

The U.S.S. Constitution

A Virtual Tour

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Pirate of Panther
Bay and Tortuga Bay*
(Southern Yellow Pin
Publishing)

Cover Photo:
Castle Island (downloaded
from wikipedia)



USS Constitution

- Commissioned in 1797
- Oldest commissioned warship afloat
- A museum ship moored in Boston harbor
- One of the first ships commissioned by the U.S. Navy
- Classified as a “heavy frigate”—more heavily armed than typical frigates of the day



A ship built for action!

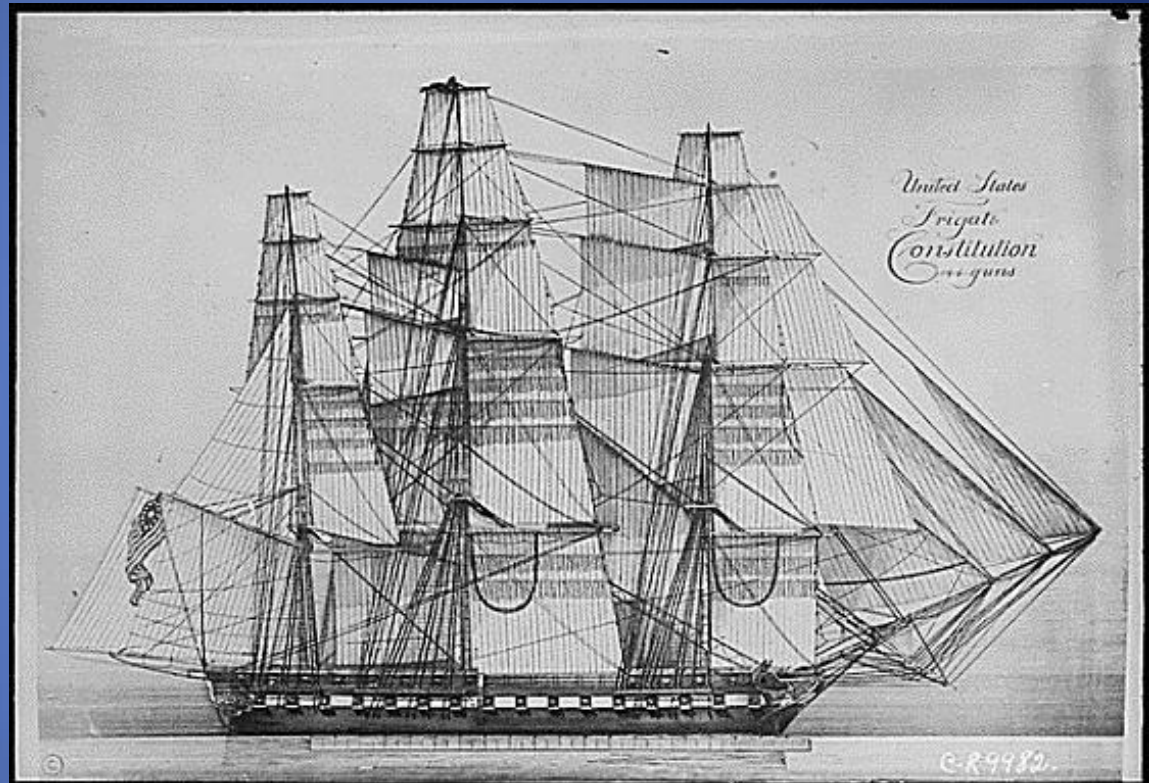


A view of the *USS Constitution's* gun deck
(below the main deck)

- The *USS Constitution* is one of the most storied warships in U.S. naval history
- Fighting the Barbary Pirates off North Africa
- War of 1812
 - Earned nickname “Old Ironsides” in battle against *HMS Guerriere*
- Mediterranean Squadron
- Decommissioned in 1855

The quick & dirty on the *USS Constitution*

- The Constitution had three masts, classifying it as a “ship” in the age of sail
- When fully deployed, the ship’s sails covered 42,710 square feet, equivalent to about one acre of land.
- The ship’s length was 175 feet at the waterline and 304 feet from the tip of the bowsprit in front to the tip of the spanker in the rear
- The main mast (middle mast) was 220 feet high



Source: U.S. Navy

Navigating an 18th century frigate

- Frigates were built for speed and maneuverability
- The *USS Constitution* (and its sister ships) needed at least 23 feet of water to navigate
- The frigate could travel at 13 knots, or about 15 mph
- She displaced 2,200 tons when she sailed



As a “heavy” frigate, the *USS Constitution* had guns on two decks—the main deck (or weather deck) and the official gun deck below. By the 18th century, however, most frigates no longer carried guns on the gun deck.

U.S. frigates were the envy of the world when they engaged their enemies

The Bow (front) of the *USS Constitution*



The Stern (rear) of the *USS Constitution*



During the War of 1812, British ships were ordered not to engage a U.S. warship of the same class unless they were supported by at least one other friendly ship.

The Constitution had a crew of 450, including 55 marines

The crew typically slung hammocks over the guns below deck when they were off watch



Hammocks were slung on the gun deck for the crew to rest. They normally would be between and over cannon (portals on the right in this picture).

Photos by SR Staley unless noted

Officers stayed in state rooms- very small cabins. But at least they had some privacy



The officer state rooms were typically in the stern. This picture is looking toward the aft (back of the ship). The officer's mess would be in the center of this space.

www.srstaley.com, www.pantherbay.com

The Constitution was classified as a “heavy frigate” because it carried up to 50 guns

30 24-pound “long guns” on the gun deck



Long guns were used for distance and accuracy.

20 32-pound carronades on the main deck



Carronades were powerful guns used for close quarters combat

Flying Tops (Crow's Nest)

- The *USS Constitution* carried 55 marines
- Marines would often perform the role of sniper from the “flying tops,” also known as a crow’s nest
- Marines would also board ships during an attack and defend against boarders from attacking ships



Frigate vs. Brigantine

USS Constitution

3 masts, 300 feet, 50 guns, 450 crew



USS Niagara

2 masts, 120 feet, 23 guns, 150 crew



In *Tortuga Bay*, Isabella is captaining a brig and is chased into Port-au-Prince by a Spanish frigate (albeit smaller than the *Constitution*).

Learn more about the *USS Constitution* and the role frigates played in U.S. Navy history

<http://www.usconstitutionmuseum.org>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Constitution

Ronald Utt, *Ships of Oak, Guns of Iron: The War of 1812 and the Forging of the American Navy* (Regnery History)

