

The Daybook

Volume 7 Issue 1

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About The Daybook

The Daybook is an authorized publication of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum (HRNM). Its contents do not necessarily reflect the official view of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Navy, or the U.S. Marine Corps and do not imply endorsement thereof. Book reviews are solely the opinion of the reviewer.

The HRNM is operated and funded by Commander, Navy Region, Mid-Atlantic. The museum is dedicated to the study of 225 years of naval history in the Hampton Roads region. It is also responsible for the historic interpretation of the battleship *Wisconsin*.

The museum is open daily. Call for information on *Wisconsin*'s planned hours of operations. Admission to the museum is free. *The Daybook*'s purpose is to educate and inform readers on historical topics and museum related events. It is written by the staff and volunteers of the museum.

Questions or comments can be directed to the Hampton Roads Naval Museum editor. *The Daybook* can be reached at 757-322-2993, by fax at 757-445-1867, e-mail at gbcalhoun@nsn.cmar.navy.mil, or write *The Daybook*, Hampton Roads Naval Museum, One Waterside Drive, Suite 248, Norfolk, VA 23510-1607. The museum can be found on the World Wide Web at <http://www.hrnm.navy.mil>.



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All About the Money: Declaring Victory Over the French

Cover Photograph: There have been many military celebrations in this region. Of no less importance was one of the very first ones. The highlight of the 1799 naval war with France was the capture of the French frigate *L'Insurgente* by the American frigate *Constellation*. Shown here in this 1799 painting by E. Savage, *Constellation* chases down the French warship and prepares to do battle. Once captured, *L'Insurgente* sailed into Hampton Roads under an American prize crew where local citizens received her with grand praise. The Gosport Navy Yard then refitted the prize and recommissioned her for action under the American flag.

A Museum For the Millenium

The Director's Column

by Becky Poulliot

The Hampton Roads Naval Museum staff is undertaking several ambitious projects to place us in the vanguard of the hands-on educational movement. By the time you receive this issue of *The Daybook*, the *Wisconsin's* December 7th homecoming ceremony will be a fond memory. But the battleship's grand opening to the public is set for April 16, 2001, and we have to be ready to greet and teach an estimated 250,000 visitors per year. We are still seeking volunteer battleship tour guides and will train them during January-March 2001. Two training options are available: a two week course on-site (26, 28 February; 5, 7 March 2001); or a take-home course on video. All docents will give practice tours onboard the ship to other volunteers before going before the public. A tour guide can also specialize in a specific section or station of the ship at first, before conducting an entire tour.

One specific museum audience that we continue to focus on is school age children

are adding a new school program. "Silent Hunters: U.S. Navy Submarines in World War II" will allow students to become "members" of a U.S. Navy sub crew. In addition to learning about the historical significance of U.S. Navy submarines, the students will learn physical science principles related to technology, light, sound and motion.

Getting the word out is just as important as conducting the training. Through the efforts of Foundation Board Member William J. Jonak, Jr. working with the museum, a \$5,000 grant has been obtained from The Natural Sciences Fund (formerly the Society of Sciences) to support the museum's ongoing education program. The grant will fund the museum's planned "Teacher Awareness Program," which will focus on orienting the public school systems of Norfolk, Portsmouth, Virginia Beach, and Chesapeake to the extensive, curriculum-based, K through 12, educational opportunities afforded by the museum. The trustees of the local, Natural Sciences Fund responsible for directing this significant grant to the museum are M. Lee Payne, Walter P. Conrad, Jr., James E. Prince, Jr., and Jonak.

I end this column by introducing new additions to our staff: **Kathryn Holmgaard** and **Tom Dandes**. Kathryn, a recent graduate from William and Mary, is our Special Events Coordinator. She plans all our luncheon lectures and there are some great ones coming in 2001. Tom, our volunteer coordinator, endured a baptism by fire recently by arriving on the first day



Rudy Boesch of the CBS television show "Survivor" recently paid a visit. He filmed a public service announcement for us as a part of the Virginia Association of Museum's "Museums for the Millenium" program. Rudy is a retired master chief of 45 years and a resident of Virginia Beach. (HRNM photo)

of *Wisconsin* docent training. He handles all volunteer applications and volunteer work schedules.

I have included a photograph here illustrating our latest endeavor. Virginia Beach resident and television celebrity **Rudy Boesch** really needs no introduction. He graciously agreed to do a public service announcement for the Hampton Roads Naval Museum and the Virginia Association of Museums to celebrate "Museums in the Millennium." Please watch for this commercial advertising for us to air beginning in January 2001.

Becky



The Hampton Roads Naval Historical Foundation and the museum recently accepted \$5000 from the Natural Sciences Fund for an education outreach program. Pictured from left to right are president of the HRNHF, Sam Barron Segar, William J. Jonak, a director of the HRNHF and the Natural Sciences Fund, Becky Poulliot, and Major Gen. Dennis Murphy, executive director of the HRNHF. (Photo by Gordon Calhoun)

from grades 4-6. The State's Standards of Learning for these grades emphasize American history and allow for field trips to museums. Through the generous support of the Centennial of the U.S. Navy Submarine Force National Commemorative Committee, this year we

Reminder!

The Hampton Roads Naval Museum will be **CLOSED** between January 2, 2001 through March 30 to prepare exhibits for the battleship *Wisconsin*.



Jack From the Locally-Based Battleship USS *Maine* Back on Display

After nine months of detailed conservation work, one of the museum's most priceless artifacts is back on display. The gigantic canvas jack from the locally-based battleship USS *Maine* (BB-2/c) recently returned from textile conservators and is currently on permanent exhibit in the museum's Spanish-American War gallery, behind the 1884 builder's model of the warship. This flag flew at the bow of the battleship the night she exploded in Havana, Cuba.

The late Everett Conwell of Chesapeake, VA gave the flag to the museum in 1998. He received the flag from his grandfather, James B. Dean, who happened to be in Havana during the investigation of the explosion.

