such vessels as these most of the states had a few larger and stouter sailing craft, mounting generally from ten to twenty guns and fairly well fitted for deep-sea navigation. The one state whose deep-sea exceeded its inshore craft was Massachusetts.

The history of naval administration in the several states possesses some common features. It will be recalled that in most of the states the provincial government about the year 1775 was superseded by a revolutionary government, and this in turn about a year later was succeeded by a permanent state government. The revolutionary government consisted of a legislative body, or Provincial Congress, and of an executive body, or Committee of Safety. The permanent state government consisted of a Legislature of one or two Houses and an Executive, which was either a Council, or a Governor and Council. The initial naval administration in the states usually fell to the Committee of Safety, or Revolutionary Executive, which upon the change to a permanent state government bequeathed its naval duties to the Council or to the Governor and Council. In most of the states the details of naval administration were at some time during the Revolution lodged with

an Executive Board. In some states there were separate boards for naval and military affairs; in others, one board performed both functions.

The history of naval administration in the states falls into two periods, one embracing the years from 1775 to 1778, the other the years from 1779 to 1783. In the first period each state procured a naval armament, as a rule for the general purpose of providing a naval defence, and not to meet some specific call for armed vessels. By 1779 the first naval craft had been largely captured, destroyed, or sold; and often the first machinery of naval administration had been in large part removed. In response to special needs for armed vessels, calls for which came most often from those who were suffering from the ravages of the British fleets, the states now procured additional vessels, and often devised new administrative machinery to manage them.

In defensive warfare the problem in each state was to provide for the defence of its ports, trade, coasts, and shipping. The offensive warfare of the state navies, which was quite secondary in importance, consisted chiefly of commerce-destroying, conducted along the great ocean-paths of British trade. The principal problem here was for the American vessels in leaving home ports and in returning with their prizes to elude the British vessels, which hovered along the American coast, especially at the mouths of the Chesapeake, Delaware, and Narragansett bays. It is always to be remembered that in all the states the privateers exceeded the state craft, which were often insignificant in comparison.

By far the largest naval undertaking of the Revolution made by the Americans was the Penobscot Expedition. Until 1779 the general policy of those who managed the fleet of Massachusetts was to send its vessels cruising against the British transports, merchantmen, and small privateers, leaving the coast to be

On April 27, 1776, the Massachusetts Navy fixed the respective shares of the proceeds of prizes for officers and seamen: a captain was to receive six shares, and "all the Cabin Furniture;" a first lieutenant, five shares; a drummer, one and one-fourth shares; a seaman, one share; and a boy, one-half a share."

defended by the seacoast establishment and by local forces. In August, 1777, the Council agreed with this policy for it then spoke of the Continental vessels, the state vessels, and the privateers as "improper" to be employed in clearing the coasts of these "vermin." In April 1779, it disapproved this policy. It now in a message to the House submitted whether, instead of sending the armed vessels of the state on long cruises

after prizes, it would not have been vastly more to the advantage and profit of the state to have employed them cruising on the coast of Massachusetts for the protection of trade and the defence of harbors and seacoasts, "which have been left in such an unguarded and defenceless Situation that where we have taken one Vessel of the Enemy their small privateers out of New York have taken ten from us." It would seem that the Board of War was right in employing its fleet in prize-getting rather than in defensive warfare. The capturing

One of the rules that governed the Massachusetts State Navy read:

"And if any Person belonging to either or such Vessels shall be convicted of Theft, Drunkenness, profane Cursing, or Swearing, disregarding the Sabbath, or using the Name of God lightly or profanely, or shall be guilty of quarrelling or fighting, or of any reproachful or provoking Language tending to make Quarrels, or of any turbulent or mutinous Behavior, or if any Person shall sleep upon his Watch, or forsake his Station, or shall in any wise neglect to perform the Duty enjoined him, he shall be punished for any of the said Offences at the Discretion of the commissioned Officers of such Vessel, or the Major Part of them, according to the Nature and Aggravation of the Offence, by sitting in the Stocks, or wearing a wooden Collar about his Neck, not exceeding 4 Hours, nor less than one, or by whipping, not exceeding 12 Lashes, or by being put in Irons for so long Time as the said Officers shall judge the Safety and well being of the Ship and Crew requires, or otherwise shall forfeit to the State not more than six, nor less than two Days Pay for each offence."

of small privateers and merchantmen were the only enterprises for which the Revolutionary fleets were adapted. Those vessels that cruised continually near the American coast sooner or later fell foul of the stouter and better armed ships of the enemy. The Board of War, had it not responded to the commercial spirit of the times, would have been compelled to adopt the methods of the privateers, did it wish to succeed in its competition with them for seamen.

During the first half of 1779, the British vessels were very destructive to the trade and shipping of Massachusetts and New Hampshire. On June 9, 1779, eight hundred of the enemy, encouraged by certain Tories in Maine, effected a lodgement on the Maine coast at a place called Bagaduce, now Castine, near the mouth of the Penobscot river. This made a fine vantage-point as a base for naval operations. The appeal for naval protection which the inhabitants of Massachusetts now made upon her was a strong one. Towards the close of June the Massachusetts government began concerting with the Continental Navy Board at Boston and

with the government of New Hampshire an expedition to capture and destroy this British station. Samuel Adams, who had recently retired from the chairmanship of the Marine Committee of Congress and had returned to Boston furthered the enterprise. To the fleet which was now formed, New Hampshire contributed the *Hampden*, 22; the Navy Board at Boston, the Continental vessels, *Warren*, 32, *Providence*, 12, and *Diligent*, 12; and Massachusetts, the three state brigantines, *Tyrannicide*, 16, *Hazard*, 14, and *Active*, 14, together with thirteen privateers, which were temporarily taken into the state service. These twenty armed vessels mounted in all 324 guns, and were manned by more than 2,000 men. Besides the armed fleet there were twenty transports which carried upwards of 1,000 state militia. The naval forces were under the command of Captain Dudley Saltonstall of the Continental navy; and the troops were commanded by Brigadier-General Solomon Lovell of the state military forces of Massachusetts. Paul Revere was Chief of Artillery with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

The assembling, manning, provisioning, and fitting of so many vessels greatly taxed the resources of Massachusetts. The fleet left Boston on July 19, and during the last days of the month it appeared off the Penobscot and attacked Bagaduce with only partial success, failing to take the main fort. Before a second attempt was made a British fleet from New York under the command of Sir George Collier, who had received news of the expedition, appeared in the Penobscot. The British fleet consisted of the *Raisonnable*, 64; *Blonde* and *Virginia*, 32's; *Greyhound*, *Camilla*, and *Gallatea*, 20's; and *Otter*, 14; together with three small vessels at the garrison, the *Nautilus*, 16, *Albany*, 14, and *North*, 14. It mounted 248 guns and carried more than 1600 men. In number of guns and men the advantage lay with the Americans, but in weight of metal and tonnage it was probably with the British. On the morning of August 14, the British fleet came in sight of the American. The two fleets were barely in range of each others guns when the Americans were seized with a panic, and fled with their vessels helter skelter up the river, pursued by the British. The Americans offered almost no resistance whatever, but ran their ships ashore, set fire to them, and escaped afoot, when not too closely pursued. With the exception of two or three vessels which were captured, the American fleet was annihilated. The British lost 13; the American loss has been placed at 474. The larger part of the American sailors and soldiers returned by woods to New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

The total cost of this expedition to Massachusetts as calculated by the Board of War was £1,739,175. The larger part of this sum £1,390,200 was charged to the

account of the navy. It suffered the loss of three state armed vessels and a victualer, nine privateers, and twenty transports. Among the twenty transports, with possibly one exception, was the whole trading fleet of the state. Soon after the disaster a joint committee of the Massachusetts House of Representatives and Council with Artemas Ward as president, held an inquiry and made a report on the causes of the failure of the expedition. In answer to the question, "what appears the principal reason of the failure," the committee decided unanimously, "want of proper Spirit and Energy on the part of the Commodore." A courtmartial which was held on the frigate *Deane* in Boston harbor about the first of October found against Captain [Dudley] Saltonstall, and dismissed him from the navy. Rarely has a more ignominious military operation been made by Americans than the Penobscot Expedition. A New Englander with some justice has likened it to [General William] Hull's surrender at Detroit [in the War of 1812]. Had it been successful, it would not have been worth the effort it cost. Its object had no national significance; it was an eccentric operation. "Bad in conception, bad in preparation, bad in execution, it naturally ended in disaster and disgrace."

This excerpt is from Charles O. Paullin, "The Administration of the Massachusetts and Virginia Navies of the American Revolution," pp. 131-164, March 1906 *Proceedings*.



CAPTAIN JEREMIAH O'BRIEN and a crew of 35 colonial "haymakers" in 1775 presented and won the first challenge by the fledgling American navy to the colossal naval power of Great Britain. This brilliant victory by a Yankee settler represented the first of the soon-to-be-numerous naval victories of the Revolutionary War. The exploits of this sailor-soldier-privateer are, however, little known today. Jeremiah O'Brien of Machias, Maine, captained six privateers at sea between 1775 and 1781, and during his only time ashore, he was the captain of a company of militia defending against British-inspired hostile Indians.

Reports of the battles at Lexington and Concord reached the isolated settlement of Machias in early May 1775. Under the auspices of the village's bolder citizens, a "liberty pole" was erected to symbolize the independence of the colony. The pole consisted of a tall Maine pine tree denuded of foliage except for the very top. After installing the pole prominently on high ground in the village, the townsfolk gathered about it and solemnly pledged themselves to resist British

oppression and, if necessary, to sacrifice their property and blood in defense of the settlement.

For over ten years, the residents of Machias had exchanged lumber from the town's mills for provisions brought in by ship. On Friday, 2 June 1775, two sloops of about 80 tons each, the *Unity* and the *Polly*, arrived at Machias from Boston. The cargoes consisted of the household goods of families fleeing Boston and most important, provisions for the inhabitants. Escorting the sloops was the British armed vessel *Margaretta* (100 tons, crew of 40, and four 4-pounders). The following day, 3 June 1775, Captain Ichabod Jones, owner of the *Unity* and the *Polly*, circulated a contract for the townspeople to sign. The contract gave Jones permission to load his ships with lumber for Boston and committed the villagers to protect the ships during the loading. Signing of the contract was made a condition for receipt of the badly needed provisions. At the time, the estimated level of provisions in Machias was adequate for three weeks. The settlers correctly surmised that the type of lumber desired was destined for use by the British army of occupation in Boston and that providing it would give aid and encouragement to the enemy. Accordingly, only a few signed the contract.

Captain Jones arranged a town meeting and submitted his proposal to a vote. Jones expounded that the British had allowed his departure from Boston only on the condition that he would return with cargoes

of lumber and that the *Margaretta* had been sent to ensure his proper execution of the condition. The pressing need for provisions and the presence of the *Margaretta's* guns just a few rods from their homes forced the expedient acceptance of Captain Jones's "contract." The *Unity* and the *Polly* were thereupon moored to the village wharf, but distribution of provisions was made only to those who had not opposed the "contract."

From his vantage point in the Machias River, Captain Moore of the *Margaretta* was taunted by the sight of the liberty pole. Captain Moore subsequently landed and demanded from the assembled villagers that the pole be removed. John O'Brien, a younger brother of Jeremiah, is recorded as having replied, "Must come down! Those words are very easily spoken. You will find, I apprehend, that it is easier to make than it will be to enforce a demand of this kind." The astonished Moore replied, ". . . my orders are pre-emptory and must be obeyed. That liberty pole must come down, or it will be my painful duty to fire upon the town." Stephen Jones, a resident merchant and nephew of Captain Jones, on two separate occasions was able to dissuade Moore from the execution of his threat. Patriotic settlers, including Jeremiah O'Brien and his five younger brothers, thoroughly aroused the smoldering indignation of even the most conservative villagers. In subsequent town meetings, the settlers spontaneously resolved not to allow Captain Jones's sloops to return to Boston.

