

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

USS CONSTITUTION

A MIDSHIPMAN'S
POCKET MANUAL 1814



USS *CONSTITUTION*
A MIDSHIPMAN'S POCKET
MANUAL, 1814

Compiled and introduced by Eric L. Clements

OSPREY
PUBLISHING

Osprey Publishing
c/o Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
PO Box 883, Oxford, OX1 9PL, UK

c/o Bloomsbury Publishing Inc.
1385 Broadway, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10018, USA
E-mail: info@ospreypublishing.com

www.ospreypublishing.com

OSPREY is a trademark of Osprey Publishing Ltd, a division of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

First published in Great Britain in 2017

© 2017 Eric L. Clements

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be used or reproduced in any form without prior written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. Inquiries should be addressed to the Publisher.

Every attempt has been made by the Publisher to secure the appropriate permissions for material reproduced in this book. If there has been any oversight we will be happy to rectify the situation and written submission should be made to the Publisher.

A CIP catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

Eric L. Clements has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the Author of this Work.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-4728-2793-7
ePub: 978-1-4728-2792-0
ePDF: 978-1-4728-2791-3
XML: 978-1-4728-2794-4

Typeset in Adobe Caslon Pro by Deanta Global Publishing Services, Chennai, India

Front Cover: USS *Constitution* © H. Armstrong Roberts / Classic Stock / Getty Images

Osprey Publishing supports the Woodland Trust, the UK's leading woodland conservation charity. Between 2014 and 2018 our donations are being spent on their Centenary Woods project in the UK.

To find out more about our authors and books visit www.ospreypublishing.com.
Here you will find extracts, author interviews, details of forthcoming events and the option to sign up for our newsletter.

CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Mister Midshipman 17

From the Secretary of the Navy • Oath of Allegiance •
Duties of • Keeping of Journals by • Dress of •
Quarters and Mess of • Deportment of •
An Admonishment to

The Frigate *Constitution* 25

Formation of the Navy • Construction of •
Dimensions, Characteristics, and Features of

Manning *Constitution* 35

The Ship's Company • Lieutenants • The Ship's Divisions •
The Ship's Marines • Pay and Provisions • Ship's Discipline

Matters Medical 46

Injury and Disease at Sea • Cleanliness at Sea

Provisioning *Constitution* 54

Regulations Respecting • Inventory of •
Regarding Slops • Ship's Stores

Sailing *Constitution* 60

Shipboard Routine at Sea • Maneuvering the Ship •
Captain's Orders Pertaining to • Of Signaling •
Of Fire at Sea • Boats and Boatmanship



Boarding the Enemy 75

The Quarter Bill • *Constitution's* Armament • Clearing for Action •
Engaging the Enemy • Boarding

Of Prizes and Pensions 89

Rules Governing Prizes • Pensions Awarded for Naval Service

“Old Ironsides”: Her Exploits of 1812 95

The Declaration • The Chase • Defeat of HMS *Guerriere* •
Defeat of HMS *Java* • Heroes of USS *Constitution* •
British Reaction to the American Victories

A Naval and Nautical Glossary 107

Addenda to the 1816 Edition: *Constitution's* Exploits of 1815 117

Defeat of HMS *Cyane* and HMS *Levant* • A Celebrated Ship

Sources and References 125

Index 137



INTRODUCTION

*“The tenure of a sailor’s existence is certainly more precarious than any other man’s, a soldier’s not excepted. Who would not be a sailor?
I, for one.”*

—*Surgeon Amos A. Evans, USS CONSTITUTION, 1812*

What follows is a book that was never written. In 1814, two years into the War of 1812, the US Navy Department published its revised naval regulations. What if the department, concerned about officer training in the middle of a war, had published a guide for midshipmen at the same time? To extend this fantasy further, what if the department had issued these guides tailored to the classes of vessels or even to the individual ships then in its service? That is the premise of this book.

THE U.S. NAVY IN THE FEDERAL ERA

After ratifying the Treaty of Paris of 1783, ending its Revolutionary War, the United States disbanded its navy, selling off the last of those ships in 1785. The U.S. Navy would be resurrected due to the activities of the Barbary pirates in the Mediterranean. Deprived the aegis of the Royal Navy upon independence, the new country’s merchant vessels became vulnerable to the attacks of the Barbary corsairs operating out of Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers. The corsairs captured American ships and cargoes and held their crews for ransom. In 1794 Congress authorized the creation of a navy and the construction of six ships, among them *USS Constitution*, to address the Mediterranean situation.



