The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History

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THIS PUBLICATION IS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN.
unjustness of my pretentions. With the greatest respect & Consideration [&c.]

Tho. Shields
Purser


Lieutenant Daniel T. Patterson to
Secretary of the Navy Hamilton

New Orleans Decr 22d 1812

Sir,

Captain Shaw has thought it highly necessary to Appoint a Separate Purser, to the Ship of War called the Louisiana, lately purchased into the Naval Service on this Station, the Gentleman Appointed by him to fill this Station, is my Brother in law Mr Carlile Pollock.

I have therefore taken the liberty to address you on the subject, in which I feel a lively interest, in order to Solicit from you a Confirmation of the appointment, and that if confirmed by you, that you will do him the Honour to nominate him to the Senate for a Commission as a Purser in the Navy of the United States, to which Service he is extremely desirous of becoming permanently Attached: The confirmation of Mr Pollock's Appointment, will lay me under very great obligations to the Honble the Secretary of the Navy, who I hope will not deem this application presumptuous. I have the honour to be [&c.]

Dan'l T. Patterson


Chapter Five
The Atlantic Theater:
September-December 1812

During late 1812, when American naval officers became disillusioned with duty on remote stations, such as St. Marys, New Orleans, or Black Rock, they requested duty on the Atlantic. For there careers were being made, junior officers were gaining the laurels that might win them a command at sea, and there was the possibility of getting rich on prize money. Captains Hull and Porter had already won national attention, though Commodore Rodgers had fallen short, and Commodore Decatur's time was yet to come. The British blockade was still relatively porous, but there would come a time when sailors who had longed for Atlantic service would yearn for duty on the northern lakes just to escape from the frustration of being bottled up by British squadrons in Long Island Sound or off the Delaware and Virginia capes.

The promise of future victories was fulfilled in the period September-December 1812. Wasp - Frolic, United States Macedonian, and Constitution - Java were American single-ship victories that established a soaring mood in the small American navy. But there were signs, for those who chose to read them, that this optimism might not last. The British were seizing a large number of American merchantmen and privateers, and many American seamen spent idle months on bleak Melville Island, a prison in Halifax Harbor. It was not easy to find seamen willing to sign on for a two-year naval cruise when prize money in larger shares was available in privateers. British cruisers sailed into the sounds and bays of the southeastern states with impunity. Despite these factors, it took Congress six months after the declaration of war to decide that a larger navy was necessary if the early victories at sea were to be followed up.

On land, American military defeats and failures to exploit enemy weaknesses along the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River frontier showed the British that the United States was militarily vulnerable along
ATLANTIC THEATER

thousands of miles of contiguous border. A lack of preparation, stemming from an almost fatal over-confidence in the militia traditions of America's revolutionary "minutemen" doomed any chance of a lasting military conquest on the northern frontier. Generals Hull, Van Rensselaer, Smyth, and Dearborn all lost whatever reputations they had cultivated. By the end of the 1812 campaign season, it was apparent that American mettle would again be sorely tested. If there was to be any chance of success, it would depend upon a rejuvenated military and the establishment of naval superiority on the northern lakes. Commodore Isaac Chauncey, seconded by the capable Lieutenants Melancthon T. Woolsey and Jesse D. Elliott, accomplished a miracle of naval logistics and with sheer bravado overawed the small force of the Provincial Marine on Lakes Ontario and Erie. By the time cold weather arrived, British naval forces on the lakes were on the defensive; but clearly this condition could last only until the opening of navigation. The advantage then would lie with the forces who had best taken advantage of shipbuilding opportunities during the long northern winter.

In Washington, the Madison administration received an electoral victory in November which seemed to endorse the war, and this strengthened the president's hand in selecting more capable cabinet members. Both Secretary of War William Eustis and Secretary of the Navy Hamilton were perceived as men unequal to the crisis. December was the last month during which they served. Secretary Hamilton was soon to be succeeded by William Jones, a Philadelphia merchant with a considerable knowledge of ships and seagoing men.

By the end of the first year of war, the American public had been reminded of war's excesses as well as its few opportunities for glory. It was to the credit of the American navy that the taste for victory had not been whetted. Unfortunately, as 1813 was to show, success was as frequently elusive on sea as on land. One legacy of the year 1812 is that despite all the difficulties, a tradition of excellence was established in the naval service. Many of "Preble's Boys" had become men, and although the navy was small, it was admirably prepared for offensive operations in the Atlantic Theater.

SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 1812

U.S. Frigate Essex vs. H.M. Brig Alert

In an earlier though less famous action than Constitution-Guerriere, Captain David Porter's Essex took the first British warship to fall to an American naval vessel in the War of 1812. The British had drawn first blood in an easy capture of Lieutenant William Crane's brig Nautilus on 16 July. Porter's capture of Alert was equally easy, and he makes it quite clear that the taking of a smaller ship of less force was no test of his capacity. Porter's egotism, however, was backed up by real ability. The list of his captures for the period 3 July to 3 September was sent to the secretary of the navy as an enclosure to his report on his engagement with Alert.

CAPTAIN DAVID PORTER TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

U.S. Frigate Essex
At Sea September 3d 1812

Sir,

I had the honor to address you on the 14th Augt by Lt [James P.] Wilmer, and on the 17th by an American Schooner, informing you briefly of my having captured H B M Sloop of War Alert commanded by T. [Thomas] L. P. Laughorraine Esqr after an action of eight minutes-for the satisfaction of the Dept however, I now take the liberty of entering into a detail of particulars relating to that affair.

At 1/2 past 9 on the morning of the 13th Augt in Lat. 41°04' N.Long. 55°24' W. as we were standing to the Southd with the wind Westerly, discovered a square rigged Vessel to windward running down under a press of canvass evidently with a view of speaking us: as she approached supposed her to be a large arm'd English West Indiaman, as every means had been used to give her that appearance, and under this impression I considered it unnecessary to call to general quarters, but took my usual precautions of having some of the Gun deck Guns cleared away, tapping in the half ports & tarpions, & concealing every appearance of preparation. On her nearer approach, after she had made a signal to us and hoisted her colours, we sighted the English ensign & pendant. At 1/2 past 11 she was short pistol shot on our starboard quarter, I the discovered that she was a ship of War and prepared for action, and perceiving it to be their intention to take us, I
hoisted American colours wore short around, and after receiving his broadside, (which did us no more injury than the cheers that accompanied it) brought our larboard Guns to bear, which compelled her to haul her wind on the starboard tack; we again wore, and by the time our starboard guns were brought to bear she was on the larboard tack: finding that the shortness of the enemy's ship gave him the advantage over us in close manoeuvering, and that he intended if possible to prevent our getting fairly along side of him, I determined to gain more room, and with this view stood on a wind on the starboard tack until the ships were separated about musket shot, then wore raking him in the act of wearing; he now attempted to make his escape, I consequently made more sail and was ranging up with the intention of not firing until there was a certainty that every shot would take effect, but when we were short pistol shot on his starboard quarter and had hoisted our flag bearing the Motto "free trade & Sailors rights" he avoided the dreadful consequences that our broad side would in a few moments have produced by prudentially striking his colours.

I sent Lt Jno Downes to take possession and on her commander coming on board and delivering up his sword, he informed me that the ship was sinking. I caused her to be wore around on the other tack to bring the shot holes above water and sent our carpenters to plug them up.

The Alert has suffered much in her hull, sail & rigging; she had two Guns disabled by us, three men badly wounded and two slightly — it was stated by her crew that she had nine men killed, and if they remained at their quarters during the firing, I cannot conceive (from examining the course and effect of our shot) how they could all have escaped.

The Essex has received a few musket & grape shots in her hull & sails, but the greatest injury she has sustained is in having her cabin windows broke by the concussion of her own guns.

The Alert with a select crew was cruising with the view of intercepting the Hornet, and it is the source of regret to me that she did not fall in with that vessel instead of the Essex, as the forces would then have been more equal.

We are now well convinced notwithstanding Capt. Bingham's declaration that an English Sloop of War, calculating on the Magic of the British name and Terror of British Thunder, has had the assurance to "commence attack within pistol shot on an American Frigate" for such (they informed us) they knew us to be, and have repeatedly reported, that had we been Frenchmen they would either have taken us, or made their escape, with all due deference to the insuperability of British prowess, I believe that in their future naval contests with Americans, they will be induced to apply some other rule to measure their resistance, than that employed to estimate the opposition of Frenchmen.

Nothing could have exceeded the zeal exhibited by the Officers & crew of this ship, and I cannot speak in too exalted terms of the conduct of the Marines and Topmen in annoying the enemy with their muskets while he was enabled to keep under our stern — his striking so soon was the cause of no small regret to the seamen as it deprived them of the opportunity of firing that broadside, on the effect of which they had so largely counted and of which the enemy was evidently so much in dread.

After getting the officers and greater part of the crew from the Alert, I sent Lt J P Wilmer on board as Prize Master with an intention of proceeding in company with her to America: but had I considered that she possessed as many good qualities as our own Ships of War, I should have sent Lt Downs [John Downs], and strongly have recommended him to you as her future commander. She will answer admirably as a guard or block ship but not as a cruiser. After repairing her damages and finding her to sail badly, on the 18th Augt I concluded (as we had a great many prisoners on board and our provisions and water were getting short) to send her to St Johns in Newfoundland as a Cartel, therefore I proposed the terms contained in the enclosed papers to Capt Laugharne, which were accepted, and on the same day I dispatched her under the command of Lt Wilmer with the orders to proceed from thence to New York with such Americans as he may receive in exchange.

It would have afforded me much pleasure to have witnessed that liberality and strict sense of honor and propriety in the enemy after his surrender, that is so much the boast of Englishmen. So far from being guided by those laws of war that should govern the citizens and subjects of civilized nations, and particularly those of the Navy of Great Britain, so celebrated for its strict discipline, no sooner had Capt Laugharne left his ship, than a scene of pillage and destruction was pursued by her crew, that would have disgraced a corsaire of Barbary. The Spirit room, purser's, and other store rooms were broken or thrown open, nor did the Captains Cabin & private stores escape, and such articles as could not be taken were broken, thrown overboard, and otherwise wantonly destroyed. But Sir, while I state
those facts I fully acquit Capt Laughärne of any suspicion of having authorized, or being concerned in conduct so disgraceful & dishonorable to such as have, by a surrender, not only claimed the mercy and generosity of their vanquishers but have deceived them into a confidence of security against further acts of hostility—Although British pride may have been much humbled, such means of convincing us of the fact was of all others the most unjustifiable.

The Essex has sent into Port and destroyed since the 12th of July, nine of the enemies ships and Brigs, and the whole amount of property may be estimated at $300,000. she has also made 424 prisoners, some of whom have gone on parole, the rest have been sent off in Cartels to be exchanged, and during that time she has been off Bermudas, Halifax & St Johns in Newfoundland, and the Western Islands: Only one man has died during the cruise, and at this time she has not a man on board unable to do his duty—she has never at any time run from an enemy, nor has any endeavour been used to shun them, though frequently in the neighborhood of very superior force.

Copies of papers relative to every important transaction of the cruise accompany this letter. Also subjoined is a list of captures. I have the honor to be [&c.]

D Porter

List of Captures by the Essex

July 11th 1812 The Transport Samuel & Sarah, Captain L. T. Sones, conveying troops to Quebec: Ransomed
July 15th Brig Lamprey Thos White Master from Jamaica bound to Halifax via Bermuda—Cargo Rum &c &c sent in Midn Haddaway [William H. Haddaway] Prize Master
July 26th Brig Leander Jno: Bolsor Master, from Liverpool bound to Newfoundland; cargo Salt, Coal &c &c sent in Midn [George] Pearce Prize Master
Augt 2d Ship Nancy Edw Stanworth Master from Gibraltar bound to Newfoundland—Cargo Salt, Coal &c &c: sent in Midn [Joseph L.] Biggs Prize Master
* 2d Brig Hero, Henry Gardner Master from Guernsey bound to Newfoundland, in ballast—Burnt!

Discipline On Board Privateers

As seen in the case of the privateer Matilda (pp. 191-92), discipline was occasionally lacking on board private armed ships. However, Captain Joshua Barney of Rossie had been an officer in the Continental Navy and was well aware of the importance of discipline for a successful cruise. Article 15 of the Instructions of Letters of Marque (see p. 169) had been framed for a purpose. Having put in at Newport at the end of his first successful cruise, Barney transferred to Master Commandant Oliver H. Perry two men whom he believed deserved trial by court martial. The following documents refer to this incident.
Sir,

I have the honor to inclose you two letters from Capt Joshua Barney, commanding the private-armed Schooner Rossie requesting a court martial on John Nerborn & Thomas Holden - the latter it appears from the documents which I have in my possession as noted in the margin not only prove him to be an American Citizen, but that he has been in the Naval Service of the United States, and as Capt Barney alleges "a deserter from it." They are now in confinement onboard No 46 where they will be kept until your pleasure is known.

I have been induced to take them in charge from the circumstance of the Rossie being about to sail, and looking upon one of them as a deserter from the Navy. It has not however escaped me Sir, that Capt Barney should have made this request direct to you. I am [&c.]

O.H. Perry

For the Margin please turn over -
Menn papers found on Thos Holden

1. Thomas Holden served as acting gunner on board General Greene in Nov. 1802. See Knox, "Barbary Wars II: 516-17."
After returning from a long, disappointing voyage of many weeks duration, Commodore John Rodgers was alert to the possibilities for action. While preparing President and Hornet for an upcoming cruise, Rodgers interrupted this work to prepare for action against H.M. frigate Maidstone which he understood was in the offing, outside Boston Bay. In amplification of his cruise report (pp. 262–66) Rodgers sent further suggestions on how U.S. Navy ships ought to cruise in the future and mentioned scurvy among the men of President, a fact known also to the British commander at Halifax (p. 497). The enclosure, from Oliver H. Perry, contains intelligence concerning a British squadron which had its own problems with scurvy.

**Commodore John Rodgers to Secretary of the Navy Hamilton**

U.S. Frigate President
Boston Sept 4th 1812

Sir

A report having reached here yesterday, about one o'clock, that an Action had taken place that morning off Cape Ann, between two Frigates supposed to be the Essex and British Frigate Maidstone. I had prepared to put to Sea this morning, with this Ship, the United States, and Hornet, in the expectation that if it had been the Essex, she would at least require assistance to get into port, the Maidstone being a much heavier Ship. After working all night, taking in Water & provisions, and having sent our Sick to the Constitution and Congress, and received effective men in their place, the report turns out to be entirely unfounded: This circumstance, I am sorry to say, will retard our equipment three or four days longer.

Permit me to suggest Sir for your consideration whether, when the Ships, as present here, are ready for Sea, it would not be advisable to go out in Squadron and afterwards separate: By this means the Enemy will for a considerable time be kept in ignorance of the dispo-

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sition of our vessels, and, in consequence, concentrate his force, to the advantage of our commerce. It will at the same time afford now and then an opportunity to our Frigates and theirs, of falling in singly, to our advantage, as I am satisfied they never will attack us in squadron, without a decidedly superior force, as fully appears from the character of the force with which they have appeared on our coast since I left New York.

The Communication of which the enclosed is a Copy I received this morning. I had known however, a fortnight previous to my arrival here that the squadron, it mentions, was on our coast, and by referring to the Log-book I find we were on the 30th Ult where they are represented to have been two days.

I do not regret that we did not fall in with them, particularly as we had so many men confined with the Scurvy.

The men affected with the Scurvy are recovering very rapidly and I hope they will all be perfectly restored to health in twenty days at farthest: no time will be lost, you may be assured, in getting the Ships ready for Sea again: I feel extremely anxious to make up for time lost, at the first of the War.

I wrote you yesterday respecting the Hornet, she will be ready for Sea tomorrow or next day, and might make a cruise of a fortnight, and return by the time the other vessels are ready.

I am about ordering a survey on the Constitution, and apprehend she will require new lower masts: the other injuries she gained in the action, can be soon repaired. With the greatest respect [&c.]

Jn0 Rodgers

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1812, Vol. 3, No. 16.

[Enclosure]

[To John Rodgers]

New Port Sept 3rd 1812

5 P.M.

Sir

By an arrival this moment at this place the Ship Neptune Captn Rolls from Liverpool in 30 days I am informed by Captn Williams a passenger, that they left the Eolus in company with the Spartan, Maidstone, and a Brig of War on Sepr 1st at 9 A.M. in Latd 41° 11' Longd 69° 42' in 50 fathoms water, the same evening they were joined
by a large Ship which he supposed to be Shannon, making in all four Ships & a Brig: when last seen they were laying too, heads to the East. The whole squadron was short of water, and it was said were ordered to Halifax—many of the Crew of the Eolus had the Scurvey. It is supposed they had water for fifteen days. It was mentioned on board the Eolus that they intended to make an attempt on some port in the U. States for the purpose of Cutting out, preparations were making by mounting Swivels in the Boats &c These accounts is confirmed by several of the passengers
I have thought this information of sufficient importance to warrant me in sending an express to you I have therefore directed Mr. [Stephen] Champlin Comdg Gun Boat No 89 to proceed direct to Boston with this
18 of the Eolus Crew were down with the Scurvy.
Signed, O. H. Perry

A Critical Report on the North Carolina Gunboats

Congressman William Blackledge, a representative from North Carolina in the 12th Congress (1811–1813), was a personal friend of Secretary Hamilton. While travelling to Washington, North Carolina, Blackledge discovered some irregularities in the performance of the U.S. Navy gunboats assigned to protect Ocracoke Inlet. He reports his discoveries in the following letter, in which he also comments on problems of supplying the navy in that location. Blackledge’s political persuasion is apparent from opinions expressed in the postscript.

Congressman William Blackledge to Secretary of the Navy Hamilton

Washington N Carolina
Septr 4th 1812

Dear Sir,

On my arrival at this place, I find one of the Gun boats here, & learn that their Orders are to Cruise in the waters of Ocracocock. Now before I left Newburn I found complaints that the Boats did not lie at Ocracocock or in that neighborhood where they are wanted, but availing themselves of the latitude of their orders are almost always at Newburn or this place. The waters of Roanoake, Tar river & Neuse are considered by them as the waters of Ocracocock because they discharge through that inlet, yet it is obvious no enemy can get into these rivers but through Ocracocock Inlet. The use of Gun boats at Ocracocock is to prevent an enemy coming at that Inlet & to protect the vessels lying in that harbor. They would also be useful in preventing depredations upon the Citizens living on Ocracocock & Portsmouth Banks, but to lie at Newburn, Washington or Edenton they would be of no earthly use. The two Ordered to Beaufort are arrived and will no doubt occupy their proper Stations at that town which is in sight of the Sea. Before I close this letter I beg leave further to mention that a few days past a vessel arrived at Newburn with Flour and Pork for the Gun boats, the Captain of which said he was ordered by the Navy Agent at Baltimore to deliver his Cargo to John P. Blount Esq. Mer. at this place (Washington). Yet you have a Navy Agent at Newburn Jerremiah Brown, and at Newburn Pork and flour are always 15 to 25 P Cent lower than at Norfolk. Then where is the policy of purchasing at a higher price in Norfolk, paying freight & shipping it round at the risque of Capture? These things are remarked upon by our enemies and our friends cant well ward off the effect of their observations. My sincere good wishes to the administration and particularly for you have incuced [induced] me to state this circumstances, and remain your sincere friend &c.

Wm. Blackledge

P.S.

Federalism has gained much ground in this State but there is never the less a considerable majority not less than 20 to 30 of republicans
Joshua Humphreys’s Advice

In September 1812, Congressman Adam Seybert from Philadelphia wrote former naval shipbuilder Joshua Humphreys with several questions regarding U.S. Navy ships. Humphreys’s replies provide an interesting commentary on the state of the navy, Humphreys’s notions of shipbuilding, and the United States’ proposed building of 74-gun ships of the line. Humphreys’s reputation had grown to large proportions since the days of the American Revolution. As the superintendent of a commercial shipyard in Philadelphia, he fitted out several vessels of the Continental Navy. In 1794, Humphreys was appointed the first “naval constructor” of the United States, and he is credited with having developed the basic plan for the 44-gun frigates which became the mainstay of the U.S. Navy from 1797 until 1815.

Although Humphreys was dismissed as naval constructor in 1803, he continued to take work on commission from the government, in particular, the building of a yard and dock for the U.S. Navy at Philadelphia in 1806. At the time Congressman Seybert asked his advice, Humphreys was in retirement on his farm near Chester, Pennsylvania. Seybert was a Republican member of Congress during the years 1809–1815 and 1817–1819; he was particularly interested in compiling statistical data concerning expenditures and revenues of the United States, which he later published.1

W. B.

1. Essex Junto: phrase coined by John Hancock to describe hardcore Federalists of New England led by Timothy Pickering. New York Republicans, led by DeWitt Clinton, opposed the reelection of President James Madison and won the support of many Federalists in their autumn campaign. Address of the Republican Committee of the City of New York, to Support of the Nomination of the Hon. DeWitt Clinton, to the Presidency... [New York, 1812] was issued 17 Aug.
The actual State & present management of the Navy of the U.S. can say little or nothing on this subject. The gun boats & some few other matters only have come under my notice. The Gun boats which have been built in this port, are in my opinion badly constructed and as badly executed. Gun Boats ought to be constructed for Shallow water and not larger than sufficient for our bays, they ought never to be sent into extensive waters, because the smaller and lighter they are built, so that they are large & strong enough to carry the men & metal they are intended for the better. The timber should be of the smallest size & out of timber grown to the mould. no timber should be put into them cut across the grain, because it is a useless weight, in fact it is a disadvantage as it adds weight without increasing the strength. The Cranes for the waste cloths ought to have been made in such a manner, that when done rowing, the Oars would swing directly fore and aft which is the best position for them when not in use, & they can more easily be resumed; The present mode, is when the Oars are not in use, to either run across the deck, or let them stick out from the side; In the first instance the oars must encumber the deck, and in the last are very liable to be broken.

The manner in which they are rigged is in my opinion, improper, from their construction & rig they cannot move against a head wind. If they were built light & of a proper construction & rigged with Lattéan masts & Yards they could be rowed against any moderate breeze. The masts are short & when the sails are build up, the yards are placed in a horizontal position so that their ends only are exposed to the wind; Another great advantage arises from the lattéan sails, they will lay much nigher the wind than any other.

In order to bring to any point in a short time a number of Gun boats, and to make a much less number answer, say one half, and appropriate the sum the other half would cost, with the sum it would take to maintain them, to open an Inland navigation from St Marys River to Rhode Island, by this means the one half would be much more formidable than the whole is under the present unconnected state of the river & bays: Inland navigation would much facilitate the transportation of stores from one place to another. 

The best state in which it may be practicable to place it under existing circumstances.

I would recommend to call in all our small Cruisers and heavy sailing vessels and station them in our Rivers and Bays, and keep none out but the large Frigates, the Essex and any other of our vessels that sail fast.

Of Timber what are the kinds of timber commonly used and the most approved for the construction of ships in the port of Philadelphia.

The timber that is now generally used in this port is white oak but sometimes they are built of Live Oak & red Cedar. Of the principle pieces are of Live Oak. The Timber which our Merchant Vessels were generally built of before the Revolution were White Oak, Live Oak & Red Cedar: Their floor & raising Timbers, Lower Futtocks, Knees & sometimes the beams were of white oak, the middle and upper Futtocks & toptimbers were of Live Oak and red Cedar, and all the rooms between the timbers and plank above the floor timber heads were filled with salt, which has by experience been found the best mode of preserving ships. But experience has convinced me that if ships were built with Live Oak floor & raising timbers & upper Futtocks and the upper timbers of white Oak taken green from the stump & well salted as the best methods of building Ships: the Sap of green timbers acts as conductors, by which means, the salt penetrates all the pores of the wood and soon displaces the sap. But if Ships are not to be salted, then it will be best to build them of timber seasoned under tight sheds. Timber seasoned in water looses much of its strength by the destruction of its [quitenous] substance & when taken out is very liable to rend and crack on being exposed in the air & is very brittle & short.

Is there at this time a provision of large and approved timber at the yards of Philadelphia

I will require about, 30,000 Cubic feet of timber for the frame of a large 70 or 80 Gun ship exclusive of plank wales &c. There has been delivered from 1800 to 1802 into the different Navy Yards cut expressly for the 74 Gun Ships the quantity annexed most of which I suppose may be on hand.

Boston 40,036 Cubic feet
Portsmouth N.H. 18,706 ditto
New York 18,676 do
Besides the Live Oak there was provided in this port Keel pieces, Kelsons, wales, &c a large proportion of the live Oak knees were reshipped to Washington & also a number of white oak knees were procured here and sent on to the same place. I believe there are very few pieces of timber in the yards of Philadelphia that would be suitable for ships more than 500 tons. 

Can ships of war be conveniently built in Philadelphia of what rates particularly

There is no port in the U.S. in which ships of war can be built more conveniently than in Philadelphia of any Rate that will be useful for the United States, which I presume ought not to exceed double deck Ships on account of their harbours. The Ships built in this port are noticed in all parts of the world for their beauty and substantial workmanship, and are preferred to all others and have always commanded a freight in preference to any other Vessels built in the U.S. and for the risk of the sea can be insured at a less premium. 

Should Government direct the building of the double deck Ships, I would by all means recommend the extension of their dimensions, the timber provided will admit of it & make them the most formidable double ships: by extending their dimensions you encrease their sailing. By building your ships of war larger and more powerful than they are in Europe you take a lead in two classes of ships (I mean double deck Ships & large Frigates) which will in a degree render the Ships of Europe of the same class in a very great degree useless, but if you build of the same size & construction you will always be behind. it is only by taking a bold lead you have any chance of succeeding: no necessary expence ought to be spared on this subject for it is one of the most important in the formation of our navy. The recent & last most brilliant affair of the Frigate Constitution confirms this opinion. The excellent qualities of our large Frigates, has confirmed the arguments I made use of in favour of their size. In drafting the 74 I had not the same latitude, they are much smaller than I think they ought to be. 

What time would be required to build a 74, in the port of Philadelphia admitting the necessary timber was already in the yard. What time is generally consumed for building a merchant ship of 300 tons do they last in proportion to the time employed in building

A 74 may be built in about 12 months if all the materials are provided, merchant ships generally take from 4 to 6 months. I do not [think] that it makes any difference as to the time in building. 

Have you any knowledge of the premature decay of the Ships of war belonging to U.S. if yea, to what cause do you attribute it & what are the precautions you would recommend in future.

The first knowledge I had of the decay of our ships of war, was, in the year 1800, on board the Frigate UStates, about three years after she was Launched. Having been in the Habit of Salting all the Merchant Ships I built, I strongly pressed the necessity of salting the Frigate U.S. but it was opposed by Captain [John] Barry he stated it would make the ship damp & unhealthy, he carried his point: The want of this necessary precaution, was one reason why the cause of decay affected that part of the ship so much. I am convinced the decay was caused by the foul air of the ship & for want of a free circulation of fresh air, & I am confirmed in this opinion from the following facts. I found in taking off the plank that above almost every port cill where the foul air was in a great degree excluded, the plank was much less affected, and in some places not at all: the Brackets of the spare gun carriages which were laid in the hold, one on the other, the foul air lodged between them where I suppose there was little or no circulation, in this situation, that part of both brackets that laid on each other was decayed, when the other parts were sound, the reasons that these parts of the brackets, which were not affected, was In my opinion owing, to the air not being so confined, but had a circulation from many causes.

In the Frigate Constellation I found where the Bulk heads were nail·ed to the beams & where I conceived the foul air lodged & where the common movements in the vessel could give it little or no circulation, in these places I found the beams Rotten (not in the heart that part being sound, as is the case in all our large white Oaks they decay the first in the heart) on the outside this was the first instance of the kind I had ever met with, From these facts I am firmly persuaded the premature
To remedy the Evil in some degree in the UStates, I had hung between every Gun port a hanging port, with a communication from all the timbers between the Gun ports by a rabit in the edges of the plank, in which there fixed a thin plank that was 1 1/2 inches clear of the timbers, through this opening I conceived the air would circulate, these ports kept constantly opening & shutting as the ship healed the weather side opening & the lee side shutting. If ships were to be salted there would be of no occasion for this precaution, neither would it have any good effect, as all the room between the timber would be filled with salt. Wether the same precaution was made use of on board the Constellation while under repair I cannot say, nor what was the result of this on board the U.S. as I was discharged from the service before the Constellation was finished.

Would you under any circumstances advise ships of war to undergo a thorough repair, or do you deem it preferable to put them out of service when in a condition to need such repair.

Under some circumstances I would advise very considerable repairs where a ship has been found to be of superior construction where her qualities exceed any other ships, in such cases I should advise a repair if it would amount to the cost of a new vessel.

In the merchant service I have always advised my employers, when their ships wanted considerable repairs to dispose of them, but with Government it is different, their Old ships cannot be disposed of they are seldom suitable for merchants they are therefore under the necessity of giving their vessels heavy repairs. It is a very difficult point to ascertain the true state of a Ship even by the most experienced & disinterested persons. Officers some times press considerable repairs of their vessels, even should the cost exceed her value when she is repaired: for fear of loosing their command, and there are very few who have had sufficient experience to form correct opinions and so various are the opinions of commanders, that let the most experienced one of the navy have the fitting of a ship & then change the commander & if he has time and liberty will run the public to very considerable expense in alterations he will state to be absolutely necessary. True principles ought to be fixed upon by which all vessels belonging to the U.S. should be fitted and no alterations should be allowed, but what could be done with the crew of the ship without any additional cost. There are certain considerations to be taken into view before an opinion could be formed whether great or extensive repairs ought to be gone into, particularly the relative cost & firmness when compleated & compared with that of a new one, than unless the advantage was very obvious & clear repairs ought not to be gone into: It is a fact that after the strictest examination & calculations made when you have taken out the defective parts first discovered you will always find more so that you never know the cost until the repairs are compleated . . .

Before I close this letter I will take the liberty to state the duty assigned & performed by me under the Navy Department while Philadelphias was the seat of Government of the U.S. and the compensation allowed me: and where the greatest number of vessels of War belonging to the United States were fitted, It was a satisfaction to me to be informed by Mr Stoddard [Benjamin Stoddert] Secretary of the Navy, that the vessels were always fitted more expeditiously and at much less expense than in any other port in the U.S. . . .