It is often asked how we can be sure this is the actual flag. In addition to the donor's oral history, there are several important clues that support its claimed provenance. First, it is large and made of canvas and not

a modern day material. Second, it has 43 stars which is the correct number of states for 1898. Finally, and most importantly, on the back of the flag is written: "Union Jack No. 3, Dec. 1892, New York Navy Yard." The New York Navy Yard constructed *Maine* and launched her in 1892. 



The jack of the locally based USS Maine (BB-2/c) is back on display after nine months of work by textile conservators. At left is a painting of the battleship at anchor in Havana the day before she exploded. Notice the jack flying at the bow of the ship. (Photo of jack by Gordon Calhoun; Maine painting, HRNM photo of an 1898 print by Henry Reuterdahl)

The Museum's New Architectural History Program

One of the great secrets of Hampton Roads Naval history is its rich architectural material culture. Located on local Navy facilities are everything from the 17th century Kiskiack House of Yorktown Naval Weapons Station to the second oldest baseball field (McClure Field) in America.

In partnership with the Commander, Navy Region, Mid-Atlantic and the Navy Regional Historic Preservation Office, HRNM has begun a new education program which will focus on the history and architectural heritage of the Navy's buildings in the Hampton Roads region. This joint effort follows guidelines and requirements as set forth in the National Historic Preservation Act for treatment of the historic properties.

Specifically, the program uses Web based materials, CD-ROMs, and on-site

school instructional to form a comprehensive education package, which will be available to all public schools and the general public. The public school related materials are also being structured to conform to current Virginia Standards of Learning requirements so that they will be suitable for teachers to use in classrooms on a regular basis.

The program is highlighted at the museum's web site (www.hrnnavy.mil). After entering the museum, clicking on the "Architectural Heritage Program" button to take you to the new site. This new web site addition

1907 drawing of the west wing of building N-23

contains introduction material with goals and objectives, a list of historic preservation links, current preservation news items and historic Navy building pictures with descriptions. The "Quarterly Events" section also has a ready to use lesson plan for public school teachers, along with a featured picture section.

For more information about this program, please contact: Michael V. Taylor, HRNM, One Waterside Drive, Suite 248, Norfolk, Virginia 23510-1607, 757-445-8574, or send an e-mail to mvtaylor@nsn.cmar.navy.mil. 

Sacred Everyday Items

Wisconsin Veterans Donate Artifacts for Exhibits

The heart of any museum exhibit is its artifacts. They allow the visitor to see history in front of them and make a connection with it. Without artifacts, an exhibit is nothing more than a

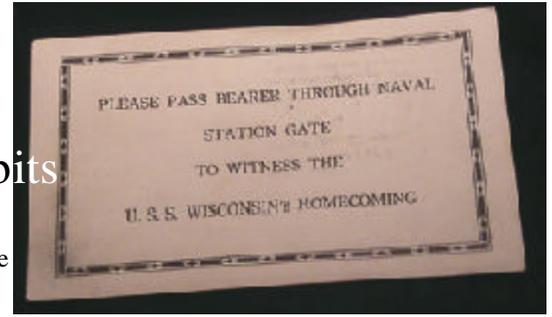
shortened version of a book that could be found any store. Artifacts allow historians to know a personal side of their subject. These artifacts represent the men who made *Wisconsin* into a living, breathing entity and therefore, are priceless. Shown here are some of them that will be on display in the new exhibits. We are very appreciative of the vets for donating these items so that others may know their experiences.

In terms of straight, monetary value, these items may not fetch much. However, in many ways one can not place a price tag on items like a photograph of one of *Wisconsin's* young enlisted sailors and his mother or a battle streamer that flew over the ship during World War II. These artifacts represent the men who made *Wisconsin* into a living, breathing entity and therefore, are priceless. Shown here are some of them that will be on display in the new exhibits. We are very appreciative of the vets for donating these items so that others may know their experiences.

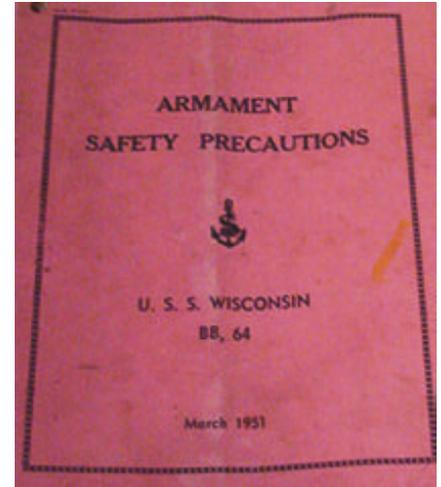


The Hampton Roads Naval Museum and Nauticus are extremely fortunate that several veterans of USS *Wisconsin* have donated personal possessions of theirs that relate to the ship. Pieces range from common items such as pea coats and

jumpers to more unusual items like lice powder. The collection includes photographs, flathats, basketball uniforms, guidebooks, ship's plans, midshipman cruise information books, and sea bags.



Pass donated by Russell Texter



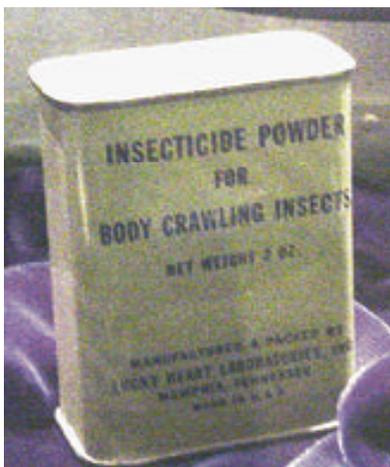
Safety manual donated by Ronald Reeves



Seabag donated by John M. Fox



Jersey donated by Roger Kliesen



Can of anti-lice powder donated by Howard Lynn



Section badge donated by John A. Costello



Seabag donated by William R. Beeker



Suitcase, uniform, and flathat donated by Howard Lynn. "Crossing the Line" book donated by William K. Henson.