On Saturday, 10 June 1775, a local conference was held secretly for planning operations against the foe. Surprisingly, the suggestion to capture Jones and the *Margaretta's* officers while they attended church the following day met with opposition from Morris O'Brien, the 60-year-old father of the O'Briens. Morris O'Brien's reluctance probably stemmed from his understanding of the local situation—scarcity of provisions and the difficulty of obtaining additional supplies, coupled with the defenseless condition of the village. Nonetheless, at a secret meeting the next morning, the stirring oratory of Benjamin Foster moved the group to follow through on the plan to capture the British officers. An advance party of armed villagers attended the Protestant service. (Machias had been chartered by Massachusetts Colony in 1770 with the stipulation that the settlers be Protestant.) Concurrently, another armed party started crossing the river on logs. Unfortunately, the church was so situated that London Atus, the pastor's negro servant, saw the second group of men and assumed that they were British troops bent on attacking the village. With a single bound, London Atus leaped screaming through an open window in the church, and fled into the nearby woods. The ensuing



William O'Brien, who joined his brothers in capturing the British *Margaretta*.



ROBERT L. LAMBDIN

A party from the sloop Unity captures HMS Margaretta off Machias, Maine in June 1775.

confusion permitted the alert Captain Moore and his officers to escape from the intended trap. Moore hastily boarded a waiting gig and was rowed to the *Margaretta* and immediately got her underway. After firing a few warning shots over the village and at the settlers pursuing in small boats and canoes, Captain Moore anchored downriver. He then sent back word to Machias that if harm came to Captain Jones or his sloops, the *Margaretta* would return to burn the village.

Flushed with new confidence, the villagers vowed they would capture the *Margaretta*. An armed party set out to the river bank near the British anchorage and upon arrival opened fire with small arms. Fortunately for the eager Yankees, the *Margaretta* was unable to raise her guns to return the fire, owing to the elevation of the surrounding river bank. In the haste to withdraw further downstream to avoid the harassing fire, the *Margaretta*'s main boom snapped, and she was then seriously crippled. She did, however, manage to withdraw and re-anchor out of gunshot from the settlers.

Early Monday, 12 June 1775, four young men (including Dennis O'Brien) spontaneously agreed to cap-

ture the *Unity* then anchored in the river just off the village wharf. The intrepid boarding party rowed out to the *Unity*, took possession without firing a shot, and brought her to the wharf. The enthusiastic "prize crew" drew a crowd at dockside with their cheering. Almost immediately the leaders in the crowd—principally Jeremiah O'Brien—realized the potential that lay at their disposal to capture the *Margaretta*. Arms and ammunition were hurriedly placed on board the *Unity*. Amid the cheers of the town's men, women, and children, the *Unity* sailed, half-laden with lumber, to seek the enemy. The loading and complement of the single-masted vessel consisted of 20 fowling pieces (shotguns) with three rounds of powder and ball each, a small cannon, 30 hay forks, a few axes, a loaf of bread, a few pieces of pork, a barrel of water, and 35 volunteers solicited from the dockside crowd. Among the crew were the six O'Brien brothers. It is curious to note that Morris O'Brien was deterred from joining the "boys" only by their earnest remonstrances.

Captain Moore had witnessed the entire episode through his spy-glass and correctly deduced the intentions of the *Unity* and her crew. Moore got underway

and fell further downriver to Holmes's Bay. As chance would have it, an American schooner out of Norwich, Connecticut, happened to be anchored there. Her main boom was transferred and fitted to the *Margaretta* and her captain, Robert Avery, was impressed as a pilot. Moore then put to sea, a full hour ahead of the *Unity's* departure.

In her haste to join the enemy in battle, the *Unity* had somehow managed to sail without the benefit of a duly appointed commanding officer. Jeremiah O'Brien was nominated and unanimously elected as captain by the crew. His first official act was to allow three of the crew, who in the cold light of day had decided not to see the adventure to conclusion, to depart for shore in a small boat.

"Now, my brave fellows, having got rid of those white-livered cowards, our first business will be to get alongside of the schooner yonder: and the first man who boards her shall be entitled to the palm of honor," exclaimed the 30-year old skipper. O'Brien next directed that the lumber on board be placed as breastworks to protect the crew from hostile fire.

For reasons that remain forever unknown, the *Margaretta* endeavored to avoid contact with the *Unity*, and when first sighted was headed for sea. To increase his speed, O'Brien cast off the small boats from his stern. The *Unity* was apparently a better sailer, as she steadily reduced the distance of an hour's headstart by her opponent. Once within hailing distance, Moore demanded that O'Brien keep off, and threatened to fire. O'Brien replied, "In America's name, I demand you surrender!" The *Margaretta* then opened fire with a stern swivel gun and killed two of the *Unity's* crew, McNeil and Coolbroth. A backwoods moosehunter by the name of Knight manned the small gun and picked off the *Margaretta's* helmsman with a ball through the head. This rapidly cleared the enemy's quarterdeck leaving the *Margaretta* not under command. She broached under the *Unity's* bow and the latter's bowsprit caught the mainsail of her opponent and caused the two vessels to be held together. At this juncture, John O'Brien sprang to the *Margaretta's* deck only to see the vessels part, leaving him alone and stranded in the enemy's camp. A bayonet charge, however, convinced John O'Brien that he should abandon his precarious post for the relative safety of the sea. In a hail of balls, he swam the intervening 30 yards to the *Unity*. After retrieving and congratulating his brother for setting foot on the foe's deck, Jeremiah O'Brien maneuvered the *Unity* alongside the foe and lashed the two ships together through the efforts of a team of Yankee sailors.

Captain Moore bravely rallied his men and personally threw hand grenades on the deck of the American ship. Recognizing that Jeremiah O'Brien was the motive

force behind the bold attack, Moore directed the fire and grenades at the audacious skipper. Fortunately, O'Brien remained unscratched, and ironically Captain Moore was felled by two shots from a Yankee marksman who had witnessed the personal attempt on O'Brien's life.

"To your feet lads! The schooner is ours! Follow me! Board!" Twenty men, previously selected and armed with pitchforks, clambered over the rails. After nearly an hour of battle including hand-to-hand, the leaderless and frightened British crew surrendered. Captain O'Brien personally hauled down the British ensign in triumph.

Subsequent to her exultant return to Machias, the *Unity* was fitted out as an armed cruiser with the captured weapons from the *Margaretta*. Her name was changed by O'Brien to the *Machias Liberty*, and she was employed by the settlement as the first American armed cruiser of the Revolution.

The chronicle of O'Brien and his ship could have well stopped here and been complete; however, fate was to bring new contact with the foe in exactly one month. The British sent out the armed cruiser *Diligent* and her tender *Tapnaquish* from Halifax, Nova Scotia, ". . . to bring the obstreperous Irish Yankee in for trial." On 12 July 1775, acting in concert with Benjamin Foster (in an East Machias schooner), Jeremiah O'Brien in the *Machias Liberty* captured both the *Diligent* and the *Tapnaquish* off Machias.

This article is reprinted from M. D. Giambattista, "Captain Jeremiah O'Brien and the *Machias Liberty*," pp. 85-87, February 1970 *Proceedings*.



THE FIRST open and armed opposition to the forces of His Majesty, and the first blood shed in the Revolutionary War, was the *Gaspee* affair, and its leader was Abraham Whipple of Rhode Island, the real "forgotten man" of the Continental Navy. [See page 22.]

A son of John Whipple, one of the original owners of the Providence Plantations, Abraham was born in the town of Providence on September 26, 1733. Early in life he was drawn to the sea, and while still a young man he was appointed captain of a merchantman sailing in the West Indian trade. As a practical mariner he acquired an intimate knowledge of seamanship and navigation and an acquaintance with northern harbors which was to stand him in good stead during the Revolution. There is some evidence to show that, under letters of marque, he engaged in privateering during the war with France. Yet it was not until the *Gaspee*



J. MCNEVIN

He looked no more like a hero than his men really looked like Indians. But Abe Whipple and his aroused Rhode Islanders destroyed the *Gaspee* in 1772 and ignited the first fires of rebellion.

affair that he first came into historical prominence.

As a man of unquestioned patriotism and as a leader, Whipple was early chosen for a salient rôle in the activities of the smallest colony. The State General Assembly, in June, 1775, directed the committee of safety to charter two vessels to protect the trade of the (Newport) colony. At that time the only Rhode Island town having a customhouse was Newport, boasting a much greater activity than Providence. During the year ended December 31, 1763, for example, 181 vessels from Europe, Africa, and the West Indies, and 352 from neighboring colonies, cleared at the customs in Newport.

Two vessels to protect trade were duly authorized, one of 10 guns, 14 swivels and 80 men, the other of less force. Abraham Whipple was invested with the command of both, with the title of commodore. The larger vessel was the *Katy*, Whipple's first naval command, and the smaller was the *Washington*, captained by John Grimes. To this naval armament two row galleys carrying 60 men were added in August.

The General Assembly equivocally expressed the belligerent step as a measure "to protect the trade of the colony." Commodore Whipple explains this phrase in a memorial which he subsequently addressed to Congress. He stated that he received his appointment on the 15th day of June (1775); that it was made his duty to clear the bay of the tenders belonging to the British frigate *Rose*, then off Newport; and that on the very first day of his appointment he discharged this duty by making prize of one of these tenders, after touching off at her the first cannon fired at any part

of His Majesty's Navy in the Revolutionary struggle.

Partly as a result, relations between the two ships were both prolonged and acrimonious. Though Whipple was ill-equipped to come to grips with the *Rose*, his courage and spirit were equal to any contingency. The celebrated correspondence between the two skip-pers is as follows:

"From Capt. Sir James Wallace of the *Rose*:

You, Abraham Whipple, on the 10th of June, 1772, burned His Majesty's vessel, the *Gaspee*, and I will hang you at the yard-arm.

James Wallace"

To which note, more curt than courteous, Whipple replied with equal brevity and dispatch,

"To Sir James Wallace, Sir:

Always catch a man before you hang him.

Abraham Whipple."

On August 26, 1775, the General Assembly instructed the delegates to Congress to

"use their whole influence at the ensuing Congress for building, at the continental expense, a fleet of sufficient force for the protection of these colonies, and for employing them in such manner and places, as will most annoy our enemies and contribute to the common defense of these colonies."

This, it is believed, was the earliest move toward the establishment of a continental navy. Congress met on September 5, and these instructions were laid before its members on October 3 following. The scheme met

with favor, and measures were instituted to further the building of a navy. A congressional committee was instructed to procure three vessels, one of 14, one of 20, and one of 36 guns, for the protection and defense of the United Colonies.

Esek Hopkins of North Providence, then a brigadier general in the service of his state, received the appointment of Commander in Chief of the infant navy. It was desirable that he repair as soon as practicable to Philadelphia with as many officers and men as he could enlist in the service. The Rhode Island Council of War thereupon dispatched the sloop *Katy* under command



Esek Hopkins

of Commodore Whipple to Philadelphia, transporting Commander Hopkins with his men, with orders to remain in the service of Congress in case the armed vessels were directed to cruise off New England, and if not, to return home.

Whipple's ship was retained in the service and her name changed to *Providence*. The proposed naval armament was increased, and Commodore Whipple was appointed to the command of the ship *Columbus*.

One morning early in 1776, Commander Hopkins stepped into his barge at the foot of Walnut Street and, amid cheers and hat-waving, made his way through the icy river to the deck of his flagship, the *Alfred*. The ship had been named, curiously enough, in honor of Alfred the Great, regarded as the founder

of the British Navy, with which it was soon to come to grips.

It is claimed that as the Commander in Chief gained the quarter-deck, Lieutenant John Paul Jones hoisted the yellow rattlesnake flag with its motto "Don't tread on me!" (the famous Gadsden flag).

The new navy, under Hopkins, left the capes of the Delaware on February 17, 1776. It consisted of the ships *Alfred* (the first flagship of the Continental Navy) Captain Dudley Saltonstall, and *Columbus*, Captain Whipple; the brigs *Andrea Doria*, Captain Nicholas Biddle; *Cabot*, Captain John B. Hopkins; and the sloops *Providence*, *Fly*, *Hornet*, and *Wasp*.

Without too strict an interpretation of the orders issued him, Commander Hopkins sailed to the Bahamas where he took from the town of New Providence all the cannon and military stores there, consisting among other things of 88 cannon from 9 to 36 pounders, 15 mortars from 4 to 11 inches in diameter, 5,458 shells, and more than 33,000 round shot. The fleet returned to New London on April 8 and subsequently made Providence. This was the first naval expedition against the British under congressional sanction.