Joshua Humphreys

The Honl Adam Seybert

Copy, PHI, Joshua Humphreys Papers, 1582-1835, Letterbook 1800-1835, pp. 99-114.

A Narrow Escape

Captain David Porter was returning to port after a successful cruise off the Grand Banks when he encountered and was chased by three enemy warships. He fell in with them off Georges Bank, a rich fishing ground northeast of Cape Cod. The following document is his report to the secretary of the navy. Essex sailed into Delaware Bay and put in at Chester, Pennsylvania, for a layover of almost seven weeks. Porter’s next assignment was to sail with Constitution and Hornet under Commodore Bainbridge.
Sir,

On the 4th inst off the tail of St. Georges Bank I discovered two Ships of War to the Southd and a Brig to the Northd, the Brig in chase of an American Merchant Ship, and I have not the slightest doubt of their being enemies — gave chase to the Brig which attempted to get past us to join the rest of the squadron, this we prevented and compelled her to stand to the Northd continued in chase until we got abreast the American Ship when we gave over chase as the wind was getting light and the Brig leaving us with her sweeps out. On shewing our colours to the American Merchant Ship several signal guns were fired by the ships to the southward which made all sail in chase of us.

At 4 PM they had gained our wake and had come up with us very fast, calculating on making my escape by some manoeuvre in the course of the night, I hoisted American colours and fired a Gun to Windward; the ships still continuing to gain on us and the largest being considerably to windward of the other and about 5 miles a stern of us bearing S. by W. I determined to heave about as soon as it grew dark, and, in the event of our not being able to pass him, to fire a broad side into him and lay him on board; with this view made every arrangement and preparation the crew in high spirits & gave three cheers when the plan was proposed to them. At 20 minutes after 7 hove about and stood S E by S (the wind heading us off the moment we hove in stays) until 30 minutes after 8, when we bore away SW without seeing anything more of them, which seems the more extraordinary as a pistol was fired by accident on board this ship at the moment when we must have been at our shortest distance from them.

Finding myself thus cut off from New York and Rhode Island, I made the best of my way for the Delaware.

Considering this escape as a very extraordinary one, I have the honor to enclose you a sketch of the position of the ships at three different periods, by which you will perceive at once the plan of effecting it. I have the honor [&c.]

D. Porter
The Marine Commandant Comments on Naval Events

In replying to Captain Archibald Henderson’s report on the cruise of President, Commodore Rodgers’s flagship, Lieutenant Colonel Commandant Franklin Wharton remarked on the service of marines on board ship during the summer of 1812. His letter, which follows, shows his sense of loss in the death of Lieutenant William S. Bush of Constitution’s marine guard and his concern for detail in providing clothing for marines on shipboard. The marines available for duty were few compared to the new demands placed upon the corps, consequently reassignments were frequent as some ships returned from cruises while others prepared to weigh anchor.

Lieutenant Colonel Commandant Franklin Wharton, U.S.M.C.,
To Captain Archibald Henderson, U.S.M.C.
H. Q. of the Marine Corps
Washington, Septr 7th 1812

Sir!
I congratulate you on the return of the Squadron, & I hope the Cruise has restored your Health, of which you have said nothing in your last communications to me.¹

I had heard, as you may suppose with great pleasure, the brilliant act of Capt Hull, which has done much for our Country, & I trust will do something for its Navy. The loss we have to lament in the fall of our late brother officer Bush is severe: but as a Military Man he has gained by it- he has left an example worthy of Imitation, & his Memory will be cherished so long as heroic Acts are valued.

Your reports will be attended to on the Books of the Adjt in regard to the loss of your Men, & the promotions you have made are confirmed.

Commodore Rogers will be made acquainted, if not already so, of the relief in the Squadron of two officers of the Corps, yourself and Lieut [Henry H.] Forde. It will be of course most advisable that you immediately prepare yourselves to deliver the Guards to the officers ordered to relieve you, & who have been in New York for some months. They are Capt [Robert] Greenleaf, & Lieut [William] Strong. Whenever the relief has been made you will receive the Guard of Marines at Boston, or rather Charlestown from Lieut [James] Broom, who will remain with you for some time there, to assist you. The moment Lieut Forde is relieved order him to proceed to New York, with all dispatch, & report himself to Capt [John] Hall, as I have for him a Command which will be very desirable—indeed if it were possible I should be very happy for Lieut Forde to proceed there on receipt of this—by the consent of the Commodore.

I find you have been by your unexpected departure from N. York—very deficient in Clothing. I have had placed there supplies for you, & have now directed Capt Hall to forward, whatever he can, with all dispatch—some Articles he cannot have on hand. I must therefore request you to contract for the delivery of 150 Uniform Coats—150 Pair of Gaiters, & 500 pair of Shoes on the best terms, & to be as early as possible furnished for the use of the Squadron. The form, or pattern of each, of the two former Articles, you can furnish, with the quality of the Cloths, & I presume you can buy them in Boston, as cheap as in New York. For the Coats I there pay 8:50 each. I cannot however limit you in the prices: you must make the Contract; & the Contractors will be paid through the Navy Agent, who will be instructed so to do. The Agent I presume could assist you much in this business. I am [&c.]

F. Wharton

Capt Archibald Henderson
Commanding Marines, of the President
Boston

Copy, DNA, RG137, CMC, Letters Sent.

¹ Archibald Henderson, commissioned 2nd Lieutenant on 4 June 1806, was promoted 1st lieutenant on 8 Mar. 1807, and captain 1 Apr. 1811. He was appointed lieutenant colonel commandant of the Marine Corps in 1820, rose in rank to brevet brigadier general, and served as commandant until his death in 1859. He was, at the time this letter was written, commanding officer of President’s marine detachment.
Repairs for War-Damaged Frigates

The Boston navy agent was in a key position to expedite the supply of goods and services for warships and naval personnel. On 23 January 1812, Secretary Hamilton informed Amos Binney that he had been appointed to this position, and that for his services he would receive a commission of 1 percent on all naval expenditures. But when the war began, the amount of work that fell to the navy agent was staggering, particularly at Boston, the port closest to the scenes of naval action.

Binney described his initiation as a wartime naval agent in an account published in 1822:

In Aug., or Sept. [1812] the whole squadron came into port. Every ship required complete supplies of provisions and every kind of stores. I was but newly appointed, had no experience, no precedents, no forms, no instructions; was obliged to form a whole system from the chaos that surrounded me, was always short or wholly destitute of funds. I resorted to the banks and to my friends for money on loans and on interest, was soon overwhelmed with requisitions from the public ships in every department—pursers, boat-swains, carpenters, gunners, armourers; and frequently had half a dozen midshipmen, with as many boats' crews, calling for stores, &c. I could not be with, or serve everyone at once: hence was obliged to confide much of the business in detail to persons I believed honest and faithful.

The following order, concerning the finances of repairing warships damaged in battle, arrived on Binney's desk at the very time described above:

2. Documents relative to the Investigation, by Order of the Secretary of the Navy, of the Official Conduct of Amos Binney, United States Navy Agent at Boston, upon the Charges made by Lieutenants Joel Abbot and Others, "Published by the Accused" (Boston, 1822), pp. 60–61.

Your letter of 31 ulto has been received. On account of pay of the Navy 10,000$: on account of provisions 10,000$: on account of medicines 2,000$: and on account of contingencies 1000$. I have this day directed a warrant to be issued in your favor, agreeably to your requisition.

You require "For Repairs 4,000$." The repairs of the frigates Constitution & President, as both those vessels have been damaged in action, must be paid for out of the appropriation for "repairing our vessels of war, that may be damaged in action"; and under this head you will be pleased to make your requisitions for all monies required for the repair of the frigates Constitution & President, and for the repair of all other of our public vessels that may arrive at Boston under similar circumstances—that is requiring repairs of damages sustained in action with the enemy.

That no inconvenience may arise to the public Service, and as you will certainly want more the [than] 4000$ for the repairs of the frigates President & Constitution, I have directed you a remittance of Ten thousand dollars, out of the appropriation for "Repairs of vessels damaged in action."

We are extremely anxious to get all our public vessels to Sea, with the least possible delay; and we confidently hope, that every assistance on your part, will be promptly rendered, to effect this desirable object.

For Paul Hamilton
C: W: Goldsborough

| Pay | 10,000 |
| Provisions | 10,000 |
| Medicine | 2,000 |
| Contingent | 1,000 |
| Repairs of vessels damaged in action | 10,000 |

Total: $33,000
The Porter-Bainbridge Friendship

On returning from his cruise, David Porter wrote Commodore Bainbridge of his successes and added some personal comments. Porter had served as Bainbridge's first lieutenant on board the frigate Philadelphia when she grounded off Tripoli in 1803. He had shared the trials of imprisonment at the hands of the Tripolitans with Bainbridge, and the two officers remained close friends for many years afterwards.

CAPTAIN DAVID PORTER TO COMMODORE WILLIAM BAINBRIDGE

U.S. Frigate Essex Mouth of Delaware
Sept 8th 1812

Dear Sir

I have the good fortune to inform you of my safe arrival here and of the success of my cruise. I have no cause to complain, for although I have not benefited myself much, I have the satisfaction to reflect that I have been a great annoyance to the Enemy. I have taken in the mouths of their Harbors eight of their merchant vessels, and one of their sloops of war, the latter fought me 8 minutes. Two of the Merchantmen I burnt—two or three days ago they gave me a hard chase and were very near catching me. I however gave them the dodge in the night. I have made 220 prisoners and the injury I have done them in less than 2 months may be fairly estimated at $300,000. I hope however to have another slap at them ere long that will gall them still more. I do not know whether my prizes have arrived as I have not yet had any news from shore. This is written in haste by an officer that goes in a passing vessel. I know you will expect a letter from me and I am confident that you will be much pleased to hear of any of my good fortune and indeed it would be unpardonable in me to let slip the first opportunity of dropping you a line. I should be much gratified to hear from you as early as possible and feel much solicitude as to your future intentions. Do you not intend having a dash at them? How do you like Boston? How is Mrs Bainbridge pleased with it? Give my warmest regards to her. my love & kisses to Miss Susan and the Little ones and accept assurances of my unalterable friendship & Esteem! Yours &c.

D. Porter

Comr. Wm Bainbridge

I am all anxiety to see my little rib. I left her unwell and many a bitter and anxious moment I have felt on her account. When I get home I shall write you more fully. I think it not improbable my repairs may keep me in port 3 weeks.

ALS, Navy Department Library, Special Collections, Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C.

1. Susan Heyliger Bainbridge and Susan Parker Bainbridge
2. Evalina Anderson Porter.

Further Instructions to John Mitchell

By a letter of 26 August, the secretary of the navy sent instructions to John Mitchell regarding his duties as American Agent for Prisoners of War at Halifax. Realizing that these instructions had been framed too broadly, giving too much discretion to the man on the scene, Hamilton’s next letter to Mitchell narrowed his field of action.

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON TO JOHN MITCHELL

John Mitchell Esq.
Philadelphia

Navy Depart
8 Sept 1812

In the letter of instructions addressed to you under date 26. ulto you were informed that it would “be your duty to discuss & arrange with
the proper authority all points in relation to the exchange of prisoners."

This instruction was given to you under the erroneous impression, that it was the intention of the President of the United States, to invest you with full power to discuss and definitively adjust the principles of exchange. Having communicated with the Secretary of State upon the subject, I find, that the objects of your appointment were "to promote an exchange of prisoners, to supply their wants and to facilitate their return to the United States" leaving the principles of Exchange to be settled by Commissioners hereafter to be appointed for that purpose.

So far therefore, as the instructions under date the 26th ulto may be considered as conferring upon you the power of discussing or adjusting any principle, upon which the exchange of prisoners shall be made you will consider them as hereby revoked. I am Sir [&c.]

for Paul Hamilton
C. W. Goldsborough

Copy, DNA, RG45, MLS, Vol. 11, p. 142.

Squadron Cruising Orders

Shortly after the return of the combined squadrons of Commodore Rodgers and Decatur, preparations began for a second cruise. The results of the U.S. Navy's activity during the summer of 1812 seemed to indicate that ships cruising independently inflicted more damage on the enemy than those cruising in large squadrons. The success of Constitution and Essex were remarkable in this respect. Rodgers himself suggested in his letter to the secretary of 4 September that U.S. Navy ships sortie in squadron strength to deceive the enemy, then operate separately. Secretary Hamilton's subsequent orders show a compromise between squadron and independent operations. Three small squadrons were to be formed with considerable latitude allowed the commodores as to cruising grounds. As most of the ships intended for these squadrons were refitting and were in different ports, some time passed before they were ready to sail in force.

SEPTEMBER–DECEMBER 1812

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON TO

COMMODORE JOHN RODGERS

Comr Rodgers

Boston

It has been determined that our vessels of war shall be divided into three small squadrons to be commanded by yourself in the frigate President, Comr Bainbridge in the frigate Constitution & Comr Decatur in the frigate United States: for the present, each Squadron will consist of two frigates, & a small brig, when ready for sea each Squadron will be instructed to pursue that course, which, to the commanding officer, may, under all circumstances, appear the most expedient to afford protection to our trade & to annoy the enemy: returning into port, as speedily as circumstances will permit, consistently with the great objects in view & writing to the Department by all proper opportunities.

In arranging these Squadrons reference must be made to the relative rank of the respective commanding officers, & to the properties of the respective vessels. In paying every proper respect to rank we must not forget the great importance of selecting vessels for each of the squadrons, as nearly equal in the property of sailing & in capacity of burthen, as may be practicable: The three small vessels that will be attached to the squadron, will be commanded by Capt [Jacob] Jones Capt [James] Lawrence & Capt [Arthur] Sinclair: & they are to be attached to the Squadrons in the order of their rank. That is to say-Capt Jones will join Comr Rodgers; Capt Lawrence will join Comr Bainbridge & Capt Sinclair will join Comr Decatur. The three frigates to be attached to the Squadrons (besides those to be commanded by the commodores themselves) will be the Chesapeake-the Congress & the Essex - & with respect to these frigates the commanders will consult the good of the Service & decide for themselves, if found necessary, & the good of the service will permit, they will choose in the order of their relative rank: that is Comodore Rodgers will choose first, Comr Bainbridge next & Comr Decatur will take the third-In making the arrangement, You will also have proper reference to the periods when the respective vessels will probably be ready for service, it being important that the whole should proceed to sea, as early as may be practicable.

The Essex & the Wasp are expected in daily- & unless they should meet with some untoward accident, they will, in a day or two, after their arrival be again prepared for service.
Special Praise for Captain Hull

Secretary Hamilton's terse letters usually contained few words of praise for his officers. The victory of Constitution over Guerriere, however, was such welcome news that he fairly deluged Captain Isaac Hull with gratitude. Material rewards in the form of prize money were forthcoming, as well as promotions and favorable reassignments for Hull and his officers. For personal reasons, Hull requested duty ashore and was assigned to the New York Navy Yard. His first lieutenant, Charles Morris, received a generous promotion. Hamilton's enthusiasm for Hull and his men is evident in the following letter.

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON TO CAPTAIN ISAAC HULL

Cape Isaac Hull
Boston
9 Sept 1812

I have it in special charge from the secretary of the Navy to express to you & through you to the officers & crew of the frigate Constitution the very high sense entertained by him of your & their distinguished conduct in the late action with his Britannick Majesty's frigate the Guerriere. In this action, we know not which most to applaud, Your gallantry or Your skill-You, Your officers & Crew are entitled to & will receive the applause & the gratitude of Your grateful country.

SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 1812

Your officers will not be neglected by this Department-Their distinguished merits entitle them to special attention.

Transmit to me the name of that excellent Man, who has lost his leg. Express my condolence in his misfortune. He shall immediately have a pension. You will also favor me with the name of that distinguished Hero: "who, in the heat of the action, on seeing the flag at your foretopmast head shot away up & lashed it in such a manner as to make it impossible for shot to take it away, without taking the mast" & You will make to him some suitable present not exceeding value one months pay, as a testimony of the approbation of his country.

Express to Lt. Morris my high admiration of his conduct & my sincere hope, that he will speedily restored to health & further honor.

The Death of Lt. [William S.] Bush of marines is deeply regretted. He died nobly.

P. Hamilton

Copy, DNA, RG45, SNL, Vol. 10, pp. 148-49.

Arrangements for Prisoner Exchange

Prisoner of War Agent John Mitchell, soon to depart for his mission at Halifax, responded harmoniously to Secretary Hamilton's restriction of his powers as agent. In the following letter, Mitchell shows that he has rapidly grasped the principal responsibilities of his new position.

JOHN MITCHELL TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

Philadelphia
9th Sept 1812

Sir,

I had the honor of writing You Yesterday, and today that of receiving your letter of the 8th revoking that part of Your Instructions of the 26th Ult which made it "my duty to discuss and arrange with the proper Authority all points in relation to the exchange of Prisoners."
and shall conform to your desire and follow the instructions I received this day from the Secretary of State.

I have to acquaint you with my having seen Mr [Anthony St. John] Baker today, & am to see him again Tomorrow.

Should he persist in sending the British prisoners to Halifax under Contract as he mentioned to me today, instead of chartering a vessel and furnishing regular Rations to the Men I will loose no time in engaging a vessel to proceed to Halifax that will be capable to bring back two hundred or more of our Men, as such a vessel will not be as expensive in proportion as one which will carry only 100 men.

As there is only about 40 Prisoners here Mr Baker wont look for a vessel capable of carrying a larger Number & that trifling exchange will not meet the views of our Government.

Tomorrow I shall have the Honor of Writing you again on the subject, I am [&c.]

John Mitchell


Supply Problems on the Charleston Station

A ship's purser during the War of 1812 carried out duties which more recently have been allotted to a ship's supply officer. All items related to the needs of shipboard personnel, such as pay, clothing, and food, fell within the scope of the purser's responsibilities. He had to procure, disperse, and account for these items. Usually, the purser of a ship would deal with the navy agent of his station for the procurement of these necessities. Occasionally, however, when local goods or services of a certain type were not available or were not acceptable, he would request permission of the secretary of the navy to make a purchase outside the system. In the following letter, Purser Satterwhite of the U.S. brig Vixen discusses his needs in this regard.

John Mitchell


SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 1812

PURSER EDWIN T. Satterwhite to SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

U.S. Brig Vixen
Charleston, Rebellion Roads
11th Sep 1812

Honorable Sir,

The extreme bad quality of Cloth, of which the Winter Cloathing for the men belonging to the Vixen were furnished last year, produced murmurings by no means agreeable. This year, it would appear, will be more difficult in procuring them. I have visited throughout Charleston, and I find that Cloathing, which is very bad, commands an exhorbitant price. I have therefore, Sir, thought it advisable to request of you permission to let me get them of Mesrs Winn & Butler of New York, as Mr [Gwinn] Harris, Purser St Mary's Station, assures me that they can be procured of a quality much superior to those in Charleston, and at prices below those heretofore paid.

I have taken the liberty to enclose a Letter for Mr Silas Butler; in which I have requested him to call on you.

The inhabitants of Charleston are very sickly; and two or three cases of Yellow Fever have occurred; owing it is supposed to the heavy falls of Rain, and the stagnant water which has been permitted to remain in Cellars, &c. You have no doubt heard of the Death of our worthy Commander, Captn Gadsden's his Son, about 18 months old expired a few days after. The family are the most distressed I ever saw. I had the pleasure of conversing with Col. Waring a few days since; he stated your family to be in perfect health.

You will have the goodness, Sir, to forward my instructions relative to the Winter Cloathing. I have the honor [&c.]

Edwin T. Satterwhite

ALS. DNA. RG45, BC, 1812, Vol. 3. No. 34.

The Return of the Nautilus's Crew

Captured on 16 July, Lieutenant William Crane, with his officers and men, was held prisoner at Halifax until arrangements for parole could be made. On his return to the United States, Crane reported to Commodore Rodgers who forwarded documents relating to Crane's confinement to the secretary of the navy. The following items include Lieutenant Crane's letter announcing his arrival at Boston and Commodore Rodgers's letter of transmittal and an enclosure in the form of a safe conduct for the cartel passengers.

Lieutenant William M. Crane to Secretary of the Navy Hamilton

Boston 11 Sept 1812

Sir,

I have the honor to acquaint you with the arrival at this port of the officers & crew of the late U.S. Brig Nautilus in the Dart Cartel. I have laid before Comdre Rodgers the Correspondence between Admiral Sawyer and myself relative to the treatment of my crew, and thro' him all the documents which are thought in any way necessary for the information of the Department will be forwarded.

I have on the part of myself, my officers, and crew requested Commodore Rodgers to convene a court of enquiry before the seperation of the ships Company, to investigate and examine into the causes which have led to the loss of the late U.S. Brig Nautilus respectfully [&c.]

W. M. Crane


1. For the proceedings of the Court of Inquiry on Lieutenant Crane's conduct in the loss of Nautilus, held on 26 Sept. 1812 on board United States in Boston harbor, see DNA, RG125, Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General (Navy), (Records of General Courts Martial and Courts of Inquiry of the Navy Department, 1799-1867), Vol. 3, No. 119.
You will perceive, Sir, that there are also included in the exchange, or parole, No. I, Two Midshipmen & five seamen belonging to the U.S. Frigate Essex, who were recaptured in a prize. Seven seamen recaptured in a prize to the U.S. Frigate Constitution, and one mid­shipman & four men belonging to the U.S. Brig Argus, recaptured in a prize to the squadron under my command, all of whom are placed in the same situation, as respects their exchange, that those the Nautius are I have the honor to be [&c.]

Jn° Rodgers

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1812, Vol. 3, No. 43.

[Enclosure]

By His Excellency Lieutenant General Sir John Coape Sherbrooke KB Lieutenant Governor and Commander in Chief in and over His Majesty's Province of Nova Scotia and its Dependencies &c &c &c and by Herbert Sawyer Esquire Vice Admiral of the Blue, and Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Squadron on this Station &c &c &c

To All unto whom these presents shall come

Greeting

Whereas the several persons who are particularly named and described in the Schedule hereunto annexed are Citizens of the United States of America have been captured by the Ship of His Majesty subsequent to the Declaration of War on the part of the United States against Great Britain and Whereas we are willing that the said Persons should be released and restored to their Native Country in Exchange for the like Number of British Subjects who are or may become Prisoners of War in the United States of America and for that purpose have given to the said Prisoners our Permission to proceed from hence under a Flag of Truce to the Port of Boston in order to preserve that courtesey and good understanding which should subsist between Nations on all such occasions and in full confidence and trust of receiving a Like Number of British Subjects who are or may become Prisoners in the United States in Exchange for them. Now be

it known that this Passport and safe conduct is hereby given by us to the said several persons beforementioned in order that they may forthwith proceed without hindrance or molestation in the Brig Dart whereof Rammage\(^1\) is Master under a Flag of Truce as aforesaid We having every reason to conclude that the said Flag will meet with all due respect and consideration from the Government of the United States and all persons at sea or on shore belonging to the said Government

And we do hereby order and direct all His Majesty's subjects within this Province and to all Commanders of His Majesty's Ships and vessels on this Station to permit and suffer the several persons beforementioned to proceed on their said voyage to Boston in the said Brig without any hindrance interruption or molestation whatever of their persons or property and to use them kindly and courteously wheresoever they shall be found. In Testimony and Confirmation whereof we have with our hands signed these presents and caused them to be sealed with our Seals. Dated at Halifax this 1st day of September in the 52d Year of His Majesty's Reign and in the Year of our Lord 1812.

J. C. Sherbrooke\(^2\)
H. Sawyer

By His Excellencys Command
H. H. Cogswell
D. Secy

DS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1812, Vol. 5, No. 45.

1. James Ramage, later sailing master, USN (as of 1 June 1813).
2. Lieutenant General Sir John Coape Sherbrooke (1764-1830), Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, 1811-1816.
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<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Name of Prize</th>
<th>Name of War</th>
<th>Whether Man of War, Privateer, or Merchant Vessel</th>
<th>Prisoners’ Names</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Time When Discharged</th>
<th>Whither, and by what Order</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Nautilus</td>
<td>Man of War</td>
<td>Commander W. M. Crane</td>
<td>Thos. Babbitt</td>
<td>Lieut.</td>
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<td>Pasinger</td>
<td>Mercht Vessel</td>
<td>Will Foothacre</td>
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<td>(Dart cartel to Boston for Exchange)</td>
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<td>Saml Foote</td>
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<td>Two men left Brig</td>
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In all One hundred and thirty seven Persons

HMB Acasta being an American Bunkershill

The whole of the beforementioned Persons Victualled on the day Discharged, and also supplied with twenty Days Provisions for their passage

H Sawyer Vice Adml W Miller Agent for Prisoners of War

DS, DNA, RG45, CL. 1812, Vol. 3, No. 43. These prisoners' names are entered on a printed form. Handwritten additions to the heading are set in small capitals.

1. Column two, "Number on the General Entry Book," contained no entries and has been deleted.
2. The entry for the final column on each page of this list reads: "Dart Cartel to the Port of Boston, per Order of Vice Admiral Sawyer, in exchange for the British Soldiers &c captured in the Samuel and Sarah Transport, by the United States Frigate Essex, who were sent to Quebec on Parole." On each page, a large brace, enclosing all the prisoners' names except those denoted "In Dart Cartel for Boston," points to this entry.
3. "Seven" is written below "five," which is scored through.
WHEREAS LIEUTENANT WILLIAM MILLER Agent to the Commissioners for conducting His Britannic Majesty's Transport Service, and for the Care and Custody of Prisoners of War at HALIFAX NOVA SCOTIA has granted us the undersigned Prisoners described on the Back hereof, Permission to return to the PORT OF BOSTON upon Condition that we give our Parole of Honour, that we will not enter into any Naval, Military, or other Service whatever, against the United Kingdom of GREAT BRITAIN and IRELAND, or any of the Dominions thereunto belonging, or against any Powers in Alliance with GREAT BRITAIN, until we shall have been regularly exchanged for one or more British Prisoners of equivalent Rank, and that we will surrender ourselves at such Place, and at such Time, as shall be required by the said Commissioners, or their Agent for the Time being, to whom we are to give Notice from Time to Time of our Place of Residence. NOW, in Consideration of our Enlargement, we do hereby declare, that we have given our Parole of Honour accordingly, and that we will keep it inviolably. Given under our Hands, at HALIFAX NOVA SCOTIA this Day of SEPTEMBER 1812.

Signature | Rank | Ship | Man of War, Privateer, or Merchant Vessel
--- | --- | --- | ---
John Fairfield | Master | Bolina | Merchant Vessel
Geo Dean Jr | Super Cargo | ditto | ditto
Chas. Bertody | Master | Hare | ditto
John Wales | Mate | ditto | ditto
Jonathan P. Felt | Master | Monk | ditto
J. Lewis | Captain | Bunker Hill | Privateer
Saml. E. Foote | Master | Passinger | Merchant Vessel

DS. DNA, RG45, CL. 1812, Vol. 3, No. 45. These prisoners' names are signed to a printed form. Handwritten additions to the oath are set in small capitals.
On 13 August 1812, Captain David Porter’s Essex captured the British sloop of war Alert (see pp. 218-19) and sent her into New York as a prize. After completing his cruise, Porter returned to the United States and informed the secretary of the navy of his arrival (see pp. 461-64). In responding to this welcome news, Secretary Hamilton sent congratulations and stated that President Madison would soon decide whether or not to take Alert into the navy. Hamilton asked Porter whether by making alterations Alert could be converted into a useful cruiser.1 In the following letter, Porter responds to Hamilton’s question, supplying a good description of Alert’s qualities.


CAPTAIN DAVID PORTER TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

U.S. Frigate Essex
Chester [Pa.] 15th Sept 1812

Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 12th inst. and immediately commenced the repairs. I shall cause my Sails, Bowsprit and other repairs to be made in Philadelphia and shall keep the ship in a state to act on the shortest notice until they are ready to come on board. Our provisions, wood and water will be completed tomorrow.

Your instructions respecting the Arms &c shall be attended to as soon as I can procure suitable persons to value them.

As respects the Alert I do not think she would suit our service as she does not sail well, and it would be mortifying to see the British Flag flying on board her. She is a substantial well built ship and well equipped and calculated to mount 20 Guns has chiefly been employed in conveying, she carries without any inconvenience eight months provisions & water for crew of 120 men, she is high out of the water as you may suppose when she has eight feet hight on the Birth Deck, perhaps settling her Gundeck might improve her sailing, but I should not sup-
Vice Admiral Herbert Sawyer, R.N., to Andrew Allen, British Consul at Boston

His Majesty's Ship Centurion at Halifax the 5th of Augt 1812

Sir

I have fully Considered that part of your letter of the 18 ultimo, which relates to the means of ensuring a Constant Supply of Flour & other dry Provisions to Spain & Portugal & to the West Indies, & being aware of the importance of the Subject, Concur in the proposition you have made. I Shall therefore give directions to the Commanders of his Majesty's Squadron under my Command, not to molest American Vessels Unarmed & So Laden "bona fide" bound to Portuguese or Spanish Ports, Whose Papers Shall be Accompanied with a Certified Copy of this letter Under Your Consular Seal, I have the honor to be Sir [&c.]

Sign'd H. Sawyer
Vice Admiral

Office of his Britannick Majesty's Consul,

I Andrew Allen junior, His Britannick Majesty's Consul, for the States of Massachusetts, New Hampshire Rhode Island and Connecticut, hereby certify that the Annexed paper is a true Copy of a letter Addressed to me by Herbert Sawyer Esquire Vice Admiral and Commander in Chief on the Halifax Station. 1

Given Under my Hand and Seal of Office at Boston in the State of Massachusetts this Sixteenth day of September in the Year of Our Lord One thousand eight hundred and Twelve.

And Jr. Allen, Jr.
Intelligence on British Strength at Halifax

In responding to Secretary Hamilton's cruising instructions, Commodore Rodgers indicated his plans for leaving Boston and included valuable up-to-date information on the buildup of British warships at Halifax, Nova Scotia, and St. John's, Newfoundland. Although Rodgers' source was a Halifax newspaper, in all likelihood it was the most accurate information Washington had received in some time concerning the naval strength of the enemy.