Learn more about the future plans of the battleship *Wisconsin* at <http://www.hrnm.navy.mil/wisconsin.html>



Signal flags donated by Frederick C. Mauritsen

The Armor of Achilles: Composition of American Battleship Armor Plate Steel

The last issue of *The Daybook* focused on the design and construction of *Wisconsin* and her sister *Iowa*-class battleships. The article reported that all battleships used a nickel-steel for armor plating, but that the *Iowa*-class battleship benefited from advances in steel forging technology. Specifically, steel mills manufactured



higher quality steel through the use of higher temperature forges.

Since that article was written, new information has come to light. When the museum posed the question about armor plate steel to the Internet, steel mill historians and retired steel mill workers from across the nation took a great interest in finding out more for us.

It turns out that Class "A" armor plate steel, the kind used on a portion of the *Iowa*-class' armor belt, was made up of much more than nickel and iron. Rather, in addition to using higher temperature forges, metallurgists created a complex series of elements to create an impressive alloy.

Specifically, they came up with the following composition:

- .15% Carbon
- .35% Manganese
- .02% Phosphorus
- .02% Sulfur (no more than .02%, see below)
- .25% Silicon
- 2.60% Nickel
- 1.40% Chrome
- .40% Molybdenum
- 94.81% Iron

Instead of "nickel-steel," we really should call *Wisconsin's* armor carbon-manganese-phosphorus-sulfur-silicon-nickel-chrome-molybdenum (whew!) steel. Sulfur was a by-product of raw materials and an impurity. Metallurgists set a limit of .02% of sulphur in the final product. The resulting alloy is some of the hardest known metal ever manufactured. This type of steel is still turned out today under the names HY-80 and HY-100. However, it is used in much different products such as pressurized gas bottles and in hulls of modern submarines.

U.S. Steel, Bethlehem Steel, and Lukens Steel manufactured both the Class "A" and Class "B"-armor used on *Wisconsin*.

The citizens of Hampton Roads opened their papers on 2 March 1799 to “glorious news”. The first reports had come in of a signal naval victory in the Quasi-War with France. The United States frigate *Constellation*, under the command of Commodore Thomas Truxtun had defeated the French frigate *L’Insurgente* in a battle off the island of Nevis in the West Indies. Although in those pre-electronic days the news was almost a month old, it thrilled the readers. Both the *Constellation* and her captain were well-known to the people of Norfolk and Portsmouth. More than a hundred of her crew had been recruited locally, and some of her officers such as Lieutenant Wills Cowper were Virginia-born. She had been a frequent visitor to the region during periods of refitting. The pride felt by the people of Hampton Roads was enormous.

The Sea Fight

Constellation had departed the Chesapeake on New Year’s Eve in company

Truxtun proceeded on his own patrols in *Constellation*.

At about noon on 9 February a few leagues off the island of Nevis, lookouts sighted a ship to the west. Closing, Truxtun took her to be a man of war. He showed the agreed upon signal of the day, but the stranger failed to give a correct answer. *Constellation* beat to quarters and began the chase. About 2 o’clock in the afternoon a squall passed through the area. Truxtun’s seamen eased their lines in time to avoid damage, but the main topmast of the other ship was seen to go overboard. This allowed the Americans to gain ground rapidly. At a quarter past three, *Constellation* was close on the quarter of what Truxtun was now sure was a French frigate. At 100 yards range, Truxtun opened the engagement with a starboard broadside, beginning a fight that would last about 75 minutes.

The French ship brought her stern through the wind in a seeming attempt to close for boarding. With her manpower

into their sights. By half past four, the French captain, Michel Pierre Barreaut, realized the futility of continuing the increasingly uneven fight and struck his flag.

Truxtun sent his first lieutenant, John Rodgers, across to formally accept the surrender of what he now learned was the French national frigate, *L’Insurgente*. Rodgers wrote home a few days later to describe what he had seen. “I must confess the most gratifying sight my eyes ever beheld was seventy French pirates (you know I have just cause to call them such) wallowing in their gore, twenty-nine of whom were killed and forty one wounded.” The French had fired high during the battle in an attempt to disable the Americans’ sails



“Glorious News!!” Using a typeface that would be the equivalent of reporting the bombing of Pearl Harbor by a 20th century newspaper, the Norfolk Herald reported on March 2, 1799 to local readers about the capture of the French frigate *L’Insurgente*.

Glorious News

Capture and Career of the frigate *Insurgent*

by Joe Mosier

with the brig *Richmond* and four merchant ships. Twelve days later in the vicinity of Antigua, Truxtun dispatched the brig and continued down the chain of islands toward the American base at Basseterre Roads off the island of St. Kitts. For three weeks, Truxtun worked to assign his subordinate vessels to the necessary but unglamorous task of convoying merchant ships through areas where French privateers were active. Secure that his system was well understood,

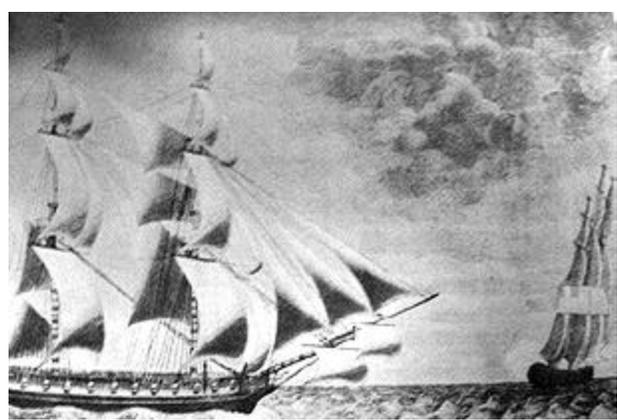
advantage (about 400 to 250) it might prove a winning strategy. *Constellation* pulled ahead, crossing her bows and raking the frigate with another crippling broadside. The French had now lost their mizzen topmast, and their sails and rigging were terribly cut up. Truxtun used his superior maneuverability to range repeatedly across the enemy’s bow and stern. With each crossing, the cannons on *Constellation*’s gun deck fired in turn as the French passed

and rigging. While much of *Constellation*’s rigging was damaged, this resulted in little injury to her crew. Injuries were to be found only among the men in the tops.