During the return voyage, on April 4, the fleet captured two small armed British vessels, the *Hawke* and the *Bolton*, and two days later ran upon the *Glasgow*, a 20-gun frigate. In a brief and sharp encounter the Americans lost 10 killed and 14 wounded, whereas the British ship made good her escape. When the result of this engagement became known ashore, a cry of indignation was raised, against which the new Navy had but the ineffectual yet truthful defense of lack of experience, organization, and discipline. On April 30, Captain Whipple of the *Columbus*, having been blamed for not closing with the *Glasgow* in the April 6th affair, demanded a court-martial, which was held on board the *Alfred* at Providence, resulting in his acquittal. For his part in the regrettable *Glasgow* encounter Esek Hopkins was censured by Congress and dismissed from the service on charges not now readily understood.

A listing, dated December 22, 1775, gives Abraham Whipple the honor of second ranking captain in the service, but there is reason to believe the selection somewhat arbitrary and not entirely agreeable to all those holding commissions. An official list from the Journals of Congress as of October 10, 1776, gives his rank as twelfth. On the same list John Paul Jones ranks eighteenth. During this period, Whipple's activities are of an obscure nature, but he is recorded as having command of the sloop *Carea* up to December 6, 1776.

British ships appearing off Newport served to intimidate certain Yankee skippers, yet even such a display of superior power did not daunt Whipple, who was shortly to show his mettle against an overwhelming

force under most favorable circumstances.

He was, under date of April 4, 1777, in receipt of a letter from the Marine Committee of the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, addressed to Captain J(ohn) B. Hopkins of the *Warren*, Providence, R.I., urging on him haste in getting to sea and preying on British transports and commerce; and ordering him to cooperate with the Council of War at Providence. Captain Abraham Whipple of the *Providence* and Captain Dudley Saltonstall of the *Trumbull* received copies.

Commodore Whipple sailed from Providence on March 20, 1778, in his new frigate *Providence* for France, and battled his way past one of the British cruisers off Newport. Whipple, during the dark and storm, forced a path through the hostile fleet, pouring broadsides into the enemy's ships and sinking one of their tenders. The new command was a ship of 28 guns, and is not to be confused with the early vessel by the same name, which was a sloop. Naval records show that there were three vessels named *Providence* during the Revolution, tending toward some confusion on the part of casual historians, whose task is made no lighter by the fact that letters of marque were given to no less than 19 *Rangers*, 7 *Queens of France*, 7 *Rattlesnakes*, 17 *Revenge*s, 11 *Sally*s, 11 *Venus*'s, 8 *Washington*s, 13 *Neptunes* (of which 4 were from Philadelphia), and 25 *Betsey*'s! The frigate, under Commodore Whipple, made many prizes during 1778, but was to cover herself with glory during the following summer and provide her commander with enough renown to place his name among the immortals of the Navy. Why it never arrived there is an unfathomable mystery to the writer.

On June 18, 1779, the frigates *Providence*, Commodore Abraham Whipple, *Queen of France*, Captain John P. Rathburn, and *Ranger*, Captain Thomas Simpson, sailed from Boston on a cruise to the eastward. The Commodore's ship and that of Captain Rathburn each carried 28 guns, while the *Ranger* mounted only 18. The log of the last ship records the capture of a vessel on July 20 and another the next day, both from Jamaica. As to what further occurred during that eventful month on the high seas off the Newfoundland banks we have varying accounts, but they agree in the main on one point: a large number of enemy vessels was captured and sent home under prize crews to bring a vast sum to the wavering colonial fortunes of war.

That such an amazing performance was possible is largely due to two important factors: (1) that there existed then no intership communication save by megaphone, and (2) that most vessels were total strangers to each other and might prove friendly as readily as hostile upon identification. One ship in a fleet of 150 could hardly be conversant with the appearance and rigging of more than a few of the total number,

making it relatively simple for an enemy with concealed colors and armament to pose as another merchantman, particularly since colors representing both sides of the conflict were standard equipment in ships' lockers.

An account of this unparalleled feat is given by Andrew Sherburne (later a minister) who had been taken aboard the *Ranger* when not yet 14, and was therefore but a youth on this cruise. Of the encounter he writes:

"I was waiter to Mr. Charles Roberts, the boat-swain, and was quartered at the third gun from the bow (to carry cartridges). Being ready for sea, we sailed to Boston, joined the *Providence* frigate commanded by Commodore Whipple and the Boston frigate *Queen of France*. I believe that this small squadron composed nearly the entire navy of the United States. We proceeded to sea some time in June 1779. A considerable part of the crew of the *Ranger* being raw hands and the sea rough, especially in the Gulf Stream, were exceedingly sick and myself among the rest. We afforded a subject of constant ridicule to the old sailors.

"Our officers improved every favorable opportunity for working the ship and exercising the guns. We cruised several weeks, made the Western Islands, and at length fell in with the homeward-bound Jamaica fleet on the banks of Newfoundland. It was our practice to keep a man at the masthead constantly by day, on the look-out. The moment a sail was discovered a signal was given to our consorts and all possible exertion was made to come up with the stranger, or discover what she was.

"About seven o'clock one morning the man at the fore-topmast head cried out "A sail, a sail on the lee bow; another there, and there!" Our young officers ran up the shrouds and with their glasses soon ascertained that more than fifty sail could be seen from the masthead. It should here be observed that during the months of summer, it is extremely foggy on the banks of Newfoundland. Sometimes a ship cannot be seen at the distance of 100 yards, and then in a few moments you may have a clear sky and bright sun for half an hour, and you are enveloped in the fog again.

"The Jamaica fleet which consisted of about 150 sail, some of which were armed, was convoyed by one or two line of battle ships, several frigates, and sloops of war. Our little squadron was in the rear of the fleet and we had reason to fear that some of their heaviest armed ships were there also . . . no time was to be lost. Our Commodore soon brought-to one of their ships, manned and sent her off. Being to windward, he edged away and spoke



FRED FREEMAN

Abraham Whipple's men prepare to fire on British opponent while intercepting a convoy.

to our Captain. We were at this time in pursuit of a large ship. The Commodore hauled his wind again and in the course of an hour we came up with the ship, which proved to be the *Holderness*, a three-decker mounting 22 guns. She struck, after we gave her several broadsides. Although she had more guns and those of heavier metal than ourselves, her crew was not sufficiently large to manage her guns and at the same time work the ship. She was loaded with cotton, coffee, sugar, rum, and allspice.

While we were employed in manning her, our Commodore captured another and gave her up to us to man also. When this was accomplished it was nearly night; we were, however, unwilling to abandon the opportunity of enriching ourselves, therefore kept along under easy sail.

Sometime during the night we found ourselves surrounded by ships and supposed we were discovered. We were close on board one of their largest armed ships and from the multitude of lights which had appeared, supposed that they had called to quarters. It being necessary to avoid their convoy, we fell to leeward and in an hour lost sight of them all. The next day the sky was overcast and at times we had a thick fog. In the afternoon the sun shone for a short time and enabled us to see a numerous fleet a few miles to windward, in such compact order that we thought it best not to approach them. We were however in hopes that we might pick up some single ship. We knew nothing of our consorts, but were entirely alone.

"On the third morning we gained sight of three ships, to which we gave chase and called all hands

to quarters. When they discovered us in chase, they huddled together, intending as we supposed to fight us. They however soon made sail and ran from us; after a short lapse of time we overhauled and took one of them, which we soon found to be a dull sailer. Another, while we were manning our prize, attempted to escape, but we soon found that we gained upon her.

"While in chase a circumstance occurred which excited some alarm. Two large ships hove in sight to windward running directly for us under a press of sail. One of them shaped her course for the prize we had just manned. We were unwilling to give up our chase, as we had ascertained from our prize that the two other ships were . . . unarmed. We soon came up with the hindmost, brought her to and ordered her to keep under our stern, while we might pursue the other, as our situation was too critical to allow us to heave to and get out our boat.

"The stranger in chase of us was under English colors; we however soon ascertained by her signal that she was the *Providence* frigate, on board of which was our commander. This joyful intelligence relieved us of all fear of the enemy and soon we came up with our chase. . . . We now ascertained that the strange ship which was in chase of our first prize was another of our consorts, the *Queen of France*.

"In all, we had taken ten prizes, two of which were retaken. The *Ranger* made but a short stop at Boston (a month later), for most of our officers and crew belonged to Portsmouth and its vicinity. The cargoes of our prizes being divided among our crews, my share was about one ton of sugar, from 30 to 40

gallons of fourth proof Jamaica rum, about 20 pounds of cotton and about the same quantity of ginger, logwood, and allspice, and about \$700 in paper money equal to \$100 in specie."

In the Boston *Independent Chronicle and Universal Advertiser* for August 26, 1779, the following is printed:

"Saturday last arrived here the Continental frigates *Providence*, *Queen of France*, and *Ranger*; during their cruise they fell in with a Jamaica fleet of upwards of 100 sail, under the convoy of several frigates. . . . This favorable opportunity they improved as well as circumstances would admit. . . . They picked out 9 ships and one brig deeply laden with rum, sugar, etc., 7 of which arrived here and one into Cape-Ann."

Those ships captured by this remarkable *tour de force* were of the 700-800 ton class, and the eight which arrived were named, respectively, *Holderness*, *Dawes*, *George*, *Friendship*, *Blenheim*, *Thetis*, *Fort William*, and *Neptune*.

Above and beyond his share of the prize money and cargoes, Commodore Whipple received a communication, dated September 19, 1779, from the Marine Committee of the Continental Congress in Philadelphia congratulating him on the success of his cruise in the *Providence*, and urging the speedy preparation of that vessel for another cruise!

But Whipple's star had now passed its zenith. In 1780 he was sent under orders to the relief of Charleston, S. C., which was besieged by the British. There is some doubt as to what actually occurred in the counsel and conduct of this gallant officer, and at least one account charges him with having been so intimidated that he advised scuttling his ships on the mud flats back of Charleston rather than waging a losing fight against overwhelming odds in the bay. Whatever the preliminaries, the *Providence*, *Queen of France*, and *Ranger* were struck to the British under Sir George Collier. Commodore Whipple was taken and he with his officers confined until the close of the war, when the Continental Navy passed out of existence.

Back in Rhode Island, Whipple existed for a time on his farm, meanwhile hoping that a reluctant Congress would disburse back pay with which he could discharge his debts. In 1784 he went on a commercial cruise to England, hoping thereby to raise money, but all he raised was the first American flag after the signing of the peace treaty between England and the United States.

In 1788, Abraham Whipple and his wife Sarah (Hopkins) moved to Marietta, Ohio. After living in

the Marietta region for 31 years, the Commodore died on May 19, [1819]. In the old Mound Cemetery in Marietta (where lie more Revolutionary officers than in any other place) his bones were laid to rest, their only encomium being a tombstone placed over them years later by Nahum Ward and carrying this inscription:

SACRED
TO THE MEMORY OF
COMMODORE ABRAHAM WHIPPLE
WHOSE NAME, SKILL AND COURAGE
WILL EVER REMAIN THE PRIDE AND
BOAST OF HIS COUNTRY.

"In the late Revolution, he was the first on the seas to hurl defiance at proud Britain, gallantly leading the way to wrest from the mistress of the ocean her sceptre, and there to wave the Star Spangled Banner. He also conducted to the sea the first square rigged vessel ever built on the Ohio opening to commerce resources beyond calculation."

A half year before the death of this great sea hero, his wife had died and the illustrious achievements of the Revolutionary commander faded in the memory of his countrymen. Only on the stone marking his grave and in isolated history pages is the glory of the Navy's forgotten warrior perpetuated for posterity.

This excerpt is from Horace S. Mazet, "The Navy's Forgotten Hero," pp. 347-354, March 1937 *Proceedings*.



HE-STATEMENT has more than once been made that the justly celebrated phrases regarding the "Qualifications of a Naval Officer" reputed to have been written by John Paul Jones were never penned by him, and that the marine committee to whom they were addressed did not exist at the time that he was supposed to have written them.

That he truly was the author of such phrases is beyond doubt. On January 21, 1777, Jones addressed an open letter to the marine committee, over a year after the formation of that body, in which he laid before them his treatment by Commodore Esek Hopkins. In this letter appears the passage: "None other than a Gentleman, as well as a Seaman, both in theory and practice is qualified to support the character of a Commissioned Officer in the Navy, nor is any man fit to command a Ship of War who is not also capable of communicating his Ideas on Paper in Language that



John Paul Jones

becomes his Rank." A copy of this letter, evidently written by Jones's secretary, is now on file with the collection of Jones's manuscripts in the Library of Congress.