COMMODORE JOHN RODGERS TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

U.S. Frigate President
Boston Sept 17th 1812

Sir

Your letter of the 9th inst I have received.1

The President will be ready for sea in 5 or 6 days, and in the event of a single British Frigate appearing off here I shall put to sea by that time, otherwise I shall wait for the Congress, which will be ready to accompany me in 12 or 14 days from this date. The Wasp (the 3rd and only remaining vessel of my division) has, I am just informed, arrived at Norfolk. I shall inform her commander of the disposition you have made of the Public Vessels, and direct him to join me in a certain Latd & Longd on a certain day, leaving him sufficient time for the outfit of his vessel.

I have just seen a Halifax paper of the 4th Inst stating that Adml Sir John Borlaise Warren had been appointed by the British Admiralty to supercede Admiral Sawyer on the Halifax Station, and that he was on the eve of sailing from Portsmouth (Engd) with an additional squadron, to those already at Halifax & St Johns, consisting of five Ships of the line and two or three Frigates, one of which (the Junon rated a 38) the same paper states to have already arrived at Halifax.

They are determined, it appears, to have Ships enough on our Coast; comparatively small as our force may be. I hope that we shall still be able however, by judicious management, to annoy them: and indeed if we had half their number, of equal force, I am satisfied they would soon be made heartily sick of our Coast: At any rate, should they send their whole Navy on our Coast, I hope it never will be urged as a reason for the few vessels we have not going to Sea.

Your Copy of extracts from Lieut [William M.] Crane's letter of the 18th ult I have received, and presume the reinforcement under the command of Adml Warren as stated in the Halifax papers of the 4th Inst, is that to which he alluded.

I received information to day that there were four British Frigates seen off New Port, the evening before last, and it is reported here (but from what Authority I could not learn) that there were three others outside of Block Island: everything that is seen on our coast now having three Masts, is magnified into a frigate.

Annexed is a list of the English Naval force at present on the St John's & Halifax stations. I have the honor to be [&c.]

Jn't Rodgers

List of British vessels of War at present on the Halifax & St John's stations the 25th August 1812

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<tr>
<th>Name &amp; rate</th>
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<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
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<td>G.S.</td>
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<td>Centurion</td>
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<td>Shannon</td>
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<td>Spartan</td>
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<td>Beulães</td>
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<td>Maidstone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aeolus</td>
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This force is under the command of Vice Admiral Sawyer

At St Johns under the command of Admiral Sir John T. Duckworth

Also 1 Frigate & four other Sloops of War Ringdove, Rosamond, & Laura, Brigs, have sailed with Convoys.


1. See pp. 671-72.
2. Formerly U.S. Brig Nautilus which was renamed for the British ship Emulous which grounded on Cape Sable on 2 Aug. 1812.

News for the British Admiralty

Vice Admiral Herbert Sawyer, nearing the end of his term as commander in chief on the North American station, continued to inform his superiors periodically of the movements of various warships, communications with the United States government, and news of the enemy’s ships. In the following letter, Sawyer remarked particularly on the “unpleasant” news of Commodore Rodgers’ squadron’s safe return to Boston, arrangements made for the exchange of prisoners, and the problem of British seamen serving in American warships.
dient to send the *Coquette* to England with the Dispatches from Mr Baker & Sir George Prevost, which I hope will be approved of. I stated in my Letter No 70 of the 9th Inst. a general Exchange of Prisoners between this Country & the U.SStates has been agreed on, & an agent appointed by the American Government to Superintend those at Halifax, but I wish it to be understood by their Lordships, that I have no intention of exchanging those taken in Privateers, while there are any others, but shall wait their Lordships direction herein. I have therefore only to represent that when this Garrison is strengthened the great accumulation of Prisoners of whom there is a thousand, and at present would render it very difficult to obtain supplies equal to such an increase of Persons.

As I addressed you so recently & not any movements of the Squadron have taken place since, except those detailed above- I shall defer sending returns until the next opportunity. The ships remaining here are the *Africa, Centurion, Junon, Tartarus, Paz*, and *Bream.*

The *Endeavor Cartel* arrived here last night with Lieut. [Bartholomew] Kent and a part of the Crew of His Majesty's late ship *Guerrieres,* & a number of Merchant Seamen. That Officer has informed me that on passing the President, Commodore Rodgers caused twelve of the *Guerrieres,* men to be taken out of the Cartel, who assigned as a reason for so doing, the circumstance of six men belonging to the late United States Brig *Nautilus* having been sent to England, and said they would be treated as Prisoners of War until the six men were released or satisfactorily accounted for. They were sent in the *Thetis* by Captain [Philip] Broke of the *Shannon* who addressed you on the subject. Six men who were serving on board the *Congress* frigate, having given themselves up as British Subjects have been sent here, but I am sorry this is not generally the case nearly two thirds of the American Frigates crews are English and manifest a disposition to quit them, but means are resorted to, to prevent it. I intend however to promulgate an offer to intervene for them, with a view of obtaining His Royal Highness the Prince Regents pardon for all those who may be thereby induced to return to their allegiance, which I hope will meet their Lordships approbation. I have the honor to be &c

(Signed) H Sawyer
Vice Admiral

**A British Protest**

Even as preparations were being made for the proper exchange of prisoners captured at sea, difficulties arose over the treatment of prisoners of war. Lieutenant William Crane had pointed out abuses of his men at Halifax, and in Boston, Andrew Allen, the former British consul, charged that Americans were interfering with British prisoners of war. In the following letter, Anthony St. John Baker complains to Secretary of State Monroe on these matters, asking redress.

**ANTHONY ST. JOHN BAKER TO SECRETARY OF STATE JAMES MONROE**

Philadelphia Sept 19 1812

Sir,

By a letter dated on the 10th Inst which I have received from Mr Allen, his Majesty's late Consul at Boston and who now superintends the embarkation of the British prisoners of war from that port, I am informed that on the arrival at Boston of the Squadron under the command of Commodore Rodgers "every attempt was made to seduce the common Seamen amongst the prisoners who were on board to enter into the American service, but except in a few instances ineffectually: that several boys, however, from 10 to 15 years of age, who were apprentices under indentures, were compelled or persuaded to enter, and notwithstanding repeated applications for their release were still detained: and that many of the Seamen after being kept for some days on board were turned into the Streets instead of being given up to the Marshal, in the hope that from the want of means of procuring subsistence they would be compelled to resort to the American service for support."
I forbear making any remark upon these circumstances as I trust that a knowledge of this improper conduct on the part of its officers will alone be necessary to induce the American Government to issue such orders as may cause immediate redress to be afforded and may prevent the occurrence of such events in future.

I feel it however to be my duty more particularly to call your attention to the following circumstance as stated in the above-mentioned letter from Mr. Allen. "The British Government Brig Endeavour with 110 passengers was stopped on her passage down the harbour by a boat from the President, Commodore Rodgers, and 12 men, part of the crew of the late Guerriere, every one of whom were Englishmen, taken forcibly out and carried on board of the man of war. The pretext assigned for this outrage is that six of the Crew of the American Brig of war Nautilus (who were however British Subjects) were permitted to enter into the service at Halifax, and six more of the same Crew who were recognized as deserters from British Ships of war have been sent to England by the Admiral to await their trial." I need not point out to you, Sir, the evil consequences to which a proceeding of this nature may lead, and which I am convinced will be deprecated by no person more than by yourself. With a view therefore to arrest in this early stage a course of measures which may have so fatal a tendency, I have the honour to request that the persons who were seized by the order of Commodore Rodgers may be released, and to offer to afford every facility in my power in transmitting either to Vice Admiral Sawyer or to his Majesty's Government any claim which may be made by the Government of the United States to the Seamen either at Halifax or in England whose detention has served as a pretext for the violent proceeding adopted by Commodore Rodgers. I have the honour to be [&c.]

Anthony St Jno Baker

The Honble James Monroe
&c &c &c

Copy, DNA, RG45, AF 7.

1. For Commodore Rodgers's comments on this incident, see pp. 477-78.

Prize Money
for the St. Marys Gunboats

After a ship was captured, the usual procedure was for the prize master to bring her into the nearest safe port. There a prize agent would present documents before an admiralty court to have the ship labelled and condemned as a lawfully taken prize of war. The ship was then sold at auction. In the case of prizes taken by the navy, 50 percent of the proceeds were retained for the federal treasury and the rest was presented to the ship or ships involved in the capture. This sum was then dispersed proportionally according to shares assigned to the commodore, if there was one, captains, officers, and enlisted men. In the following letter, a pursuer assigned to gunboats in East Florida discusses the result of such an admiralty proceeding.

Pursuer Gwinn Harris to Secretary of the Navy Hamilton

St. Marys in Georgia
19th September 1812

Sir:
The British Schooner Tripper taken by the Gun Boats on this Station on the 9th July last, has been labelled and condemned in the Admiralty Court of this District: The Specie and nett sales of the articles onboard, amount to Five thousand Eight hundred and Sixteen Dollars and ninety one cents. I am appointed by the captors as prize agent to distribute the one half amongst the officers & Crew & all concerned in the capture: The other half, say Two thousand Nine hundred and Eight Dollars and forty five & 1/2 cents remains in my hands Subject to the order of the Government. I have the honour to request You will direct, to whom the above Sum is to be paid. I have the Honour [&c.]

Gwinn Harris

ALS, DNA, RG45, BC, 1812, Vol. 3, No. 58.

The departure of Captain Isaac Chauncey from New York for Sackets Harbor, with men and materials from the yard, created a scarcity of many items. The task of filling these needs fell to Master Commandant Charles Ludlow. In the following letter, Ludlow states his situation and discusses the ship John Adams and the prize ship Alert which Captain Porter had sent in during his cruise off the Grand Banks.

MASTER COMMANDANT CHARLES LUDLOW TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

U.S. Navy Yard New York
September 29th 1812

Sir,

Commodore Chauncey left this station for the North on Saturday the 26th Inst. since which, I have had the honor to Command the Yard and flotilla. I beg leave to report to the Department the immediate want of Cannon Shot & Small Arms. (to supply the deficiency that Commodore Chauncey has made, by taking those articles from this station) I require 1300 round 32 pd Shot, and 800 Muskets, before the Gun Boats can be ready for service, and have only Men enough belonging to the flotilla & Yard to Man six Boats. I am making every exertion to Ship Men, & have made requisitions for the Shot and Arms, but have to report that neither can be completed for some considerable time, the Muskets particularly. I have been informed that the Arsenal in Connecticut contain a Quantity of Muskets belonging to the United States, if we could have a supply of them, it would enable me to expedite the fitment of the flotilla, & put it in some state of defence.

The U.S. Ship John Adams has at present 30 men attached to her, without her having a Gun, or grain of powder on board, these men I have no control over, owing to her being commanded by a Senior Officer to myself, if it could be so arranged, they would be of inoffine service to the Yard & Boats at present.

The Naval Rendezvous

When a warship needed seamen, the traditional way of attracting them was to "open a rendezvous," which meant detailing an officer to go to a location where such men were likely to gather. There he would make a public announcement that his ship would soon sail on a cruise of a certain duration. Special provisions were usually made for an advance of several months pay and the payment of an enlistment bonus, called a "bounty." Occasionally, the officer would take "music" (a fifer and a drummer) with him, as well as a surgeon or surgeon's mate to examine the candidates. He might also have handbills printed or advertise in the newspapers. Those deciding to enlist would sign articles of agreement, pledging themselves to serve the required term in that ship.

In October 1812, the frigate Constellation was in the final stages of a refit at Baltimore. The next document pertains to the navy's expectations for a two-year cruise. It was Constellation's bad luck, however, to spend most of the war at Norfolk penned in by the British blockade of the Chesapeake.
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SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON TO CAPTAIN JOHN CASSIN

Captain John Cassin
Gosport Navy Yard
1st Oct 1812

The Constellation requires a number of able & Ordinary Seamen. Cause a Rendezvous to be opened at Norfolk for the purpose of entering for that frigate from 60 to 100 able Seamen and as many Ordinary Seamen—wages 12$ pr month for able & 8 to 10$ pr month for Ordinary Seamen—from two to four months advance may be made to each upon good Security to indemnify the public in the event of desertion—and should you find it absolutely necessary, you may allow to able Seamen a bounty of from 10 to 20$ each. The whole to be entered to serve two years from the ship’s first weighing anchor on a cruise. The Agent will furnish the necessary monies upon the requisitions of the recruiting officer approved by you. The requisite blanks are herewith sent to you.

for Paul Hamilton
Ch: W. Goldsborough


Some Naval Intelligence

While Essex was lying at Chester, Pennsylvania, on the Delaware River, await new sails and rigging, Captain Porter was eager for news of the position of the British fleet. He made a cruise a short distance down to the Delaware Capes, where he spoke an American merchantman. Porter learned that there was a large concentration of enemy ships to the north and passed that information to the secretary of the navy. The Delaware Capes were close of blockading ships for the time being, a fact that must have made Porter anxious to get underway before they appeared. He finally sailed on 28 October, expecting to rendezvous with Commodore Bainbridge’s squadron.

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CAPTAIN DAVID PORTER TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

Sir,

I have the honor to inform you that on the 27th ult: I got under way and proceeded down as far as the Capes, while there I obtained the following information respecting the enemies force on the coast.

I spoke an American Schooner the Capt of which informed that he had been captured a few days since off the South shoal of Nantucket by a squadron of 7 British Frigates & a Brig, they kept possession of her 36 hours & then liberated her as she was of little value, they had several valuable prizes in company, the Squadron consisted of the Acosta 40, Statira 38, Belvidere 36, Shannon 38, Maidstone 36, Aeolus 32, little Emulus late Nautilus, & an other frigate.

The Officers of the Squadron informed the Capt of the Schooner, they were on the lookout for Commr Rodgers, who they understood was to sail from Boston on the 24th Sept and stated their intention to run into Boston Bay: From them he also learnt that the Acosta was one of the frigates which chased the Essex, & was the nearest when they lost sight of us. On the 22nd ult the Schooner was spoke by the British Frigate Orpheus of 36 Guns, from the West Indies bound to Halifax, she put some prisoners on board and permitted her to proceed, the Capt informed that the ships would all be drawn from the West Indies for the Halifax Station; that he had spoke the Southampton a few days since bound to the West Indies with 3 prizes in company, The Orpheus wanted repairs & was going to Halifax to dock, her crew was represented as weak and very sickly: On Sunday last she spoke the ship Bainbridge from Liverpool bound to Phile, she had a convoy of 10 sail in company, from the West Indies bound to Halifax.

On Monday last the Belvidere & little Emulus, were seen off Barnagast.

I have just arrived here and shall commence stripping the ship & making the necessary repairs immediately: The Bowsprit, Sails & rigging will soon I expect be ready to come on board, and I shall very
shortly endeavour to have her in a state for service. I have the honor to be [&c.]

D Porter


The Private Life of a Seaman

Few seamen wrote accounts of their life on the lower decks of American men-of-war during the War of 1812. They were mostly illiterate, and many were foreigners, a good number being naturalized Americans who had been born in the British Isles. When documents are located which shed light on any aspect of their lives, they deserve to be considered. The following document is a letter from the representative of a woman who claimed to be the wife of a blue jacket whom she had not seen for four years. The circumstances of her plight seem typical of the time. Hers was not a casual inquiry: she had paid visits to warships putting in at New York and had twice written to the highest military authorities (secretary of war and secretary of navy). No reply to her letters has been found.

1. There are at least two exceptional published accounts: Samuel Leech, Thirty Years from Home: A Voice from the Main Deck (Boston, 1843) and James Fenimore Cooper, Ned Myers; or, A Life before the Mast (Philadelphia, 1841). Leech’s account is an autobiography, while Ned Myers was an account written by Cooper, as told to him by Ned Myers.

HENRY HEDLEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

New York October 5th 1812

Hnb Sir

Were it possible to obtain any information of the Seaman enlisted in the State service in our Navy I would not now trouble you. It is more than four years that a man by the name of Patrick McDonough or McDonald (his Wife is not sure which it is) entered on board one of the frigates under the command of Commodore Decatur when he first enlisted he used to send his Wife Letters but it is more than nineteen months that she has not heard a word of him. A Sailor who said he was enlisted told Mrs. McDonough that her husband died on board the Constitution and was buried in Washington on or before the twenty third day of April last past which rendered Mrs. McDonough very uneasy and distressed in mind1 to know whether the assertion of the said Sailor was true or not I wrote to the Honorable Mr. [William] Eustis the Secretary of War2 some time in the beginning of last August (I think it was) but have not as yet had any answer which I expect is owing the business he has to attend to & perhaps that his Honor was not the person I should have addressed my Letter. If your Honor will please to send me an answer with all the possible information that is in Your Honors power to give about him and on board what Vessel he is so that when our fleet arrives in this Port his unhappy and disconsolate wife may go and see him Your Honor will confer a great favour both on his Wife and Your Honors Dutiful Servant

N B.

Please direct the Letter to me 190 Duane Street

Henry Hedley Builder

ALS, DNA, RG45, MLR, 1812, Vol. 6, No. 173.


2. See Hedley to Secretary of War Eustis, 14 Aug. 1812, DNA, RG45, MLR, 1812, Vol. 6, No. 20. The letters are similar though not identical in content. Mrs. McDonough is quoted in the first as saying that her husband had served for three years as a master and then two as a seaman under Commodore Decatur. She added that she had advertised in the newspapers and had visited the navy agent’s office in New York to no avail.

Change of Command at Halifax

The Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty appointed Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren to replace Vice Admiral Herbert Sawyer during August 1812. Warren’s burden was heavier than Sawyer’s, as he was given control of the West Indies station, based on Bermuda, as well as
ATLANTIC THEATER

the North American station. Warren relieved Sawyer on 27 September and soon made an appraisal of his new command and reported his concerns to the Admiralty. In the following letter, addressed to the Secretary of the Admiralty, Warren expresses his concerns about the small number of ships at his disposal and the rapidly growing threats from American naval vessels and privateers.

ADMIRAL SIR JOHN B. WARREN, R.N., TO
SECRETARY OF THE ADMIRALTY JOHN W. CROKER

Halifax the 5th October 1812

Sir,

Enclosed I beg to transmit a Copy of the Disposition of His Majesty's Squadron under the Command of Vice Admiral Sawyer as delivered to me by him on the 27th Ultimo.1 The Ships named in the margin but upon that List are lost or gone from hence, and their Lordships will observe that the Force of this Station is in a very reduced state.

The demand of Ships for Convoys and the protection of the Commerce, the State of the War which seems to assume a new as well as more active and inveterate aspect than heretofore: the quantity of Shipping detained and now remaining without condemnation in the several districts of the command, and the Enemy's Cruizers being very active and persevering which by the accompanying Copy of a Commission found on the Prize Master of a ship recaptured by the San Domingo will be seen already to amount to three hundred and eighteen, a number of large ships from 22 to 32 Guns being fitting out and in the different American Ports, exclusive of the United States Navy of Frigates, which also are to be encroached induce me to believe their Lordships will not disapprove of my requesting your stating for their consideration the necessity of re-inforcing the Squadron on this Coast, and in the West Indies, to enable me to meet the exertions of the Enemy, who seem to be determined to persevere in the annoyance and destruction of the Commerce of Great Britain and these Provinces. I have the honour to be, Sir [&c.]

John Borlase Warren

P.S. The following Ships are off the List of this Squadron as enclosed in your letter to me dated the 8th August last.

Guerriere Movies
Laura
Emulous
Chubb
Indian
Atalanta
Coquette
Juniper
Leeward Island Squadron
Barbadoes

Enclosed I beg to transmit a Copy of the Disposition of His Majesty's Squadron under the Command of Vice Admiral Sawyer as delivered to me by him on the 27th Ultimo. The Ships named in the margin but upon that List are lost or gone from hence, and their Lordships will observe that the Force of this Station is in a very reduced state.

It is generally assumed that naval officers consulted among themselves as to the most favorable tactics and strategies to be used in war. It was natural that they would take advantage of each other's knowledge and experience. It has seldom been shown that they also consulted with civilians on such matters. In September 1812, Commodore Bainbridge received general cruising orders from the secretary of the navy, as did Commodores Rodgers and Decatur. But, on 5 October, Bainbridge wrote his friend William Jones, a Philadelphia merchant and former sea captain, asking his advice on where to cruise with Constitution, Essex, and Hornet. Jones's informative reply was dated 11 October, so it probably reached Bainbridge before his squadron left Boston on 26 October. Bainbridge's track conformed well to the advice Jones provided, indicating at least that their thoughts coincided on the most fruitful way to annoy the Enemy. In January 1813, William Jones

John Wilson Croker

1. Enclosure not found.

William Jones and Commodore Bainbridge
became secretary of the navy, an appointment applauded by many naval officers, not the least of whom was Commodore Bainbridge.

Commodore William Bainbridge to William Jones

U.S. Frigate Constitution
Boston 5 Oct 1812

My dear Sir,

Your friendly letter of the 30th ult has this moment reached me. I trust ere this, that my letter to you, which was forwarded to New York has come to hand. But in case it should not, I beg leave to trouble you with a repetition of my request. Viz. When I had the pleasure of meeting you last in Philada you kindly offered to give me your ideas on a plan of Cruizing. Which I will now thank you for. And entertaining as I sincerely do, the very highest opinion of your able judgement, I must beg you will give me your opinion & advise, freely & fully. My command consist of the Frigates Constitution & Essex & Sloop of war Hornet. The two latter vessels are extremely well Commanded. We can carry between 4 & 5 months Provisions and 100 days water. The Constitution will be ready to leave this with the Hornet in twenty days. The Essex I shall order from the Delaware to meet me at fix place. Which would be the best Place, off Madera, or the Cape de Verd Islands? In your observations on my intended Cruize be pleased to mention the best places for receiving Supplies of Water & Provisions. I intend to keep my Cruizing Ground as secret as possible, in order that the Enemy may not disturb me by superior numbers. I trust I shall always be freely disposed to meet them, as you say, Ship for Ship & Man for Man—in which event, I pledge you my word, my esteemed friend, you shall have no cause to blush for my conduct. Comr Rodgers Squadron consist of the President, (one of the finest Ships in the World—I offered Rodgers $5000 to change Ship) Congress & Wasp. Comr Decatur's Squadron is the U. States, Chesapeake and Argus. Rodgers & Decatur, with their own Ships, the Congress & Argus will leave here tomorrow on a Cruize, but wither bound, I know not. The Chesapeake I presume will be manned in the course of a month when she will also leave here. Having had to give the Constitution all new lower Masts, and many other Spurs, and an entire new Gang of Standing Rigging, besides patching
her Wooden Hull, keeps me very busily employed. Last Sunday, I took in the Main Mast and this day, Sunday I am taking in the Foremast. So you'll perceive, that I dare even break the Sabbath in this Religious Land.

I believe the Report which we had sometime since, that there were first rates in the Squadron of Sir J B Warren was incorrect. Later information states that he has only 270 seven fers & one of that class of vessels. I think it probable they would have to Cruise on our Coast, to overmatch our large Frigates.

I do not believe the Enemy will make any attack on any Part of our Sea Coast, particularly the Eastern Section, until they find the war is settled to a probable period of duration. At present, I presume, they will so conduct themselves as not to give that initiation which unquestionably would produce a more union of sentiments in the Action of war. I will thank you to say to our mutual friend Mr. Chandre Price, that I received his letter and would if it had been practicable have attended to his request with much pleasure for Young Hunter is a great favorite with me. Mrs. B. joins in great regard & best wishes to William Jones Esqr. warm friendship, yours Mrs. Jones & yourself. An believe me settled to a probable period.

I proceed to comply with your request of Octot. Dec. 1812.


1. Chandler Price, of Philadelphia, was seeking a promotion and transfer to a frigate for his nephew, Midshipman William M. Hunter, sailing master in Fire. Hunter was commissioned lieutenant on 25 May 1813, and as first assigned to the ship Pride, at Boston, but was reassigned to Constitution on 28 Sept. See Chandler Price to William Jones, 13 Jan. and 5 Mar. 1813. Phil. U. C. Smith Collection, Papers of William Jones, folder Jan.-June 1813.

WILLIAM JONES TO COMMODORE WILLIAM BAINBRIDGE

Philada 11th Octot 1812

Dear Sir,

I proceed to comply with your request of my Ideas of a Cruise for the Squadron under your Command, which your own experience & intelli-

gence renders almost superfluous. I perceive by the Stock of provisions you mention and the places you propose for the Essex to rendezvous that you probably contemplate the extension of your cruise to the Southern Hemisphere. The positions which I consider the best for intercepting the British trade I will mention in the order of distance from our own Coast. First off Cape Carneauval in the coast of Florida in the outer verge of the Stream you intercept to a certainty everything from Jamaica through the Gulph and have the ports of Georgia and the Carolinas near you, which your prizes can reach in 3 or 4 days. 2d The Crooked Island passage to intercept the trade from the East end of Jamaica our privateers have fallen in with a great many fine ships through both passages which were too strong for them and go in small squads of 4 or 6 ships these would be fine game for you. 3d. From one to two degrees North of Corvo and Flora [Flores, Azores Islands] this is an excellent position. The W I fleets and small squads in order to avoid the fogs and keep together pass to the Southward of the tail of the Bank and near these Islands and then steer a more Northerly course. Commodore Rodgers was too far North when on the Maredian of the Azores. 4th. From the last mentioned position range along the Coast of Portugal in the track of the convoys to a position by Britain & the Straits of Gibraltar and thence pass to the Westward of Madeira Teneriffe and the Cape de Verds or from the Azores direct to the Cape de Verds if it is thought the eastern route does not promise Success or would be likely to expose your route to the enemy. I would pass just to the Westward of the Cape de Verds and cross the Equator in about 22° West where you may in all probability fall in with some of the extra India men out or home or some of the trade to or from the Cape of Good Hope Isle of France &c. Here you may also replenish your water from the rains, as I presume you would not wish to touch at Teneriffe or the Cape De Verds Isles for that purpose. The Next cruising Ground and which I deem a very important one is the Coast of Brazil with which the British drive a valuable trade and the returns are very frequently in a very convenient Commodity Viz Gold in Bars and Coin and other compact valuables. 5th. If you go further South than this I would advise you to touch at Tristan Da Cuna where you can get refreshments and water, an American having a few years Since settled there and carried with him live stock for Breed and the soil and climate being favorable I presume they have greatly encreased. You will find there a good Bay and anchorage. Thence I would look off the Cape of Good Hope for the trade that may be passing and avoid giving alarm as much as poss-
sible. If you can learn of any valuable Vessels lying in Table Bay you may by running in under English Colours perhaps have a chance of Cutting them out. 6th A Brilliant Cruize ought no doubt be made in the Indian Seas, but for the distance and absolute deprivation of a Single friendly Port to refit in Case of Accidents to which you would be much exposed. Which the Men with the dread of disease seems to forbid so hazardous an enterprise. There are numerous places in which you could replenish your water, and the Country ships you would probably make prize of would furnish you with abundance of rice and some other articles of provision. You might also calculate upon getting a partial Supply of Cordage and other Naval Stores out of your prizes but upon mature reflection there appears to be too much of chance and responsibility to warrant the enterprise with so important a part of our Gallant little Navy.

With a view to furnish you with information relative to the trade & Navigation of the India & China Seas Straits &c and the Voyage thence I have delivered to Mr [George] Harrisons Clerk to be forwarded to you the best practical work extant that I have met with viz "Elmores Indian Directory" and for the China Seas you ought to have Hosburghs Charts and Directions.1 The Homeward Bound British India Men pass the Cape of Good Hope from the Middle of Jany to the 1st of March; April the China fleets about a month later—and pass the equator in about Longt 22° W about five weeks after they pass the Cape of Good Hope touching at St Helena on their way down. The Outward Fleets leave the Channel from the latter end of Jany to the beginning of April pass the Equator from 18° to 25° as the Winds admit and pass within 5 or 6° of Brazil some much nearer and sometimes touch at Rio Janeiro. As much time would be lost in your route from the Coast of Brazil to the Cape in which you would meet with Nothing the only object (unless you mean to pass to the East of the Cape) being to get your casting, look into the Cape and return in the track of the India Men, passing near St Helena and touching at Ascencion where you will in all probability get an abundant Supply of turtle (but recollect the report of cannon will drive them off). You will determine whether it would not be better to limit your cruize to the Coast of Brazil touching at Rio for supplies where they may [be] deposited for you with the Consul by direction &c and if on that station your success should not equal your expectations you can soon return to the Northward ranging along the West India Islands and select your cruizing ground according to cir-

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*In whatever situation you may be placed I am well assured that a high sense of National and Personal honor guided by vigilance skill and intrepidity will mark your conduct and that the fruits of your labours may be a rich harvest of glory wealth and happiness is the Sincere wish of your respectful friend

W J

P.S. You propose the Essex to join you off Madeira or the Cape de Verds Isles and ask which I think best. If you adopt the Idea of a short cruise off Corvo & Flores had She not better join you there. If not, I do not think you have much to tempt you to stay long near Madeira where our own vessels will discover and expose your route & therefore she may join you off Teneriffe or the one of the Cape de Verds Isles with more convenience.


The Promotion of Lieutenant Charles Morris

In reporting his successful engagement with Guerriere, Captain Isaac Hull had high praise for Lieutenant Charles Morris' skills as Constitution's first lieutenant. In a spontaneous act of gratitude, Secretary of the Navy Hamilton had Morris promoted directly to post captain. This generous act offended many officers both senior and junior to Morris. His peers and superiors generally conceded his competence, but they also considered him merely lucky to have been serving in Constitution at the time of her stunning victory. In their opinions, several others could have done as well, and a more reasonable reward would have been promotion to the next higher rank—that of master commandant.

As a major incident in the internal administration of the Navy Department, the promotion controversy reveals the special sensitivity of naval officers in matters of honor and position. They did not hesitate to state their objections to the secretary. Three letters that follow are indicative of the mood of many. Master Commandant James Lawrence's reaction is noteworthy. Although well-liked and acclaimed as a leader of men, Lawrence carried the point of personal honor to an extreme. He declared he was so insulted that he was on the verge of resigning. The succeeding document is Lieutenant Morris's grateful acceptance of the promotion, taken against the advice of some of his friends. The last two documents are Secretary Hamilton's caustic rejection of Lawrence's threat to resign and Lawrence's shocked rejoinder wherein he announces his intention to appeal to the Senate, over the head of his operational commander.