Beginning in early 1793 the United States faced another threat to its seaborne trade. The wars of the French Revolution and Napoleonic era would last, with only brief intermissions, from 1792–1815. The United States would attempt to remain neutral during this long conflict and to continue to trade with both Great Britain and France, a posture satisfactory to neither European power. The conflict produced by these circumstances would ultimately lead the United States to declare war on Great Britain in 1812, the war in which USS *Constitution* would win her renown.

THE BARBARY CORSAIRS

At the end of March 1794, having decided that “the depredations committed by the Algerine corsairs on the commerce of the United States render it necessary that a naval force should be provided for its protection,” the U.S. Congress passed “An Act to Provide a Naval Armament.” This authorized the construction and manning of four 44-gun and two of 36-gun frigates, *Constitution* being one of the former vessels.

With its fleet still under construction, however, the United States at first had to negotiate rather than fight. In September 1795 the U.S. signed a treaty with the Dey of Algiers in which it agreed to pay \$1 million to ransom 155 American sailors, and to make annual tribute payments in exchange for an end to corsairs’ attacks on American shipping in the Mediterranean and off the coasts of Spain and Portugal in the Atlantic. Treaties extending similar tributes followed in November 1796 with Tripoli and in August 1797 with Tunis.

THE UNITED STATES AND THE WARS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

In the meantime, the United States confronted another, more powerful foe much closer to home. In February 1793, after the execution of Louis XVI, France went to war against Great Britain, Spain, and the Netherlands. In response, on April 22 President George Washington issued a proclamation of neutrality, declaring that “the duty and interest of the United States require, that they should with sincerity and good faith adopt and pursue a conduct friendly and impartial toward the belligerent Powers.”



The United States would attempt to maintain that policy throughout the wars of the French Revolution and Napoleonic era. The belligerents, however, had little interest in upholding American neutrality and from the start both sides interfered with American trade intended for their adversary. In May 1793 the French government ordered its navy to seize neutral ships carrying supplies to British, Spanish, or Dutch ports. The following month Great Britain countered with orders to seize neutral ships, including American, headed to French ports. This war spread to the Western Hemisphere at the end of the year thanks to a British Order in Council, issued that November, to seize any neutral vessel carrying exports from French colonies in the Caribbean, which led to the capture of American ships and the impressment of their crews.

THE QUASI-WAR, 1796–1800

The Washington administration and later that of John Adams attempted to negotiate U.S. differences with the European powers, but soon discovered that any settlement with one power only provoked retaliation from its opponent. In 1795 the U.S. reached a modest accommodation with Great Britain through Jay's Treaty, only to draw the ire of France, which suspended diplomatic relations with the U.S. at the end of 1796.

In May 1797 President Adams dispatched a three-member commission to Paris to negotiate settlement of the differences with France, but his action only exacerbated the crisis. In October representatives of the French minister of foreign affairs attempted to bribe the U.S. commissioners, seeking payments as a precondition to negotiations. When Adams released details of what came to be called the XYZ Affair to Congress the following April, public outrage led Congress to suspend commerce with France and its dependencies in June 1798 and the following month to renounce the 1778 treaties of alliance and commerce with France. What followed was a two-year-long, undeclared naval war in the Caribbean between French privateers and the new ships of the U.S. Navy. This Quasi-War was settled by the Treaty of Mortefontaine, in which France and the U.S. agreed to resume normal diplomatic relations, end the Quasi-War, and annul the treaties of 1778.



THE FIRST BARBARY WAR, 1801–05

Scarcely had the conflict with France in the Caribbean been resolved before trouble developed again in the Mediterranean. In May 1801 the Pasha of Tripoli, whose demands for greater tribute remained unmet, declared war on the United States. Rather than continue to pay tribute, the new U.S. president Thomas Jefferson, with the naval means at his disposal, decided to challenge the Barbary corsairs in what became the First Barbary War. Five years later, in June 1805, the American campaign culminated in a treaty between the United States and Tripoli, in which the United States agreed to pay a \$60,000 ransom to recover the crew of the captured U.S. frigate *Philadelphia*, but in return Tripoli renounced further privateering or tribute.

