



Vessel History

USS Constitution – Frigate Old Ironsides

Vessel Name: USS Constitution

Class: 44-gun frigate

Hull: Wood

Masts: 3 - 198' foremast, 220' mainmast, 172.5' mizzenmast – see below.

Designed by: Humphreys - Joshua Humphreys (1751-1838)

Build date: 1794-1797

Launched: October 21, 1797

Built by: Edmund Hartt's Shipyard

Built at: Boston, Massachusetts on a slip laid for the purpose in the North End of Boston, approximately at the eastern end of the present day Coast Guard Base.

Built for: United States Navy

Named for: Constitution of the United States - named by George Washington

Tonnage: 1,576

Displacement: 2,200

Length: 204': 175' at waterline

Beam: 43'6"

Depth of hold: 14'3"

Draught: 21' forward: 23' aft

Decks: Orlop, Berth, Gun, Spar

Sail area: 42,710 sq ft on 3 masts

Crew: 450 including 55 Marines & 30 boys

NRHP: 66000789

1884: "A resident of Belfast, Maine, declares that within one hundred rods of his house there is a stump from which was cut one of the masts of the frigate Constitution. The stump is almost obliterated. It was pointed out to the resident, who is now eighty-five years of age, by his father. The father saw the tree cut. Another tree had been selected for the mast, but it was lodged and broke while being floated down to tide-water." - Harper's Weekly, February 2, 1884, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1415. p. 75.

Disposition: See the USS Constitution Museum, Charlestown Navy Yard, Building 22, Boston, Massachusetts. The vessel is berthed in Boston Naval Shipyard (Boston National Historical Park), on the south side of Chelsea St. in the Charlestown area of Boston. It is operated and maintained by the U.S. Navy in cooperation with the National Park Service. Constitution is at the pier closest to Constitution Road and 3rd Street.

"USS Constitution is a wooden-hulled, three-masted heavy frigate of the United States Navy. Named by President George Washington after the Constitution of the United States of America, she is the world's oldest commissioned naval vessel afloat. Launched in 1797, Constitution was one of six

original frigates authorized for construction by the Naval Act of 1794 and the third constructed. Joshua Humphreys designed the frigates to be the young Navy's capital ships, and so Constitution and her sisters were larger and more heavily armed and built than standard frigates of the period. Built in Boston, Massachusetts, at Edmund Hartt's shipyard, her first duties with the newly formed United States Navy were to provide protection for American merchant shipping during the Quasi-War with France and to defeat the Barbary pirates in the First Barbary War.

Constitution is most famous for her actions during the War of 1812 against Great Britain, when she captured numerous merchant ships and defeated five British warships: HMS Guerriere, Java, Pictou, Cyane and Levant. The battle with Guerriere earned her the nickname of "Old Ironsides" and public adoration that has repeatedly saved her from scrapping. She continued to serve as flagship in the Mediterranean and African squadrons, and circled the world in the 1840s. During the American Civil War, she served as a training ship for the United States Naval Academy. She carried US artwork and industrial displays to the Paris Exposition of 1878.

Retired from active service in 1881, Constitution served as a receiving ship until designated a museum ship in 1907. In 1934 she completed a three-year, 90-port tour of the nation. Constitution sailed under her own power for her 200th birthday in 1997, and again in August 2012, to commemorate the 200th anniversary of her victory over Guerriere.

Constitution's stated mission today is to promote understanding of the Navy's role in war and peace through educational outreach, historic demonstration, and active participation in public events. As a fully commissioned US Navy ship, her crew of 60 officers and sailors participate in ceremonies, educational programs, and special events while keeping the ship open to visitors year round and providing free tours. The officers and crew are all active-duty US Navy personnel and the assignment is considered special duty in the Navy. Traditionally, command of the vessel is assigned to a Navy Commander. Constitution is berthed at Pier 1 of the former Charlestown Navy Yard, at one end of Boston's Freedom Trail." "USS Constitution," Wikipedia, 09/02/13, Accessed online 09/07/13; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Constitution

In the War of 1812, during the British blockade of the east coast, two British frigates, HMS Junon and HMS Tenedos, chased the USS Constitution into Marblehead Harbor and the safety of Fort Sewall.

"When the USS Constitution, "Old Ironsides," was preparing for its 200th anniversary in 1997, the crew from Ralph W. Stanley was called in to help determine if it was seaworthy. So Ralph, Richard and his brother-in-law, Tim Goodwin, went to Boston to conduct a survey of the old warship.

"I went all over that ship," Richard Stanley said. "She was really in good shape. She could have sailed."

They made some suggestions, although he said he didn't know what the Navy did with the ship. It did sail again, he added." - from "Stanley Boat Leaving Southwest Harbor" by Rich Hewitt, Bangor Daily News, August 24, 2009.

The Don Turner Award from the USS Constitution Museum recognizes a person or team of people, professional or amateur, who have contributed significantly to efforts to preserve important vessels or who have made a significant contributions to our knowledge and understanding of ship design

and construction. Ralph Warren Stanley was presented with the award by Anne Grimes Rand, President of the USS Constitution Museum on June 26, 2013.

July 1997, in honor of the 200th anniversary of USS Constitution, "Old Ironsides," commissioning, Capt. William Harland Kelley was chosen to sail the famous 204', 3-masted wooden frigate out of Boston, into Marblehead Harbor and back to Boston. This was her first independent sail in 116 years.