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON TO LIEUTENANT CHARLES MORRIS

Nav: Dep't
5 Oct 1812

I have the happiness of transmitting to you herewith, by the special direction of the President of the United States, a Commission as captain in the Navy of the United States dated 19. Aug: 1812. a day which...
Sir

To you, as the guardian of our rights, I feel bound to appeal, whenever there is a probability of their being in danger, and as it is easier to guard against an evil than to combat it after it takes place, I think it proper to offer you my sentiments on the following subject.

It having been suggested that the friends of Lieut Morris intended using their influence to have him promoted to the grade of Post Captain, in consequence of his officer-like conduct in the late brilliant action fought by Capt Hull, I have maturely reflected upon the merits of such an act and cannot find that justice in it, which it might appear to carry with it to persons not immediately interested in its consequences. All of us who have now arrived to the grade of Master Commandant are of fourteen or fifteen years standing in service, and have gained that rank entirely by our long services, without any opportunity having offered by which fortune could aid us: and if we are to be overtop by every brave Lieut on whom fortune may smile, there will be no stimulus left us: for, Post Capt being the highest rank we can aspire to, however brilliantly we may distinguish ourselves, the Lieut who has been lucky enough to gain this rank at one promotion, will continue to rank us, although his services may not have been half equal to ours. Were there other grades still higher by which we could derive similar advantages, our case would not then be peculiarly hard as it now is, or rather will be, in case this system is adopted. There are none of us who would, were it in our powers take one particle from the merits of Mr Morris, and I pledge my honor, as an officer, were I at the head of the list of Lieuts I should be pleased to see him made a Master Commandant over me, as much as I should to see any junior of my own grade advanced to a post rank above me, under similar circumstances. What would be said by all the old Captains, were it to please the government to say that one of us should take Rank of the whole of them? Wt, they would at once determine that their long services had been thrown away, and they would leave the service without hesitation. There is but one sentiment on this subject throughout the service, and that is, that Lieut Morris should be promoted to a Master Commandant, and as such he would be greeted, with pleasure by all grades. It is as much as he can expect from this single act, and I believe it to be as much as he wishes. I hope, Sir, you will at once see the weight of the arguments I have used, and the propriety of using them: and that my motives may be appreciated as they deserve and as they are intended: for the good of the service and in justice to the Rank I hold in that service. Let me hope that while I am absent in the service of my Country, that you sir, will be a stickler for my rights, and that this may be brought forward as my remonstrance against an attempt to infringe them in the present case. I have the honor [&c.]

A Sinclair

ALS, DNA, RG45, MC, 1812, Vol. 1, No. 104.

SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 1812

519

U S Ship Hornet

Octr 10th 1812

Sir

I was much gratified this evening with a report of your return to Washington, and hasten to address you as the guardian of our rights, on a subject that nearly concerns me as well as others of my grade in the service. It has for some time past been currently reported in this city (and in fact I have seen two letters from Mr Gouldsborough that corroborates the report,) that Lieut: Morris was to be promoted to the rank of Captain in the Navy, in consequence of his conduct onboard the Constitution in the late action with the Guerriere. I have the most exalted opinion of Lieut: Morris, of course cannot wish to detract from his merits, but sir after the most mature consideration, I really cannot discover wherein his exertions as first Lieut: entitle him to the rank to which I understand he is about to be promoted. the appointment of a Master & Commander in my opinion amply compensate him, and as far as I can judge give universal satisfaction. I have consulted with Commodore Rodgers, who fully agrees with me in opinion and has authorized me to make use of his name in my communications to you on the subject, Commodore Bainbridge's sentiments on the occasion I presume you are acquainted with as he informs me he has writ-
ten you. I am fearful you will consider my remonstrance as improper, but trust on taking my feelings into consideration, you will make every allowance when I inform you that my friends universally and the officers generally coincide with me in thinking, that the promotion of Lieut Morris to the grade I first mentioned, bears peculiarly hard on me, as I was first Lieut: with the now Commodore Decatur at the time he destroyed the Frigate Philadelphia at that time, if not now, thought as much of, as the capture of the Guerriere, for which exploit he was promoted to the rank of Post Captain, and I rewarded by the offer of two months pay. After devoting near fifteen years of the prime of my life, faithfully to the service of my country, you I trust will not think hard of my having remonstrated thus plainly to you, on the subject of Lt Mor ris's promotion over me. I assure you I should regret leaving the service at any time, particularly at this period, but if out rank'd by any officer, who I think has not greater claims to promotion than myself, I have no alternative, trusting to the impartiality of your decision. I have the honor [&c.]

Ja. Lawrence

ALS, DNA. RG45, MG, 1812, Vol. 1, No. 106.

Lieutenant Charles Morris to
Secretary of the Navy Hamilton

Boston
Ocr 10th 1812

Sir
I have this day received your letter of the 5th inst covering my commission as a Captain in the Navy of the United States. I have to request that you will be pleased to present my grateful acknowledgements to his Excellency the President of the United States for this unexpected and signal mark of his confidence, and to assure him that my highest ambition will be to prove by my future conduct that it has not been misplaced. Be pleased also to accept my sincere thanks for your interference in my favor on this occasion, and for the very honorable command you have been pleased to assign me.
My health is not yet so far restored as to enable me to travel with safety, whenever it shall be I shall lose no time in repairing to Washington in conformity to your orders. With great respect [&c.]

C: Morris


1. The Senate delayed confirmation of Morris's promotion until Mar. 1813, and in that month made some allowances for the seniority of Morris's colleagues. Three captains were confined by the Senate: Jacob Jones on the 3rd of Mar., James Lawrence on the 4th, and Charles Morris on the 5th. In this way, some of the jealousies caused by the Morris promotion were assuaged. See Charles Morris, The Autobiography of Commodore Charles Morris (Annapolis, Md., 1880), pp. 167-69.

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON TO
MASTER COMMANDANT JAMES LAWRENCE

Capt. Lawrence

U. S. Ship Hornet

Navy Dep't

17. Octo 1812

Your letter of the 10th Inst has reached me. The suggestion with which that letter concludes prevents an answer in detail, & confines me to the single observation, that if (without cause) You leave the service of our Country, there will still remain, Heros & patriots to support the honor of its flag.

P. Hamilton


MASTER COMMANDANT JAMES LAWRENCE TO
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

U.S. Ship Hornet

Boston Oct 22d [1812]

Sir

I had the honor of addressing you a few days past on a subject wherein I was deeply interested, (and this morning while under sailing orders) received your answer, I regret that you should have considered my letter as indecorous, indeed I am astonished it should so

have been considered, as it only contained a very respectful representation of my feelings in a cause of complaint in which I was seriously affected, and to you sir as the head of our naval establishment, and the Guardian of our legal rights; I certainly thought that I could address my complaint without giving offence, but your answer has taught me to know that I was mistaken and that an officer in the Navy cannot solicit the navy department for redress without having his patriotism call'd in question. In consequence of which I have consulted my friends, and have drawn up a memorial which will be presented to the Honble the Senate of the U States, and shall be governed by their decision, I really think my holding a commission as Master Commdt: a bar to promotion, inasmuch as I am constantly attached to a frigate, and should she be so fortunate as to capture a vessel of a equal force, her first Lieut.: agreeable to the present arrangement must be promoted over me. very respectfully I remain [&c.]

Ja's Lawrence


Labor and Management at the Washington Navy Yard

A number of blacksmiths employed at the Washington Navy Yard petitioned the secretary of the navy for redress of grievances relating to their wages, use of liquor, and physical punishment. The secretary forwarded this petition to Commodore Tingey for his reaction. What follows is Commodore Tingey's statement of policy on the questions raised by the petition.
Sir

I have maturely considered the Petition of the blacksmiths, which you did me the honor to refer to me, and which is herewith return’d. Their first charge, of being deprived of "refreshments" (liquor) while at heavy work, is not well founded. My orders were that, if such indulgence was necessary, they should bring it in with them, on the bell ringing to work, the objection was to the breaking off from work, several boys or men for half an hour at a time, in the course of the day, to bring the liquor from outside the Yard. In respect to raising their wages to that of the Shipwrights, it behoves me to observe that, they certainly are, a valuable set of workmen. Most of them of extraordinary ability and industry, but as far as my knowledge goes, I conceive there is no precedent, at any port in the Union, where smiths wages are equal to those of shipwrights: and again should we at this time make a rise of wages in anyone class, I conceive that all the others will expect it, the same proportions being paid in the different branches from the first establishment of this yard. Their third request being granted, would have strong tendency to destroy all organization & discipline in the Yard, my determination being long made known to discharge from this service, any of the men, who should strike another, within the yard. Understanding however that the Negro who was struck, had been extremely careless in his duty, & gave provocation thereby, I only observed to the man who struck him, that, on a repetition of such an act, I would certainly dismiss him. All of which is respectfully submitted. I have the honor [&c.]

Thos: Tingey


1 Petition not found.
shall meet you there. From Port Praya Bay, I shall proceed to the Island Fernando Noronha, in Late 5° 53' South, and Longe 32° 27' West, at which place I shall get Refreshments, and expect to leave there by the 15th December, and thence cruise along the Brazil Coast, as far South as Cape Frio in Late 23° South and Longe 41° West, until the 15th January, at which time I intend to pass by Janero, and cruise between that place and the Island St. Sebastian until the 1st February, when I shall stop at said Island (Sebastian) to receive some Refreshments, and shall Leave it on the 5d February and proceed to the Island St. Catherine in Late 27° 32' South & Longe 49° 15' West, which place I shall Leave by the 15th February. I shall then proceed off the Island St. Helena, and cruise to the Southward of it, occasionally so near as to discover it. In this station I intend to remain to intercept the returning Ships from India, until the 1st of April. Should any unforeseen cause or accident prevent our meeting by the 1st April next, you must then act according to your best judgment for the good of the Service on which we are engaged. I herewith transmit you a copy of my instructions, in order that you may know the Latitude I am acting under, which I consider completely discretionary. I shall be extremely anxious for us to meet, to communicate more fully, and for me to receive your able assistance in advice and cooperation. With best wishes for the health & Success of yourself, Officers & Crew, I am [&c.]

(Signed) Wm Bainbridge

Captain David Porter
Commander US, F. Essex

Copy, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 1, No. 6 1/2.

British Encouragement of Licensed Traders

On 9 October, Commodore Decatur's United States left Boston to join President, Congress, and Argus. Three days later, as they were cruising as a squadron, United States chased and brought to an American merchant ship, Mandarin. Among the captain's papers was a package of licenses from England which were intended for shipowners who had applied to the British for permission to trade with Spain and Portugal. Decatur made a prize of the ship and sent the licenses to Secretary Hamilton. The following document was Decatur's letter of enclosure. The incident became an annoyance to Decatur (see pp. 637-38) after his return.

COMMODORE STEPHEN DECATUR TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

U. States Ship United States at Sea Latitude 41 Longitude 60 October 12 1812

Sir,

Having yesterday parted with the squadron under the command of Commodore Rogers in pursuit of a Frigate I this morning fell in with the American Ship Mandarin William Baker Master from London bound to Philadelphia on examining her papers I discovered that a large portion of the Merchandize on board her was for British account and I have resolved to put an officer into her and sail her to Norfolk. I also found a number of licenses from the British Government to Citizens of the United States granting them protection in the transportation of Grain &c to Spain & Portugal. These I have taken the liberty to forward herewith for your disposal. I am very respectfully [&c.]

Stephen Decatur


Captain Porter Requests a Transfer

As much as David Porter's name is linked with the fortunes of the frigate Essex, it is ironic that she was not his favorite ship. In the following letter, Porter continues to complain of Essex's sailing
Guns for Privateers

As owners of privateers prepared ships for active service, they occasionally encountered difficulties in obtaining guns and other weapons of the desired size and type. Lewis Leroy, a merchant in Washington, North Carolina, was confronted by just such a problem. Hoping for government assistance, Leroy wrote the secretary of the navy describing his need for ordnance and enclosed a letter written on Leroy's behalf by Representative Blackledge, who was actively interested in naval matters (see pp. 452–54). The following documents include Leroy's letter and Blackledge's recommendation. The secretary's response to these supplications is unknown, but it is likely that he discussed the request with Leroy during a personal interview. The Navy Department generally encouraged the equipping of privateers, so it is probable that Hamilton loaned Leroy the required weapons.

1. See, for example, Benjamin Crowninshield to Secretary of War Eustis, 3 July 1812, DNA, RG45, MLR, 1812, Vol. 3, No. 12, in which he asks his Massachusetts ally to assist in the procurement of 14 nine-pounders for the privateer America, and the letter of Boston Navy Agent J. Vincent Brown to Secretary of the Navy David Porter, 16 Sept. 1814, referring to several cannon lying at Crowninshield Wharf in Salem, which were said to have been loaned by the navy for use on board America, DNA, RG45, MLR, 1812, Vol. 3, (no document number but located between nos. 32 & 33).

CAPTAIN DAVID PORTER TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

U.S. Frigate Essex
Chester [Pa.], 14th Octr. 1812

Sir,

I had the honor to address you on the 6th & 15th ulto respecting the Alert. My Officers and men seem very anxious to know how that ship is to be disposed of and the views of the Department respecting her, particularly as they are now destined on a very long cruise and are desirous of having the means of providing themselves with clothing, Stores &c. 

They have repeatedly requested me to write to you on the subject in order that some arrangement may be made before their departure. Permit me also to observe that I took the liberty to address a few lines to you on the 23d ulto respecting a transfer to the Adams and I beg that the department will indulge me in the exchange on my return from the next cruise as my insuperable dislike to Carronades and the provision of having the means of providing themselves with clothing, Stores &c. especially as they are now destined on a very long cruise and are desirous to be disposed of and the views of the Department respecting her. Should there however be material obstacle to making this change, I beg that the Department will indulge me in the exchange on my return with the Officers particularly as they are now destined on a very long cruise and are desirous to be disposed of and the views of the Department respecting her.

I endeavour to do my duty to the utmost in the service. An Officer junior to myself has command of a 36 Gun Frigate and if I should not be so fortunate as to obtain the Adams, the probability is that an officer junior to myself will also be appointed to her, should there however be material obstacle to making this change, I endeavour to do my duty to the utmost in Essex and trust to the fortune of war for a better ship. I have the honor [&c.]

D Porter


sea. On laying his circumstances before me I have thought not impossible, but he might on giving bond and good security (which he can give) to restore the arms if not taken by the enemy, obtain from your department one eighteen pounder and the necessary shot. 50 Cutlasses and 50 muskets, the muskets would do even if not in prime order nor of the best quality, he would also like to have if he could obtain it one 24 pound Caronade & two long sixes. From Mr Leroy's judgment in vessels, as well as in Commerce, I have no doubt if he can get this vessel to sea properly equipped she will be as great a thorn in the enemy's side as any afloat of her burthen. He will have her Coppered and in every respect well fitted for a long Cruise, if he can but procure the Arms he wants. Believing as I do that till our navy is increased which will take some time, it is by privateering only that we shall be able much to annoy the enemy, & knowing your anxiety to make the enemy feel as much on his element, I have ventured to address you this to be forwarded or handed you by Mr Leroy under a firm conviction that if it be within the Compass of your power & resources to aid him you will do so. And with sentiments of very great respect remain [&c.]

Wm Blackledge

P.S. Mr L. can contrive to get the arms without danger of Capture from any port upon the waters of the Chesapeake & will thank you if this is forwarded you by him to address an answer to him at Washington No Carolina.

ALS, DNA, RG45, MLR, 1812, Vol. 6, No. 193.

LEWIS LEROY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

Washington N Ca
14 October 1812

Sir,

Having Being Informed that the Government had in Some Instances extended their aids to Individuals towards arming against our Enemies, has induced me to take the Liberty of asking wheather I could also be aided with the necessary guns, and Small arms for a vessell of 240 tons which I have Built Since the Declaration of war, expressly for to Cruise as aforesaid; Having nearly Exhausted my funds in Building

and fitting it will be almost impossible to Procure the armament unless government will aid me, I was advised to apply to the war Department which I have done and made a demand for these very articles I now write for, but since I am informed that yours is the Proper one; have obtained a Letter from Wm Blackledge "Esquire" to you which I Respectfully Inclosed, with the request, if you have it in your Power to grant me the Loan of the arms I want, I will upon Knowing their Value, give my Bond with approved Sureties to the collector of this Port and authorise some Persons to receive them at the Place you'll be good enough to order; the arm's wanted are as upon otherside:

1 18. Pound. cannon: there is Several here Belonging to government one of these would answer
2 6. Pounders. cannon
4 24 Pound Caronnades.
50 Musketts
50 Pairs Pistols
50 Sabres or cutlasses. of the Latter there is a Parcell here belonging to government.

The Musketts and Pistols if not even in the Best of order would never the Less answer. I Pray you to be good enough to Inform me where I can Send for the above articles, in case my Demand is granted. I am with sentiments [&c.]

Ls. Leroy

ALS, DNA, RG45, MLR, 1812, Vol. 6, No. 198.

Captain Isaac Hull
Ordered to New York

Soon after returning to Boston following his defeat of Guerriere, Captain Hull learned of the death of his brother and asked to be relieved of command of Constitution. Secretary Hamilton complied with his request, ordered him to transfer his command to Captain Bainbridge,
and informed Hull that his request for leave to clear up his brother's estate would be granted. Armstrong was to continue as commandant of Charlestown Navy Yard while preparing his ship for sea, when Hull returned from leave, he would relieve Bainbridge of his duties as yard commandant.

Meanwhile, Captain Chauncey was making preparations to depart New York Navy Yard for his new command on Lakes Ontario and Erie, and Master Commandant Charles Ludlow had been ordered to relieve him, at least temporarily (see pp. 302-303). At some point, however, the secretary must have had second thoughts about Ludlow's appointment, for on 10 October he peremptorily ordered Hull, who was in New York on family business, to assume command of all warships and gunboats at New York, to ready them for the defense of the city, and to 'follow the Instructions of gen Armstrong, with respect to your operations for the public good.'

The document which follows is Hull's reply to this sudden change of plans, revealing his willing, though perplexed, state of mind.


CAPTAIN ISAAC HULL TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

New York
15th October 1812

Sir

I have had the honour to receive your instructions of the 10th instand and shall proceed to Carry them into Execution as speedily as Possable. but it will Take a longtime to put the GunBoats and other vessels on this Station in a State for Service.

The John Adams is without Armament of any sort nor is there a gun in the Yard fit to Put on board of her nor a gun Carriage had we the Guns. I shall however See what Can be done And in a day or Two make you acquainted with the State of the Yard and the different Vessels on this Station.

I regret to find in your Instructions I am directed to Call on General [John] Armstrong and receive his Instructions And Consult with him on the operations of Vessels Stationed here under my command. There Can be no question but he ought to be consulted on some points And

That the land and sea forces ought to act Together—but I cannot suppose that it is your intention That I receive orders from General Armstrong as to the disposition or Equipment of the force placed by you under my Command. I should be much pleased to be made acquainted with your intentions on that Subject as I yesterday Called on General Armstrong and requested of him to suspend any orders that he might find necessary to give untill I heard from you for untill that Time I could not Consent to act upon any order he might think proper To give. When you was pleased to order me to take charge of the yard at Boston I had hopes of getting a few Months leisure to attend to my Private Concerns, and Came here for that Purpose and having Com­menced on the Settlement of my Brothers Estate I must Suffer great inconvenience by being continued at this Yard. I have to make arrangements for the Comfort of a large Famaly & Provide for them against the Winter. My young brothers depend on me to Settle my Brothers Estate and to Provide for them. I hope Therefore situated as I am if the Service will Possably admit of it you will be pleased to Con­sider me attached to the Boston Station or Should you have given that yard to some other officer you will give me a Station in Connecticut or if there is none Then grant me a furlough for a few months I could not ask it under any other Circumstances than these I have mentioned to you. The Season will now soon be such that the enemy will hardly attempt to enter our Ports so that there will be but little for the officers to do here. indeed when the Boats are fitted out or even in fitting them out I should suppose that Captain Ludlow is fully Competent to every­thing they may require. I have the honor to be [&c.]

Isaac Hull

ALS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1812, Vol. 5, No. 125.

Charleston Under Blockade

The impact of British ships actively blockading a poorly defended port can be seen in the following report from Charleston. The American navy's few ships were otherwise employed and unavailable to provide a counter-blockading force, hence, Captain John Dent's sug-
estion of other alternatives. His proposal that a local vessel be bought by the state and loaned to the navy is reminiscent of improvised navies during the American Revolution. He provides evidence that in the absence of federal support local communities felt forced to take action to defend themselves.

CAPTAIN JOHN H. DENT TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

Charleston. 17th October. 1812

Sir

My last acquainted you, that our port was blockaded by three Brigs of War. Since which they have been joined by a fourth, and from the look out last evening a large Ship was seen in the offing. Supposed to be a frigate, as the Squadron did not chase; She must belong to them. they have captured in Sight of the harbour, twelve Sail, two of which (Coasters) have been recaptured by the Mary Ann privateer, and two others drove on shore in the late gale and lost to the Southward of the light. General [Thomas] Pinckney has loaned me thirty Soldiers to do duty in the guard Boats during the night. I have made a requisition on Lieut [Robert D.] Wainwright for fifteen Marines to do duty on board the guard-Ship, if complied with will enable me to take that number of Seamen from her, for the Barges: the Enemy appear well acquainted with our harbour—they approach very near, and avoid the Shoals when in chace which circumstance makes me believe they have pilots.

A Schooner Sailing fast, to carry about 10 or 12 guns would be of infinite Service in this harbour, to protect vessels chased within the Shoals, and after to withdraw the attention of the Enemy from the chace, thereby enable them to escape, there is Such a one building and will be ready to launch in two Weeks, well calculated for this Service. there has been meetings of the Citizens here these two days to take into consideration the practicability of equipping the Merchantment & Privateers to engage and drive off, the blockading Squadron. there are no vessels here competent, and their plan will not succeed—they are clamarous for such a vessel as I have requested, and would I presume be purchased by the State and loaned to the Government.

Gun Boat No 166 since cruizing in the Waters of Beaufort has given great Satisfaction to the Inhabitants in that quarter—her force is not competent to the protection and guard of so large a Bay, divided into many channels, I could purchase a small vessel here (that would go the
in, except Eighty one Boxes of Gold and Silver, amounting to between One hundred fifty and Two hundred thousand Dollars: The Specie I took out of her and had intended sending her to England in the character of a Cartel, with her own Crew: Having fallen in at this moment however with the American Schooner Eleanor, bound from Baltimore to France, dismasted, induced me to change my first determination and instead of sending her to England have sent her to the U. States in charge of the Master and Crew of the before mentioned Schooner, who at the moment of writing this have charge of the Swallow with the Schooner in tow, but which, as soon as the weather will permit, they intend abandoning, after having taken her cargo on board the Swallow.

I parted company with the U. States and Argus five days since, they are not however far from [me) at present I apprehend.

We have [fallen in with no) vessel of War as yet, except one Frigate, which the want of wind and the approach of night prevented our chasing with any effect; altho from information afterwards received we Must have passed very near a squadron of Five Frigates the evening proceeding that on which we saw the one before mentioned. I have the honor to be [...].

Jno Rodgers


Wasp, Frolic, and Poictiers

On 18 October 1812, Master Commandant Jacob Jones and his sloop Wasp achieved a brilliant success in capturing the British sloop of war Frolic but then was overtaken and captured by a 74-gun ship of the line, H.M.S. Poictiers. The following documents include the Captain's Journal of Poictiers and the after-action report of Frolic's Captain Thomas Whinyates. Jones was taken prisoner with his crew into Bermuda and was not paroled until November. For his report see pp. 379–83.

October 1812
Bermuda Northrock S 3° E 275 Miles
PM fresh Br and clear W. at 1 20 out 3 reefs of the Fore and Mizen Topsails at 2.10 saw 3 Strange sail SSE. Made sail in chase & cleared Ship for Action at 4 fired Several Shot at the chase Observed Do hoist American Colours passed a vessel Dismasted at 4.40 Shortnd sail the chase having Struck her colours which proved to be the United States Ship of war Wasp. Sent Boats with officers and men to Do & recd Prisoners wore Ship towards the Brig Frolic having been captured by the above ship sent officers & Men to Do at 6 fresh gales & cloudy Empd getting the Prisoners on Board made and Shortd sail as Necess at 11 up Quarter Boats Prizes and a Merchant Ship (one of the Frolic convoy) in Co Prisoners are officers & Men.

Remarks &c
Monday 19th
Am fresh gales and Squally Prizes and Merchant Ship in Co at 2.40 the Pinnace returned with the captain of HM Brig Frolic at 4 Strong gales and Squally with rain Handed the Topsails-at 6 wore Ship, and set the Main Topail-at 8 fresh Gales and Squally-at 9 made Signal to steer S.W. at 9.20 in Main Topail-Came to the Wind on the Starbd Tack, and set the Main Staysail-at Noon Strong Gales and Squally Prizes and Merchant Ship in Co.

Bermuda South S 5 E 248 Miles
P.M. Fresh Breezes and Squally with Rain at times-made and shortened Sail as necessary-at 4 fresh Breezes & cloudy Wr. Prizes in Co.-at 5.20 down Pinnacle, and sent her with a Hawser to the Brig at 5.30 got her in tow. at 6 do. Wr. at 7.30 bore up S.W. at 8 do. Wr. Lost part of the Log-line-at 9 set the Mizen Staysail-at 11 down Do.
can Ship from Lisbon bound to Philadelphia with Licence- at 2.16 filled & made Sail. set Royals at 3 were Ship and shorten’d Sail at 4 mode and fine Prizes in Co. at 5 up Mainsail recd 9 Prisoners from the Frolic. at 5.30 filled at 6 light Breezes at 6.15 in T. Gt Sails at 7 back’d the Mizen Topsail at 8 light Airs-Prizes & Merchant Ship in Co. at 8.20 up foresail at 8.40 backed the M Toppail & in 2nd & 3rd reefs of the Mizen Topsail at 10 Calm at 10.30 a breeze sprung up from the Sd & Ed at 10.50 in 2nd & 3rd reefs of the Fore & Main Topsails: At Midnight Modte & fine-Prizes & Merchant Ship in Co.

D, UKLPR, Adm. 51/2694.

CAPTAIN THOMAS WILYATES, R.N., TO ADMIRAL SIR JOHN B. WARREN, R.N.

His Majesty’s Ship the Poictiers at Sea October 25th 1812

It is with the most bitter sorrow and distress I have to report to your Excellency the capture of His Majesty’s Brig Frolic by the Ship Wasp belonging to the United States of America on the 18th Instant.

Having under Convoy the home bound Trade from the Bay of Honduras and being in Latitude 56°N and Longitude 64°W on the night of the 17th we were overtaken by a most violent gale of wind, in which the Frolic carried away her Main Yard lost her Topsails and sprung the Main topmast. On the morning of the 18th as We were repairing the damages sustained in the Storm, and reassembling the scattered ships, a suspicious Ship came in sight and gave chase to the Convoy.

The Merchant Ships continued their voyage before the Wind under all sail the Frolic dropt astern and hoisted Spanish Colours in order to decoy the stranger under Guns and to give time for the Convoy to escape about 10 o’Clock both vessels being within hail we hauled to the wind, and the battle began. The superior fire of our Guns gave every reason to expect its speedy termination in our favour. But the Gaff and the head braces being shot away, and there being no sail on the Main-
mast, the Brig became unmanageable and the Enemy succeeded in taking a position to rake her; whilst she was unable to bring a Gun to bear. After laying some time exposed to a most destructive fire, she fell with the Bowsprit betwixt the Enemy’s Main and Mizen Rigging still unable to return his Fire. At length the Enemy Boarded, and made himself master of the Brig, every individual officer being wounded, and the greater part of the men either Killed or Wounded, there not being twenty persons remaining unhurt.

Although I shall ever deplore the unhappy issue of this contest, it would be great injustice to the Merit of the Officers and Crew if I failed to report that their bravery and coolness are deserving of every praise.

To the Right Honble. Sir J. B. Warren Bart KB &c &c &c

(Signed) T. Whinyates

Copy, UKPR, Adm. 1/502, part 3, pp. 681-83.

Arrangements for a Hospital in Washington

The lack of proper hospital facilities for naval officers and seamen was a continuing theme of surgeons’ reports to the Navy Department during the War of 1812. The following letter comments on that subject in the nation’s capital.
Sir,

Agreeably to your permission for me to do my best, in relieving the present wretchedness of the hospital establishment; and providing for the approaching season, I have acted, and I trust you will approve of the act.

At present the public pay two hundred dollars per annum for a miserable shell & two hundred more for the rent of a house for the Surgeon's mate to reside in: now for the addition of two hundred more, making six hundred dollars I have rented a large & convenient house, in which the Surgeon's Mate will necessarily reside most comfortably, thereby saving the rent he now receives; and in which an hundred sick men may be comfortably accommodated, so convenient as to be immediately under the eye of the Barracks officers.

At New orleans twice this rent is paid. at Washington, twice the demand exists for the building; and as I consider'd the arrangement as a most Judicious thing for the public; I did not decline it from the two conditions, insisted on; namely, that the house should be taken for six years; and that part of the rent should be advanced to the Proprietor; This Proprietor is Comdr Tingey & the house is the one he lately occupied. Respectfully yr [&c.]

Thos Ewell
19th Octr 1812

The Observations of a Gunboat Commander

There are four gunboat logs extant from the War of 1812, but only one of them deals with the first year of the war. William Laughton, commander of Gunboat No. 71 was stationed at the Washington Navy Yard. His duties during the autumn of 1812 were not exciting, but his observations reveal the nature of the mundane but essential work of many gunboat officers and men. Fortunately, Laughton's account is written more in the expansive style of a journal than the terse language of the usual log. He apparently had little sea service but was aware that his treatment of events was unorthodox. On the last page of the log he wrote: "Should the Honorable Secretary of the Navy find any unnecessary observations in these remarks, he will be pleased to excuse them . . . for my own part it is the first remarks I ever made in the Service, therefore be pleased to believe that where ever I have made unnecessary observations it was from no other motive than to throw as much light as possible on how we spent our time."