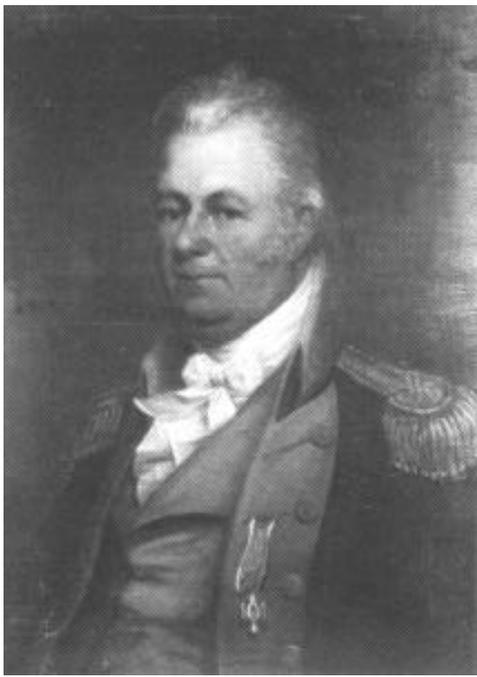
Captain Barreaut professed astonishment that the fight had occurred between the ships of two nations that were formally at peace. As Truxtun later wrote Navy Secretary Benjamin Stoddert; “The French captain tells me, I have caused a war the France. If so I am glad of it, for I detest things being done by halves.”

The difficulty now was in getting both *Constellation* and her prize into port for

Insurgent continued on page 7



Constellation chases after L’Insurgente. When asked why he attacked the French frigate, Truxtun only remarked “The French captain tells me, I have caused a war the France. If so I am glad of it, for I detest things being done by halves.” (HRNM photo of a 1799 engraving by E. Savage)



Possessing of one of the most dominating personalities in U.S. Naval history, Commodore Thomas Truxtun was the commanding officer of Constellation and the senior officer in the Caribbean at the time of the battle with L'Insurgente. (Naval Historical Center photo of an 1817 painting by Bass Otis)

repairs. While the damage was nowhere near as heavy as that to *L'Insurgente*, Truxtun's ship found it difficult to sail to windward. It took both ships nearly three days to make the twenty or so miles to the safety of Basseterre Roads. Once there, Truxtun basked in the praise lavished on him by the island's British residents. He wrote Stoddert, "It is impossible for me to state the joy demonstrated by the inhabitants on this occasion." The commodore placed John Rodgers in charge of the repair of *L'Insurgente*. In doing so he warned Rodgers to spend as little as possible on her refit.

Until a court condemned the prize, no money would pass into her captors' hands. Moreover, "when the United States values the ship, we shall have to pay perhaps our proportion of her outfit." It took a month of hard work before Rodgers had the prize in a state of reasonable readiness to go to sea. A crew of about 124 seamen had been drafted for *Constellation* and other ships in Truxtun's squadron to man her. With the one-year enlistments of his crew running out, Truxtun decided in late April to take both ships back to Norfolk.

The Court Fight

On 24 May 1799, the *Norfolk Herald* reported: "Yesterday arrived in Hampton

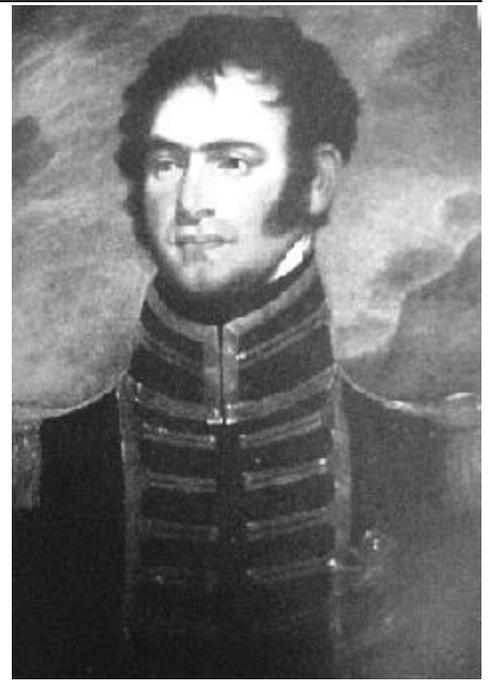
Roads the U.S. Frigate *Constellation*, Commodore Truxtun and the *Insurgente*, Lieutenant Rogers [sic]. They left St. Kitts on the 7th instant." Celebrations were quick to follow. That evening the 54th Regiment of the Virginia Militia held a parade at Lindsay's Gardens. An "elegant dinner" followed where toasts were offered to General Washington, President Adams, the Navy, and (after he was modestly allowed to leave the room) to Commodore Truxtun himself.

Just as quickly began the effort of judging the prize money due to *Constellation*'s crew. By the rule of the day, once a prize was condemned, her value was set by the courts. To this end Naval Agent William Pennock brought together a commission of six men to determine the value of *L'Insurgente* for the District Court which would hear the condemnation trial. Pennock was an old friend of Truxtun. One writer claims that Pennock had served as the Commodore's second lieutenant in the privateer *Mars* during the Revolution. The commission he assigned all appeared to have been favorable to Truxtun as well. It consisted of Naval Constructor Josiah Fox (builder of the ill-fated *Chesapeake*), Norfolk merchants John Granbery and Moses Myers, sea captain and merchant John Bramble, shipbuilder and chandler Nicholas Shacklock and David Pierce. Granbery, Myers, and Bramble were all strong Navy supporters who had been involved in the building of the subscription brig *Richmond*.

