

Gun Deck

- **Capstan**

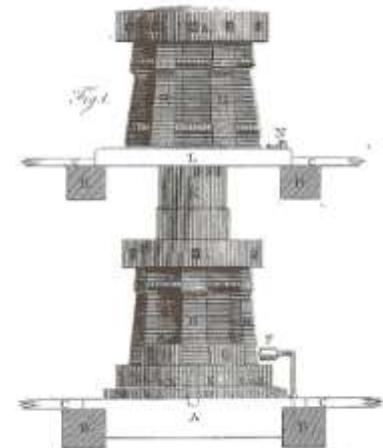
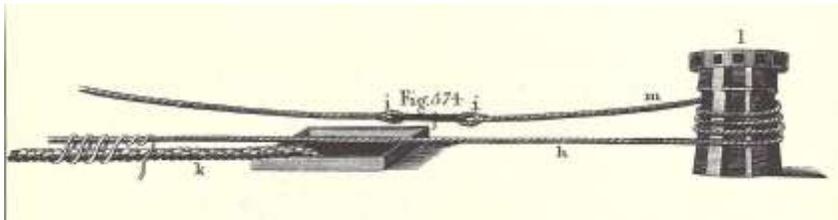
The simple, man-powered ‘winch’ used to raise the anchor; spar and gun deck capstans are linked by a vertical shaft & they turn together. Spar deck capstan could be used to lift other heavy weights, but would NOT be used to hoist the sails. The present *Constitution* capstans (right) date from the mid-to-late 19th century & are intended for anchor chain – note the



sprockets at the base of the capstan for a chain messenger that would, with nippers, be used to bring in the “chain cable” or anchor chain.

Constitution received chain cable in 1821; it could have

been used as the chain messenger with the 21” hemp cable or it could have been the first time chain was used for holding the anchors.



National Cruise, 1931-34, USN photo (top); Capstan, anchor cable, messenger, & nippers (above), Lever's *Young Sea Officer's Sheet Anchor* (1819); Early 19th century capstan (right), *Falconer's ...Dictionary of the Marine* (1815); Photos, NHHC Detachment Boston, 2010.