EARLY SERVICE OF USS *CONSTITUTION*

USS *Constitution* entered service in July 1798 at the beginning of the Quasi-War. She made two undistinguished patrols during that conflict, then was retained in inactive reserve, “in ordinary,” at Boston from 1801 to 1803. In August 1803 she sailed for the Mediterranean and service in the First Barbary War. She remained in that sea for four years, participated in five bombardments of Tripoli in August and September 1804 as Commodore Edward Preble’s flagship, and the draft of the treaty with Tripoli ending the war was completed aboard *Constitution* on 3 June 1805 under Commodore John Rodgers. After her return to the United States in October 1807 *Constitution* was inactive until being assigned to coastal patrols in August 1809. Her last peacetime cruise before the War of 1812 was a diplomatic mission to France, Holland, and England from August 1811 to February 1812. Her call at Portsmouth, England, came in November 1811, amidst the Anglo-American tensions that would lead to war only seven months later.

THE NAPOLEONIC WARS, 1803–15

By the time the issues had been settled in the Mediterranean with the Barbary States, European hostilities had resumed after a short respite brought about by the Treaty of Aliens of March 1802. This second phase of the French and Allied conflict lasted from the resumption of hostilities between Britain and France in May 1803 until Napoleon’s final defeat at Waterloo in June 1815.

Once again, the U.S. and its trade were caught between the combatants in a crossfire of decrees. In May 1806 Great Britain imposed a blockade on the



northwestern coast of Europe. In response, Napoleon issued the Berlin Decree that November. This established the Continental System, which forbid any country allied to or dependent upon France to trade with Britain. The British government responded with the Orders in Council of November 1807. These forbid French trade with the United Kingdom, its allies, or neutrals, and required neutral ships to stop at an English port for inspection prior to sailing for the Continent. Napoleon countered with the Milan Decree of December 1807, declaring that any ship, including neutral vessels, that called at a British port or permitted inspection by the Royal Navy would be considered British and therefore subject to seizure and confiscation. Thus, if U.S. ships followed the Orders in Council they were liable to French seizure under the Milan Decree; if they adhered to the terms of the Milan Decree, they were liable to British seizure under the Orders in Council.

“FREE TRADE & SAILORS’ RIGHTS”

That same year, this war of decrees concerning neutral rights became a shooting war over impressment on the opposite side of the Atlantic. On 22 June 1807 the 50-gun frigate HMS *Leopard* accosted the 36-gun U.S. frigate *Chesapeake* off Norfolk, Virginia, demanding to board the ship to recover Royal Navy deserters. When *Chesapeake*’s commander refused *Leopard* opened fire, killing three Americans and wounding eighteen. After *Chesapeake* struck her colors *Leopard* removed four of her crewmen, three of them American born.


Intense outrage in the U.S. over the *Chesapeake-Leopard* incident led Congress to pass the Embargo Act in December 1807. This attempted to force both Britain and France to recognize U.S. neutral rights by forbidding American ships to sail for foreign ports and foreign ships from loading cargoes in American ports. Although in the long term American trade embargoes would damage the British economy, in the short term the Embargo Act, passed by a Republican Congress, most injured the maritime trade and economy of Federalist New England. The region’s opposition to trade embargoes and to anti-British policies in general would lead New Englanders to smuggling with British Canada and later to opposing the War of 1812.

On 1 March 1809 Congress replaced the ineffective and unpopular Embargo Act with the Non-Intercourse Act, which reopened overseas commerce with all nations except Britain and France, but empowered the president to reinstate



trade with either country if it renounced its violations of U.S. neutral rights. Fourteen months later, on 1 May 1810 Congress replaced the Non-Intercourse Act with the even weaker and more convoluted Macon's Bill No. 2. This lifted the embargoes yet authorized the president to re-impose the embargo on either Britain or France if the other power agreed to respect U.S. neutral rights. With that, the French government pulled a ruse, implying that the Berlin and Milan decrees had been revoked. Believing this to be so, Madison re-imposed the embargo on Great Britain in November 1810 further straining

Nr. 2612



I, JOSEPH WHIPPLE,
Collector of the District of Portsmouth, State of New-Hampshire,

DO hereby certify, that *Henry Shapley Jr.* —
an American Seamen, aged *forty* — years
or thereabouts, of the height of about *five* feet *5 3/4* inches,
dark — complexion, *dark colored* hair, *gray*
eyes,

was born in *Portsmouth* — in the State
of *New Hampshire* —

has this day produced to me proof in the manner directed in the
Act, intituled, "An act for the Relief and Protection of American
Seamen," and pursuant to the said act, I do hereby certify that the
said *Henry Shapley Jr.* —
is a citizen of the United States of America.

In Witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal of Office,
this *13th* day of *May* 1808

Joseph Whipple



Anglo-American relations. Britain reacted by stationing warships off New York and by continuing to impress American sailors.

Even after France's trick became known to Madison in September 1811, he retained the embargo on Great Britain. Great Britain was seizing more American ships than France, impressing American sailors, and, allegedly, continuing to incite Native American attacks upon American settlers in the northwest. When Madison sent his war message to the U.S. Congress in June 1812 western issues received only brief mention in his catalog of Great Britain's "series of acts hostile to the United States as an independent and neutral nation." Most of his war message was devoted to denouncing Britain's attacks on American neutral trade and its impressment of U.S. citizens. Congress responded on 18 June with a declaration of war, voting a party-line approval, 19 to 13 in the Senate and 79 to 49 in the House. The declaration was supported heartily in the agrarian South and West, and hardly supported at all in the commercial and maritime Northeast.

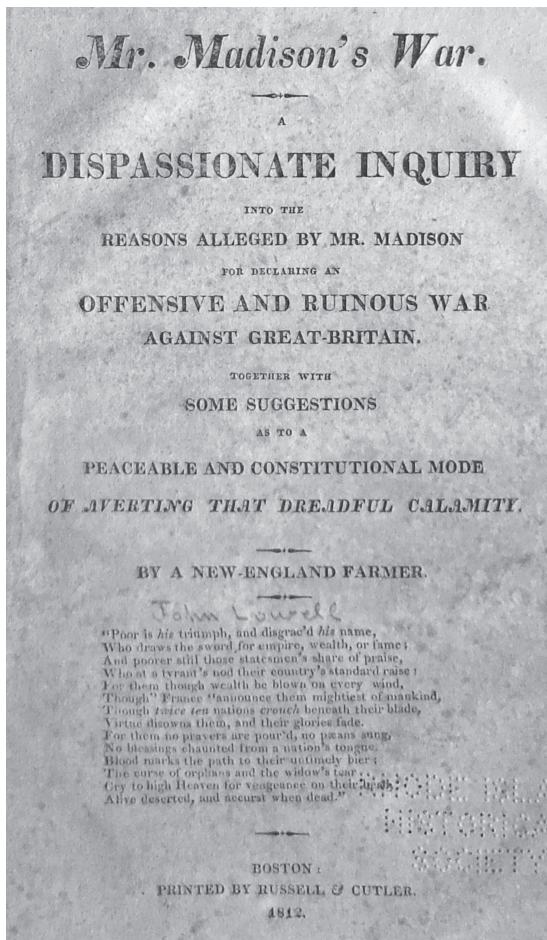
MR. MADISON'S WAR

With the exception of landlocked Vermont, every New England state opposed the war, as did the maritime states of New York, New Jersey, and Delaware. In Boston "A New England Farmer" published "Mr. Madison's War," protesting "an offensive and ruinous war against Great Britain." New England objected officially as well. A week after the declaration of war the governor of Massachusetts declared a statewide fast in protest and the state's legislature issued a proclamation declaring the war to be against the public interest and promising to provide military forces only for defense. Both Connecticut and Massachusetts would refuse to provide militia for federal service later that summer. While President Madison won reelection comfortably that November, Federalists doubled their strength in Congress. In December 1813 Madison would ask Congress for a new embargo act forbidding any trade with the British to stop New England's trading with British Canada.