Myers had frequently played host to Truxtun at his home and would later be his

"I must confess the most gratifying sight my eyes ever beheld was seventy French pirates (you know I have just cause to call them such) wallowing in their gore, twenty-nine of whom were killed and forty one wounded." -An assessment of the battle from Lt. (and future commodore) John Rodgers

partner in the purchase of District of Columbia land from Navy Secretary Stoddert. Whatever their motivations, the six were generous in their calculations. A certificate of value for *L'Insurgente* dated 27 May 1799 still exists in the Josiah Fox Papers at Peabody Essex Museum in Salem,



Truxtun's protégé was one Lt. John Rodgers. Soon to be a iron fisted commodore in his own right, Rodgers took command of L'Insurgente's prize crew and brought the frigate back to Hampton Roads. (HRNM photo of an 1803 painting)

Massachusetts. Fox put her value at \$116,400; Granbery - \$120,000; Myers - \$136,000; Pierce - \$110,000, Bramble \$120,000 and Shacklock - \$118,000. The average of \$120,066 was accepted by the District Court when *L'Insurgente* was later condemned.

By law the resulting monetary reward was to be divided by strict standards. If the prize ship was held to be inferior in size and power to her captor, the prize money was split evenly between her crew and the Federal government. If, however, the prize was judged superior, the winning crew kept all the money. In making its decision the court was again generous to Truxtun.

Official French documents put *L'Insurgente* at 40 guns; 26 twelve-pounders, 10 six-pounders and 4 thirty-six pound carronades. This gave the frigate a nominal gun weight (the total weight of shot that could be fired without reloading) of 516

Insurgent continued on page 8



Constellation caught up with L'Insurgente and opened the action on the afternoon of February 6, 1799. Within 75 minutes, L'Insurgente struck her colors and surrendered. The young U.S. Navy now had its first big prize. (Naval Historical Center)

Insurgent continued from page 7

pounds. The actual weight would have been slightly higher as the French “pound” was about 1/12 greater than the English measure used by the U.S. Navy. *Constellation* was officially rated as a 38-gun frigate. At the time of her battle with *L'Insurgente*, however, she actually mounted many more cannon.

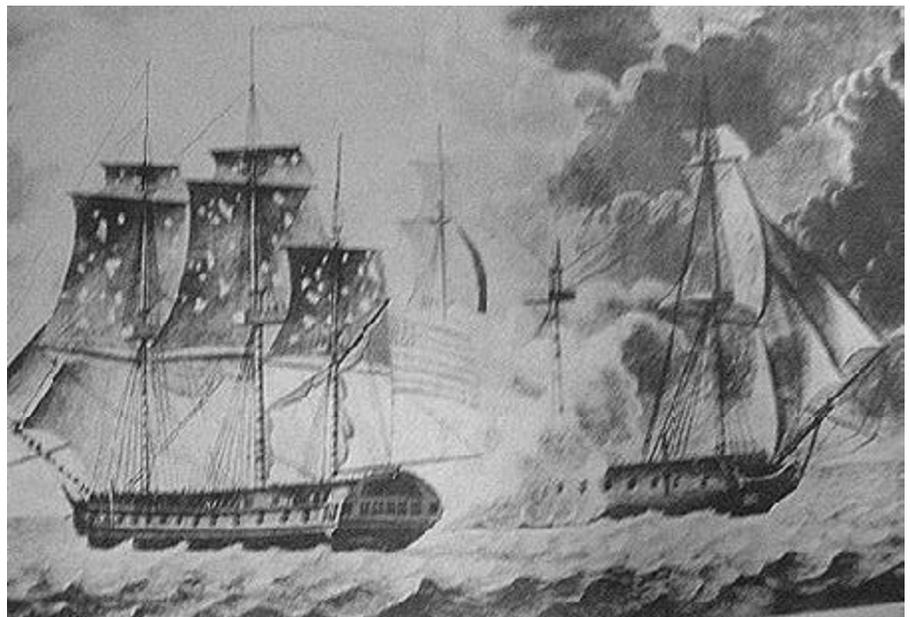
Spencer Tucker in his fine work *Arming the Fleet* states: “During the Quasi-War with France, when she captured the *Insurgente*, the American frigate had twenty-eight short 24-pounders manufactured by Cecil Furnace on her main deck and twenty 12-pounder carronades on the quarterdeck and forecastle.” This gave her a gun weight of 912 pounds, an advantage of at least 60%. Truxtun’s first lieutenant, John Rodgers, was questioned by the court on the relative strength of the two vessels. He gave a minimalist answer citing only the official ratings of the frigates, 40 guns versus 38. No one pressed him further, and the entirety of the \$120,000 prize money was awarded to Truxtun and his crew.

Navy Secretary Benjamin Stoddert

would have none of it. He received from Truxtun a copy of the court decree condemning *L'Insurgente* and passing ownership of her to her captors. On 2 July,

Stoddert wrote the commodore: “The decree is an extraordinary one - not

Insurgent continued on page 9



Once the ship to ship action was over, the fighting did not die down. A Norfolk prize court concluded that *L'Insurgente* possessed superior firepower to his ship, thus making Truxtun, and his crew eligible for *L'Insurgente*'s full prize amount. (Naval Historical Center photo of an 1800 painting by E. Savage)

Insurgent continued from page 8

agreeable to law in directing the vessel to be delivered to the captors - not agreeable to fact, in determining her force to be superior to that of the *Constellation*. I am not however disposed to appeal this decree. But anxious as I am on every occasion to do at least full justice to the commanders, officers and seamen of our navy, I cannot but feel that it is my duty to do justice to the public also....The sum fixed on by the gentlemen at Norfolk is far beyond her value in my opinion. She is I presume seven or nearly seven years old [she was built at L'Orient in 1791] - a rough built vessel, much the worse for wear...Upon a view of all circumstances, and as you will have to wait a little while at New York, I think it will be best for you to come on to the seat of government on this business." A week later Stoddert was still stronger in his refusal to accept the court's decree. He wrote again to Truxtun. Calling the court's finding on the comparative force of the two frigates erroneous, he warned, "[I]t is my opinion that the superior court on an appeal, would reverse the decree. I wish to avoid the disagreeable circumstance of a contest between the United States, and the officers and seamen in the public service. I offer you and the officers and seamen of the *Constellation* interested in the *Insurgente*, eighty four thousand five hundred dollars, for all your claim to that ship...I cannot exceed it. If this offer should not be agreeable, then I propose, that the ship shall be valued by competent persons, indifferently chosen - and I will immediately pay into the hands of your agent, one half the amount of that valuation."