1. See Claudia Bradley et al., comps., List of Logbooks of U.S. Navy Ships, Stations, and Miscellaneous Units, 1801-1942, National Archives and Records Service, Special List 44 (Washington, D.C., 1958). The gunboats referred to are No. 6 (Aug 23, 1813-Nov 3, 1813), No. 32 (Nov 23, 1813-Mar 5, 1813), No. 71 (Sept 10, 1812-Nov 3, 1813), and No. 81 (Apr 3, 1809-Feb 28, 1814). These logbooks are part of DNA, RG24.

Remarks On Board the United States Gunboat No. 71

William Laughton, Commander

[Extract]

1812.
Saturday October 10.
This day Mr Davis the Plumber commences scuppers for Gunboat No. 71. Commodore Tingey agrees that I shall have two Davids for the stern of No. 71 to enable me to hoist up my boat while under Way tending as usual all day in the Yard.

Sunday 11.
This day the colors were hoisted on the Frigate Constellation for the first time since she under went a thorough repair; Went to Church in the Navy Yard, The Hon. the Secretary of the Navy present &c &c

Monday 12.
This day made out a requisition to enable me to recruit a Crew for No. 71. Approved by the Commodore, went to Navy Department and received the sum of four hundred Dollars of the Bank of Columbia; returned to the Navy Yard Where I remained the latter part of the day.
Tuesday 13. This day Comodore Tingey gave me verbal orders to go to Alexandria to recruit men for No. 71. in compliance of which I took my passage in the Packet and went down to Alexandria, took lodgings and kept Rendevous with [Acting] Lieut. [James] Sanders he recruiting for the Constellation and I for No. 71. We commenced this day, Paid Passage. Twenty five Cents; Do for Baggage Twenty five Cents; The latter part of the day employed procuring Musick for regular attendance at the Rendevous which was opened at Sanguses Sailors Boarding house. Alexandria.

Wednesday 14. Shipped a Man at Alexandria, Robert Forsyth, Landsman, paid his Jail fees on his landlords passing his word he would be his security his crime for being in Jail was only for fighting gave him the latter part of this liberty to take a cruise; No luck at the Rendevous this day.

Thursday 15. This morning paid Mr Learey the balance of Robert Forsyth's advance he being present and owing it to Mr Learey say two months Adv. at 8$ prMo is $3.50. Took him on board the Packet and brought him up to Washington Navy Yard. Reported him to Capt Haraden I who registered his name, afterwards took him to the Sergeant at the of the Navy Yard; and forbid his passing without my orders, or Orders Accountable persons in the Navy Yard, the put him on board the old GTeen, among the other Gun boat men, and the people of the Ordy and arranged for his eating &c &c This day had scuppers put in the trunk comings or Hatchway, hung the Rudder and had my men scraping the Pitch off the seams &c. Capt Haraden informs me I must go to Georgetown tomorrow to bring Cannon for the boats &c

Friday 16. This morning after visiting the Navy Yard, and eating breakfast took passage in the Washington Packet to Alexandria to endeavor to procure more men, arrived at Alexandria at 12. Passage Money. Twenty five cents......... $0.25 This afternoon remained at the Rendevous endeavouring to procure men but not any to be had, owing to the horrid class of Licensed vessels.
twenty one pieces of old Cannon to the Foundery, and to bring back the Ten Caronades proved in my presence by Mr Salvador Catalano the day before in consequence of the men not having provisions with them and calculating to be back much sooner I was obliged to procure refreshments for them which cost me $1.68 1/2.

Got back to the Navy Yard at 8 P.M. thick black & Unsettled Weather Ends this day's Labour.

This day employed seeing the Cannon delivered to the respective Boats: Received my Steam Devits from the Blockmaker. Cost me, to crews of Gunboats to put my two Cannon on board for Drink Money &c.

This day till done with the Boat One Dollar 1.--

Saturday 24.

This day attended in the Yard all day. Received Several pieces of Work from the blacksmith which did not fit, sent them back to be altered, this day all the carpenters broke off from the Gunboat except a Mr. Goff, and put on the Constellation, little or nothing done.

William Laughton
Late Comr of U.S. Vessell No 71

ADS, DNA, RG24, Logbook of Gunboat No 71. 10 Sept. 1812-3 Nov. 1813.


The New York firm of Bullus, Decatur, and Rucker was engaged in the manufacture and supply of gunpowder for the Navy Department. The first of the partners, John Bullus, had been associated with the navy since the Quasi-War with France, when he had served as a surgeon on board the frigate United States. He was first appointed a navy agent for the Mediterranean squadron in 1807, and, after returning to the United States, Bullus continued to serve as a navy agent in the port of New York. That Bullus could serve both as a contractor to the navy in the matter of gunpowder and navy agent in charge of procurement in New York, shows that "conflict of interest" in public employes was not then considered as grievous a sin as it has come to be in recent times. Bullus' partners were John P. Decatur, Stephen Decatur, Jr., his brother, and John A. Rucker.
We beg leave to State that we took no advantage even at that moment when powder was in great demand and selling at $80., a Barrel of the three months notice which was to be given us before we should be called upon to deliver it, but furnished the whole of it immediately upon the requisition of the Commanding Officer. Having had a good supply of Saltpetre of our own on hand, the last parcel of Saltpetre which we received from Philadelphia, belonging to the Navy Department to be manufactured by us is still in Store, and from an accurate calculation which we have made find that the 15 1/2 cents for manufacturing agreeably to your Letter of the 21st Inst is not equal to 7 cents a pound, returning a pound of powder for every pound of Saltpetre delivered, and the manufacturer to find the Sulphur & charcoal. We have the honor [&c.]

Bullus, Decatur & Rucker

LS, DNA, RG45, MLR, 1812, Vol. 6, No. 243.

United States vs. Macedonian

After refitting during most of September, the U.S. Navy's small fleet was nearly ready to sail for cruises that would last into the winter months. Three squadrons composed of three ships each were to cruise independently in locations chosen by their commodores. Ideally, each squadron had a large frigate, a smaller frigate, and a sloop of war in company. Bainbridge in Constitution was to sail with Porter's Essex and Lawrence's Hornet. Rodgers in President was to sail with Smith's Congress and Jones's Wasp; and Decatur in United States was to sail with Sinclair's Argus and Evans's Chesapeake. In reality, Essex, Hornet, and Chesapeake were not ready for sea when the larger ships were and departed later. Wasp was captured en route to her rendezvous with President, Essex never made rendezvous with Constitution, and Chesapeake did not sail from Boston until 12 December.

Rodgers's and Decatur's ships sailed together from Boston on 8 October. Four days later, Decatur's United States and Argus parted company with Rodgers, sailing in the direction of the Azores and then the Cape Verde Islands. By the 25th of October, United States and Argus had gone their separate ways. Decatur's ship was cruising in a southerly direction about midway between the Azores and Cape Verde Islands when he sighted the new British frigate Macedonian. The following documents are the reports of Captain John S. Carden and Commodore Decatur, respectively, narrating the battle from their own vantage points.

CAPTAIN JOHN S. CARDEN, R.N., TO SECRETARY OF THE ADMIRALTY JOHN W. CROKER

American Ship United States
at Sea 28th October 1812.

Sir,

It is with the deepest regret I have to acquaint you for the information of my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that His Majesty's late Ship Macedonian was Captured on the 25th Instant by the United States Ship, United States, Commodore Decatur Commander, the detail is as follows.

A short time after daylight steering NW b W with the Wind from the Southward in Latitude 23° 00 N and Longitude 29° 30 W in the execution of their Lordships orders, a sail was seen on the lee beam, which I immediately stood for, and made her out to be a large Frigate under American Colours, at 9 OClock I closed with her and she commenced the Action, which we returned, but the Enemy keeping two points off the Wind I was not enabled to get as close to her as I could have wished; after an hours Action the Enemy back'd and came to the wind, and I was then enabled to bring her to close Battle, in this situation I soon found the Enemys force too superior to expect success, unless some very fortunate chance occur'd in our favor, and with this hope I continued the Battle to two hours and ten minutes, when having the mizen mast shot away by the board, Topmasts shot away by the caps, Main Yard shot in pieces, lower Masts badly wounded, lower Rigging all cut to pieces, a small proportion only of the Fore sail left to the Fore Yard, all the Guns on the Quarter Deck and Forecastle disabled but two, and filled with wreck, two also on the Main Deck disabled, and several shot between wind and water, a very great proportion of the Crew Killed and wounded, and the Enemy comparatively in good order, who had now shot ahead, and was about to place himself
in a raking position without our being enabled to return the fire, being a perfect wreck, and unmanagable Log.

I deemed it prudent th'o painful extremity to surrender His Majesty's Ship, nor was this dreadful alternative resorted to till every hope of success was removed even beyond the reach of chance, nor till I trust their Lordships will be aware every effort has been made against the Enemy by myself, my brave Officers, and Men, nor should she have been surrendered whilst a man lived on board, had she been managable. - I am sorry to say our loss is very severe, I find by this days muster, thirty six killed, three of whom linger'd a short time after the Battle, thirty six severely wounded, many of whom cannot recover, and thirty two slight wounds, who may all do well, total one hundred and four.

The truly noble and animating conduct of my Officers, and the steady bravery of my Crew to the last moment of the Battle, must ever render them dear to their Country.

My first Lieutenant David Hope was severely wounded in the head towards the close of the Battle, and was taken below, but was soon again on deck displaying that greatness of mind and exertion, which th'o it may be equalled, can never be excelled; the third Lieutenant John Bullford was also wounded, but not obliged to quit his Quarters, second Lieutenant Samuel Mottley and him deserves my highest acknowledgements, the cool and steady conduct of Mr [James] Walker the Master was very great during the Battle, as also that of Lieutenants Wilson and [George] Magill of the Marines.

On being taken onboard the Enemies Ship, I ceased to wonder at the result of the Battle: the United States is built with the scantline of a seventy four gun Ship, mounting thirty long twenty four pounders (English Ship Guns) on her Main Deck, and twenty two forty two pounders, Carronades, with two long twenty four pounders on her Quarter Deck and Forecastle. Howitzer Guns in her Tops, and a travelling Carronade on her upper Deck, with a Complement of four Hundred and seventy eight pick'd Men.

The Enemy has suffered much in masts, Rigging and Hull, above and below water, her loss in killed and wounded I am not aware of, but know, a Lieutenant and six Men have been thrown overboard.

Enclosed you will be pleased to receive the names of the Killed and wounded on board the Macedonian. And have the honour to be [&c.]

Jno S. Carden
COMMODORE STEPHEN DECATUR TO
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

U.S.S. United States at sea October 30 1812

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that on the 25th Inst. being in the Lat. 29. N. Long. 29° 30. W., We fell in with, & after an action of an hour & an half, captured his Britannic Majesty’s ship Macedonian commanded by Captain John Carden, and mounting 49. carriage guns (the odd gun shifting) She is a frigate of the largest class-two years old-four months out of dock, and reputed one of the best sailers in the British service. The enemy being to windward had the advantage of engaging us at his own distance, which was so great, that for the first half hour we did not use our carronades, & at no moment was he within the complete effect of our musketry or grape - to this circumstance & a heavy swell which was on at the time I ascribe the unusual length of the action. The enthusiasm of every officer Seaman & marine on board this ship on discovering the enemy, their steady conduct in battle & the precision of their fire could not be surpassed - where all have met my fullest expectations it would be unjust in me to discriminate. Permit me however to recommend to your particular notice my first Lieutenant Wm H. Allen, who has served with me upwards of five years & to his unremited exertions in disciplining the crew is to be imputed the obvious superiority of our gunnery exhibited in the result of this contest.

Subjoined is a list of the Killed & wounded on both ships our loss compared with that of the enemy will appear small. Amongst our wounded you will observe the name of [Acting] Lieutenant Funk, who died a few hours after the action he was an officer of great gallantry & promise and the service has sustained a severe loss in his death. The Macedonian lost her mizzenmast, fore & maintopmasts and mainyard & was much cut up in her hull. The damage sustained by this ship was not such as to render her return into port necessary, and had I not deemed it important that we should see our prize [in?] should have continued our cruise. With the highest consideration and respect I am [&c.]

Stephen Decatur

List of Killed & wounded on board the United States-
*John Mercer Funk. Philadelphia Lieutenant. *John Archibald-New York. Carpenters crew-Christian Clark ditto Seaman-George Christopher ditto-ordinary seaman-George Mahai ditto-ditto-William James ditto-ditto- John Lalor ditto private marine-Wounded- On board the Macedonian There were thirty six killed & sixty eight wounded Among the former were the Boatswain-one masters mate & the schoolmaster & of the latter were the first & third Lieutenants-one masters mate & two midshipmen-
*since dead

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1812, Vol. 3, No. 154. Signature, asterisks, and last line are in Decatur’s hand.
The neglected state of the navy yard at Portsmouth is the subject of the report of Purser Tunis Craven which follows. The building of the yard had begun more than ten years earlier during the Adams administration. The failure of later presidents to complete this work had led to the virtual abandonment of the site. Craven's report portrays a navy yard in its crudest state, though blest by natural advantages lent by geography and a numerous population.

Purser Tunis Craven to Secretary of the Navy Hamilton

Navy Yard Portsmouth N H
October 31st 1812

Sir,

I had the honor to report to you, my arrival on this station, under date of the 17th ulto and at that time stated the Situation of Public Property at this yard. Since then no alteration has been made. I respectfully beg leave to refer you to that letter, and to repeat, that, the Keel, floortimbers, and many other valuable pieces of Seventy four frames, 1 altho' under sheds, are laying on the ground, and will certainly receive material injury, if not total destruction, unless soon properly Secured. The timbers of the Slip, above high water mark, would be much benefited by a thick coat of pitch.

By this days mail you will receive drafts of this Harbour and Island, which I beg you will honor me by accepting. They are in part copied, from rough sketches, but principally drawn from actual survey, the soundings were taken by myself aided by an able Seaman. From the height of tides, the rapidity, (between 5 & 6 Knots) and vicinity to the Ocean, the navigation of this Harbour is never impeded by ice, and of course is, all important in a Naval point of view, particularly at this Crisis. The Town of Portsmouth and adjacent country abounds in first rate mechanics in every department requisite to the building and compleat equipment of Ships. There are Gentlemen in Portsmouth who would become security for their building a Frigate...
in ninety working days. From the country bordering on the River, and district of Maine "pasture" Oak, Spruce Pine, esteemed the best for light spars and pitch pine equal to the Southern, can be obtained in any quantity and at very cheap rates. Ball and powder is also easily attainable from Massachusetts. From these circumstances from the Harbour being Safe and Commodious and of easier access than any other during winter I venture to suggest, the advantages that would result, from having at this Yard, such imperishable spare materials, as would enable our Squadron, from disasters of any kind, to obtain the necessary supplies without delay.

On the plan of Navy Yard Island I have taken the liberty of pointing out "Deep Cove" as a suitable place for a Dry Dock, there are many others, but that, appears by nature designed for one; in fact, nearly all the requisite materials for such a work, are on the Spot, from the bold rocky Shores, a labourer can quarry large Square Stones much faster than a mason could lay them. The dwelling house has two tenements one of which, I found, and is still, occupied by a Mr. Bowles employed by the Superintendant, and paid by the Department $300 p. annum to take care of the Yard. With your permission, I will most cheerfully take due care of the Yard and property therein without any further compensation than the right of residence you were pleased to give me. I have the Honor [&c.]

ALS, DNA, RG45, MLR, 1812, Vol. 7, No. 3.

Tunis Craven
Purser, U S Navy

Hospital Troubles at Charlestown

A poor relationship between the marine hospital and nary patients resulted in the ouster of several seamen of Constitution. The document following states their pitiful condition and makes recommendations for at least a temporary improvement of the situation.

Lieutenant Joseph Nicholson to Secretary of the Navy Hamilton

Navy Yard Charlestown 31 Octo: 1812

Sir

Allow me to trespass on a few of your busy moments to represent the situation I am placed in respecting the Sick & wounded Men on this station—two or three days ago Doctor [David] Townsend of the Marine Hospital informed me that a number (say 15) of the men belonging to the Constitution & others of our fleet had behaved improperly in the Hospital & must come out immediately, that they did not require Medical aid. the Commdg Officer of the Chesapeake offered to take them, they were sent for—but on observing their miserable situation Capt'n [Samuel] Evans sent them back to me. I then intreated Doctor Townsend to take them & in his presence wrote on the subject, offering every assistance in keeping them in proper Order & represented my having no place whatever to put them in on shore—all to no avail these poor wounded Seamen were turned from the Hospital Gates. I have put them on board a Gun Boat. They are principally on Crutches with broken & shattered limbs & the Surgeon of the Yard reported to me that some of them would shortly die for want of a more proper place to put them in. Capt'n Evans knowing these circumstances advised me to make this representation to you—Desertions frequently happen & our service suffers from the improprieties of this man. I am daily liable to be treated similarly by him, as he is not in the practice but "Inspector of Pot & Pearlash" & lives at the other extremity of Boston & consequently is obliged to trust & believe all his Fore-man may report of anything improper from a parcel of Sailors uncontrolled by anyone.

There is the left wing of the New Barracks unfinish'd & unoccupied allow Me Sir to suggest the propriety of appropriating a part of that Building to accommodate our Sick Seamen this winter. As we have many Sick on this station the Barracks would prevent much
The Rate of Exchange of Prisoners

The question of how prisoners of war were exchanged is a complex one. The following document reveals the agreed-upon valuation of prisoners according to rank. One-for-one exchanges could only be made with men of equivalent rank. Otherwise, ratios were established on the basis of one officer of a given rank for a certain number of enlisted men. Since army officers and soldiers could be and were captured at sea, the same rules applied to their exchange.

**Lieutenant William M. Crane to Secretary of the Navy Hamilton**

Boston 31 Octb. 1812

dear Sir

I this morning received a letter from Cpt Jacob Lewis (at Washington) in which he desires, that, I will forward to the Honbl Secretary of State the rate of exchange established by the British Government, and given me by Lieut [William] Miller Agent for prisoners at Halifax-immediately after my arrival at this place I waited upon Comdr Rodgers and gave him all the documents furnished me by Lieut Miller, which after perusal he assured me would be transmitted to the Honbl Secretary of the Navy, amongst them was the original rate of exchange given me by Lieut Miller, I however enclose you a copy, which you will please dispose of as you think best and proper -The Admiral (Sawyer) assured me, that, my Officers crew and self should be exchanged for the Officers and Soldiers taken in the transport by Cpt Porter, that is to say, provided our Government approved the arrangement-Lieut Miller did not furnish me with the papers until after the Cartel had got underweigh, and the number of persons on board prevented me from examining them at that time : Lieut Miller however expressly told me, that, I should be at liberty to act again immediately after my arrival at Boston, and I left Halifax under that impression-the Officers and soldiers taken in the transport are without doubt either doing duty in the field or in Garrison-I regret giving you trouble but I feel desirous that you should be made fully acquainted with the circumstances and I request you will admit this as my apology-I have been excessively mortified in not being able to join the Constitution previous to her departure, the Commodore had asked me in the most flattering way and expressed his disappointment before leaving us-he recommended to the Honbl Secretary my appointment to this Yard until something better could be done for me. I wish for it at this time as I am very much distressed with a bad leg. I was accidentally hurt in the chase and after was left without a Surgeon as I thought it trifling the wound is now greatly enlarged and extremely painful- with very great respect and esteem I am [&c.]

W. M. Crane

ALS, DNA, RG45, BC, 1812. Vol. 3. No. 137.
The Supply of Timber

Accounts of the Exchange of Prisoners of War With
Prisoners Sent from

<table>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>0</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. The numbers at the tops of the Columns of Ranks signify the equivalent in Men of those ranks respectively and according to which officers Belonging to either power, may with the approbation of the Naval Commander in Chief, be exchanged where there shall be no Officers of corresponding ranks in possession of the other power.

Signed  W. Miller
Agent for Prisoners of War

Copy, DNA, RG 45, BC, 1812, Vol. 3, No. 137.
other leaves only the consideration whether the intrinsic value of the southern materials, over the other will justify that difference of expense, risque, and uncertainty. I conceive it my duty respectfully to state my opinion that it will not if the materials are carefully selected in the north, by a judicious and experienced person.

All which is respectfully submitted for your consideration and instructions thereon. I have the honor [&c.]

Tho' Tingey


A Merchant in Search of his Goods

There are many victims in wartime, and merchants may have suffered more than most civilians during the War of 1812. In peacetime, communication between ports was slow and merchants were denied timely information concerning the existence of ready markets and good prices for their products. Those shipping goods overseas or importing from abroad faced vast uncertainties, against which they attempted to insure themselves. During the war conditions worsened and produced situations such as those experienced by the author of the next document. The ship carrying his goods had the misfortune to be captured by the British frigate Guerriere before her engagement with Constitution.

Stephen Singleton to Captain Isaac Hull

Commodore Isaac Hull Esqr
New York
Philadelphia 9 Novr 1812

Dear Sir,

I have taken the liberty to address you on the subject of some property that I had on board the Guerriere (say twenty Bales of Cloth) at the time of her capture by you, which Cloths were originally shipp'd for my account at Cadiz on board the Brig Hiram, Elijah

Stephen Singleton

LS, DNA, RG45, MLR, 1812, Vol. 7, No. 41.

1 Answer not found; but see Hamilton to Baetje, 21 Nov. 1812, pp. 577-79, which discusses the proposed terms of evaluating Guerriere and cargo for the purpose of assigning prize money to Constitution's crew.

Oliver H. Perry at Newport, Rhode Island

Although anxious for a command at sea, Master Commandant Perry had to content himself with chores at the Newport naval station, where he was responsible for the activities of a small gunboat flotilla. The future commander of the Lake Erie squadron is shown in the
following documents as an officer assiduous in the care of men and materiel under his control. He had still two months of suspense to endure while awaiting the department's decision on his future duty station, but he did not leave this entirely to chance. He would soon write to the department requesting a command on the lakes.

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**MASTER COMMANDANT OLIVER H. PERRY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON**

Newport Novemr 10th 1812

Sir,

In a conversation this day with Doctr. [Edmond T.] Waring who superintends the Marine Hospital at this place, I am informed by him that he has written you on the subject of a Naval Hospital—such an establishment has become indispensably necessary, as the Collector for this District (by order of the Secy of the Treasury) has absolutely refused to admit into the Hospital under his direction, any seaman belonging to the public service. The Gun-boats afford no accommodation for the sick. I have therefore been under the necessity of procuring a small room in one of the Barracks on Rose-Island for a temporary one, until I shall be honored with your orders on that subject. This is attended with many inconveniences, and should the number of sick encrease, would be totally inadequate to the purpose.

Should you therefore Sir, think proper to order a House to be hired for a temporary Hospital, to be under the direction of Doctr. Waring it would doubtless add much to the comfort of those who may be so unfortunate as to need one, while on this Station. Requesting you would pardon the liberty I have taken in suggesting the above, I am with respect Your Obt Sert

O. H. Perry

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**A Sea Ruse**

While it was still legal for American merchant ships to trade under British license, the practice was frowned upon by U.S. naval officers who attempted to check the practice. The document which follows presents an unusual, amusing incident by which an American navy purser, as prize master of a licensed trader, managed to evade capture by two British ships and return to the United States.
Purser Henry Denison to Secretary of the Navy Hamilton

Philadelphia, 11th November 1812.

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that I arrived here last evening in the Ship Ariadne of Boston, cleared from Alexandria for Cadiz, with a cargo of above 5,000 barrels of flour, but detained by the U.S. Brig Argus, Capt [Master Commandant Arthur] Sinclair, for being under British licence. The Argus fell in with her on the 15th Ultio in Lat. 35°49'. Long. 56°59'. & by boarding under British colours obtained possession of her passport. I was ordered to take charge of her and bring her into the first port I could make in the United States. On the passage I fell in with two British cruisers, viz. the Sloop of War Tartarus & Brig Colibri, & was strictly examined by each, but by making use of the licence and a little finesse, we escaped capture; the Tartarus even put on board of us nine American Seamen (prisoners) to assist in working the Ship. All the papers found on board I have submitted to Mr [Alexander] Dallas (District Attorney) but as yet he has not given me any decided opinion relative to the case.

The Argus separated from the squadron on the 13th Ultio & when I left her she had fallen in with nothing but the Ariadne. I have the honour [&c.]

Henry Denison


American Trade with the British West Indies

The existence of war notwithstanding, the British West Indies were habitually dependent upon trade with the United States for supplies of food and other provisions. It was part of British policy to encourage American merchants to send their ships, protected by licenses, to ports easily accessible to West Indian planters. The following documents show a concern that this American trade be protected from interrup-
Sir,

Boston 21st Octr 1812.

I have been requested to introduce to you the bearer Captain Joshua Nash, deputed by one of the most respectable mercantile houses in this Country to procure from your Excellency, should it be deemed consistent with the views of His Majesty’s Government, such protections as will enable him, or his principals, to furnish a supply of dry and wet Provisions necessary for the West Indian Islands, under American or other Colours. I have been given to understand, that the entrepot intended is the Island of St Bartholomews, and I am induced to believe, that under existing circumstances this destination is the best calculated to secure the successful execution of the object in question.

From my knowledge of the principals in this proposed business, and from the assurances which they have given me, I beg leave to observe, that whatever engagement may be entered into by the Bearer will in my belief be most honorably and completely fulfilled. I have &c.

Signed Andw Allen Jr.

His Excellency
Sir John Borlase Warren KB &c

Copy, UkLPR, Adm. 1/503, Part 1, pp. 53-54.

[Enclosure]
Memo. for Captain Nash

You will on your arrival at Halifax present to His Excellly Sir J:B: Warren your letter of Introduction from Mr Allen.

The object of your Mission is to procure from Adml Warren & Adml Sawyer (if the authority of both are necessary to the security of the object) Licences to Transport free from British molestation, supplies of Dry & Wet Provisions from any Port of the United States under American or other Colours, to the Port of St Bartholomew. It has occurred to us that this Island may be made, during the present War an entrepot from which supplies necessary to the West India Islands may be securely and easily distributed. St Eustatia & St Thomas during former Wars have been rendered the Mediums of communication whence the neighbouring Islands have been furnished with such Articles of Provision as their respective exigencies required.

It would be inexpedient & dangerous for Vessels sailing under American Colours to receive and use Licences from any Officer of the British Government, to proceed to a Port in possession of Great Britain, the existing laws of the United States rendering not only the use, but even the receipt of such Licence highly penal; Subjecting the Parties engaged in such Commerce, not only to a forfeiture of double the value of Vessels and Cargoes so destined, but also to Fine and Imprisonment.

Under such Penalties no individual on whom due reliance could be placed would engage in the undertaking. The impossibility of extending the object with impunity and the extra expences necessary to cover the hazards would render it utterly abortive. Whereas a neutral destination such as the Isle of St Bartholomew, would be attended with less difficulty in the outset and promise, with more certainty the accomplishment of the Ultimate Object.

If it should be found consistent with the views of the British Govt to afford you the necessary Licences to compass the end in view, we flatter ourselves you will be enabled to shew that the confidence which may be placed in yourself & in your principals will not be abused.

Should it be found inexpedient from any unforeseen event to use the Licences you may procure we pledge ourselves that they shall be delivered to our friend Mr Allen or disposed of in any way which the Admiral may see fit to direct.

We refrain from furnishing you with letters to any individuals at Halifax, persuaded, as we are, that no reference to private characters will be necessary when you are provided with the recommendation of Mr Allen.

You must particularly remark that under the existing laws of the Union no Citizen can with safety receive a Licence which even gives him an Option to proceed to a British Port and that it is therefore necessary that any protections you may obtain, shall not only be
Expansion of the American Navy

Despite initial successes at sea, it had not escaped U.S. policymakers that ships of the line, mounting 60 or more guns, would be essential if the American navy was ever to compete meaningfully against British sea power. During the summer of 1812, the British had but a small portion of their battle fleet on the North American station. Most Royal Navy ships of the line carried 74 guns and were stationed in the English Channel, in the Bay of Biscay, or in the Mediterranean on blockade duty. Until November 1812, the U.S. government believed that a few heavily built frigates would suffice to protect American commerce and seaports. But it was becoming clear that should the British achieve a land victory over the French, a much more menacing naval threat would appear on the American coast. American naval officers, conscious of this possibility, were anxious to commence a buildup of the fleet. To present the navy's case to Congress, Secretary Hamilton elicited a well-reasoned letter from Captain Charles Stewart of the frigate Constellation. The document which follows contains Secretary Hamilton's argument, bolstered by Stewart's opinions. Hearings took place before the House of Representatives' Naval Committee during the period 4-27 November 1812. Virginia's Representative Burwell Bassett chaired that committee and presented its recommendations to Congress. For almost a month, naval and anti-naval spokesmen argued the merits of a larger navy. Finally, on 23 December, Congress voted the first major naval construction bill in more than a decade. President Madison signed the "act to increase the navy of the United States" on 2 January 1813. It provided for the building and fitting out of four 74-gun ships and six frigates of 44 guns each.

1. For a close study of the controversy surrounding the building of 74-gun ships, see Symonds, Navaline and Anti-navaline, pp. 171-91.
2. Peters, Public Statutes at Large, II: 289.
various directions, change their positions frequently, and avoid the tremendous battery of a 76 as much as possible.

Besides a 76 is built of heavier timber is intrinsically much stronger, than a frigate, in all her works and can sustain battering much longer & with less injury. A Shot which would sink a frigate, might be received by a 76 wish but little injury—it might pass between wind & water through a frigate, when it would stick in the frame of a 76.

All things considered it must be admitted that one 76 gun ship mounting 86-is equal in combat to three frigates mounting 162 guns. Admitting this equality, other questions present themselves for consideration, &

1st What is the relative expense of building & equipping these vessels?

2nd What is the relative numbers of their crews?

3rd What is their relative annual expense in actual Service?

To ascertain the expense of building & equipping a frigate, we will take the actual cost of one of our largest viz the President—which was $220,910—a frigate would then cost $333,000.

The cost of a 76 cannot be easily ascertained, however from the papers B & C— we may I think, estimate the expense of building & equipping a 76 at not exceeding $333,000.