The misconceptions regarding this letter are due probably to the inaccuracies that exist in Augustus C. Buell's *Paul Jones, Founder of the American Navy*. The passage regarding the qualifications of a naval officer as quoted by Mr. Buell reads: "It is by no means enough that an officer of the Navy should be a capable mariner. He must be that, of course, but also a great deal more. He should be as well a gentleman of liberal education, refined manners, punctilious courtesy, and the nicest sense of personal honor."

"He should not only be able to express himself clearly, and with force in his own language both with tongue and pen, but he should also be versed in French and Spanish."

It will be noted that there is a striking similarity in meaning in these two passages, but the Buell version is somewhat longer. The passage just quoted forms part of a document addressed to the marine committee, September 14, 1775. According to Mr. Buell, a provisional marine or naval committee was appointed June 14, 1775, "to consider, inquire, and report with respect to organization of a naval force." At a session

held June 24, 1775, this committee on motion of Joseph Hewes of North Carolina authorized the chairman, Robert Morris, "To invite John Paul Jones, Esq., gent., Master Mariner, to lay before the Committee such information and advice as may seem to him useful in assisting the said Committee to discharge its labors." According to Mr. Buell, Jones readily accepted this invitation and reported in person to the committee on July 18. A list of inquiries in writing was handed to him embracing two general subjects: first, "The proper qualifications of naval officers," and second, "The kind or kinds of armed vessels most desirable for the service of the United Colonies keeping in mind the limited resources of the Congress."

Jones drafted replies, according to Mr. Buell, to the general inquiries of the committee on the subjects of naval *personnel* and *material*, respectively; the document on *personnel* bearing the date of September 14, 1775, and the document on *material* bearing the date of October 3, 1775. The document on *personnel* Jones addressed to Joseph Hewes in the form of a letter, "because I can write with more freedom in a personal letter than in a formal document, and partly that you may have opportunity to use your judgment in revision before laying it before the Committee." In the second and third paragraph of this document appears the passage quoted above. [No] naval or marine committee existed during the summer of 1775, and therefore John Paul Jones could never have been invited this early to present his views on naval matters; secondly, parts, at least, of the document said to have been presented to the committee on September 14, 1775, are copied from the correspondence of Jones bearing a much later date.

The *Journals* of the Continental Congress make no mention of any debate on naval affairs, the formation of a Navy, or the appointment of a naval committee on June 14 or any other date during the summer of 1775. The question of establishing a fleet was first presented to the Congress on October 3, 1775, when the members from Rhode Island presented certain instructions from their legislature. On October 5, Congress resolved that a committee of three should be appointed to prepare a plan for intercepting two vessels then on their way from England to Canada laden with arms and powder for the British troops. On the same day this committee brought in a report. A second report was made by the committee the following day which was ordered to lie on the table for the consideration of the members. A week later Congress resolved that a swift sailing vessel carrying ten guns with eighty men be fitted out with all possible dispatch, and that another vessel of fourteen guns should be fitted out for the same purpose. On October 13 Congress resolved that two more vessels should be fitted out and

that four more members should be added to the committee. Joseph Hewes was one of the four new members of this committee, this being the first connection as far as is known of Mr. Hewes with any naval committee. The biographers of Mr. Hewes fail to mention any earlier connection of Hewes with the Navy. This committee, formed October 30, 1775, is generally referred to in the *Journals* of the Continental Congress as the Naval Committee, the Marine Committee, or "the Committee for fitting out armed ships." On December 14, 1775, a committee on naval affairs was chosen by ballot, one member from each colony. This new committee was known as the Marine Committee, and was referred to by that name throughout the Revolution.

It hardly seems likely that an earlier naval committee could have been created by the Congress and no record of its existence made in its *Journals*. Nor does it seem likely that the appointment of such a committee would have escaped the attention of so keen an observer as John Adams, who seems positive that the Congress took no action on naval matters before October, 1775. Congress would hardly have spent hours in fierce debate as it did during the sessions of October, 1775, if the task of providing for marine defense had been already accomplished the previous summer. Thus it seems evident that John Paul Jones could have had no naval committee to address on September 14, 1775. Therefore, his specifications for the qualifications of a naval officer could not have been made at that time.

In the eighth paragraph of this document on personnel appears the following passage:

"It is always for the best interests of the service that a cordial interchange of sentiments and civilities should subsist between superior and subordinate officers aboard ship. Therefore it is the worst of policy in superiors to behave toward their subordinates with indiscriminate hauteur as if the latter were of a lower species. Men of liberal minds, themselves accustomed to command, can ill-brook being thus set at naught by others, who, from temporary authority may claim a monopoly of power and sense, for the time being. If such men experience rude, ungentle treatment from their superiors it will create such heart-burnings and resentments as are no-wise consonant with that cheerful ardor and ambitious spirit that ought ever to be the characteristic of officers of all grades. In one word, every commander should keep constantly before him the great truth that to be well obeyed, he must be perfectly esteemed."

The above paragraph should be compared with a paragraph of a letter written to Joseph Hewes on

April 14, 1776, seven months *after* the date of the document on *personnel*. This letter is authentic beyond question. The original in Jones's handwriting is in the collection of Jones's manuscripts in the Library of Congress. It reads as follows:

"It is certainly for the interest of the service that a cordial interchange of civilities should subsist between superior and inferior officers—and therefore it is bad policy in superiors to behave toward their inferiors indiscriminately as though they were of a lower species. Men of liberal minds who have been long accustomed to command can ill-brook being thus set at naught by others who pretend to claim a monopoly of sense. The rude, ungentle treatment which they experience creates such heart-burnings as are no-wise consonant with that cheerful ardor and spirit which ought ever to be the characteristic of an officer; and therefore whoever thinks himself hearty in the service is widely mistaken when he adopts such a line of conduct in order to prove it. For to be well obeyed it is necessary to be esteemed.

In the original manuscript of this letter after the word "species," two or three lines are crossed out and there is evidence of erasures. If Jones, in his letter of April 14, 1776, chose to copy a paragraph from his document of September 14, 1775, how can these erasures and corrections be explained? And would Jones have been likely to have addressed two communications containing almost an identical paragraph to the same individual in the space of seven months? It would seem likely that the document on *personnel* of September 14, 1775, was compiled by Mr. Buell in part from the Hewes' letter of April 14, 1776, and the passages in this document on the "Qualifications of a Naval Officer" from the open letter addressed to the marine committee January 21, 1777.

This excerpt is from L. H. Bolander, "Two Notes on John Paul Jones: His Qualifications of a Naval Officer," pp. 546-548, July 1928 *Proceedings*.



LONG BEFORE the Revolutionary War, the natives of New England were famous for their skill as seamen, and hundreds of their sons, from choice and love of adventure, went to sea at a very early age. Indeed, to try one's fortune afloat was then considered a manly thing to do, and there was no lack of volunteers and apprentices sailing "before the mast," on board the swift London packets, or in the carrying trade to the West

Indies. That many preferred the more perilous service in armed vessels is proven by the fact that about 12,000 American seamen of all ages enlisted in the King's ships and Colonial privateers during the Seven Years' War with France.

About 1750 it became a practice among the gentry of the American provinces to cause their sons to be entered as midshipmen in the Royal Navy. The inducements were very great. Indeed the frequent presence of British ships of war in the Colonial seaports, by their imposing size and armament and by the gilded pomp and panoply of King George's Naval Service, must have proved a great attraction to the American-born youth; but what enticed and decided him more than all else to enter the navy of the Mother Country was doubtless the jaunty appearance of the British midshipman as he swaggered through the streets of Boston or New York in his gilt-buttoned uniform and with a wicked looking dirk hanging from his belt.

[One] of the American-born youths who entered the English Navy as a midshipman previous to or during the Revolutionary War, and rose to high station and fame in the King's service, [was] Isaac Coffin, of Boston, [who] served as a midshipman on the American station, as it was then called, in 1773-1776, and in due time became Admiral Sir Isaac Coffin, with a reputation second to none in the naval history of his time. This veteran officer died in 1838 in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, in the 87th year of his age. He always boasted of being Boston-born, and never lost his interest in the "Old Thirteen," as he called the American colonies.

Of the American youths who served in the British Navy previous to 1776, and threw up their warrants in consequence of the impending war, we find the names of Richard Dale and Nicholas Biddle. With a passion for the sea, young Biddle sailed before the mast in a Yankee ship in his 13th year, and after having made several voyages he was sent to England with letters that procured for him a midshipman's warrant on board a sloop-of-war. He subsequently (1773) joined the bomb-ketch, *Carcase*, one of two vessels dispatched to the Arctic Seas with instructions to ascertain how far navigation towards the North Pole was practicable. In this small craft he found Midshipmen Horatio Nelson, who, like Biddle, had obtained permission to serve as a volunteer on the *Carcase*, despite the Admiralty's order against the admission of boys. Very soon, on account of their zeal and handiness as seamen, they were both appointed cockasterns (coxswains) by the commanding officer, a position then much coveted by ambitious midshipmen.

Upon the Declaration of Independence, no more could any British ship-of-war, however dazzling or formidable, entice a patriotic American youth or sea-

man within her bulwarks. It was the hastily improvised and poorly equipped Congress ships and privateers of 1776 that attracted all the young patriots desirous of serving their country on the sea.

First among these [was] young Nicholas Biddle, who, anticipating the course of events, had turned his back upon the King's Navy, and hastened homeward in 1775. He received a lieutenant's commission in 1776, and had command of the U. S. brig *Andrew Doria*, of 14 guns, in the first year of the war; in February, 1777,



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Nicholas Biddle

he was appointed to command the frigate *Randolph*, of 32 guns, was wounded in March 1778, in an action with the *Yarmouth*, of 64 guns; and while in the hands of the surgeon was blown up by an explosion of the magazine of the *Randolph*, his whole ship's company, excepting four men, perishing with him.

Richard Dale had been an apprentice before the mast at sea in his 12th year and had served as mate, or in a position corresponding to that of midshipman, with James and Samuel Barron as his messmates, in 1776, on board a Virginia State cruiser, commanded by the father of the latter, James Barron, who was grandiloquently styled "Commodore of all the armed vessels of the Commonwealth." The Virginia Navy, so-called, of which hardly any mention is made in the histories of the period, was employed during the war

chiefly for the defense of the bays and rivers of the State.

Dale's adventurous spirit soon led him into captivity at Norfolk, where some of his Royalist schoolmates induced him to join an English cruiser, in which he was wounded. But upon the declaration of Independence, he entered the Continental Navy and was appointed midshipman on board the U. S. brig *Lexington*, 16 guns, which was captured by the British on the coast of France in 1777, and was taken to Plymouth, England, where the officers and crew were thrown into Mill Prison. In 1778, Dale and others escaped from prison but were recaptured and remained [incarcerated] until 1779, when Dale at last [escaped] to France. Dr. Franklin, [U. S.] minister to France, had blank commissions to fill [in] at his discretion, and he appointed Dale an acting lieutenant. [Thus Dale] had the honor of serving under Jones as first lieutenant on the *Bon Homme Richard* in her terrible fight with the *Serapis*. In February, 1781, he was regularly commissioned as a lieutenant, and was taken prisoner for the third time, in the *Trumbull*, but was soon exchanged and served during the remainder of the war in letters of marque and merchantmen.

Edward Preble, whose passion for the sea led him as a mere stripling into the merchant service, in which he diligently learned the seaman's art, until he received a midshipman's warrant in 1779, on the Massachusetts State ship *Protector*. He was present in her hard fought action with the privateer *General Duff*, and was afterward captured and confined on board the prison-ship *Jersey* [See page 56], in the harbor of New York. On being liberated he joined the Massachusetts ship *Winthrop* as first lieutenant, in which capacity, says one of his biographers, he distinguished himself "by boarding with fourteen men an English armed brig lying in the Penobscot River, and carrying her under fire of a shore battery." This daring exploit made a hero of Preble, who was only twenty-two at the close of the war, and who commanded vessels in the merchant service for many years afterwards, until he was commissioned a lieutenant in the regular navy in 1799, with some other officers of the Revolutionary War.

Such were the young men of 1776 who chose the sea service as their profession. All were filled with martial ardor that nothing could restrain, but the most impetuous and daring were those who ran away from comfortable homes to embark in the dangerous work of privateering. It is worthy of notice, also, that a large share of this perilous work afloat was done by mere boys, whether sailing in privateers or "Congress Ships." We read of the privateer *Greyhound*, of 60 tons, having a crew of 20 boys and only a few able-bodied seamen, and of the *Ranger* and other Continental vessels, each

having in her complement over 30 boys of all ages. Generally one of the boys was assigned to each gun to serve ammunition, and these were called "waiters;" others were stationed aloft in charge of the upper sails and rigging, or wherever they were needed. Not infrequently, young men without any sea training, but living in sight of the sea, combined to capture armed schooners of the enemy lying at anchor in or near some port.