Truxtun knew it was an offer he could not refuse. While he agreed to the price of \$84,500, Truxtun did his best to keep as much of his share as possible. He went so far as to refuse any commission to William Pennock, the naval agent who had done so much to help Truxtun through the condemnation proceedings. He wrote Pennock: "I sent you the condemnation of *L'Insurgente* this morning. Not one dollar of commission will you or any one else receive on the prize at Norfolk. You must be satisfied with your commission on her outfit as a U.S. ship. You are capital fellows for commissions at Norfolk; let me ask you, if you don't dream of

commissions every night. I should have no objections to a reasonable commission being paid on a merchant vessel I might send in, but no commission, no, no, on *L'Insurgente*." With that rather petulant outburst, the French frigate passed into the ownership of the United States Navy.

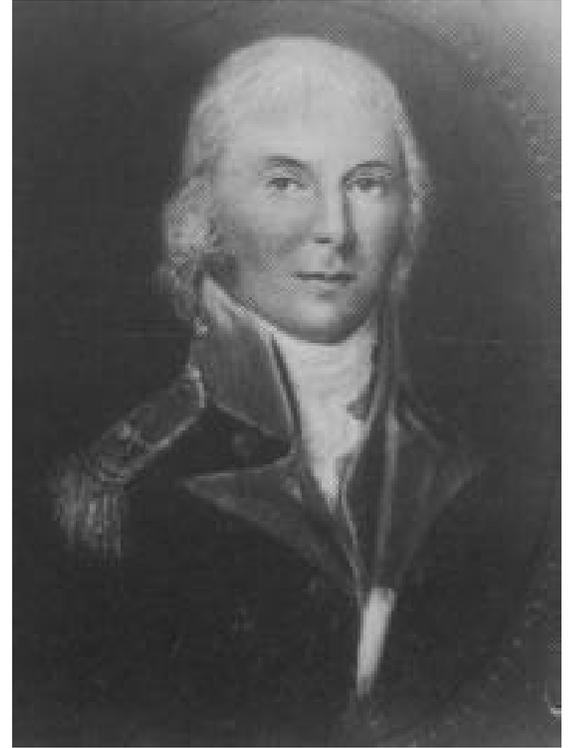
The Brief Career of U.S.S. *Insurgent*

By mid-June of 1799, Secretary Stoddert had already decided on a new commanding officer for *Insurgent*. He chose Captain Alexander Murray, former commander of the 20-gun converted merchantman *Montezuma*. Murray had served during the Revolutionary War as an army captain, a navy lieutenant, and privateer commander. He had, by his own count, fought in thirteen battles on land or at sea during that conflict. Stoddert considered him "a man of good temper, good sense, honor, and bravery." Good sense left him disgruntled by what he found when he took command in July. "I am very well pleased with the *Insurgent*," he wrote Stoddert. "She is a fine commodious frigate, but am not perfectly satisfied with Captain Truxtun's arrangements, with regard to the masts, bowsprit and

"You must be satisfied with your commission on her outfit as a U.S. ship. Not one dollar of commission will you or any one else receive on the prize at Norfolk... let me ask you, if you don't dream of commissions every night... but no commission, no, no, on L'Insurgente."
-Truxtun to Norfolk Naval agent William Pennock

bottom..." Why hadn't Truxtun had them repaired? The answer probably lay in Truxtun's desire to assure the greatest possible prize money for himself and his crew.

By the end of July, Stoddert sent Murray his operational plan for *Insurgent*. The frigate was to be "a cruising vessel...to be stationed at no particular place, nor subject to the command of any officer" senior to Murray. It was essential *carte blanche* to



Insurgent's first American commander was Capt. Alexander Murray. Described as "a status snob" by naval historian Christopher McKee, Murray spent large sums of money to make sure he was the best dressed man in the Navy. Despite his personality flaws, Murray was an intelligent officer, and a passionate political advocate for the early Navy. (HRNM photo of a c. 1800 painting by James Pearl)

patrol where the commanding officer wished. The only firm requirement was to be off the island of Cayenne about 20 September 1799. Given this leeway, Murray decided to cruise off Europe. *Insurgent* left

the Chesapeake on 14 August. She made good time, arriving off the Azores two weeks later and continued on to Lisbon which she reached on 13 September. It had been a frustrating cruise for Murray. For four weeks, he had pursued every sail in sight, but had seen not a single French vessel. At Lisbon he refilled water casks and took on fresh provisions. *Insurgent* sailed four days later in company with HMS *Phaeton* for Gibraltar.

Insurgent continued on page 14

Book Reviews

Broadsides: The Age of Fighting Sails, 1775-1815

by Nathan Miller

Reviewed by CWO4 Allen M. Mordica

A more accurate subtitle for this book might be, *The Zenith of the Age of Fighting Sail*. The “Age of Fighting Sail” is popularly accepted as beginning by 1588 with the actions between Queen Elizabeth’s fleet and the Spanish Armada in the English Channel. While Mr. Miller does touch briefly on some of those foundations, a bit more emphasis on 17th century naval events would have made his story much more edifying. The war between the English and Dutch during that time established the

Nathan Miller. *Broadsides: The Age of Fighting Sails, 1775-1815*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000. 400 pages. \$30.00

foundation for many of the traditions, technological advances, policies and naval regulations that profoundly influenced the later American War of Independence and the Napoleonic Wars at sea. The reasons for the issuance of the “Fighting Instructions” and circumstances surrounding the execution of Admiral John Byng on his own quarterdeck help explain the causes for the oppressively strict adherence to the line-ahead battle formation in the British navy.