PEACE FEELERS

On 16 June 1812 two days before the U.S. declared war, Lord Castlereagh, Britain's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, announced a suspension of Britain's Orders in Council concerning neutral shipping. The British economy was suffering the economic effects of both the American and Continental embargoes. Both Britain





© USS Constitution Museum Collection.



and the United States began to seek a compromise almost as soon as the war began. Proposals went back and forth in the summer and fall of 1812 but nothing came of these efforts until November 1813, when Castlereagh sent Madison a letter offering direct negotiations. Madison accepted immediately and named a five-member peace commission to represent the United States. Peace negotiations opened at Ghent, in northwest Belgium, on 8 August 1814.

THE U.S. NAVY IN THE WAR OF 1812

In 1812 Great Britain possessed a 600-ship navy, manned by 130,000 sailors, with about 80 of those ships active in the Western Hemisphere, deployed from Newfoundland to Jamaica. At the beginning of 1812 the U.S. Navy mustered an active force of 14 seagoing ships, its three 44-gun frigates being the heaviest, and about 1,000 sailors. Any American successes would thus be limited to commerce raiding or winning single-ship encounters. Nothing the U.S. would or could do could affect Great Britain's strategic supremacy at sea. Nevertheless, tactical opportunities occasionally presented themselves, and the U.S. Navy's victories were important both to the service itself and to the country at large.

The first American success came eight weeks into the war, on 13 August, when the 32-gun frigate USS *Essex* captured the 20-gun sloop HMS *Alert*. Six days later *Constitution* scored the first of her three triumphs, defeating the frigate HMS *Guerriere*. The U.S. earned two more victories in October, when the 18-gun sloop USS *Wasp* defeated the 18-gun brig HMS *Frolic* on October 17 and *Constitution's* sister ship, the 44-gun *United States*, bested the 38-gun HMS *Macedonian* on October 25. The year ended with *Constitution's* second victory, the defeat of HMS *Java* on 29 December.

The battle with *Guerriere* seems to have been the origin of *Constitution's* nickname, "Old Ironsides". The story goes that a sailor on the *Guerriere* saw 18-pound British cannonballs bouncing off the hull of *Constitution* and exclaimed, "Huzzah, her sides are made of iron!"

By 1813 the novelty of American victories began to fade and the weight of the Royal Navy began to tell. While the U.S. scored a few triumphs that year, notably the 18-gun sloop USS *Hornet's* defeat of the 20-gun sloop HMS *Peacock* in February and Captain Oliver Hazard Perry's defeat of the British fleet on Lake Erie, the navy also suffered its first significant defeat that June when the 50-gun frigate HMS *Shannon* captured the 36-gun frigate USS *Chesapeake*. Worse, from



the American point of view, the Royal Navy was tightening its blockade of the U.S. coast and using its supremacy to strike at will along that coast, raiding points in Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and the Chesapeake Bay.

THE YEAR 1814

In 1814 (the year of the pretended first edition of this pocket manual), the war situation became worrisome for the United States. The Royal Navy extended its blockade along the entire U.S. Atlantic Coast, which the comparatively miniscule U.S. Navy could do nothing to prevent. With American overseas trade and thus tariff revenues from imports substantially reduced, the United States government defaulted on the national debt in November. Meanwhile, dissatisfaction with the war increased in New England.

While American privateers were enjoying considerable success at the beginning of March 1814 the U.S. Navy had a total of nine ships at sea, only three of them mounting more than twenty guns. Within a month, the largest, the 44-gun *Constitution*, would return to port after an abbreviated patrol, while the next in size, the 32-gun *Essex*, would be captured by two British warships off Valparaiso, Chile. At the time, the U.S. had three 44-gun and three 36-gun frigates in operation, as well as an additional three 44s and three 74-gun ships of the line under construction; however Napoleon's defeat, abdication, and exile to Elba in April permitted Britain to shift its attention and significant naval and military resources to its war against the United States.

The American nadir came after the Royal Navy disembarked an army of 4,000 veteran soldiers under General Robert Ross at Benedict, Maryland, on 19 August. Ross' army routed a patchwork American force half-again its size at Bladensburg, Maryland, on 24 August then captured and burned Washington, D.C., unopposed, the same evening. Although the Americans successfully defended Baltimore three weeks later, an end to the war seemed as remote as ever.

USS CONSTITUTION IN 1814

Constitution departed Boston for a six-month war patrol on 30 December 1813. Her cruise in the Caribbean yielded four prizes in a week, but also ended ingloriously on 3 April 1814 due to an outbreak of scurvy and a