At one time, not less than thirty masters of merchant vessels at Newburyport, unable to obtain commands, volunteered as sailors on the Boston ship *Vengeance*, and young Nantucket captains were the first to practice marine telegraphy by means of the vanes attached to the windmills on high points near the town, which greatly annoyed the British naval officers in that vicinity. Boston, of course—the heart of the revolution—was represented ashore and afloat by a large number of her young sons, whose unconquerable spirit attracted the special attention of our French allies. All Americans were known in France at that time by the name of Bostonians, hence the name of the game of cards (Boston) then introduced in the French coffee houses of that period.

Both town and country boys took part in all these enterprises, sharing alike in the dangers and spoils of foray or battle. Many of them were captured with their



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Richard Dale

vessels by British cruisers and spent weary months or years in foul prison-ships or fouler jails, such as Dartmoor in England, their principal food there being "brown George" an unpalatable bread named after the King. Only a few, like Midshipman Dale and his comrades, succeeded in escaping from the horrors of such imprisonment. The other unfortunates while awaiting exchange or deliverance were occasionally assisted by wealthy American Loyalists, settled in England. Occasionally Admiral Sir Isaac Coffin, who never entirely forgot his native land, went down to Dartmoor to talk to the prisoners there. He found some relatives among them, and he offered to procure the release of all the Nantucket men (or Massachusetts men) provided they would settle on the island of Anticosti in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. They declined to do so, preferring to take their chances of exchange, and return to their own country. The old admiral often relieved the necessities of his townsmen by welcome gifts of money. [Although] the sufferings of the prisoners there were very great, some made an honest penny by the sale of miniature sloops or ships of their own handiwork. One young fellow from Salem, singularly named John Deadman, spent twenty-two months of his imprisonment in building a three-decker four feet long, and completely rigged and armed, which sold for twenty pounds sterling to some curiosity hunter of nautical taste. Some studied arithmetic and geometry in prison, hoping that one day they might be able to master the art of navigation and obtain a commission, and perhaps a command, in the Continental Navy.

This heterogeneous force, called the "Continental Navy," was organized, as far as was expedient, upon the British model, with its various grades of commissioned and warrant officers up to and including that of commodore, and thus it came to pass that the title and grade of midshipman were introduced into our naval service.

On November 28, 1775, the "Rules for the Regulation of the Navy of the United Colonies" were agreed to in the Continental Congress, and the pay of officers fixed as follows: Captain, \$32 per calendar month; lieutenants, \$20; and among the allowances then prescribed was "half a pint of rum per man every day, and a discretionary allowance on extra duty and in time of engagement." This provision for fortifying the inner man in emergencies was in accordance with the spirit of the day, but there were no midshipmen as yet to partake of it. The first mention of midshipmen in the Revolutionary records is found in the resolution of the Continental Congress of December 9, 1775—"That the Marine Committee appointed to fit out armed vessels, be empowered to employ the following officers, and that their pay be as follows: Midshipmen, \$12 per

calendar month; sailmaker, \$12 per calendar month; cook, \$12 per calendar month."

The next official reference to the grade is found in the resolution of prize money, to this effect: "That the following warrant and petty officers (allowing for each ship six midshipmen, for each brig four midshipmen, and for each sloop two midshipmen, etc.), have three-



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Edward Preble

twentieth parts divided among them equally." This proportion, though small, must have filled their purses many times during the Revolutionary War, if we take into account the number of transports and prizes captured.

[Thomas] Clark, in his *Naval History of the United States*, (1813), informs us that 342 ships of the enemy were taken in 1776, and 500 in the first eighteen months of the war, amounting to about 60,000 tons. The tonnage of American shipping (then comparatively small) taken by the English during the whole war amounted to only 57,000 tons.

When Commodore [Abraham] Whipple's little squadron took ten prizes of the convoyed Jamaica fleet, in 1779, a midshipman of the *Ranger*, received for his share a ton of sugar, 40 gallons of proof Jamaica rum, 20 pounds of cotton, about the same quantity of ginger, logwood, and alspice, and a sum of 700 dollars in paper money, then equal to 100 dollars in specie.

It was not an uncommon thing for a Yankee sailor to get for his share of a prize vessel engaged in the West India trade, a stock of Manchester prints, Irish linens and silk stockings of the best quality, which he sold to friends at home at great bargains, after having fitted out his "Poll" [girl] with all that her heart could desire of the booty. So great a quantity of West India produce was brought into the United States by privateers, that Jamaica rum sold for 75 cents a gallon, and sugar at five dollars per hundredweight. John Paul Jones captured the ship *Mellish*, from Liverpool with 10,000 sets of uniform for the British Army in Canada, but these were appropriated at once for clothing the ragged soldiers of our Revolutionary Army. These were halcyon days for the Continental cruisers, when officers and sailors were exalted not only by patriotism and prize money, but also by the daily pint of rum, a liberal daily allowance of grog, which even the smallest midshipman learned to imbibe without a grimace.

We have seen that the pay of midshipmen was fixed in November, 1775, at \$12 per calendar month, which was the precise allowance made to the ship's cook. They had the distinction, however, of being the only grade of officers whose pay did not vary according to the rate of the vessel in which they served. We are unable to say if there was any significance in placing the midshipman in the pay-table of November 15, 1776, between the surgeon and gunner. Probably they would have felt more at home between the purser and boat-swain, from whom they received monthly financial comfort and daily practical aid in "learning the ropes." However this may be, it cannot be doubted that the midshipman of the Revolution was a dazzling creature if he ever wore the first Continental uniform prescribed for his grade by the regulations of the Marine Committee of 1776, at Philadelphia, which consisted of a blue lapelled coat with stand-up collar, round cuffs faced with red, buttons and button-holes red, blue breeches and red waistcoat. No mention is made of the headgear, but it was probably in harmony with this fiery uniform.

The uniform prescribed for captains of the revolutionary period was a blue cloth coat, with red lapels, slashed cuffs, stand-up collar, and flat yellow buttons, blue breeches and red waistcoat with yellow lace. This uniform, perhaps on account of its glaring colors, was modified in 1777 by agreement among the naval captains of Boston. But the dashing John Paul Jones would be satisfied with nothing less than gold-bound button holes, gold epaulets and a chapeau in the French style, and he dressed his marines on board the *Alliance* in red and white instead of the prescribed green color. It was, perhaps, a growing tendency on the part of individual captains to indulge in eccentricities of uniform that brought about the pointed Resolution of

Congress of February 28, 1781, "That after the first day of January next, no officer whatsoever in the service of the United States shall in any of them wear on his clothes any gold or silver lace, embroidery or vellum, other than such as Congress or the commander-in-chief of the Army or Navy shall direct for the uniform of the corps, and badges to distinguished officers."

Owing to the loose methods of appointing officers in the Continental Navy by Congress, the Marine Committee, the commanders of ships and squadrons, and the diplomatic agents of the government abroad, and to the destruction by fire and neglect of many official records of war, there have come to us only imperfect lists even of the captains, commanders and lieutenants of that period.

Even if [an accurate record] had been kept, it would not, under the terms of the said resolution, have included midshipmen, who were only warrant officers. It could hardly be expected therefore, that any special notice would be taken of them. Fortunately, however, the names of midshipmen Dale, Preble, and the two Barrons, James and Samuel, have been rescued from oblivion, and we find also mention of a Midshipman John Mayrant, of the *Bon Homme Richard*, who accompanied Lieutenant Dale and the boarding party [that] took possession of the *Serapis*. Midshipman [Mayrant], on reaching the quarter deck of the *Serapis* was run through the thigh by a boarding pike in the hands of a man in the waist, who was ignorant of the surrender, [thus earning] the distinction of being the first and only midshipman of the revolutionary period [known to have been] wounded.

There is also occasional mention in the old books of a *midshipman* no name given. [Historian] Thomas Clark [for example,] relates that Captain Biddle, commanding the *Andrew Doria*, of 14 guns, in 1776, accompanied by a *midshipman*, both being armed, succeeded by sheer determination in taking back to the ship a number of armed deserters who had barricaded themselves in the Lewiston jail. It is stated, too, that during an epidemic of smallpox on the *Doria*, the humane Biddle gave up his own cot to a *midshipman* afflicted with that disease, whom he tenderly nursed till death supervened, sleeping himself on the hard lockers. Clark also refers to a *midshipman* on board the ship *Queen of France*, who communicated to him the particulars of a lucky capture, in one misty day, of 11 vessels of the convoyed Jamaica fleet of 150 sail, by Commodore Whipple's little Continental Squadron.

These unsatisfactory data together with the legislation in Congress, already noticed, affecting the midshipmen of the Continental Navy, are the only positive evidences we have of their existence. That their number was considerable is quite probable in view of the state-

ments of the historians of that period that there were more captains than ships in the service, and many more officers of inferior grades than could be employed at any one time.

Yet neither Clark, in 1813, nor that most industrious of naval chroniclers, Charles W. Goldsborough, in 1824, could find any more information about the midshipmen of the Revolution than has been given above. It is in Goldsborough's interesting "Naval Chronicle," and in the Journals of Congress, that are preserved the imperfect lists of the commissioned officers of the Continental Navy. The honored names of commanding officers—of Ezek Hopkins, the first commodore; of Captains [James] Nicholson, [John] Manly, Biddle (Nicholas), John Barry, [Lambert] Wickes, [Abraham] Whipple, John Paul Jones, and others have come down to us with a sufficient record of their exploits to excite wonder as well as admiration. But the names and services of the midshipmen who shared the toils and triumphs of the Continental Navy must, with the [few] exceptions mentioned [herein,] forever remain unknown.

This excerpt is from T. G. Ford, "American Navigators of the Colonial Period and the Yankee Midshipman," pp. 861-970, September 1906 *Proceedings*.



A FORGOTTEN chapter in the naval history of the American Revolution is to be found in the story of the prison ships in New York Harbor, used by the British for the imprisonment of captured seamen. The name "Jersey," often applied to these ships, was derived from the most famous of them, an old dismantled 64-gun ship of that name.

The first vessel employed as a prison hulk in New York Harbor was a transport, the *Whitby*, which was anchored in Wallabout Bay, or the Wallebocht, as it had been known in Dutch times, on October 20, 1776. Wallabout Bay was a small indentation on the Long Island shore across the East River from Corlears Hook. The Brooklyn Navy Yard is on this little bay, and the British shipping in New York wintered in the channel opposite the present site of the Navy Yard during the whole period of the Revolution. The various prison ships which succeeded the *Whitby* and formed a small squadron of prison hulks were anchored in Wallabout Bay. The shores of the bay were the burial grounds of the prisoners who died during their captivity as well as those among the guard and crews of the prison ships who succumbed. A comparison of the old chart pre-

pared by Jeremiah Johnson with a modern chart shows that Sands Street passes right through one of the principal areas used as a burying ground.

The names of the most important prison vessels in addition to the *Whitby* were the *Good Hope*, a somewhat ironic title for a prison ship, the *Falmouth*, *Prince of Wales*, *Hunter*, *Stromboli*, and *Jersey*.

There are numerous accounts of these ships by prisoners. Many of their descriptions, however, are so melodramatic as to throw doubt on their complete veracity. The best and probably the most authentic narrative is that of Captain Thomas Dring, a New England sea captain who tells a simple and straightforward story that has an air of verity about it such as one often sees in log book entries of events. Dring, when captured, was a mate on the privateer *Chance*, of Providence, R.I. [The crew was sent to the *Jersey* which] was moored in the stream opposite a small dock which was convenient for the landing of parties, watering, and burial. She had been stripped of even her figurehead. The bowsprit remained and was used to hoist in supplies. Her ports were closed and holes 20 inches in diameter crossed by strong bars were cut in her side as air holes. The guard and crew were quartered aft and here also were the cabins of the officers. The personnel in charge of the vessel consisted of the captain, two mates, twelve seamen, and an equal number of superannuated marines. In addition a draft of about 30 soldiers was usually aboard from one of the English or Hessian regiments in New York.