The Construction then of a force in frigates, equal in combat, to a 76 gunship, would cost $662,730 and in this view a difference in favor of the 76 of $320,730.

By the paper A it appears, that a 76 requires to man her, 650 men and that a 44 requires 420—To man three 44 gun frigates, or a force in frigates equal to a 76, would then require 1260 men, and in this respect we find a difference in favor of the 76 of 610 men. that is 650 men on board of a 76 can direct as much force as 1260 can on board of three frigates.

As to the relative expense— we have heretofore estimated the annual cost of a frigate of 44 guns @ $110,000 and from the best information we can obtain upon the subject, the annual expense of a 76 will not exceed $202,110.

The annual expense then of three frigates, or a force in frigates equal to a 76 would be $330,000—while a 76 would not cost exceeding

$202,110: making in this respect, a difference in favor of the 76 of $127,890 annually.

In examining the relative strength of frigates & ships of war, and of ships of war & gunboats, we shall find similar results in favor of the larger class of vessels.

Hence if the only object in view was to employ the greatest intrinsic naval force, at the least expense, I should think, there would be no difficulty in deciding, that we ought to have none but ships of the greatest magnitude. But in providing a naval armament, there are other considerations of the highest importance. We should enquire what kind of force will most probably be brought against us—with what description of force can we meet the enemy with the greatest probability of success; and afford the most effectual protection to our commerce; and upon these highly interesting points I will take the liberty of submitting a very valuable communication received from Charles Stewart esquire, a captain in the Navy of the United States—an officer of great observation, distinguished talents and very extensive professional experience—observing, that I believe all the most enlightened officers in our Service concur in the opinions, he has expressed. I have the honor [&c.]

Paul Hamilton


2. Captain Charles Stewart to Hamilton, 12 Nov. 1812, ASP, Naval Affairs, 1: 278-79.
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<th>Power of each man computed in weight of metal</th>
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Notes by an experienced gentleman.

“Labor” this item was calculated at a time when ship carpenters wages were $2.50 pr day. They can now be obtained @ $2.

“Cables & rigging” when the above Estimate was made the price was 16$ they can now be obtained @ $15.

“Carvers bill” expensive carving on the head & Stern is abolished 1000$ may be deducted from this item

“Riggers bill” we employ Seamen @ 12$ pr month this item may be considerably reduced.
"Painter's bill" the present practice of painting our ships of war differs so much from that first adopted, both in point of labor & colors, that one third of this item may be safely deducted.

"Woolen for sheathing" now exploded—experience having established the fact, that it occasions an absorption & retention of salt water which corrodes the copper inside &c nor could the copper be laid on so smooth as without it.

"Contingencies" at the time the above Estimate was made we had no yards, of course wharfage or rent of yard was then included & we do not now, as then, give such quantities of rum to laborers. This item may be reduced one half.

The frigate President of 1444 tons cost 220,910$ say pr ton 153, a 76 will ton 162.

Then to ascertain the probable cost of building and equipping a 76.

1620 tons @ 153$ $247,860
additional guns & gun carriages 18,599
additional cubic feet of timber in the frame at 4000 feet @ $125 5,000
Additional weight of rigging anchors & other materials 10 pr Ct on the cost of the Tonnage 24,786
viz 247,860 296,245
Say 300,000

Statement shewing the proportions of able Seamen ordinary Seamen &c required for a ship of the Line—say a 76—& a 44 gun frigate

able Seamen ordinary Seamen & boys a 76 requires 280 233
44 140 172

Note 280 Able Seamen is considered by practical men as too great a proportion for a first rate 76. The whole no of able & ordinary Seaman & boys is 515—and practical men say that they may be classed thus

able Seamen ordinary seamen &c 220 293

Guerriere's Worth as a Prize

Constitution fought Guerriere so effectively that the British frigate was an unmanageable hulk at the end of the battle. She was destroyed several hours later, after the wounded and killed had been taken off. The destruction of the enemy ship meant that Constitution's crew would be unable to obtain material reward for Guerriere's capture, unless the government acted to compensate them in lieu of prize money. In the following letter, Secretary of the Navy Hamilton explains the method of evaluating Guerriere, her stores, and the prize goods that were captured on board. Hamilton recommended to Congress that Captain Hull, his officers, and men be rewarded with the sum of $100,000 in lieu of prize money. On 26 November, Representative Burwell Bassett offered such a resolution and won a favorable vote, but the matter was tabled until pertinent documents could be printed. The matter was not reconsidered until February 1813, when news of Constitution's victory over the frigate Java had reached Washington. Commodore William Bainbridge had been obliged to destroy Java for the same reason that Hull sank Guerriere. As a result, Congress decided to combine the rewarding of both Bainbridge and Hull in the same resolution. To this was added a reward to Master Commandant Jacob Jones and crew for the capture of Frolic.
generosity had diminished, and the final award was $50,000 for Hull, officers and crew; $50,000 for Bainbridge, officers and crew; and $25,000 for Jones, officers and crew.1


SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON TO
BURWELL BASSETT, CHAIRMAN OF THE NAVAL COMMITTEE
OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Navy Department
21st November 1812.

Sir,

In order to enable the Committee to form a satisfactory opinion as to the compensation to be provided for the officers and crew of the frigate Constitution, for the capture and subsequent destruction of the British frigate, the Guerriere, I have the honor to state to you, that the Constitution rated 44, and mounted 55 guns, that the Guerriere rated 38, and mounted 54 guns. The Guerriere also entirely dismasted and in other respects much crippled, could have been brought into port, without incurring any other risk than that of recapture; but Captain Hull conceived that if he had manned the Guerriere for the purpose of sending her into port, he would have so far reduced the crew of the Constitution, that he might have subjected both vessels to capture. He presumed that, under all circumstances, it would be better for him to destroy the Guerriere, and preserve the force of the Constitution unimpaired—and his having done so unquestionably proceeded from the most patriotic considerations.2

The Guerriere was a frigate of the first class in the British Navy; and no doubt when the engagement between the Constitution and her commenced, she was completely fitted in all respects for the most serious service. The cost of such a ship, independently of her stores, could not have been less than 200,000£, and her stores were worth, in all probability 50,000 at least besides she had on board a number of prize goods. the value of which can't be ascertained—but was prob-ably equal to 50,000£ more. So that the whole value of the Guerriere, her stores and prize goods at the time the action commenced may fairly be estimated at 300,000£.

Had Capt. Hull have incurred the risks before mentioned and succeeded in getting the Guerriere into port. The Officers and crew Constitution, considering the Guerriere as her equal, would have been entitled to the whole of the Guerriere, her stores and prize goods—sooner however than run the risk of losing the Constitution, he determined to destroy the whole. The question then arises, what, under these circumstances, ought the officers and crew to be allowed? For my own part, I have no hesitation in offering it as my opinion, that the sum of one hundred thousand dollars, would not be too liberal a provision, or too great an encouragement for the great gallantry, skill, and sacrifice of interest displayed on the occasion—and am persuaded that if such a provision were made, the difficulties of manning our frigates, at present experienced, would vanish.

It may further be remarked, that Capt. Hull, while on the cruise, in which he captured and destroyed the Guerriere burnt two enemy's vessels, viz. the brig Lady Warren, and the Brig Adeona, and obliged the enemy to burn the brig Dolphim, with a Cargo of hemp and Russia Goods, and to abandon an English barque laden with Timber. For no part of which have the officers or crew of the Constitution received any compensation. I have the honor to be [&c.]

Paul Hamilton

Copy, DNA, RG45, Reports of the Secretary of the Navy, 1811-1819, Vol. 2, pp. 76-77.

SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 1812

The Loss of U.S. Sloop Wasp

The events of 18 October 1812 may have marked both the highest and lowest points of Master Commandant Jacob Jones's career. In a
ATLANTIC THEATER

savage action only five days after having sailed from the Delaware, Wasp captured H.M. sloop Frolic. But Wasp was not destined to arrive at her rendezvous with Constitution, for only hours later the 74-gun Poictiers came up with Wasp as Jones was repairing battle damage. Wasp was unable to escape and to resist would have been suicidal. About one month later, Jones and his men were paroled and returned to New York where Jones wrote the following report. Congress awarded the Wasp’s officers and crew $25,000 prize money and the Navy Department promoted both Jones and James Biddle, his first lieutenant. Jones received command of the captured Macedonian and Biddle soon became commander of the sloop Hornet.

MASTER COMMANDANT JACOB JONES TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

New York the 24th Novemr 1812

Sir,

I here avail myself of the first opportunity of informing you of the occurrences of our cruise, which terminated in the capture of the Wasp on the 18th of October by the Poictiers of seventy four Guns, while a wreck from damages received in an engagement with the British sloop of war Frolick of twenty two guns, sixteen of them thirty two pound carronades, and four twelve pounders on the main deck and two twelve pounders, carronades on the topgallant forecastle, making her superior in force to us by four twelve pounders. The frolick had struck to us and was taken possession of about two hours before our surrendering to the Poictiers.

We had left the Delaware on the thirteenth—the sixteenth had a heavy gale in which we lost our jibboom and two men; half past eleven on the night of the seventeenth, in the Latitude of 37° N. & Longitude of 65° W. we saw several sail, two of them appearing very large, we stood from them for some time, then shortened sail and steered the remainder of the night the course we had perceived them on. At day light on Sunday the eighteenth we saw them ahead—gave chase and soon discovered them to be a convoy of six sail under the protection of a Sloop of War, four of them large ships mounting from sixteen to eighteen guns. At thirty two minutes past eleven A.M. we engaged the Sloop of War having first received her fire at the distance of fifty or sixty yards, which space we gradually lessened.
until we laid her on board, after a well supported fire of forty three minutes; and altho so near while loading the east broad side that our rammers were shoved against the side of the enemy our men exhibited the same alacrity which they had done during the whole of the action. They immediately surrendered upon our gaining their fore castle, so that no loss was sustained on either side after boarding.

Our maintopmast was shot away between four and five minutes from the commencement of the firing and falling together with the maintopsail yard, across the larboard fore and fore topsail braces, rendered our head yards unmanageable the remainder of the action. At eight minutes the gaft and mizen top gallant mast came down and at twenty minutes from the beginning of the action every brace and most of the rigging was shot away. A few minutes after separating from the Frolic both her masts fell upon deck, the Main mast going close by the deck and the foremost twelve or fifteen feet above it.

The courage and exertions of the officers and crew fully answered my expectations and wishes. Lt. [James] Biddle active conduct contributed much to our success by the exact attention paid to every department during the engagement and the animating example he afforded the Crew by his intripidity. Lt. [George W.] Rodgers, [Midn. Benjamin] Booth & Mr [Midn. Henry B.] Rapp shewed by the incessant fire from their divisions that they were not to be surpassed in resolution or skill. Mr [Sailing Master William] Knight and every other officer acted with a courage and promptitude highly honourable, and I trust have given assurance that they may be relied on when ever their services may be required.

I could not ascertain the exact loss of the enemy as many of the dead lay buried under the masts and spars that had fallen upon deck, which two hours exertion had not sufficiently removed. Mr. Biddle who had charge of the Frolic, states that from what he saw and from information from the Officers, the number of the killed must have been about thirty and that of the wounded about forty or fifty - of the killed is her first Lieutenant and sailing master, of the wounded Capt. [Thomas] Whinyates and the Second Lieutenant.

We had five killed and five wounded as per list the wounded are recovering. Lieutenant [Alexander] Claxton who was confined by sickness, left his bed a little previous to the engagement and tho' too weak to be at his division, remained upon deck and shewed by his composed manner of noting its incidents, that we had lost by his illness the services of a brave Officer. I am respectfully yours,

JaC Jones

ALS, DNA, RG45, MC, 1812, Vol. 1, No. 118.

The War Comes to Charleston

Nestled in the embrace of the Ashley and Cooper Rivers and guarded by Fort Moultrie, Charleston provided a natural harbor where commerce thrived in peaceful times. During the first year of the War of 1812, the British gradually extended their blockade southward from the Delaware and Chesapeake capes. By the fall months, ports along the southeastern coast of the United States were being closely watched. The letters which follow give expression to the concerns of Captain John H. Dent, commander of the Charleston naval station. Of particular interest, are those which refer to his purchase of two schooners for the navy. The smaller Ferret saw duty along the Carolina coast, but the better-known Carolina eventually arrived at New Orleans and played an important role in the defense of that city during the British amphibious attack of December 1814-January 1815.

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON TO CAPTAIN JOHN H. DENT

John H. Dent
Charleston, S.C.

Your letter of the 17 Inst: has been received.

Comr Bainbridge, with the squadron under his command, has been ordered to Charleston, to clear the coast of the Enemy's cruisers.¹

You will procure the two vessels on the best terms in your power, prepare them, with all possible expedition, for the purposes suggested by you.

P. Hamilton
CAPTAIN JOHN H. DENT TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

Charleston. 14th November 1812.

Sir

Your letters of the 4th Inst I have had the honor to receive, and have communicated its contents to Major General [Thomas] Pinckney. I have been very successful in recruiting the last week, having entered Thirty men for the service. The Schooner Ferret mounts nine guns, and will Sail for Beaufort in five days, having no commissioned Officers and but one Midshipman. I have made Mr John Smith an acting Master in the Service, and given him the command of the Ferret. He is an active intelligent Gentleman & (if confirmed) will be of infinite benefit to the Service, as he is well acquainted with this Coast and its inlets. The late rains have prevented the new Schooner's launch at the specified time, She will be launched this day all her materials are ordered and in hand. The grape Shot and Sabres lost on Cape Hatteras are much wanted, none can be had here. I Have the Honor to be [&c.]

J H Dent


CAPTAIN JOHN H. DENT TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

Charleston 14th Novr 1812

Sir

The British Frigate Southampton was close in with our bar all day yesterday. She has been on the coast about ten days with two brigs in company: I have been in daily expectation of seeing or hearing from Capt Porter or Commodore Bainbridge and have kept a pilot boat Cruising in the offing and off Cape Roman with the private Signal, charged with letters, giving information of this Squadron. They are not in sight this morning, it is a great misfortune that the Essex did not
come directly off this harbour as Sir James [Yeo) would have been gratified in meeting Capt Porter. I have the Honor to be [&c.]

J H Dent


CAPTAIN JOHN H. DENT TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

Charleston Novr 16th 1812.

Sir

I have the honor to enclose for your information, the copy of a letter and an extract from the log book of Gun Boat No 166, commanded by Sailing Master [James) Mork, also an extract of a letter from Lieut [Charles F.) Grandison, relative to the Situation of the Barges at Sunbury.1

The Enemy's cruisers have not been seen since Saturday, when a frigate was at anchor off the bar: The Ferret will be so far manned as to dispatch her to Port Royal in a few days, the remainder of the men can be sent to her in a barge. The deportment and activity of Sailing Master Mork since at Beaufort Justifies the good opinion entertained of him as an officer. The new Schooner [Carolina) was launched on Saturday, and if Men can be procured will be ready for sea in 25 days as every thing is in hand and her rigging all ready to go over mast head; the want of greater part of the munitions of war on this station is greatly felt. the grape, Shot, Sabres, &c lost on Cape Hatteras can not be supplied here: will you order a commissioned officer & ten Midshipmen to this Station, as little confidence can be placed in these. I am obliged to employ as Substitutes, Mr. [John H.) Carr the purser has been in very bad health for some time & not able to attend to duty, which devolves upon me. I have the Honor to be [&c.]

J H Dent


1. The enclosure, filed with the letter, consists of Mork to Dent. 9 Nov. 1812. "Extract from the log book of U.S. Gun Boat No 166" for 5 and 6 Nov. 1812, and an extract from Grandison to Dent. 12 Nov. 1812.

CAPTAIN JOHN H. DENT TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

Charleston 24th Novr 1812.

Sir

I am sorry to inform you the Surgeon's House (Doctor Logan's) was burn't in the late fire with all the medicines, Hospital Stores, and instruments belonging to this Station—a list thereof I enclose. I have been desirous that the Naval Hospital should be established in the Navy Yard, where a Small building could be erected to answer that purpose: there is no establishment at present, and if authorized I could at a small expence erect the necessary buildings, the Surgeon's instructions authorizes him to rent such quarters as he requires in Town, and the expence of this establishment has been greater than was necessary. I have the Honor [&c.]

J H Dent


[Enclosure]
(Copy)
Return of Medicine and U.S. Hospital Stores accidentally destroyed by Fire in the Night of the 19th Inst. viz
One large Medicine Chest complete.
One Small Ditto.
One Sett Amputating instruments.
Sundry Articles of Hospital Stores.
The Surgeon having lost all his Books, papers and documents, in the Said Conflagration, is unable to determine with precision the number & value of the foresaid articles.

(Signed) George Logan
Charleston, S.C. 23rd Novr 1812.

Commodore Dent.

Copy, DNA, RG45, CL, 1812, Vol. 3, No. 190.
CAPTAIN JOH H. DENT to SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

Charleston 26th November, 1812.

Sir,

The irregular proceedings relative to prisoners of war in this port has been attended with much difficulty and some loss to the Service, as I apprehend from permitting them to be landed and not regularly transferred to the Marshal, several have entered the Service; as easily remedied, by stopping all privateers and prizes at the guard vessel, taking out the prisoners and delivering them, to the proper person appointed to take charge of them. I have in every instance tendered my assistance to the Marshal in preventing this abusive proceeding, and suggested this mode which does not appear to be agreeable to his ideas on the subject; also the proceeding of the Cartel while in this port was irregular and contrary to the established usages of all other nations, She was permitted to come to the wharf, without a guard, to make such alterations in her crew, as her Commander required, and to refit and grave his vessel to go only on a voyage to Providence where She had been fitted for this service; these proceedings have given great dissatisfaction, and I was not without fears that she would have been dismantled by a mob, as they prevented many articles from being shipped on board, there has also been three midshipmen prisoners, those gentlemen have been paroled, and permitted to go indiscriminately in all parts of the City, wharves & afloat, and have since joined the Squadron now off this coast, possessed with all the information, Such advantages afforded them to obtain: as commanding the port I cannot but feel mortified when I am applied to prevent those abuses, and have to reply I am not authorized, as not coming within my department. I have suggested those hints in hopes Sir, that some arrangement may be made in future, to prevent such irregularities, and reflections on the Officers of the government. I had fitted a prison ship in Co-operation with general [Thomas] pinckney in hopes that it would have been adopted, which under the arrangement made between us, would have prevented any irregularities. I have the honor to be [&c.]

J H Dent

Sir,

The frequent applications from the men belonging to this station for bedding cloaths &c in this inclement season, & being witness to some of their distresses (some entirely destitute of thick clothing) have been induced, deeming it for the good of the Service to order the Purser to supply those that are much in want (even if they are in debt to the U States) with one Mattress, two blankets, 1 pr of shoes & stockings and a suit of thick Cloaths. The heedlessness of the Sailor while on Shore, & their receiving three months advance has been the cause of their present distress, to prevent its continuation, induces me to Solicit the honor of an answer, whether my proceedings meets your approbation or not.

Chrs Ludlow


Hospitalization of Gunboat Seamen

During the warm months, gunboats from Philadelphia were based at Newcastle to facilitate the cruising of Delaware Bay. Likewise, Captain David Porter used Newcastle as a home port for his frigate Essex. But when he departed for his cruise to the South Atlantic and Pacific he left behind men whose poor health would not allow their absence from good medical care. Surgeon Edward Cutbush normally looked after the health needs of the Delaware Bay gunboat flotilla, but he also had responsibility for other naval personnel in the area. Thus, his concern was aroused when, with the onset of cold weather, it became evident that sick and hurt seamen could not be allowed to remain outside of Philadelphia. In the letter which follows, Dr. Cutbush suggests the removal of his medical care facilities to that city.

Sir,

Nine invalids were sent to the Hospital under my direction at New Castle from the frigate Essex: Capt Porter observed in his letter of the 20th ult. that "neither of the men will ever be suitable for the service, and did time and circumstances admit, he should discharge them." On the arrival of the men, I wrote to the Purser of the Essex for a statement of their accounts but have never received it, presuming that some information could be obtained from the returns made to the Department, respecting their wages. I beg leave to ask your order on this head; as the weather is becoming cold, they will probably stand in need of clothing, which I am not authorized to furnish. Several of the men, I presume, would be glad to return to their families could they be paid off. As the Gun Boats are laid up, and no probability of any of our ships of war coming into the Delaware during the winter season, I am instructed by Commodore [Alexander] Murray to ask your opinion, whether the Hospital shall be continued at New Castle for these nine men? The Commodore thinks it would be better to remove them to the Navy Yard at Philadelphia, if they are not discharged from the service. Should you approve of the Commodore's plan I will discharge Dr McLane at New Castle. That it may not be supposed at the Department that I have had two mates on this station, I beg leave to state, that Dr P. [Peter] C. Whittelsey who was ordered here on the 15th of August last, did not report himself 'til this morning! he is a youth of about 18 years of age what his acquirements are I know not, but conceive from his age that he is not capable of acting in any situation alone. I have now no duty for him to perform here, unless Dr [William P. C.] Barton should be ordered where surgeons are wanted. I have, however requested him to remain in Philada until I receive your order. I have the honor [&c.]

E Cutbush

Philada Novr 16. 1812.

List of men sent from the United States Frigate Essex Commanded by Capt Porter on the 21st of October 1812.
1. Charles Smith - Fistula in Perineo
2. John Smith - Diseased Testicle
3. Wm Hubble - Scrophula  
4. James Wallace - ditto -  
5. John Francis 2nd. An old syphilitic Case.  
6. Peter Johnson - Rupture  
7. [Robert] Stanwood - Stricture in the Urethra  
8. [Charles] Frederic - Scrophulous Abscess  

Peter Johnson says he was ruptured in the time of his duty at New York, therefore conceives that he is entitled to a Pension.


Frigate New York in Disrepair

Although she had once been a strong element of the Mediterranean squadron, the frigate New York had been laid up in ordinary at the Washington Navy Yard since 1805. By 1812, her timbers and those of the frigate Boston were "so rotten as to be not worth repairing," in the words of one notable maritime historian. Nevertheless, it seems that the navy was considering the rebuilding of New York. The following document contains a proposal forwarded to the Navy Department from a Baltimore builder who wanted such a contract.

Sir,
The Agent & myself are about to conclude our arrangements with the Master builder at this place for the rebuilding of the Frigate New York. He has proposed to us, his terms by the Ton, also his terms by the days work, that is for him to superintend & the U.S. to pay the bills. The former (That is by the Ton) we conceive to be most to the interest of the U.S. As the days work in the latter would enable the workmen to nurse the job & keep the Ship on hand as long as possible besides, the builder no doubt would procure the timber much lower on his own account, than he would for the U.S. He however has made another very fair offer which I conceive the best. That is he will compleat the New York for the same price & as well as such a Ship can be compleated in any port South of the City of New York. Now Sir, as Mr [Thomas] Turner the acctt can no doubt in a few minutes favor us with a copy of the cost of the Frigates United States, Philadelphia, Chesapeake & John Adams. it would enable us to make such an agreement as would prevent extravagance which was so much complain'd of in the price of the Constellation when first built.

If Mr Turner will inform us of the price pr Ton of any of the Ships built by the Ton it will enable us to fix upon the very lowest price possible. For I assure you the builder is extremely anxious that she should be the first at Sea, the fastest ship & promises that if she is not as well built as any ship in service he will forfeit the whole. All this added to the cheaper is all we can wish. He has a stern, stern & keel already engaged in case the old ones should prove rotten, & all fells point have come forward to try Baltimore against any other Ship commenc'd at the same time. Our only object now is to know from Mr Turner the lowest price, that any of our ships have or can be built for in any port South of New York either by the Ton or otherways.

The U.S. to furnish all the Copper, all the joiners work, the wharf & the ware houses. The builder to furnish all the timber, spars, & workmen.

As this no doubt will make a considerable difference in the cost of the ship, & prevent imposition, I have conceived it my duty to call on Mr T for such information as he may have in his office. I have been thus particular in stating it to you in order that you may urge (to Mr Turner) the necessity [of] my getting such information [as soon] as possible, so that I may be [able] to compleat the agreement immediately & report to the Secretary.

I also write Mr Turner in which I shall enclose this. very respectfully &c

Cha3 Gordon

This pair of star-crossed ships met in battle, and the British frigate won. Only five days later, however, both capturer and prize were lost on a reef. The British lost a venerable frigate which had been in service since the Seven Years War. The United States lost not only a fine brig, but her captain as well.

CAPTAIN JAMES L. YEO, R.N., to VICE ADMIRAL CHARLES STIRLING, R.N.

His Majesty's Ship Southampton

At Sea, 22d Novr 1812.

Sir,

His Majesty's Ship under my command this day Captured the United States Brig Vixen Capt [Master Commandant] George Reed, mounting twelve 18 Pr Carronades, two long nines, and One hundred and thirty men. She had been out five weeks, and I am happy to say had not made any Capture. I have &c.

(Signed) James Lucas Yeo. Captain

Charles Stirling Esqr
Vice Admiral of the White
&c. &c. &c.

Copy, UkLPR, Adm. 1/503, Part 1, p. 117.

1. Southampton, 32 guns, was built in 1757. J. J. Colledge, Ships of the Royal Navy: An Historical Index, 2 vols. (New York, 1969-1970), I: 515, called her "the first true frigate in the RN."

2. Reed died in captivity in Spanish Town, Jamaica, on 8 Jan. 1813.

A Naval Presence at Savannah

That there was a small U.S. naval force, made up largely of barges, on duty at Savannah, Georgia, is one of the least known facts of the War of 1812. The men who served there have remained virtually anonymous and their deeds may have been ignored by all but avid local historians, but documentation in the National Archives yields clues to what took place. The officer in command of navy barges at Savannah was Lieutenant Charles F. Grandison. During the month of November 1812, he reported directly to the Navy Department. It is clear from his detailed and frequent letters that he felt isolated and was
often uncertain where to turn for support. But he was conscientious and tried to keep the secretary of the navy informed of his actions, despite little response from Washington. Anxious about the boldness of the British, who were cruising the coast and frequently raiding up local rivers, Grandison at one point exceeded his authority. He purchased an armed ship for the navy which had formerly served as a British packet and had been captured by Joshua Barney's Rossie earlier in the year. While this step may have pleased Savannah's merchants, it gained only grudging approval from Secretary Hamilton. The following letters reveal the naval war from the perspective of the Georgia seacoast.

Sir

Lieutenant Charles F. Grandison to
Secretary of the Navy Hamilton

Savannah 7th Novbr 1812

I have the Honour to inform you that I arrived here on the 5th Inst at night, and found one of the Barges here. She had lost six of her men by desertion. The officer Commanding her informd me that the Barges have lost 13 of their Men by desertion—that they had also lost 2 Anchors and 2 Cables, and have expended all the Powder I left with them (5 Barrels). I fear there has been great remisness in the officers Conduct who was left in Command by Captn [Master Commandant George W.] Reed all this I shall be able to assertain on my arrival at Sunbury and punish accordingly. There is now laying in this Port a very fine Schooner privateer Call'd the Matilda Built at Baltimore in 1809 - 6 ms under the immediate inspection of Captn George Stiles—she is 221 tons & Coppered to the Benda with heavy Copper. She sails uncommonly fast, and is well Calculated for the Service—She has a profusion of stores of every kind requisite for a vessel of War—and may be perfectly equipt for the Service at a very trifling expence.

She has

2 Suits of good Sails
2 good Cables
3 Anchors
1 Hawser
2 Suits New Rigging
2 Tons Cannon powder
5000 Musket & Pistol Cartridges
80 Water Casks 100 Gals each

11 Carriage Guns
80 Muskets
20 Pistols
60 Cutlasses
20 Boarding Pikes
56 Battle Axes
50 Bbls Salt Provision
35 Bbls Bread, and
25 Tons of Shot

The other Articles are too numerous to mention in a Letter. This Vessel may be purchased as she now lays for 30,000 Dollars—which in my opinion is very reasonable—had we this Vessel we might man her imediately, as Seamen are very Numerous here at present. She would be an excellent Vessel to guard the entrance of this River, and occasionally run out as petty depredators may appear—and being a good vessel to recieve such men as may enter for the Service. I could always draw men from her for the Barges, as the seamen will not enter for the Barges under any circumstances—the above Vessel I have carefully examind in Company with the Collector & others, all of whom are of oppinion that she would be a Valuable acquisition to to the force in this section of the Union, particularly at this moment, as there is now, and has been for a Number of days, a British Cutter Privateer, Mounting But 8 Guns and manned Chiefly with Blacks about 70 in Number, Cruising between Savannah and Charleston and has already done a great deal of mischief.

The following is a Copy of a letter which was given to the Collector this morning by the owner of a Vessel which was Captured by her last tuesday on her way to Charleston.

Cutter Caledonia at Sea

Sir

The Persons named in the Margin being Citizens of the U.S. and taken by the Private Cutter of War Caledonia, in the Sloop William from Savannah to Charleston and by me liberated. I hope you will have the goodness to send by the first oppertunity as many subjects of great Britain, Prisoners of War in their Stead, the said persons being liberated by me on this Patrole of Honor, and you will oblige Dear Sir Yours

Richd Corelson
Commander

directed
to the Commissioners for
the Department of War
United States
The following are the names of the persons thus liberated. Willm Wilkie, Robt Frazier, Thos Lindsay, Robt Webber, and Anty Gurney I have the Honor to be [&c.]

C. F. Grandison

[P.S.] The Southampton frigate is actually off Beaufort. She boarded a Ship Just arrived and impress'd one Seaman from her Yesterday. N.B. the Collector is this moment inform'd that the British Cutter is now actually anchored inside the Light-House & we have nothing to go in pursuit of her. I have done all I could to raise Volunteers and take the Matilda down to her; but the men 200, in number will not proceed unless I command them. the Capt'n however is opposed to this, but has no objections to go himself, and the people will not go with him. I think it possible that something may be done before night, as I have promised to repair whatever damage She may sustain, and replace such munitions of War as May be expended on this occasion. Respectfully Sir

C. F. Grandison

ALS, DNA, RG45, BC, 1812, Vol. 5, No. 147.