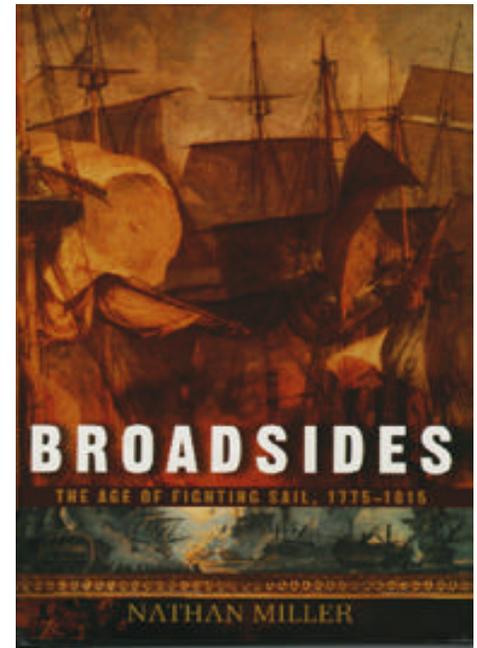
Miller also moors his narrative tightly to the life of Horatio Nelson in many places. He often refers to historical events far removed from England and to their effect on the life and career of Nelson, or conversely, of his effect upon them. It would be easy to draw the conclusion that during his life Nelson was much more influential on British naval policy and strategy than he actually while he was alive.

That having been said, in the preface by the author Miller freely admits that the focus of his book is to connect the historical background relative to several popular books about fictional British naval officers of the 1776-1815 era. He specifically refers to the series written by C. S. Forester, Alexander Kent and Patrick O’Brien. In this goal he has indeed succeeded very well, relating a concise, informative and entertaining story of a most crucial period of European (and American) history.

Miller carries an enjoyable story from the British Admiralty to the shipyards and fleet anchorages, the squadrons patrolling remote stations in foul weather, to the epic fleet battles and single-ship engagements in areas spanning half of the globe. Rather than being described as “set-piece” battles, each is shown in relation to the overall picture of regional or global naval policies. Many sea battles and campaigns, for example the running skirmishes between Admirals Suffren and Hughes in the Indian Ocean, are not generally known.

Many notable characters, including famous political figures and great (and some not-so great) commanders are brought to life. Their political and professional agendas are explained and referenced to events as they transpire. It is also interesting to note how greatly personal issues influenced naval planning during the time. One notable example is the Howe brothers, one an admiral and the other a general, and their differing views on conducting war on the American colonies. Another example is Horatio Nelson’s obsession with the Lady Hamilton and how his relationship with her adversely affected the campaign against Bonaparte’s French fleet in the Mediterranean Sea.

The battles themselves are explained with necessary attention to the gruesome



detail unavoidable in accurately describing battles at sea during the era. Vivid are the images of men smashed by shot or pierced by huge splinters from the oaken side of a ship. An example Miller used is his description of Admiral Villeneuve at Aboukir Bay where his legs were taken off by a roundshot and was set by his men in a chair on the deck of *Ville de Paris* while watching his squadron being destroyed as he bled to death.

Some anecdotes, which became famous in naval legend, are explained as well. Some are well known, such as Capt. James Lawrence’s dying words before losing *Chesapeake*, “Don’t give up the ship” and Oliver Hazard Perry’s famous summary of the Battle of Lake Erie, “We have met the enemy and he is ours.” Less known, but more amusing, is the image of Nelson, upon being told of the flag signal from his commander to withdraw at the battle of Copenhagen, putting a spyglass up to his blind eye and remarking, “I see no signal.” Also of interest is Admiral Collingwood’s irritated reaction to the famous flag signal at Trafalgar, “I wish Nelson would stop all that signaling; we all know what our duty is!”

In short, this is a very well written, enjoyable and historically accurate reference book. It deserves a place on the bookshelf alongside the fiction works mentioned above, and with other similar works. 📖

Mr. Mordica is a chief warrant officer with the United States Coast Guard who is currently assigned to the Coast Guard’s Atlantic Logistics & Maintenance Command.

Day of Deceit: The Truth About FDR and Pearl Harbor

by Robert B. Stinnett

Reviewed by Capt. Howard Sandefer (Ret.)

Theories about high members of the United States government having prior knowledge of the attack at Pearl Harbor began to surface about 10 days after the attack. Some Republicans were of the fixed opinion that FDR engineered the attack to get our nation into World War II on the Allied side. The notion persists, even after four investigations into that sad occurrence.

Robert B. Stinnett has attempted to paint the whole story, including previously reported events, such as the SS *Lurline* radio intercepts, as well as new material he had released under the Freedom of Information Act. The result is difficult to read. Many different people were involved, diverse information tracks were in existence, and a somewhat confused timeline was used. This is not surprising, given the number of people involved in intelligence gathering.

Robert B. Stinnett. *Day of Deceit: The Truth About FDR and Pearl Harbor*. New York: The Free Press, 2000. ISBN 0-684-85339-6. 386 pages. \$26.50

Through some circumstance not explained, LCDmr. Arthur H. McCollum wrote a memorandum designed to incite an attack by the Japanese. LCDmr. McCollum was the head of the Far East desk of the Office of Naval Intelligence. Reasons a lieutenant commander would write such a memo, and the President of the United States adopt it, were not revealed. The eight step memorandum was constructed on several estimated situations. It was postulated that "a small U. S. Naval Force capable of seriously threatening Japan's southern supply routes already (was) in the theater of Operations." and "A considerable Dutch Naval force is in the Orient that would be of value if allied to U. S." The memo further goes on to assert that, "...prompt aggressive naval action against Japan by the United States would render Japan incapable of affording any help to Germany and Italy and Japan itself would be faced with a situation in which her navy would be forced

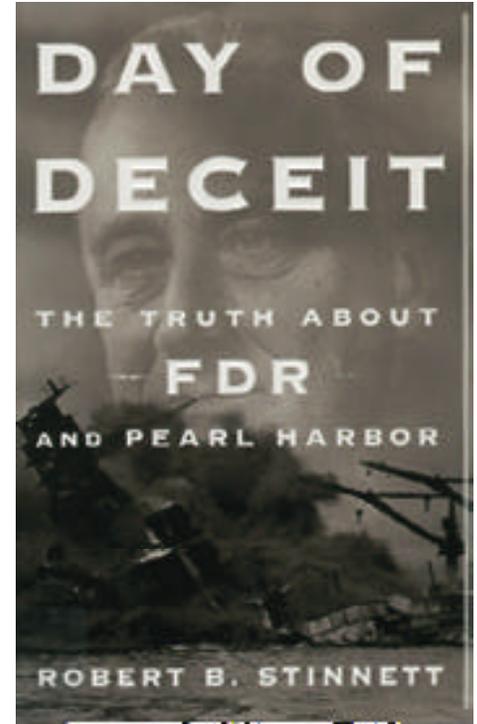
to fight on the most unfavorable terms or accept fairly early collapse of Japan." These estimates were wrong.