Each prisoner as he was received was brought up to the quarter-deck and his name, rate, and ship on which he was serving when captured was recorded. He was then sent down to the main deck to find a place to deposit his bag, a difficult thing to do on a ship as crowded as these vessels were. The prisoners were formed into messes of six and each morning rations were served out to them. The regular ration allowed was $\frac{2}{3}$ that of the British Navy at that period. All the narrators unite in reviling the food and no doubt it was bad enough. In many instances it seems to have been moldy bread, half spoiled pickled beef and pork, or provisions which had been condemned for regular issue. There were no fresh vegetables. An old bumboat woman known as Dame Grant supplied vegetables as well as sugar, milk, and other delicacies to prisoners fortunate enough to have a little money to pay for them. She was very corpulent, so much so that she could scarcely climb the gangway, and parcels of her wares, with prices affixed, were delivered by two boys who rowed her boat. She died in 1780 and her death was greatly deplored by the inmates of the hulks.

The prison ships offered ideal ground for contagious diseases to take root and flourish. In addition to the

common respiratory diseases such as colds, tonsillitis, influenza, and pneumonia, the contagious fevers, measles, scarlet fever, chicken pox, and small pox were soon introduced with dire results. No doubt diphtheria and epidemic meningitis were present at times. Typhus fever and smallpox, however, were the diseases most prevalent. The former, or "jail fever," spread as it is by the body louse, was a scourge of the century jails;



Captain Thomas Dring

the absence of proper bathing and laundry facilities and the consequent infestation of clothing with vermin, making it a disease of epidemic proportions among prisoners.

Smallpox, before the time of Jenner and the discovery of vaccination, was a disease from which no one escaped. The only thing which prevented its causing wholesale epidemics among the adult population was the fact that most of the people who lived to become adults had acquired immunity by an attack in childhood. Dysentery and typhoid were causes of many deaths, though they were of lesser importance apparently than typhus and smallpox. Scurvy must have occurred on such a diet as the prisoners received, though it does not receive much notice. It is more than probable that enough potatoes or other fresh vegetables were obtainable to keep it in check to some degree.

The captives were allowed on deck during the day and sent below at sunset and gratings placed over the hatches at which sentries with fixed bayonets were posted. In hot weather conditions in the crowded 'tween decks may well be imagined. No lights were allowed and to move about in the crowded space was difficult. The after part of what had been the gun deck was occupied by the captured officers. This was not a regulation of the captors but a custom established among the prisoners themselves. They also had a system of regulations made up which they followed as well as they could under the circumstances.

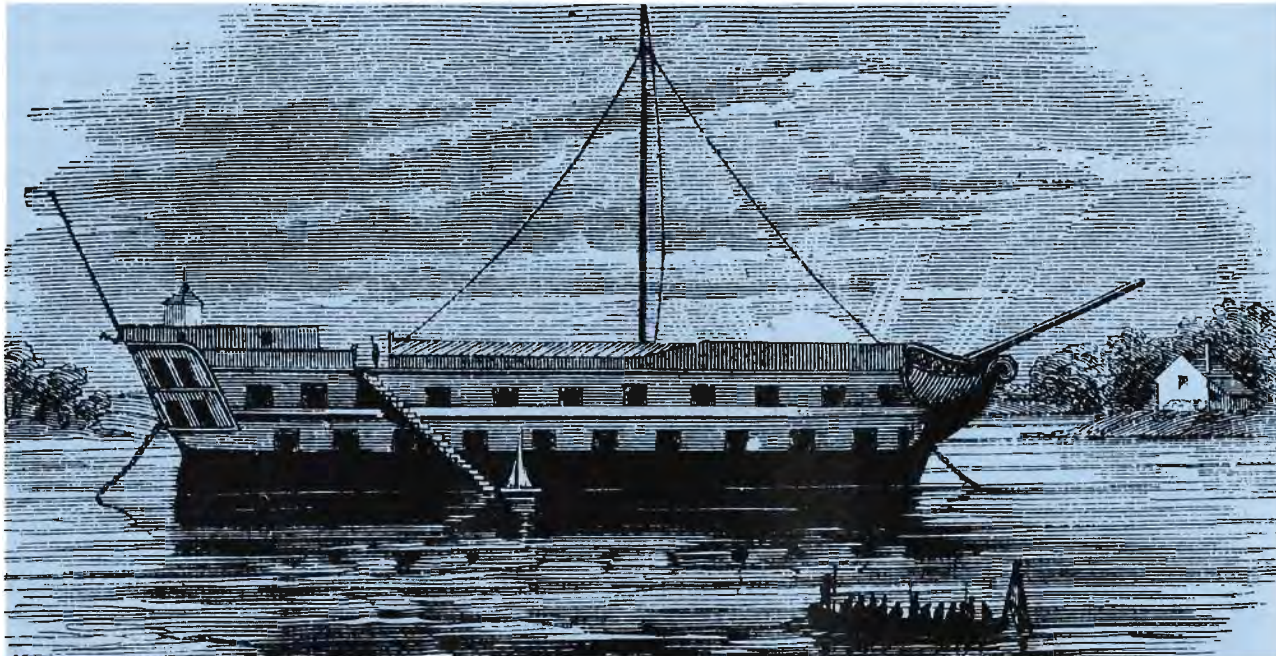
Many of the prisoners slept in hammocks, others on the deck. One side were a number of bunks for the sick. These were usually full, of course, though the very ill were transferred to the hospital ships, of which there were three, the *Falconer*, *Good Hope*, and *Hunter*. The latter was rather a medical depot ship than a hospital ship, and from her, if weather permitted, a British surgeon responded to a call from one of the prison ships. Prisoners were detailed as nurses, though Dring says that they robbed the sick and dying rather than cared for them.

A working detail was made up each morning and sent ashore as water and provision party. It was in charge of one of the captured officers and accompanied, of course, by a guard. This duty was eagerly sought by the prisoners who welcomed it as an opportunity to get away from the noisome and crowded prison ship and to set their feet on the ground again.

Many attempts to escape were made and some were successful. The strongly barred ports were sometimes forced and men lowered themselves over the side and swam for it. As the distance was about 2 miles, in order to avoid landing on a beach well patrolled by sentries, a number were probably drowned in such attempts. Dring records an attempt in which the fugitives were fired on by the guard and pursued in an armed boat, one man being fatally wounded with a cutlass and brought aboard to die.

The most successful escape attempt involved about 35 men. They rushed the sentries, disarmed them, and taking possession of a small schooner alongside made sail and were soon out of sight.

No doubt conditions on the ships varied, much depending on the character of commanding officer and subordinates, and such circumstances as the weather, time of year, presence of epidemic diseases, and particularly the number of prisoners on board and consequent crowding. Washington made frequent representation to the British of bad conditions prevailing and the British naval commanders, notably Admiral Byron and Admiral Digby, expressed concern regarding the situation of the prisoners and exerted themselves to alleviate their



The Prison Ship Jersey

hard lot. Their efforts were not apparently without success for in 1782 a report of six American shipmasters on parole stated that,

they had been on board the prison and hospital ships to inspect the state of the American naval prisoners and found them in as comfortable situation as it is possible for prisoners to be on board ship and much better than they had an idea of.

The dead were buried on shore by details made up from the prisoners. Burials were in the loose sands of the seashore and the action of wind and wave exposed the bones of those who had been buried. The remains of some Hessian and British soldiers were also buried there.

It is impossible to ascertain with much exactitude the total number of captives held in the prison ships. The ships were used almost exclusively for maritime prisoners. Indeed, Washington in a letter to General Howe dated January 13, 1777, protesting regarding the treatment of the prisoners, refers to them as "officers and men in our naval department."

Dring and some others mention that prisoners were exclusively sailors. Not all naval prisoners were held on the New York ship but practically all were confined there. There was one ship at Halifax and some captured seamen were held in England, most of them at Mill Prison at Plymouth, and Forton Prison at Portsmouth. The number was not large, however, probably not above a few thousand. The Jersey prison ships were the

principal places of confinement for men captured at sea. A large number of captured privateers were released by the British sometimes without parole, merely for lack of a suitable place for confinement and to avoid the necessity of feeding and guarding them. It is equally difficult to arrive at the number who died on the Jersey ships.

It is highly probable that [an] estimate of 11,000 deaths in these prison ships during the whole period of the war is not far from the truth.

This excerpt is from Louis H. Roddis, "The New York Prison Ships in the American Revolution," pp. 331-336, March 1935 *Proceedings*.



THE FRIGATE *Alliance* was by all odds the most remarkable ship ever built or purchased by that interesting organization, the Continental Navy. Not only did she have the well-deserved reputation of being the fastest ship in the service, but she never experienced defeat in any engagement, being always able to fight or fly as circumstances warranted. She also took part in what is believed to be the last armed engagement of the Revolution, and fired the last shot in that long and momentous conflict. For her commanders she had the two most notable seamen that the Revolution produced, John

Paul Jones and John Barry, and she twice bore the gallant Lafayette back to his native France. In her career as a naval vessel she made twelve distinct voyages, and after the war, as a merchant vessel, made one of the longest and most notable voyages of her time. Because of her beauty, her speed, and her many victories, she endeared herself to the people of the infant republic, so that she became known as the favorite ship of the Revolution. After the war it was not without real protest and much indignation that she was sold out of the public service for an insignificant sum. Foreigners, as well as Americans, were admirers of this handsome American-built ship.

The *Alliance* was built on the Merrimack River, at Salisbury, Massachusetts, by two of the most famous New England shipwrights of the time, William and John Hackett, partners and cousins, and descendants of a long line of distinguished shipwrights. Into the *Alliance* they built the exquisite workmanship that will always stand as the finest kind of monument to their memory. Other shipbuilders had refused to join them in the undertaking, for the new Republic was a most uncertain venture, it finances at best in a chaotic condition, and whoever did risk their time and money in her building, risked their personal fortunes as well. For should the rebellious colonies be subjected, her builders could never be paid. In undertaking her construction, the Hacketts showed a fine patriotism and unlimited faith in the ultimate success of their country's cause.

Though she was not launched until May, 1778, her building was contemplated months before the Declaration of Independence. The people of Salisbury are still proud of their town's part in the building of this famous ship. The spot where she was built is marked by a bronze tablet given by the Town Improvement Association of Amesbury (in early times a part of Salisbury).

It is a pleasure to recount that the Hacketts were paid for their work, for six months after the *Alliance* had sailed from Boston on her first voyage, the commissioners of the Navy Board of the Eastern Department were instructed by the Marine Committee of Congress to allow the shipbuilders 2,100 pounds sterling which they claimed to have lost by their contract for her construction, and finished their instructions by adding: "You will report what farther compensation will be proper to do compleat justice to the said builders." [The *Alliance's*] keel was 125 feet long, and her beam 36 feet, 6 inches. She was of about 900 tons burden, a very large ship for her day. Her main-topmast was 18 inches in diameter, and her mainyard 84 feet long. Shipbuilders thought her to be too long, narrow, shoal, and sharp, and to be over-sparred. In a good wind she could make about 14 knots, showing that

William Hackett, her designer, did not err greatly in planning her. As she was built on the Merrimack River, which had a bar at the mouth, Hackett had to build her shoal to get her over the bar. Work was begun on her in April, 1777, or early in May, and we know that she was completed far enough to be taken around to Boston by August 10, 1778, eighteen days after the delivery of the last of the iron.

On May 29, 1778, Congress itself took a hand in her naming. They adopted this resolution: "*Resolved*, that the new Continental frigate built at Salisbury, in the state of Massachusetts Bay, and lately launched, be called the *Alliance*." The new frigate was named in honor of the new alliance made with France, an act which had renewed hope in the minds of Americans for the ultimate success of their cause.

On August 10, 1778, she made her initial venture on salt water, for a voyage it could hardly be called, when she was brought around to Boston and anchored in the harbor. Here she remained for the rest of the summer and the following autumn, taking on supplies, and having the finishing touches put on her in preparation for active service. But it was not until December that the British Admiralty learned of her existence. On December 20 a British spy reported to Admiral Gambier, of the Royal Navy, that on that day there were lying in Boston Harbor a number of frigates, which he proceeded to name, and that there was also in the port the frigate *Alliance*, built at Salisbury, and fitting out for her first voyage. The spy reported that it was next to impossible to get crews for these frigates as nearly every available seaman had signed up with some privateer, where the opportunities for rich prizes and sudden wealth were far greater than on the frigates owned by the struggling Colonies. We shall see how this difficulty in securing crews nearly proved fatal to the *Alliance* very early in her career.