1. The same Matilda privateer, with 11 guns, which is discussed in Read to Hamilton, 13 July 1812. See pp. 191-92.
Country & the Honble the Secretary of the Navy. I have the honor &c.

C. F. Grandison

P.S. In the memorial of the Citizens of Savannah, I have only selected those of the first distinction, as it would require a volume to send the names of all the Citizens of Savannah.

Inventory of the Ship Princess Amelia

The Princess Amelia is a prize to the American privateer the Rosie [Rosie] of Baltimore. She was a British Packet mounting 8 Guns. She is about 5 years old and her burthen 180 Tons. Her Hull is sound and strongly built & she is newly coppered. Her Masts and Spars (of which she has a full set) are good, and require no expense, except some of her yards which have shot holes in them. Her sails are very good, only pierced with shot.

Of Rigging - Takle -&c -&c -&c. She has the following

One fore, & Main Top Sail half worn - Three Top Gallant Sails half worn - Two Royals half worn - One Fore sail, nearly new - One Main Sail half worn - One Spanker & mizen half worn - Two Mizen Stay Sails & one Top Mast Staysail, half worn - One Jibb & Flying Jibb, half worn - One fore Staysail, half worn, One Gaff Top Sail, half worn - One Main, Main Top mast & Middle Staysail, half worn - One Main Top Gallit Staysail, half worn - Three top mast Studg Sails, half worn - Two top Gallit, Studg Sails, 1/2 worn - One fore, Main & Mizen top Sail, Indifferent - One fore sail, Indifferent - Two Top Gallit Sails, Indiff -two Stay sails, Indifferent - One Awning, very good - One 14 1/2 in Cable, best Bower, very good - One 15 in Cable, Small Bower, very good - One 9 1/2 in Cable, Stream, very good - One hauser, Indifferent - Two Bowser Anchors - One Stream Anchor - One Kedge Anchor - running rigging complete, very good - Standing Rigging complete, much cut, but being good will answer Spliced - Lower Masts very good but pierced wt. Small Shot - Top Masts & Top Gallant Masts, slightly cut - The rest of the Spars in good order.

Ordnance

Eight 9 wt Carronades, with spunges, rammers, worms, &c complete.

Shots - Round, grape & cannister - Fourteen Boarding Pikes - Six Cutlasses - Powder horns - Cartridge boxes and every other utensel - Three Reggy Gun powder, & one bundle unfilled Cartridges - 26 fine Water Casks - one box Signal Lights - Two Binnacle compasses, & other articles - 70 Tons Pig Iron, as Ballast - a Long Boat & Cutter-Caboose & 3 Signal Lanterns.


1. See following document.

CITIZENS OF SAVANNAH TO LIEUTENANT CHARLES F. GRANDISON

M-E-M-O-R-I-A-L.

To Charles F. Grandison Esquire

Lieut: commanding the U.S. Naval forces on the Sunbury Station.

The Memorial of the undersigned Citizens of Savannah, Respectfully Represent -

That the port & harbor of the City of Savannah is evidently destitute of every kind of Naval protection, at a period when we have every reason to apprehend the enemy to visit our Sea board, & particularly the entrance of the River leading to the metropolis of this State - That understanding a Ship called the Princess Amelia is for sale and would not only answer the purpose of a Guard Ship, but is well calculated for Sailing and would answer the purpose of going over the Bar occasionally, and defending the neighbouring Sea coast from Privates and Picaroons - That your Mem. relying on your judgement and discretion, would beg leave to request the favor of you Sir, to examine the said Ship called the Princess Amelia, or any other in the Port, and should you be of opinion that she, or any other will answer the purpose for which she is wanted, you would exercise all the discretionary power you possess from Government to purchase her, or any other, from the owners, for and on acct of your Government. —

W. Stephens
A. S. Bulloch
Matt: McAllister
[T.] Bourke
Jno Bolton
Hampdin McIntosh
Alexr. Telfair
Thos. F. Williams
J. Bond Read
Jno Cumming
Sir,

Satisfaction. I can, and have sent the Barges: But these Boats will kill delegation from a meeting which was held in this City by the principal proprietors of Estates on the Sea Islands and to gratify the Citizens of Georgia: But on the other hand, I am afraid of committing myself in the eyes of the Department.

I have appointed Lieutenant N. [Noah] Allen her first Lieutenant of more real importance to be guarded & protected than the entrance of Warsaw river, which passes through, Rumney Marsh, their passage requiring high tides and that other point which passes by the south end of Skidaway Island, feel themselves greatly alarmed at their exposure to the Privateers, Picaroons & marauding parties of the Enemy.

Your Memorialists would venture to affirm, that there are not two thousand slaves and a vast quantity of provisions & other property.

To Lieutenant Grandison, Commanding the Barges of the United States on the Georgia Station.

The Memorial of the Undersigned, Proprietors and Planters of the Islands of Wilmington, Skidaway, Whitemarsh &c. Respectfully Represents.

That your memorialists and others, proprietors of Estates, between Savannah River and the South end of Skidaway Island, feel themselves greatly alarmed at their exposure to the Privateers, Picaroons & marauding parties of the Enemy.

Your Memorialists would venture to affirm, that there are not two points on the Sea, Board of the State of more real importance to be guarded & protected than the entrance of Warsaw river, which passes between Wilmington & Skidaway Islands and leads directly up to Thunderbolt & from thence four miles to Savannah: & that other point which passes by the south end of Skidaway up Vernon River to Montgomery, ten miles from Savannah. These two important passes being left altogether unprotected by Government, furnishes the Enemy with an easy & ready passage for vessels of almost any burthen, in a single tide to pass up and land either at Thunderbolt or Montgomery and be in Savannah in two or three hours. Besides Sir, the Enemy by landing either at Wilmington or Skidaway would have under their control in the course of a few hours upwards of One Thousand slaves and a vast quantity of provisions & other property.

Your Memorialists would further beg leave to state, that they understand, the Gun Boats and Barges when ordered to cruise, seldom come as far as Warsaw River, in consequence of the Intricacy of the route through, Rumney Marsh, their passage requiring high tides and fair winds.

A Gun Boat stationed at the South end of Wilmington and a barge at the South end of Skidaway would afford great protection, to all the

Copy, DNA, RG45, MLR, Vol. 6, No. 208.

[Enclosure]

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Copy, DNA, RG45, MLR, Vol. 6, No. 208.
Islands between Savannah & Great Ogeechee. A Barge would with any tide that would allow an enemy to run up to Montgomery through Rumney Marsh be able to pass through Rumney Marsh and give notice to the Gun-boat in Warsaw River. Warsaw Bar is but a few miles below Wilmington & Skidaway Islands and which can be passed by vessels drawing sixteen feet water. These Islands were visited during the last war and all are in hourly apprehension of being visited by the same enemy again.

Your Memorialists, therefore do most earnestly request that you will exercise all the discretionary powers you possess, to let us have a Barge & Gun-boat as early as possible; The former to be stationed at the south end of Skidaway, & the Gunboat in Warsaw River which will furnish not only security to the Islands but which is of still greater importance, additional security to the City of Savannah.

Proprietors of Estates on the Islands within mentioned

W. B. Bulloch
J. Lawson
John Bolton
W Stephens
[T] Bourke
A. S. Bulloch
H. M. Intosh
Barack Gibbons
Jno Cumming

Math. McAllister
Charles Harris
Geo. Jones
W Jones
Robert S Gibson
Lewis Turner
Richd Turner
Warren Percival
Mat. W. Stewart
John W. Barnard
Timoy Barnard Jr
John Barnard
Edmd Jarvis
S. Shad
George Herb
Gardner Tufts attny
for Ebn Jackson
N. Turnbull

LIEUTENANT CHARLES F. GRANDISON TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

Savannah 25 Nov: 1812

Sir,

I have the honor to inclose herewith the result of an enquiry made on the conduct of Midshipman Hemersley [Hammersley], as regards the man he wounded on Board Barge No 1, and who is since dead. It appears from all the evidence that Brown (the deceased) was guilty of Mutiny in the extreme and that he met his death in an attempt to destroy Mr Hemersley.

The witnesses in favor of Midn Hemersley are as follows-

Mr P.A. Bush-Sailing master
Mr Thos. Legare-Actg Sailg master
Mr Thos. Allison [Allison]-Midshipman
John Esbryne-Seamn
Henry Baiton-Seamn
Henry Newman-Seamn
James Hill-Seamn

And but one Seaman, Sanders, in favor of the deceased, and this man deposed that the deceased was drunk and nothing farther. From these circumstances I am induced to believe that Midn Hemersley only acted in self defence. I have the honor to be [&c.]

Cha F. Grandison


1. Upon arriving at the Sunbury station on 8 Nov., Grandison found appalling conditions: ammunition nearly exhausted, arms unfit for use, anchors, cables, and sweeps lost and broken, men deathly ill from exposure, one officer and three men dead, thirteen men having deserted, and the remainder in a state of indiscipline. Grandison attributed these conditions to the cruelty and intemperance of the officers in charge. He reported that one man, then dying, had been "most inhum[ane]ly stabd" by Hammersley. See Grandison to Hamilton, 9 Nov. 1812, DNA, RG45, BC, 1812, Vol. 3, No. 149.
Capt. Grandison, Sir,

As I was walking down on the Bluff I heard a noise on board of No 1. Mr [Lachlan] Cuthbert was then going off—he asked me if I would not accompany him, I answered yes—when we came alongside of her, Mr Cuthbert and myself address'd them and ask'd them if they were not ashamed of themselves making such a Riot they still in it. We then demanded them to keep silence which they pay'd no attention to our orders—in a few minutes after, this fellow Brown came aft and asked me if I thought any thing of what he had said to me a few evenings before? I answered him I did not—in reaching his hand dropt a long Spanish Knife drawn. I immediately arose and ask'd him what he meant to do with it, his reply was, he did not know. I then mentioned to Mr Cuthbert to make himself contented until I returned. I then went on board of No 4, the Boat which I commanded and got my side arms and ordered my men to get in the Boat and I went alongside of No 1—in stepping on board this fellow Sanders ask'd me what I meant to do with the Sword. I then struck him over the shoulders with the Scabbord twice or three times—then immediately this man Brown rush'd from aft and swore that before his ship-mate should be struck by a dam'd white liver'd Son of a Bitch he would suffer death. My Mate and several of the men seized him to prevent him from gaining me. I was then standing forward—he still made use of mutinous and insulting words and making every exertion to gain me—he caught Mr Cuthbert by the back of the neck and threw him down. After that I was convinced his determination was to destroy me in which I made two passes at him with my Sword, not for the intention of destroying him or giving him any mortal wound.

Sign'd: George Hamersley

Copy, DNA, RG45, BC, 1812, Vol. 5, No. 198.
ATLANTIC THEATER

keep them on board their Boats for they desert in spite of all the Vigilence of the officers, nothing but keeping them at a distance from the Shore on a decked Vessel will prevent ther constant desertion.

My Next Communication will inform you 

Sir

of all the expences which has attended the Barges on this Station since their first Arrival up to the close of the Present Year with the statement of the Peoples accounts the Number of desertions and the Number of deaths.

Another Bill for Medical attendance since the 9th of November is this Moment handed to me amounting to $86.50. In consequence of which I have suspended the doctors Attendance in toto, and have taken away the Medicine Chest which Captn Reed Lent him. I have the Honour &c.

Chas F. Grandison

ALS, DNA, RG45, BC, 1812, Vol. 5, No. 198.

1. Master Commandant George W. Reed commanded the barges at Sunbury for two months before being ordered to command Flure in Sept. 1812, following the death of her commander, Master Commandant Christopher Gadsden.

COUNCILMAN GEORGE M. TROUP TO
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

Washington
3oth Nov 1812

Dear Sir,

I enclose the letter, Memorial, & Exhibit, the subject of which is the purchase of the Princess Amelia for Harbor defence. There being no prospect of the gun boats (which you were so good as to promise) being able to reach Savannah, having no means of defence on the water, & the enemy having actually invaded them The Citizens of Savannah of the greatest respectability united in urging Lieut Grandison to purchase the Princess Amelia which you will see by the Exhibit has been purchased for a sum considerably below her value. As Lieut Grandison acted in this affair without express authority from you he anxiously awaits your decision on his conduct. The Memorial has the signature of the District Judge the Collector & all the public agents at Savannah.

COUNCILMAN GEORGE M. TROUP

ALS, DNA, RG45, MLR, 1812, Vol. 7, No. 155.

1. Enclosures not filed with document. In addition to the letter printed on pp. 598-600 above, they probably consist of copies of the memorial from the citizens of Savannah and the "Inventory of the Ship Princess Amelia," pp. 600-601.
2. George Michael Troup was a member of the House of Representatives from Georgia, 1807-1815. He later served as a U.S. senator and as Governor of Georgia.

LIEUTENANT CHARLES F. GRANDISON TO
CONGRESSMAN GEORGE M. TROUP

Savannah 18th Nov: 1812

My dear friend,

I wrote my letter to you last evening in such haste (owing to the closing of the Mail) that I had not time to examine it, consequently omitted to "Enclose the Memorial" therein mentioned: But tho' it's never too late to correct our errors, still they cannot be removed too soon-the longer their existance, the greater their attendant evils-therefore I took no time in sending the memorial in full chase after my letter, or, rather a copy of it-the Original being sent to the Honble: the Secretary of the Navy as I should have told you before. Here my dear Sir, let me reiterate my request of you to wait on the Secretary and be my advocate in in the purchase of the Princess Amelia. Herewith you will receive a copy of her Inventory, Examine it, and say if she is not a bargain. Her Ordnance & Ballast is worth, nay, would this day fetch as much as I have given for her and all her appendages.

You may say, perhaps, that I am over zealous in behalf of the portion of our Coast assigned to my protection. I certainly feel as much interested for its safety as tho' it belonged to me, and I feel as much desire to catch a party of English on it, as ever one of its inhabitants [does] to catch a gang of run-away Negros. Accept the assurance of my most respectful consideration.

C. F. Grandison

Cong George M. Troup Member of Congress
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON TO
LIEUTENANT CHARLES F. GRANDISON

Nav: Dep'tm
3 December 1812

Your several letters have been received. The purchase of the Princess Amelia is not disapproved: tho there exists no authority to make such a purchase. You will communicate Your proceedings to Comr. Campbell, undere whose order You are to act: Change her name, & call her the Troup

P. Hamilton

Copy, DNA, RG45, SNL, Vol. 10, p. 214.

LIEUTENANT CHARLES F. GRANDISON TO
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

U.S. Sloop Troup
Savannah 20th dec: 1812

Sir,
I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your esteem'd favor of the 3rd inst: this day, the contents of which shall be punctually attended to. The Troup is nearly ready for Service, and ere you receive this she will be quite so, except having her crew. Most of the men now on board belong to the Barges also the Officers. I dispatched two Barges to St Marys three weeks since for Men-they have not yet returned. The Troup will mount 20 guns namely, 16-9 Ibers, 2-12 Ibers, & 2-18 Ibers. Carronades, and as ammition is scarce here I wish to take her to St Mary's for the purpose of getting a sufficiency from Commodo Campbell. We have no Signal Book on this station neither have we the private Signal, nor the Privateers private Signal. May I solicit those Signals. Agreeable to your instructions I shall in future communicate my proceedings to Commodo Campbell. I am sorry to inform you that all the Officers, with the exception of one, and all the men have been very ill, myself included. Ten are in the Hospital here, the rest are on board and on the recovery. I have the honor to be [&c.]

Cha's F Grandison

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON TO CAPTAIN JOHN CASSIN

Capt John Cassin
Navy Yard Gosport Va

Be pleased to order a Rendezvous to be opened at Norfolk to enter thirty able & thirty Ordinary Seamen, directing the recruiting officer to report from time to time his progress to Capt Morris at this place-the men being intended for the Adams under his command.

The wages to Able Seamen are $12 pr month and if absolutely necessary, a bounty of from 10 to 20$ may be given to Ordinary Seamen & boys from 6 to 10$-and to all two months advance upon good Security being given, to indemnify the public in the event of desertion-to be entered to serve two years from the time the ship first weighs anchor for a cruise. Give the recruiting officer orders to enter none but white able bodied Citizens.

Men for the Frigate Adams

Charles Morris's promotion to captain gave him priority in gaining a command at sea. He was ordered to Adams, a small 28-gun frigate which was undergoing a partial rebuilding at the Washington Navy Yard. To obtain seamen, Secretary Hamilton issued orders for the opening of a rendezvous. Morris and his ship were delayed more than a year in departing by the British blockade off the Virginia Capes. After breaking out in 1814, Morris made several captures, but was ultimately obliged to destroy Adams when threatened with capture in the Penobscot River. The document which follows contains the Navy Department's recruiting order on behalf of Morris.
The Navy Agent will furnish the necessary monies upon the requisitions of the recruiting officers approved by you. Blank shipping papers are herewith transmitted.

Paul Hamilton

Commodore Tingey's Concerns

The correspondence of Thomas Tingey, commandant of the Washington Navy Yard, is rich in detail for the study of ship repair and the procurement of naval stores, timber, rope yarns, iron, and ordnance for the Washington yard and others along the east coast. Tingey's concerns during early December 1812, focused on three subjects: repairs and recruitment for the frigate Adams at Washington Navy Yard, the possible rebuilding of the decaying frigate New York, and the disposition of naval gunboats at the various naval stations in Chesapeake Bay and southward. An offer had been made by a Baltimore builder for work on New York (see pp. 592-93) and preparations had been made to escort the ship to Baltimore with gunboats from the Chesapeake Bay flotilla based in that city. But a decision was reached not to proceed with the work. In the long run, this may have been the wisest choice. New York was so far gone that she would have required extensive work, and she probably would not have been able to break through the blockade even if completed. Constellation was ready for sea by late 1812, yet was unable to leave Chesapeake Bay until the end of the war. The documents which follow reflect activities at the Washington Navy Yard during the last month of 1812.

Sir

On an examination of the five Gun Boats, sent here by Captain [Master Commandant Charles] Gordon, (intended to take round the frigate New York to Baltimore) it appears that they are not in a state, fit to send outside the Capes, for a southern station. I therefore beg
leave respectfully to recommend that they be ordered to return to Baltimore, or sent to the Norfolk station. I have the honor to be [&c.]

Thoş Tingey

ALS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1812, Vol. 3, No. 205. Endorsed at foot of letter: "No. 135 Richd Cox 136 Geo J Davis 139 Horace Smyth 142 Jno Nantz 143 Jas Lawson Ordered them to Norfolk P.H."

COMMODORE THOMAS TINGEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

Navy Yard Washin 4d Dece 1812

Sir

I have received information from the Navy Agent at Boston, that, a number of men for the frigate Adams, have embarked in a sloop for this port. As we shall need a comfortable and safe place to lodge them, I will have the frigate New York, prepared for that purpose, should it meet your approbation. I have the honor to be [&c.]

Thoş Tingey


COMMODORE THOMAS TINGEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

Navy Yard Washin 12th Dece 1812

Sir

I have the honor to inform you that, in consequence of the appearance of the weather, I yesterday directed Sailing Master William Fleetwood, commanding Gun Boat No 144, with Nos 137, 140 & 141 under his direction, to proceed down near Alexandria and there wait until I should receive your Instructions, where to order them, for their winter station.

The Gun Boat No 135, sailing Master R. J. Cox, with four others attachd to his command, are also here, and ready to proceed, wherever you shall be pleased to direct. Mr Cox, having on board the Signah, for the Baltimore Squadron of Boats, it may be most eligible that, he with the Boats attachd to his command, be ordered back to Baltimore. And Fleetwood with the others, to the Norfolk Station.

All which is respectfully submitted for your instructions. I have the honor to be [&c.]

Thoş Tingey

ALS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1812, Vol. 3, No. 212. Endorsed at foot of letter: "Let it be so ordered P.H."

The Return of United States and Macedonian

After defeating Macedonian off the Azores Islands on 25 October, Captain Decatur's crew spent several days jury-rigging her, then commenced the long voyage back to the United States with the prize in company. During the first days of December, the two ships slipped through the blockade and entered coastal waters. United States sailed into Long Island Sound and made for New London, anchoring off that port on 4 December. Macedonian, however, was beset with fog and went into Newport two days later. Macedonian's arrival raised great excitement since this was the first news local inhabitants received about Decatur's success. The Newport Mercury welcomed the news under the headline "ANOTHER BRILLIANT NAVAL VICTORY," remarking "with emotions of heartfelt pride and pleasure, we place before our readers another proof of the superior skill and bravery of our officers, seamen, and marines which will secure to them the unanimous applause of a grateful country."

Master Commandant Perry, commanding the Newport station, was immediately involved in taking care of the prize and her crew, among whom were a number of sick and wounded seamen. In the following two letters Decatur reports his safe arrival at New London, and Perry informs the secretary of his having rendered assistance to Macedonian's crew.

1. Newport Mercury, 12 Dec. 1812, p. 3.
Sir

I have to acquaint you with the arrival at New London this morning & beg leave to refer you to the enclosed for the details of an action between this ship & His Britannic Majesty's ship Macedonian. The last night being very dark we unavoidably parted with our prize off Montauk [Montauk] point and the weather is still so thick that she cannot come into port. She has a pilot on board and is capable of standing any weather—the moment she can see her way I have no doubt she will be in.

'Tis with great pleasure I inform you that our wounded are all doing well—and have the honour to be [&c.]

[Stephen Decatur]

ALS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1812, No. 107.


The Loss of His Majesty's Packet,

Princess Amelia

Among the many prizes taken by American ships during the War of 1812 were a number of British packets, which were official vessels, though not a part of the Royal Navy establishment. They carried mail and specie from England to British possessions in North America and the West Indies, and to the British civil servants and citizens living in South America. One of the first packets to become a victim of the war was Princess Amelia, carrying eight guns and 14 men, en route from St. Thomas to Falmouth. She had the misfortune to encounter Joshua Barney’s Rossie during the second part of that ship’s successful cruise. There was a long, hard-fought contest, during which the packet suffered the death of her captain and master and many other casualties. As has been seen in earlier documents, Princess Amelia survived the engagement, was taken prize and sent into Savannah. She was eventually taken into the U.S. Navy as Georgia, but was renamed Troup in honor of Congressman George Troup from Georgia who had urged Secretary Hamilton to make the purchase. The following documents consist of an official account of the capture of Princess Amelia and a request by postal officials that the officers and men of the ship be compensated for their injuries with "gratuities" for severe wounds and "smart money" for slight wounds. Pensions were allotted to the families of those who were killed.

To the Right Honorable The Lords Commissioners
of His Majesty's Treasury-

My Lords

We deem it highly necessary to represent to your Ldps the Circumstances of a very gallant Action which occurred on 15th Sept last, in Defence of the Princess Amelia Pkt, agst an American Privateer of very superior Force: & though that Defence proved unsuccessful, we think it proper for the Sake of Example, & for the good of the Service, as well as on acct of the excellent Conduct of the Officers & Men, to propose such Pensions to the Widows & the Relatives of those who fell in the Action, & Rewards & Smart Money to the Remainder of the Crew, as have been usual in Cases of a like Nature.

The Princess Amelia, armed with eight guns, & carrying 28 Men, Officers included, sailed from St Thomas' for Falmouth on 12th Sept last, & on the 15th of that Month she was attacked by the American Privateer Rossie of 12 guns & 95 men, agst which she was defended upwards of 50 Minutes, when the Captain, & the Master, & a Boy, having fallen, & the Mate & ten Seamen being wounded, & every further Effort to save the Vessel become unavailing, she was surrendered to the Enemy & the Mail & dispatches sunk.

Capt: Moorsom who has thus lost his Life in the Service, & Mr Nankeville the Master were truly worthy Men, & deserving Officers. They have both left Widows to lament their Fate, & the Master has besides left an aged Mother who entirely depended upon him for her support. We therefore submit that it may be right to allow Mrs Moorsom a Pension of £ 60 per Ann: during her Life or Widowhood: & a Pension of £ 20 per Ann: to the Widow of Mr Nankeville during her Life or Widowhood, with an additional allowance of £ 5 per ann during the Life of his Mother whom he supported. We also beg leave to propose a gratuity of £ 10 to the poor aged Mother of Richard May, the Boy, who was killed in the Action: & Smart Money to the Master, and wounded Seamen, with gratuities to the remainder of the Crew, as stated in the enclosed List, & we request your Lordships Authority to pay the same amounting for the Pensions to Mrs Moor-
Pensions, Smart Money, & Gratuities, proposed to the Officers & Crew of the "Amelia" Packet & to the Relatives of those who fell in Action with the American Privateer "Rossie" of 12 guns & 95 Men on 15th Sept. 1812.

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>£</th>
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<td>to his Widow during life or Widowhood</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Nankeville</td>
<td>Master, Pension per Annum</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to his Widow during Life or Widowhood</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ditto - Aged Mother</td>
<td>whom he supported</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richd May</td>
<td>Allowance to an Aged Mother</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wm Edmonds</td>
<td>Severely wounded, uncertain if he will recover</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jno Hayman</td>
<td>-dito - Ball thro' his right Arm, doubtful if he will recover its use</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jno Macklaine</td>
<td>- Ball in the Thigh, not yet extracted</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jno Francisco</td>
<td>Wounded in the Head, part of his Skull carried away by a Musket Ball</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrd Ford</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brot. Forwd</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wm Redgard-Mate</td>
<td>Wounded in the Head by a Musket Ball</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Jones</td>
<td>Splinter in the Arm</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


1. The figures total only £ 221 4s.
Saratoga: A New York Privateer

One of the most active American privateers in the Caribbean during the first year of the War of 1812 was Captain Charles Wooster’s schooner Saratoga. During her career in this war, Saratoga took approximately 22 ships. As can be seen from the following journal, Captain Wooster was not one to shrink from close action.

1. Mclay, American Privateers, p. 558

Lieutenant’s Journal of the Schooner Saratoga

[Extract] 11 December 1812

Moderate Trades and pleaseat weather  At 1/2 past 12 a Sail hove in sight to windward  Tacked and Stood in for our boat being on shore for the Capt  at 2 PM our boat returned with the Capt, immediately, made all Sail in chase  at 1/2 Past 3 perceived an English Jack at the foretopmast head of a schooner at 4 Tacked Stood in shore to endeavor to cut her off  on which she hauled in for the land

Sent our small boat with six men armed, in order if possible to take charge of her before she could reach the shore  at 1/2 past 4 the boat boarded her  She hauled down her colours within half Piccol Shot of the beach, took possession of her and stood off Lagoira bearing at the same time S.W. 4 Leagues dist. She proved to be the British schooner Mariich belonging to St Thomas 4 days out bound to Lagoira Laden with 40 bbls Flour & 50 Boxes Trunks of dry goods retained one prisoner on board  Sent the remainder with their baggage on shore they being English French and Spaniards  at the request of the american consul took Capt Moncreeff and 10 men on board who had been 3 or 6 months on shore at Lagoira  at 6 PM Lagoira bore S. S.W 6 Leagues dist Stood [stood] off and on under Easy Sail Prize in [Com] 6 a.M Lagoira bore S 5 Leagues distant. Tacked and Stood in  at 8 AM Saw a Brig to the westward Standing to the North by the wind  Hauled the Prize along Side and took out one of the most valuable Goods Put Mr Boggs and F Bergman his mate on board with 4 men gave instructions for her to Stand in Shore in case we lost Sight of her she would lay off and on for two or three days if we should not be able to find her in that time to proceed direct to Cartagena and there await our arrival. At 1/2 past 8 AM made all Sail in chase of the Brig  at 9 Set English Ensign and Pendant on which she Hoisted an English Ensign. Called all hands to quarters and cleared for action  at 10 gave her a shot and hoisted American Ensign and Pendant the shot cut away her Stern boat, she returned our fire with her Stern chasers, At 1/4 past 10 the action commenced, distant from Each other 1/4 mile at 11 the shot from the Enemy carried away our fore topsail yard at the same time the Axeltree of the after gun gave away which rendered it unfit for Service  Torn Breechings of the principal guns in the waist parted: finding She would not Strike made Sail to get in shore to windward of her in order to board 10 minutes past 11 the firing ceased on both Sides all hands Employed repairing damages at meridian the Enemy a Stern Standing the Same way with us

12 December 1812

commences with Strong Brees E. NE. Heavy swell on could not fight with our Lee guns  Sent up a new topsail Yard 1/2 past 12 the Enemy Tacked at 1 having repair’d all damages Tacked and made sail after her 1/2 past one came up to the windd of him  Hove too, to send a flag of truce on board to inform him of the force and number of men of the Saratoga with the determination that if they did not haul down her colours Every man on board should be put to death he heaving too for the space of five minutes then made Sail from our boat, Set our English Jack forwarded and made Sail after him 1/2 past 2 came up within hail of him  Sumoned him frequently to Strike otherwise abide by the consequence, which he refused to do at the same time having his colours nailed to the Peak we Stood ready for Boarding the Enemy shot ahead we recommenced with round and grape at 3/4 past 2 Bore up athwart his stern and raked him, rounded too, to board him fire’d several volleys of musketry into him which drove all his men below who were able to get there we ceased firing she fell off along side of us we grapled to her the grazing Lanyards parted, one officer Mr Dexter and 2 men Richd Pemberton and Charles Rowland got on board by the Jib guys found only one man on deck alive who was trying too haul down the colours at 5 his Colours were hauled down by Mr Dexter one of our own officers on our part 2 men were wounded (not mortally) the caps. and 2 men of the
Enemys Ship Lay dead on deck and two wounded one of which died soon after. Though the surgeon took care of them and the humane attendance of our officer, it proved to be the Brig Rachel from Greenock commanded by Capt N Dalmarhoy mounting 14 guns, maned with 36 men, out 57 days - the damages done the Saratoga were of no great consequence. Three shrouds shot away, mainsail fore top sail and jib were cut by the shot of the Enemy, a number of Grape shot in our foremast. Brails, braces &c cut away our starboard bulwark stove in (a little) by the vessels striking each other.

The Enemys damage. Four shot 2 between wind and water his sails, rigging and spars cut very badly. Sent our carpenter on board to repair her at 4 PM. Lost sight of our prize schooner. Received the greater part of the brig Rachel's prisoners on board. All hands employed repairing damages. At 5 PM another brig hove in sight, cleared ship for another action. Our Prize brig in Co at 5.50 Cape Blanco. S W. Distant 6 Leagues at 9.30. Beat to quarters at 9.40. Came up with the chase. Brought her to close quarters and boarded her. She proved to be the Spanish brig San Hosa[Jose] 57 days from Cadiz bound to Porto Cabello at 10. Permitted her to pass. Tacked and stood in shore prize in Co at II. Calm. Continued calm all night. At 8 am. Light breezes from the Eastward ran under the lee of our prize. Took out some canvas stores &c. Sent on board 2 casks of water. Kept 4 of the prisoners on board the Rachel and 2 on board the Saratoga. Gave the remainder 27 in number the long boat of Brig to proceed to Laguira, we being too short of water to detain them. Supplied them with provisions and water and they made sail for the land, all hands employed repairing sails, rigging &c.

Wind E NE. Land near, Laguira in sight.
boat that was, he was answered that it was Neptunes the god of the seas, & that he wished permission to come on board with his train, as soon as It was granted one of the B Mates with some others being in the fore chains, came over the Bows and mounted their carriage (made of some boards lashed together on an old gun carriage having two chairs lashed there on for Neptune & his wife) this carriage was drawn by 4 men some with their shirts off & their Bodies painted & others with their trousers cut off above the knees & their legs painted & their faces painted in this manner accompanied by his Barbers with their razors made of an Iron hoop & constables & Band of music they marched on the quarter deck where he dismounted with his wife and spoke to the Captain for permission to shave such as had not crossed the line before officers excepted, provided that they would pay some rum, this was granted. they immeadiately got into one of the boats filled with water (those that had not been across the line before were ordered below) and 1 was brought up at a time.

Remarks Dec 12th 1812.

Commences moderate and Pleasant at 2 discd a sail on the weather Bow 1 pt. made sail in chase at 4 tacked still in chase Squally and flying clouds at sun down chase still on the weather Bow having the appearance of an armed Brig Beat to quarters and cleared for action at 7 PM drew up to the chase Hailed her and told Her to heave too she attempted to run to Leeward at which we fired a volley of Musketry at Her. Killed 1 man and cut her Rigging very much she proved to be his Britannic Majesties Packet Nocton of 10 Guns from Rio - Bound to England having on board 12000 £ sterling at 7 AM ran foul of Her & carried away part of Her Starbd quarter & our Sprit-Yard & cat Head.

Lat acc Long in Correct Long variant
[0°] 38 South 25° 49' W 27° 50' W 1 1/2 W

Remarks Dec 13th 1812

at 1 Mr [Midshipman William] Finch went on board with Mr [Midshipman Thomas] Conover and his crew and departed for the US at 1/2 past 2 made sail at 4 Brig out of sight set up the rigging Ends Pleasant.
The papers herewith transmitted & marked A, B, C, D, E & F will I hope furnish all the requisite information upon the points contemplated in the Memoranda which I had the honor to receive from you yesterday. I have the honor [&c.]

Paul Hamilton

A

Exhibit shewing the number of Commission officers & midshipmen requisite for the vessels of War now in Commission & ordered to be fitted for the Service of the United States specifying the vessels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vessels</th>
<th>Captains</th>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Commiss.</th>
<th>Lieutenants</th>
<th>Surgeons</th>
<th>Surgeon-Mate</th>
<th>Chaplains</th>
<th>Midshipmen</th>
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<tr>
<td>Frigate</td>
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<td>President</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Scorpion</td>
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9  9  69  20  23  9  182
Names.
Isaac Garretson
Samuel Hambleton
Clement S. Hunt
Gwinn Harris
John H. Carr
Nathl Lyde
James R. Wilson
Samuel Robertson
Samuel Maffitt
Robt C. Ludlow
Robt Pottinger
John B. Timberlake
Thos J. Chew
Thos Shields
Richard C. Archer
Lewis Deblais
George S. Wise
Francis A. Thornton
Humphrey Magrath
Edwin T. Satterwhite
James M. Halsey
Edward Fitzgerald
Alexr P. Darragh
Edwin W. Turner
Robert Ormsby
Ludlow Dashwood

Where employed
Constellation
Newport R.I.
President
St Mary's Georgia
Charleston S. Ca
New York Yard
Congress
Chesapeake
Constitution
Cren
United States
Boston Yard
New Orleans
Gosport Yard
Washington Yard
Macedonian
Hornet
Viper
Vixen
Wilmington N.C.
Gunboats Lake Ontario
Oneida
Enterprize
Argus
Portland, Maine

Leaving for Service on shipboard
The number required for service on shipboard
is paper A
Deficient

Decr 24. 1812

The number of Commission Masters Commandant
in the Navy is
of this number there are
at Baltimore
at New York Yard
at Newport R.I.

Leaving for Service on Shipboard
The Number required for Service on shipboard
is paper A
Deficient

This deficiency is at present supplied by Lieutenants commanding

Captains
For the 4 Ships of the Line & frigates
deficient pr paper A
So that the present number of Captains must be increased

This would raise all the Masters Commandant & two of the Lieutenants to Captains.
So that when the nine now nominated are nominated there will still be a deficit of 7 pursers.


Tightening the Blockade

Despite Admiral Warren’s requests from Halifax, reinforcements for the Royal Navy on the North American station were slow in arriving. At the same time the Admiralty had in mind a more rigorous blockade, particularly of the southern ports of the United States. Strengthening the blockade meant pulling ships from fleets in the English Channel, in the Mediterranean, and on blockade duty in the Bay of Biscay. The following document shows that British orders for blockade emanated from the highest level of government. Orders of this type brought the shock of war to Chesapeake Bay during 1813 and 1814 with a severity that surprised Washington, Alexandria, Baltimore and the surrounding area.

LORDS COMMISSIONERS OF THE ADMIRALTY TO

Admiral Sir John B. Warren, R.N.

Secret

Whereas the Earl Bathurst one of His Majesty’s Principal Secretaries of State, hath by his Letter of the 25th instant, signified to us, the Pleasure of His Royal Highness the Prince Regent that immediate Orders be given for establishing the most complete and vigorous Blockade, of the Ports and Harbours of the Bay of the Chesapeake and of the River Delaware: We do in addition to our Order to you of the 27th of last Month herewith send you a copy of Earl Bathurst’s abovementioned Letter & do hereby require and direct You to establish the most complete and vigorous Blockade of the Ports and Harbours of the Bay of the Chesapeake and of the River Delaware, and to maintain and en-
force the same according to the usages of War under the Regulations pointed out in his Lordships said Letter.

Given under our Hands 26th Decr 1812

Melville

W. Domett

Geo. J. Hope⁧

To

The Right Honble

Sir John Borlase Warren Bt & K.B.

Admiral of the Blue &c &c

Bermuda

Copy, UKLPR, Adm. 2/175 (Secret Orders and Letters), pp. 337–38.

1. Henry Bathurst, 3rd Earl Bathurst (1762–1834), secretary for war and the colonies in the cabinet of Lord Liverpool.


William Jones,
Future Secretary of the Navy

The singular success of U.S. Navy frigates in ship-to-ship combat was a tonic to the nation at a time of military defeats on the Canadian frontier, but all was not well within the Navy Department. Secretary of the Navy Paul Hamilton had performed as a satisfactory administrator during peacetime, but under the pressure of war, he was unable to keep pace with the work and had developed an addiction to alcohol.¹ While this was widely known at that time, it had been difficult for Hamilton's opponents to effect his removal because of the pending reelection of President Madison. Once Madison's reelection was certain, his party exerted pressure to remove both Secretary of War Eustis and Secretary of the Navy Hamilton. A prime candidate for the navy post was William Jones of Philadelphia, but it was not known whether he would accept the post. Congressman Jonathan Roberts of Pennsylvania wrote a persuasive letter on 28 December to convince Jones to accept the post if it were offered.


CONGRESSMAN JONATHAN ROBERTS TO WILLIAM JONES

Washington
Dec 28th 1812

My Dear Sir

I wish to have seen you as I came onto this place but the evening I spent in your City was unpropitious to that wish. It was that on which Mr Connelly was buried as well as that of your electoral election. I have forborne to intrude a letter on you hitherto as from the commencement of this session ours has been a state of suspense of oscillation between light hopes & strong apprehensions. It early suggested itself that under the strongest convictions of the public mind of the incompetency of the heads of the War & Navy Offices that it would be right to wait the issue of the election which was at least doubtful before plain dealing with the president should be commenced on those subjects. The fourth Wednesday in December came round & secured to us a Prest. in whose virtue we have unlimited confidence & whose feelings as a gentleman appear to be the only blemish in his character. With one accord our friends in both houses resolved in our places & out of our places to press the appointing powers to an exercise of its functions. This disposition had its foundation in the purest wishes for the public good no local or personal feeling had the slightest operation in it. Dr [William] Eustis gave ground at once & however he might have failed to fill his office with success he quit it with a magnanimity that has enabled him to [carry] away a very general respect. It is now impossible Mr [Paul] Hamilton [can] remain no point was ever more clearly ascertained than that he ought not to remain in office. I have more than once intimated to our revered friends Fox & Connelly that it was I believed the universal wish that in case the office became vacant you should take it. The reply I got from our friends to this part of my letters was not plain as to the probability of your willingness to lend your aid to your country's councils. When I learnt from Mr [Nathaniel] Macon...
yesterday that you had directly declind to be considered as elegible to appointment I felt a disposition to dispair for the fate of the ark of our public safety more than ever. On a little reflection a hope revivd that as your objections tho' weighty being all of a private character might be removed when a public call should [be] made upon you under a state of public suffering to be relieved only by your saving hand. We would in that case have decreed that your private affairs should be conducted at the public expense as was greatly done by the ancient Romans when they calld a citizen from his field to be their Dictator. Be assured sir the vacancy about to occur has not been effected thro' a hope of getting your services but from the impossibility of proceeding with Mr Hamilton. Get who we may we cannot get a man so little fit for his duty.

To induce you to enter the public service I am sure it is not necessary to tell you that the office which it is wished you should fill is popular & that it would be impossible but it must become more so the moment you enter it. The temper of your mind is of another character it would be stimulated by obstacles Here there can be no hazard of success while he must quit the field of the revenue unless the expenditure is brought within more reasonable bounds. I know not what to say to overcome your repugnance tho' weighty being all of a private character might be considered as would govern your conduct were

Great as he is yet one opposed to all oppressed by misfortunes the best may fall he must quit the field of the revenue unless the expenditure is brought within more reasonable bounds. I know not what to say to overcome your repugnance to enter the councils a great & intrepid mind must be still unresolved. This was the question of the licensed trade, so annoying to navy commanders, who thought Congress should prohibit such practices. Decatur’s seizure of several licenses found on board Macedonian, was of equal force compared to his capture of Macedonian. It was of equal importance to determine whether Macedonian had been of equal or greater force, Congress would have voted the whole of her value as prize money to the crew of United States. This, however, was not the case. Decatur’s ship was larger, heavier, carried more guns, and had a larger complement. The second document contains Secretary Hamilton’s thoughts on Macedonian’s evaluation, prior to the event.

Not long after his celebrated return in United States with the prize frigate Macedonian, Commodore Decatur wrote the secretary of the navy on a matter of previous concern (see pp. 326–27), but which was still unresolved. This was the question of the licensed trade, so annoying to navy commanders, who thought Congress should prohibit such practices. Decatur’s seizure of several licenses found on board Macedonian had become an embarrassment, with the owners importuning Hamilton. Cet who we may we cannot get a man so little fit for his duty.

To enter the public service I am sure it is not necessary to tell you that the office which it is wished you should fill is popular & that it would be impossible but it must become more so the moment you enter it. The temper of your mind is of another character it would be stimulated by obstacles Here there can be no hazard of success while there is enough to employ all your faculties. Our country to use our friend Foxes words “have indeed a treasure in Mr Gallitii” he wants support.

Great as he is yet one opposed to all oppressed by misfortunes the best may fall he must quit the field of the revenue unless the expenditure is brought within more reasonable bounds. I know not what to say to overcome your repugnance to enter the councils a great & intrepid mind must be still unresolved. This was the question of the licensed trade, so annoying to navy commanders, who thought Congress should prohibit such practices. Decatur’s seizure of several licenses found on board Macedonian had become an embarrassment, with the owners importuning Hamilton. Cet who we may we cannot get a man so little fit for his duty.

Let me obtest you my dear Sir to let no private considerations allow you to decline the public service if you are calld upon & I have no doubt but you will be calld upon. The Nation & the Navy point to you as the fittest man we have & what is to become of us if the fittest man will not come forward in a moment of public danger. I beg you to forgive my importunity my apology for it is that I am urged to use it from such considerations only as would govern your conduct were you to enter the cabinet a regard for the public good. With sincerest respect & friendship I am &c.

Jonathan Roberts

Capt W. Jones


1. Jonathan Roberts, a Republican from Pennsylvania, served as a member of the House of Representatives from Mar. 1811 to Feb. 1814, when he was elected to the United States Senate to fill a vacany caused by the resignation of Michael Leib. Roberts was reelected as a senator in 1815 and served in that capacity until 1821. For the political context in Pennsylvania, and Roberts’s and local Republicans John Connelly and Edward Fox’s support for the war, see Victor A. Sapio, Pennsylvania & the War of 1812 (Lexington, Ky., 1976); esp. pp. 152-54.

**Licenses and Rewards**

Not long after his celebrated return in United States with the prize frigate Macedonian, Commodore Decatur wrote the secretary of the navy on a matter of previous concern (see pp. 326–27), but which was still unresolved. This was the question of the licensed trade, so annoying to navy commanders, who thought Congress should prohibit such practices. Decatur’s seizure of several licenses found on board Macedonian had become an embarrassment, with the owners importuning him for their licenses.

At the time, however, the secretary of the navy was more concerned with how to compensate Decatur and his crew for their capture of Macedonian. It was of critical importance to determine whether Macedonian was of equal or inferior force compared to United States.
Sir,

On the 12th of October last, I had the honor to forward for your disposal a number of British licences addressed to citizens of the United States which I found on board the ship Mandann Baker Master from London bound to Philadelphia. These licences were thus diverted from the course of their original destination, under a belief I then had, that the Government of the United States would interdict the use of such protections to their citizens, by the time of the Mandanns arrival at Norfolk, where I intended to send her. I thought too, it might be of some service to have the Government apprised of the extent to which this trade seemed enlarging itself under the protection of the Enemy, and of the individuals concerned in it; especially as it could be done with so little inconvenience to the owners of the licences. These purchases having been answered & the trade not having been made illegal it is my wish that the licenses should be transmitted to their respective owners unless the Government think proper to dispose of them otherwise - in which case, I beg to be advised of it, that I may satisfy owners who are becoming importunate in their applications to me for them. With the highest respect [&c.]

Stephen Decatur


Commodore William Bainbridge sailed from Boston in company with U.S. sloop of war Hornet, commanded by Master Commandant James Lawrence. In accordance with Secretary Hamilton's cruising orders of 9 September, Bainbridge selected his own hunting grounds, sailing toward the Cape Verde Islands and then southwest to Brazil. On 13 December, Constitution and Hornet arrived off São Salvador (Bahia), Brazil, where they found the British sloop of war Bonne Macedonian. I assure You, sir, that it affords me real happiness to be the Medium of Conveying to You the expression of his feelings & sentiments upon this subject. Permit me also to congratulate You upon this brilliant achievement which adds another laurel to those already justly earned by You.

With respect to the prize, two points namely, her relative force & her value must be immediately ascertained. This can best be done by the appointment of referees on the part of the Department. I nominate Jacob Lewis Esqr now at New York as one of the referees. You will be pleased to appoint another & should the two so appointed disagree, they will choose a third whose decision shall be conclusive.

The objects to be particularly attended to by the referees, are 1. the relative force of the two frigates, the United States & the Macedonian including her rigging, apparel, armaments, & everything belonging to her - at such valuation the Navy Depmt will purchase her & put her in commission. Should She be considered equal in force to the United States, the Department will pay to the Captors the whole amount of her valuation - if of inferior force, one moiety only unless Congress should vote the whole to the captors.

Be pleased to apprise Capt Lewis of his appointment as a referee, & give to the referees a Copy of such parts of this letter as belongs to the Subject.

P. Hamilton


Constitution vs. Java

The President of the U.S. desires me to express to You & to Lt. [William H.] Allen through You, to the officers & crew, of the frigate U.S. his warmest thanks & highest approbation of Your & their conduct on the defeat & capture of his Britannic Majesty's frigate the
Citoyenne in port. While Hornet remained to blockade São Salvador, Constitution cruised southward along the coast. She was about thirty miles offshore on 29 December when H.M. frigate Java, 38-guns, hove in sight with a prize in company. In the following pages Commodore Bainbridge and Lieutenant Henry Chads describe the ensuing action as experienced from the decks of their respective vessels.

**JOURNAL OF COMMODORE WILLIAM BAINBRIDGE**

Extract from Commodore Bainbridge’s Journal Kept on board the U.S. Frigate Constitution

Tuesday 29th December 1812

At 9 AM, discovered two Strange Sails on the weather bow, at 10 AM, discovered the strange sails to be Ships, one of them stood in for the land, and the other steered off shore in a direction towards us. At 10.45, we tacked ship to the N & Wd & stood for the sail standing towards us. At 11.00, we tacked to the Sd & E d haul’d up the mainsail and took in the Royals. At 11.30 AM made the private signal for the day, which was not answered, & then set the mainsail and royals to draw the strange sail off from the neutral Coast.

Wednesday 30th December 1812, (Nautical Time) Commences with Clear weather and moderate breezes from E. N. E. Hoisted our Ensign and Pendant. At 15 minutes past meridian, The ship hoisted her colours, an English Ensign, - having a signal flying at her Main Red - Yellow - Red At 1.26 being sufficiently from the land, and finding the ship to be an English Frigate, took in the Main Sail and Royals, tacked Ship and stood for the enemy. At 1.50, determined to close with the Enemy, notwithstanding her raking, set the Fore sail & Luff’d up close to him. At 2.50, The Enemies Jib boom got foul of our Mizen Rigging At 3, The Head of the enemies Bowsprit & Jib boom shot away by us At 3.5, Shot away the enemies foremost by the board At 3.15, Shot away The enemies Main Top mast just above the Cap At 3.40, Shot away Gafft and Spunker boom At 3.55, Shot his mizen mast nearly by the board At 4.5, Having silenced the fire of the enemy completely and his colours in main Rigging being [down] Supposed he had Struck, Then hawl’d about the Courses to shoot ahead to repair our rigging, which was extremely cut, leaving the enemy a complete wreck, soon after discovered that The enemies flag was still flying hove to too repair Some of our damages.

At 4.20, The Enemies Main Mast went by the board. At 4.50, [Wore] ship and stood for the Enemy At 5.25, Got very close to the enemy in a very [effective] raking position, athwart his bows & was at the very instance of raking him, when he most prudently Struck his Flag. Had The Enemy Suffered the broadside to have raked him previously to striking, his additional loss must have been extremely great laying brought on afire from us of the whole broadside, on which he hoisted an English Ensign at the Peak, and another in his weather Main Rigging, besides his Pendant and then immediately returned our fire, which brought on a general action with round and grape.

The enemy Kept at a much greater distance than I wished, but Could not bring him to closer action without exposing ourselves to several rakes. - Considerable Manoeuvers were made by both Vessels to rake and avoid being raked.

The following Minutes Were Taken during the Action.

At 2.10. P.M., Commenced The Action within good grape and Canister distance. The enemy to windward (but much farther than I wished).

At 2.30. P.M., our wheel was shot entirely away
At 2.40., determined to close with the Enemy, notwithstanding her raking, set the Fore sail & Luff’d up close to him.

At 2.50, The Enemies Jib boom got foul of our Mizen Rigging At 3, The Head of the enemies Bowsprit & Jib boom shot away by us At 3.5, Shot away the enemies foremost by the board At 3.15, Shot away The enemies Main Top mast just above the Cap At 3.40, Shot away Gafft and Spunker boom At 3.55, Shot his mizen mast nearly by the board At 4.5, Having silenced the fire of the enemy completely and his colours in main Rigging being [down] Supposed he had Struck, Then hawl’d about the Courses to shoot ahead to repair our rigging, which was extremely cut, leaving the enemy a complete wreck, soon after discovered that The enemies flag was still flying hove to too repair Some of our damages.

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H.M.S. Java Engaged by U.S.S. Constitution off the Coast of Brazil, 29 December 1812
like a log upon the water, perfectly unmanageable, I could have continued raking him without being exposed to more than two of his Guns. (if even Them)

After The Enemy had struck, wore Ship and reefed the Top Sails, hoisted out one of the only two remaining boats we had left out of 8 & sent Lieut [George] Parker 1st of the Constitution on board to take possession of her, which was done about 6. P.M. The Action continued from the commencement to the end of the Fire. 1 H 55 m our sails and Rigging were shot very much, and some of our spars injured - had 9 men killed and 26 wounded. At 7 P.M. The boat returned from the Prize with Lieut. [Henry D.] Chads the 1st of the enemies Frigate (which I then learnt was the Java rated 38 - had 49 Guns mounted-- ) and Lieut Genl [Thomas] Hislop appointed to Command in the East Indies, Major Walker and Capt Wood, belonging to his Staff. Capt [Henry] Lambert of the Java was too dangerously wounded to be removed immediately.

The Cutter returned on board the Prize for Prisoners, and brought Capt [John] Marshall, Master & Commander of The British Navy, who was passenger on board, as also Several other Naval officers destined for ships in the East Indies. The Java had her whole number complete and nearly an hundred supernumeraries. The number she had on board at the commencement of the Action, The officers have not candour to say: from the different papers we collected, such as a muster book, Watch List and Quarter Bills, she must have had upwards of 400 souls, she had one more man stationed at each of her Guns on both Decks than what we had The Enemy had 85 wounded & 57 killed.

The Java was an important ship fitted out in the compleatest manner to carry out the Lieut. General & dispatches. She had Copper &c. on board for a 74 building at Bombay, and, I suspect a great many other valuables, but everything was blown up, except the officers baggage when we set her on fire on the 1st of January 1813 at 3 P.M. Nautical Time.

Copy, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 1, No. 8 1/2. Two amended versions of Bainbridge’s account of Java’s capture are in AF 4.

1. The second vessel was American merchant ship William, prize to Java, which ran in for the safety of neutral Sao Salvador only to fall prey to Hornet.
Sir

646 ATLANTIC THEATER

Lieutenant Henry D. Chads to
SECRETARY OF THE ADMIRALTY JOHN W. CROKER

Triplicate United States Frigate Constitution
off St. Salvador Decr 31st 1812

Sir,

It is with deep regret that I write you for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that His Majesty's Ship Java is no more, after sustaining an action on the 29th Inst for several hours with the American Frigate Constitution which resulted in the Capture and ultimate destruction of His Majesty's Ship. Captain Lambert being dangerously wounded in the height of the Action, the melancholy task of writing the detail devolves on me.

On the morning of the 29th Inst at 8 AM off St. Salvador (Coast of Brazil) the wind at NE. we perceived a strange sail, made all sail in chase and soon made her out to be a large Frigate; at noon prepared for action the chace not answering our private Signals and backing towards us under easy sail; when about four miles distant she made a signal and immediately tacked and made all sail away upon the wind. we soon found we had the advantage of her in sailing and came up with her fast when she hoisted American Colours. she then bore about three Points on our lee bow at 1:50 PM the Enemy shortened Sail upon which we bore down upon her, at 2:10 when about half a mile distant she opened her fire giving us her larboard broad side, which was not returned till we were close on her weather bow; both Ships now maneuvered to obtain advantageous positions; our opponent evidently avoiding close action and firing high to disable our masts in which he succeeded too well having shot away the head of our bowsprit with the Jibboom and our running rigging so much cut as to prevent our getting the Ship before the Wind, our helm being still perfect. the effort unfortunately proved ineffectual from the MAIN mast falling over the side from the heavy rolling of the Ship, which nearly covered the whole of our Starboard Guns. we still waited the attack of the Enemy, he now standing toward us for that purpose, on his coming nearly within hail of us & from his manoeuvre perceiving he intended a position a head where he could take us without a possibility of our returning a shot. I then consulted the Officers who agreed with myself that on having a great part of our Crew killed & wounded our Bowsprit and three masts gone, several guns useless, we should not be justified in waisting the lives of more of those remaining whom I hope their Lordships & Country will think have bravely defended His Majesty's Ship. Under these circumstances, however reluctantly at 5:50 our Colours were lowered from the Stump of the Mizen Mast and we were taken possession a little after 6. by the American Frigate Constitution commanded by Commodore Bainbridge who immediately after ascertaining the state of the Ship resolved on burning her which we had the satisfaction of seeing done as soon as the Wounded were removed. Annexed I send you a return of a killed and wounded and it is with pain I perceive it so numerous also a statement of the comparative force of the two ships when I hope their Lordships will not think the British Flag tarnished although success has not attended us. It would be presumptive in me to speak of Captain Lamberts merit, who, though still in danger from his wound we still entertain the greatest hopes of his being restored to the service & his Country. It is most gratifying to my feelings to notice the general gallantry of every Officer, Seaman & Marine on board. in justice to the Officers I beg leave to mention them individually, I can never speak too highly of the able exertions of Lieuts. [William A.] Herringham & Buchanan and also Mr. [Batty]
Robinson Master who was severely wounded and Lieuts Mercer and Davis [David Davies] of the Royal Marines the latter of whom was also severely wounded. To Capt Jno Marshall RN who was a passenger I am particularly obliged to for his exertions and advice throughout the action. To Lieutt Aplin who was on the Main Deck and Lieutt Sanders who commanded on the Forecastle, I also return my thanks. I cannot but notice the good conduct of the Mates, & Midshipmen, many of whom are killed & the greater part wounded. To Mr T. C. [Thomas Cooke] Jones Surgeon and his Assistants every praise is due for their unwearied assiduity in the care of the wounded. Lieutt General [Thomas] Hislop, Major Walker and Captain [J. T.] Wood of his Staff the latter of whom was severely wounded were solicitous to assist & remain on the Quarter Deck I cannot conclude this letter without expressing my grateful acknowledgement thus publicly for the generous treatment Captain Lambert and his Officers have experienced from our Gallant Enemy Commodore Bainbridge and his Officers. I have the honor to be &c.

D Chads, 1st Lieut of His Majestys late Ship Java

To John Wilson Croker Esquire Secretary Admiralty.

PS. The Constitution has also suffered severely, both in her rigging and men having her Fore and Mizen masts, main topmast, both main topsails, Spanker boom, Gaff & trysail mast badly shot, and the greatest part of the standing rigging very much damaged with ten men killed. The Commodore, 5 Lieuts and 46 men wounded four of whom are since dead.

Force of the two Ships

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Commodore Bainbridge and his Officers.

Admiral Warren Requests Reinforcements

On the same day that Constitution defeated Java off the Brazilian coast, Admiral Sir John B. Warren wrote from Bermuda to the Admiralty requesting additional ships and men. His principal complaints concerned the advantage which the large American frigates enjoyed over their British counterparts, the propensity of British seamen to join the American navy after being captured, and the damaging effects of American privateering in the Caribbean and northern waters.

Sir,

ADMIRAL SIR JOHN B. WARREN, R.N., TO SECRETARY OF THE ADMIRALTY JOHN W. CROKER

Bermuda 29th Decr 1812

In former letters I have already stated the diminution this squadron had undergone, prior to my arrival here, and the inadequacy of the Forces in the present state of the War, to counteract the Enterprises of the Enemy on the American Coast, and in the West Indies.

I consider it my duty to acquaint their Lordships, that the Ships of War belonging to the American Government, are of very large Class, and also denominated Frigates, are constructed to carry 24 Pounders on their Main Deck, with another complete Tier of Guns along the Quarter Deck, Gangway and Forecastle, and manned with from Four hundred and twenty, to upwards of Five hundred prime Seamen and Gunners, which from their superiority in sailing and the number of
Riflemen and Musquetry, give them a manifest advantage over any of our single Frigates, and as the American Cabinet from the recent captures, of the Guerriere, Macedonian, and Sloops of War have obtained a confidence, and are actively employed encreasong their Marine, and seducing our Seamen into their Service and converting them into American citizens by every art and means in their power, and as many possibly receive aid from some of the detached Squadrons escaping from France. I trust their Lordships will permit [me] to suggest, that the Squadron here would be much benefited by Six or Seven good Sailing, old Ships of the Line, such as the Canada, Captain, Bellona, Monarch cut down and reduced as Razies to carry their Lower Deck Guns and heavy caronades on their Quarter Deck, Gangways and Forecastle, manned with three hundred Seamen and Sixty [Marines] likewise, for the reasons I have given that twenty five or thirty Marines and some Seamen should be added to the complement of the Frigates on this Station.

I have endeavoured by keeping two Frigates and a Sloop of War together as divisions, to obviate as much as possible these difficulties, but the Force under my Orders is so extremely small, the extent of Coast very considerable, and with many Convoys to furnish, it is impracticable to cut off the Enemy's resources, or to repress the disorder and pillage which actually exists in a very alarming degree, and will continue, both on the Coast of British America, and in the West Indies, as will be seen by the Copies of Letters herewith enclosed from Sir George Beckwith and Governor Elliot upon that subject, as well as by the representations made to me by Rear Admiral Sir Francis Laforey Bart.¹

¹ The enclosure Beckwith to Warren, 22 Nov. 1812, is in UKLPR. Adm. 1/503, Part 1, pp. 105-109. The enclosure from Hugh Elliot has not been found. Beckwith was governor of Barbadoes, and Elliot of the Leeward Islands.

I have ordered the Junon, (Orpheus as soon as she is refitted at Halifax) and the Wanderer, to join Sir Francis Laforey at Barbadoes.

The Swarms of Privateers and Letters of Marque, their numbers now amounting to 600, and the Crews of several having landed at points of the Coast of Nova Scotia and in the Leeward Islands, and cut out of the Harbours some Vessels, render it too necessary immediately to send out a strong addition of Ships, as well as light Gun Brigs for the Nova Scotia District and Bay of Fundy and Gulf of St Lawrence, or the Trade must inevitably suffer, if not be, utterly ruined and destroyed—I have the honor [&c.]

John Borlase Warren