Soon after her launching the question arose as to what officer should be made her commander, for only the most experienced and gallant seamen could be considered for so vital a responsibility. The redoubtable John Manley was first considered, and he would most certainly have given a good account of himself. But on June 19, 1778, Congress decided to give this honor and responsibility to Captain Pierre Landais. This choice was no doubt influenced by questions of policy and a desire to please our French allies. And knowing what they did of the man, it seemed to be a wise and judicious choice. Landais had been an officer in the French Navy, a seaman with wide experience, accustomed to command. His appointment to the command of an American ship named in honor of the French alliance would most certainly be pleasing to France, to whom we were deeply indebted for supplies fur-

nished to our armies. The first errand of the *Alliance* was to carry General Lafayette to France, and to bring back a cargo of supplies.

On December 9, 1778, it was reported to the Marine Committee that the *Alliance* had 180 men on board including her officers. Her guns were on board and some of her sails bent and ready. About 50 or 60 men were needed to complete her crew, and various odd jobs had to be finished by different tradesmen. Three days later Lafayette was informed by the Navy Board at Boston that they had been ordered to prepare a frigate for his return and had chosen the *Alliance*, that the voyage would be made with "all Expedition the Season will admit of." The Board desired to know how many of his friends he wished to take with him, not forgetting to inform him that Captain Landais had suggested that he could not give proper accommodations for more than six. As a matter of fact 18 officers accompanied the General, which did not make matters any pleasanter or easier for Captain Landais.

When Lafayette reached Boston he found that the ship still lacked a full crew; the privateers had signed up about all the available seamen, and the men who were to be found did not like the idea of sailing under the Frenchman, Landais. The Massachusetts Council voted to resort to press gangs to make up a crew but Lafayette would not hear of it. So the crew was made up by enlisting convicts, deserters from the British army, and English and Irish prisoners who were glad to escape confinement by serving for the voyage.

Captain Landais was made well aware of the nature of his crew and was told that he had a "number of Seditious, Mutinous, and refractory British seamen" on board his ship. He was ordered to keep double sentries of loyal men posted at all times, and to watch for and prevent "any attempt those fellows may make." On January 14, 1779, the *Alliance* sailed with a consort, the frigate *Deane*, from Boston, but they parted the third day out. On the voyage the ship ran into heavy weather and lost her main-topmast. Lafayette was no seaman and thought they were about to founder.

To increase their difficulties, a mutiny was discovered, fortunately before any harm was done. The warning came from an Irish-American sailor, who was thought by the mutineers to be friendly to them. He pointed out the ringleaders as they lay fast asleep in their hammocks. The hammock-ropes were cut, dropping the men without much ceremony to the deck where they were overpowered and placed in irons. Thirty-eight men were taken in this way, all British or Irish sailors. The sergeant of marines and the master-at-arms had planned it all. They had counted on taking the ship to some port in England or Ireland. Captain Landais, who had incurred the active dislike of the men,

was to be put in irons and to be set adrift in the ship's cutter without food or drink; the junior officers were to be made to walk the plank in good old pirate fashion, if they should refuse to navigate the ship as the mutineers directed; the marine officers and the ship's surgeon were to be hanged and thrown overboard; Lafayette was to be put in irons and to be taken to England. To these facts, William Murray, the mutinous marine sergeant, testified under oath. The American Navy has been singularly free from mutiny of its seamen, and none have been worthy of record in the Navy as it has since been organized under the Constitution. In the Navy of the Revolution there were at least two mutinies worthy of the name, both fortunately discovered and crushed before much harm could be done, and both these mutinies occurred on board the *Alliance*.

The *Alliance* dropped anchor at Brest on February 6, 1779, twenty-three days out from Boston, a fast passage, considering her troubles en route. Two British prizes had been taken on the voyage, the first in her career. Thus ended her first voyage. The *Alliance* lay at Brest for some time, but finally was brought around to Groix Roads near Lorient where John Paul Jones was equipping and manning a squadron for a cruise around Great Britain. It had been planned to send the *Alliance* back to America as soon as she could be provided with a cargo of munitions, but she was detained by Franklin and made a part of Jones's squadron.

She was by all odds the finest vessel of his fleet and it seems now that Jones should have had her for his flagship. Instead he commanded the *Bon Homme Richard*, a converted East Indiaman. Besides these two vessels there were three other ships in the squadron, the *Pallas*, a 32-gun frigate, the *Cerf*, an 18-gun cutter, and the *Vengeance* of 12 guns. The squadron sailed from Groix Roads on June 19, 1779, but owing to an accident the next night when the *Alliance* and the *Bon Homme Richard* fouled each other, carrying away the *Alliance's* mizzenmast and the *Bon Homme Richard's* jib boom, the squadron returned to the Roads for repairs. This accident Jones blamed on Landais and it was probably the beginning of an enmity between the two men. The squadron sailed from this port a second time on August 14 on a voyage that was to bring Jones deathless renown, and in which Landais lost whatever reputation for gallantry he ever possessed.

On this voyage Jones fought one of the most hotly contested single-ship engagements in all history, capturing the *Serapis* and her crew on the night of September 23-24, 1779, and the Frenchman Landais disgraced himself by firing into his own flagship, instead of coming to Jones's rescue. The story of this cruise and of this battle have been told many times by able his-

torians and need not be repeated here. But when the American-French fleet with the captured *Serapis* reached the Texel, ending the second voyage of the *Alliance*, Jones preferred charges against Landais to his superior in Paris, Benjamin Franklin. Franklin after reading Jones's charges ordered Landais back to Paris, and Jones took command of the ship. The British fleet lay outside the harbor waiting for Jones to come out, and the *Alliance* was prepared for a desperate escape when the first opportunity offered. The log of the *Alliance* during her stay at the Texel is interesting:

"Sunday, Dec. 19th—Moderate breezes and thick Weather. A.M. Careened Ship, and Scrubbed her Bottom. Tuesday, Dec. 21st—Swayed up the lower yards; and began to unmoor Ship, but before we could accomplish it the Wind changed to the Westward. (Jones was awaiting a favorable wind to make good his escape.) Monday, Dec. 27th—At 10 cut the cable, and got under Way, with several Dutch Men of War, and a number of Merchantmen, at 11 got clear of the Bay and Hove to for a boat to take out the Pilot."

The *Alliance* was at last clear of her prison and had an opportunity to show her commander how fast she could sail when the need arose. The New Year found them still at sea. On January 8 an English brig was captured and Jones put a prize crew on board her. For a week Jones cruised south of Cape Finisterre, and on the 17th, "At 1 P.M. saw the Land near Ferrol. At 4 Came to an Anchor in the Harbour of Corunna." This ended her third cruise. But "All the People refused Doing Duty, until they got some Part of the Money due them."

Jones turned over the command of the ship to Richard Dale, his first officer, and set out for Paris, where he received many of the honors so dear to his heart. Dale unrigged the ship and gave her a thorough overhauling. In Jones's absence, Landais, with the encouragement of Arthur Lee, one of the American Commissioners in Paris, stirred up a spirit of revolt against Jones on the ship. He tried to make the crew believe that Jones was endeavoring to cheat them out of their wages and prize money, and that he, Landais, was the rightful commander of the ship, appointed to it by Congress itself, which indeed was true. But Franklin had suspended him, and Franklin had been given sole management of our naval interests in France. It was really a struggle for power between the two men, Benjamin Franklin and Arthur Lee, and the *Alliance* was a pawn in the game. The French Ministry declined to take sides in the contest.

Early in June, 1780, Jones returned from Paris, expecting to sail on the *Alliance* for America, but during

a temporary absence from the ship, Landais came aboard. Here let the matter-of-fact watch officer of the *Alliance* tell the story as he set it down in the *Alliance's* log:

"Monday, June 12, 1780. Begins Moderate and Clear, Employd Hauling the Brig from along side up to the Key, the Tide of Ebbing making could not get her up. Returned with the Boat & People, Capt. Landy came on board, and took Command, he said by Orders of Congress, his Orders were read to the Officers & People. Capt. Landy Ordered all the Officers, that belonged to the late *Bon Homme Richard*, Capt. Jones, on Shore, and any other Officer, that would not Acknowledge him Capt. of the *Alliance*. Capt. Jones came on Shore—Capt. Jones set out for Paris."

About July 1, 1780, the *Alliance* set out for America under the command of Landais, with a number of passengers, including Arthur Lee. But Landais neglected to take aboard the clothing needed for the American armies. On the voyage Landais quarreled violently with his erstwhile friend, Arthur Lee, and behaved in such an erratic manner that it was believed his mind was deranged. In mid-ocean, on August 10, 1780, he was



Pierre Landais



John Barry

deprived of his command, and the ship turned over to his first lieutenant, James Degge, who brought her safely to Boston, arriving August 16. The *Alliance* had thus completed her fifth voyage and her first round trip across the Atlantic and back.

Landais was tried by court-martial of which Captain John Barry was president, and was dismissed from the service. Thus ended Landais' semi-tragic connection with the American Navy. He lived to be a very old man, ending his days on Long Island at the age of 87.

Immediately upon the arrival of the *Alliance* in Boston Harbor with her deposed commander, the ques-

tion arose as to who should next be put in command. Congress decided on John Barry of Philadelphia; their choice met with widespread approval. He was known as a capable man long before the war, and during the war had distinguished himself on many occasions. Next to Jones himself, his name has come down to us as one of the really great commanders produced by the Continental Navy. Before the *Alliance* was made ready there was the same difficulty in making up her crew that was experienced before her first voyage. It again became necessary to enroll a certain number of British prisoners. As a result Barry had to deal with a treacherous crew, but a better man to handle such a crew never trod a ship's deck.

The ship put to sea February 11, 1781, and on her as passengers sailed John Laurens, with dispatches for Franklin, and Thomas Paine, the distinguished philosopher and patriot.

On March 4, five days before the frigate reached the French coast, Barry captured a British privateer, the *Alert*, and with her a prize of the *Alert's* flying the flag of the Republic of Venice.

The *Alliance* reached Lorient safely on March 9, 1781, after a passage of 26 days. This ended her sixth voyage. Twenty days later she set out on her return trip accompanied by a large French privateer, the *Marquis de Lafayette*, loaded with stores for Washington's army. This was one of the most eventful voyages of her career. For a second time in her crowded history a mutiny broke out. This time the informant was an Indian member of the crew, who gave the names of the three ringleaders. The Irish skipper was equal to the occasion. The three mutineers were seized, hung by their thumbs, and flogged until they named 25 of their accomplices. The three men were then put in irons for the remainder of the voyage and the others released on their promise of good behavior.

On this same voyage, on April 2, Barry captured two British brigs, the *Mars* and the *Minerva*, but a gale of wind came up and the *Alliance* parted with the captures and with her consort. This consort, the *Marquis de Lafayette*, was afterwards captured and taken to Halifax. A month later two other captures were made, and on May 7 the main-topmast was split its entire length by a bolt of lightning. On May 29 the *Alliance* fell in with two British men-of-war, the *Atalanta* and the *Trepassy*, and after a 4-hour gun duel forced them to strike their colors. In this action Barry received a grape shot wound in the shoulder.

During the summer and fall of 1781, while history-making events were in progress, the Yorktown campaign was on and, Cornwallis captured, the *Alliance* lay at anchor in Boston Harbor, taking no part in the campaign. But on November 27 Barry received word



THE MARINERS MUSEUM, NEWPORT NEWS

The Continental frigate Alliance captures the Atalanta and the Trespassy in 1781.

from Robert Morris, acting for the Board of Admiralty, that he was to carry Lafayette back to France and with him a number of French officers, specified by name, *but no one else*. In his entertainment of these officers he was to remember "that we are not rich enough to be extravagant nor so poor as to act meanly." Lafayette came on board on December 23 and Barry weighed anchor at once. The *Alliance* made another fast eastward passage, dropping anchor at Lorient January 18, 1782, twenty-six days out of Boston. This completed the eighth and one of the most uneventful voyages of her career. On February 10, 1782, she sailed on her ninth cruise, chased many vessels without a single capture, spoke with sixteen, all of whom proved to be neutrals, and on February 27 returned to Lorient with her crew no richer than when they left.

Barry sailed for Boston on March 9, and made the Atlantic passage without incident, sighting Cape Henlopen on May 10. Here she was chased by H.M.S. *Chatham*, 64 guns, and was prevented from sailing up Delaware Bay. Now it was that the *Alliance's* shoal construction saved her, for Barry, to escape from his pursuer, sailed into shallow waters along the Jersey coast and the heavy British line-of-battle ship could not follow him. The *Alliance* arrived at New London, Connecticut, on May 13. In her escape she logged 15 knots. This completed her tenth voyage.

She left New London again on August 4, 1782, at four in the morning. At seven they recaptured an American brig and sent her into New London. Barry then cruised off the Bermudas with small success, and then changed his cruising ground to the waters off Newfoundland, where he took a number of prizes, some of which he sent to Boston, and others to France.

Having now more prisoners on board than could be accommodated with humanity, and fearing an uprising, he sailed for France, arriving at Lorient October 17, and ending the eleventh voyage of his ship. While at Lorient Barry was stricken with bilious fever. While in bed he received a peremptory letter from seven of his officers complaining of overdue wages.

Barry had no money with which to meet their demands and they refused to come aboard until two-thirds of their wages had been paid them. The upshot of the matter was that Barry appointed two men from his crew as acting lieutenants and sailed without them. With himself the only commissioned officer on board, he sailed from Lorient on December 9, 1782, and arrived at Martinique January 8, 1783. Here Barry received orders to proceed to Havana. On this leg of her cruise he was chased by a British fleet and by a ship-of-the-line, but easily escaped. At Havana he found the *Duc de Lauzun*, a small ship which had been purchased by Robert Morris for the Navy. Barry was to act as a convoy of this ship to the United States. They left Havana on March 6. On the 10th they sighted three British ships, men-of-war, which proved to be the frigates *Alarm* and *Sybil* and the sloop *Tobago*. On Barry's advice the *Duc de Lauzun*, a slow sailer, threw her guns overboard and ran before the wind. Barry then sailed between his consort and the *Sybil* and engaged the latter in a running fight which lasted a half-hour. In this fight the cabin of the *Alliance* was struck, and Barry's choice set of dishes completely ruined. Ten of his men were wounded, but the *Sybil* sheered off. The *Tobago* and the *Alarm* took no part in the fight.

After this engagement the voyage was continued, but the *Alliance* and her consort became separated off Cape Hatteras. Off the Delaware Capes Barry found two British cruisers on blockade, so set his course for Newport, arriving there on March 20, 1783. The *Lauzun* succeeded in getting into the Delaware, arriving at Philadelphia on March 21. This completed the twelfth and last voyage of the *Alliance* as a navy ship. The fight of the *Alliance* with the *Sybil* was, as far as we can learn, the last engagement of the Revolution. It was fought on March 10, 1783, and provisional articles of peace had already been signed at Paris on November 30, 1782. On January 20, 1783, an armistice had been arranged. Barry and Captain Vashon of the *Sybil* were, of course, ignorant of this arrangement. Robert Morris issued orders to all naval commanders on March 25 recalling them and causing them to refrain from further hostilities. In the spring of 1783 only five ships remained in the Navy. They were the *Alliance*, the *Hague*, the *Bourbon*, the *General Washington*, and the *Duc de Lauzun*. This latter ship was loaned to France, where she was taken, converted into a transport,

and sold. In the late summer the *Bourbon* and the *Hague* were advertised and sold. The *General Washington* was kept for a year longer as a packet and then also sold. This left the *Alliance* the only remaining ship in the Navy.

But by this time she was badly in need of repairs. A survey found that these repairs would amount to \$5,866.66. The controversy was dragged out in Congress until May 23, 1785, when a committee recommended her sale. In the meantime it had been proposed to repair and equip her, and give her to the Barbary powers as a bribe to keep them from interfering with our merchantmen. Fortunately, nothing came of this disgraceful proposal. The auction took place on Tuesday, August 2, 1785. On Friday, August 5, her actual sale was reported to Congress. The sale price as reported was \$26,000 in public securities; the buyers were John Coburn and a Mr. Whitehead. They subsequently sold the frigate at a handsome profit to Robert Morris.

Since the close of the war, the United States had been free from the domination of the East India Company, and her citizens were at liberty to engage in trade in the Far East. Morris saw the possibilities of using his fast-sailing ship to secure his share of that trade. He engaged Thomas Read, a veteran of the Revolution, for her commander, and Richard Dale, John Paul Jones's first officer, as his first mate. He armed her with 12-pounders, and she sailed down the Delaware June 20, 1787. She arrived at Canton safely on December 22 of the same year, the second Philadelphia ship to sail for the Far East, and the first to make an out-of-season passage. This was done by rounding the Cape of Good Hope, "running the easting down," passing around the southern extremity of Australia, and thence north to the mainland of Asia. It is claimed that the Lords of the British Admiralty subsequently made inquiries of Morris concerning the track of his ship.

She made the return trip to Philadelphia safely, arriving there September 19, 1788, after an absence of 14 months. Her cargo was worth about a half-million dollars and temporarily saved Morris from bankruptcy. Her further career as a merchantman we have been unable to trace, but after a time she became unseaworthy, and for many years her hull was beached on Petty's Island opposite Philadelphia, where she was for a long time an object of interest to sight-seers. At low tide her timbers were visible until as late as 1901 when the American Dredging Company destroyed the remains of her hulk while engaged in widening the channel.

This excerpt is from Louis H. Bolander, "The Frigate *Alliance*, the Favorite Ship of the American Revolution," pp. 1249-1258, September 1937 *Proceedings*.



THE DECISIVE influence of naval power in winning the Revolution is clearly portrayed in this impressionistic view [see facing page] of the joint land and sea situation at Yorktown in the autumn of 1781. It represents the fruition of the naval strategy of General Washington who had pleaded earnestly since 1778 for a strong French Fleet to act in concert with his army.

When the large French Army under [Comte de] Rochambeau had arrived at Newport in 1780, Washington would not then employ it actively because no fleet was available. He contended formally to the French general that: "In any operations, and under all circumstances, a decisive naval superiority is to be considered as a fundamental principle, and the basis upon which every hope of success must ultimately depend."

Washington never receded from this position. Over and over again for nearly three years he had pleaded for decisive naval support, maintaining that it "was the pivot upon which everything turned," that "whatever efforts are made by land armies, the navy must have the deciding vote in the present contest," and many similar expressions. His superlative wisdom and judgment in military-naval strategy was amply proved by

the Yorktown campaign which won our War of Independence.

By means of fast frigates in the summer of 1781 Washington communicated with Admiral Comte de Grasse and arranged that the French Fleet should sail from the West Indies to the Chesapeake in conjunction with the movement of the Franco-American Army by land and water from north of New York to Yorktown, where the British Army under Cornwallis had fortified itself. The safe transportation of the Allied Army by water from upper Chesapeake Bay to Jamestown was contingent upon naval protection by De Grasse against attack of the British Fleet under Admiral [Thomas] Graves.

After a long march from the Hudson, Washington reached the head of Chesapeake Bay on September 6 and arranged for water transport in advance of news from De Grasse. The latter had arrived and anchored his twenty-eight ships-of-the-line to guard the lower entrance to the bay a week before. The troops that had been brought up in the fleet from the West Indies were immediately landed on the James River as a reinforcement to Lafayette, then confronting Yorktown. Some French ships were sent to the mouth of the York

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The battle off the Virginia Capes, 5 September 1781.

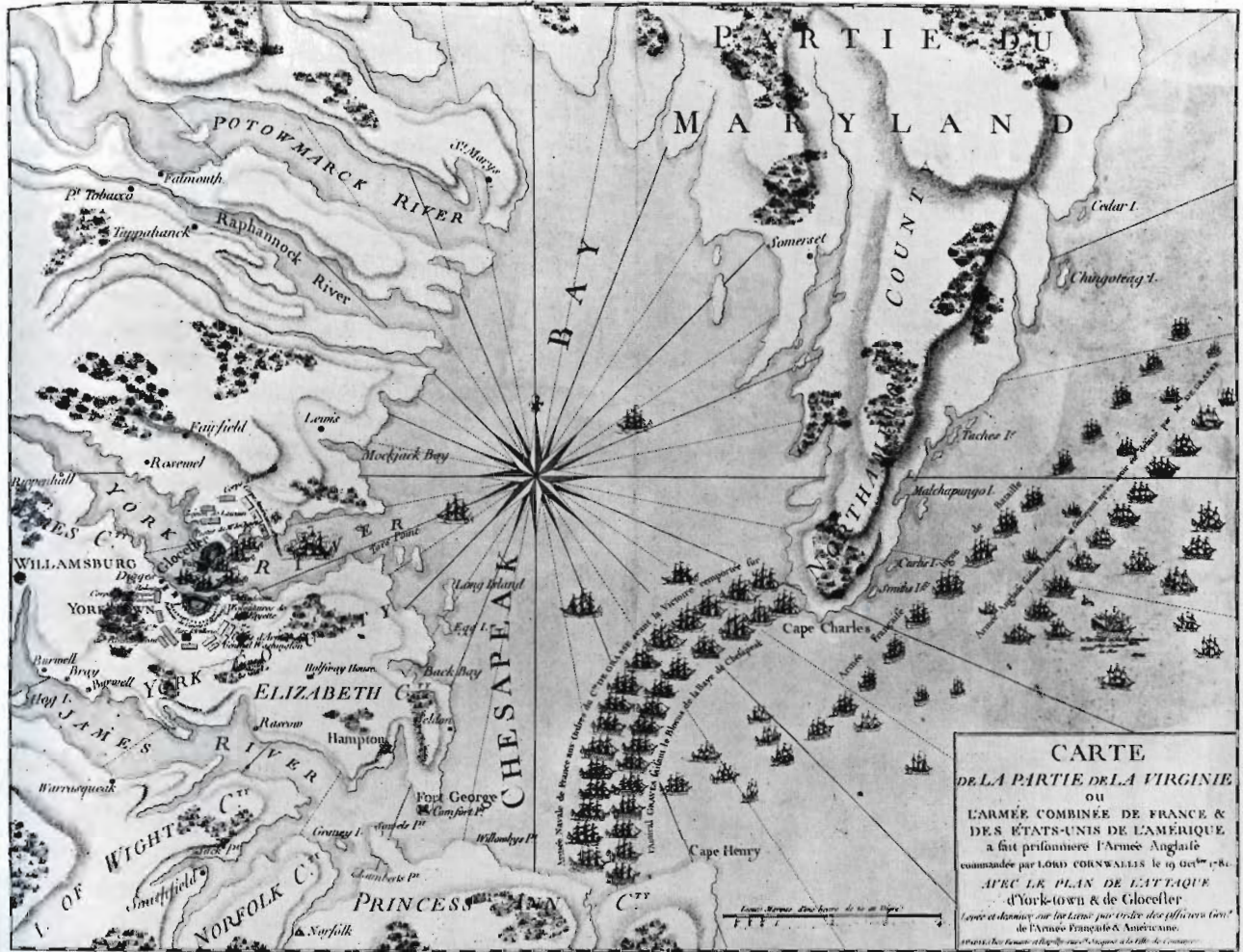


Diagram of the battle of the Virginia Capes which led to Cornwallis' surrender in 1781.

River to prevent the exit of British ships there that might interrupt Washington's projected movement down Chesapeake Bay to the James.

The British Fleet of nineteen ships from New York approached the Chesapeake entrance on September 5, the day before Washington reached the far northern end of that bay. Preferring to fight while under way, the Comte de Grasse went out to meet the British. Only the van ships fought one another east-southeast of Cape Henry, and the action was broken off towards sunset. Several days of calms or very light airs followed, during which the two fleets drifted nearly one hundred miles to the southward while within sight but out of gun range of each other.

Finally on September 9 De Grasse took advantage of a favorable wind and made all sail for the Chesapeake. His principal mission was to support the operation against Yorktown and this necessitated protection of the movement of Washington's army down the Chesapeake. He could not risk allowing the faster

British Fleet to slip into Chesapeake Bay ahead of him, perhaps destroy a waterborne Allied Army and succor [Major General Charles] Cornwallis. Thus baffled, the British Fleet returned to New York.

Meanwhile Washington had learned of the absence of the French Fleet from Chesapeake Bay and accordingly delayed his water movement to Jamestown until its return. With this indispensable protection renewed he then moved to Jamestown. When later he proceeded by land to the investment of Yorktown, Cornwallis became aware of the hopelessness of possible relief by sea and surrendered after very little fighting. Thus was Washington fully justified in his long sustained contention that a "decisive naval superiority" to act in concert with his army was essential to bring victory to American arms.

This article is reprinted from Dudley W. Knox, "Yorktown: September-October 1781," pp. 952-953, August 1945 *Proceedings*.