One of the eight recommendations of the McCollum memo called for basing the main strength of the Pacific Fleet in Hawaiian waters. Admiral James O. Richardson, who was the Commander of the U. S. Fleet at the time, objected. He stated his reasons for wishing to return to the West Coast in unmistakable language. He was relieved by Admiral Husband Kimmel.

Several chapters document the commands with access to the secret decrypted messages. According to Stinnett, General MacArthur and Admiral Hart in the Philippines were reading most of the intercepts, and were well aware of the developing threat. Their information came from Station CAST, the decryption station on Corregidor. Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Harold Stark, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General George C. Marshall, President Roosevelt, and others in Washington were reading the decrypts. It seems the only commanders not reading these messages were Kimmel and Short.

Much is made of the direction finding efforts that located Japanese forces by messages. It is asserted that during the period from 26 November to 8 December 1941, when the Japanese fleet was said to be under strict radio silence that "extensive communications" originated during the period. The source is a communications summary from Cmdr. Rochefort dated 25 November. According the Stinnett, Rochefort convinced Kimmel and Bloch that submarines and carriers were proceeding toward Pearl Harbor.

Assuming that the scenarios were correct and that Kimmel and Short were prevented from acting by the President before the "war warning" message, how was it determined that an attack could be generated on Hawaii and not in the Philippines? Why were MacArthur and Hart not cut out of the loop? Indeed, the Rainbow Five plan envisaged the attack on the Philippines and the necessity of using the Fleet to resupply the garrison there. This



problem had been gamed at the Naval War College on alternate years throughout the 30's.

Given all of this plus events that already happened in World War II (for example, the British air strike on the Italian fleet in 1940), Stinnett is correct to question conventional wisdom. But in this book, he does not ask the right questions. Better ones to ask would be, for example:

Why was the one radar set not being used to train interceptor pilots?

Why were air patrols not being flown on a daily basis?

Why were Combat Air Patrols not being flown at dawn and dusk at a minimum?

Why were Kimmel and Short the only commanders denied the information in the Japanese intercepts?

In summary, this book is a little too confusing, and more space could have been devoted to detailing the people mentioned. The book also seems to be devoted to clearing the names and records of Kimmel and Short. Lingering questions still plague this reviewer.

Perhaps the real key to the Pearl Harbor disaster can be determined from the Intelligence progression: Collect, Evaluate, Disseminate. From Stinnett's book, it is apparent that much was collected, and little was evaluated or disseminated. 

Howard Sandefer is a retired captain and a 1961 graduate of the United States Naval Academy. He also is a docent at the museum

All About the Money: Declaring Victory Over the French

A common historical criticism of American wars is that our armed forces were only used to protect America's economic interests and not engaged in some noble cause of freedom. Even in the middle of a war, critics of the war would often use this line of reasoning. Capt. Francis Chadwick, chief-of-staff of



The Museum Sage

the North Atlantic Squadron in 1898 remarked that the only reason the United States declared war on Spain was “for the Wall Street bankers.” A frequent criticism of the 1991 military action against Iraq was that we were only over there for the oil companies. There is even an argument (a very poor one) that the American Civil War was fought over control of the cotton trade.

There is little doubt that the Quasi-War with France was a war fought, at least in part, over money. France had decided to raid our merchant ships operating in the West Indies. The resulting loss in commerce was amounting to some hefty bills. Another reason for the commencing military action against the French Navy (Congress never got around to passing a declaration of war bill), was reports of brutal atrocities being committed by independent pirate ships and French privateers.

Completely shameless and unforgiving, Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith

admitted in one of the final reports on the Quasi-War that the conflict was *all* about money. He measured the success of the war by comparing how much the war cost the American taxpayer to how much commerce the Navy protected. Granted in 1799, the “American taxpayer” was domestic and foreign merchant vessels importing goods into the United States, as the bulk of the Federal budget was import tariffs and not income taxes. Nonetheless, the American consumer would have to pay the difference when he or she purchased an import at the marketplace.

Here is how Secretary Smith figured it:

During the war years of 1799-1801...

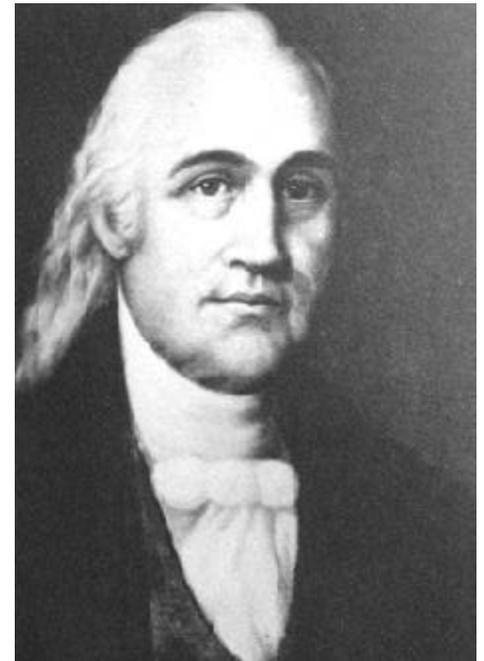
- 1) The United States exported \$303,964,713 worth of goods
- 2) The United States Government collected \$33,547,442 in tariffs on imported goods
- 3) The United States spent \$8,500,000 to run the war.

For its eight and half million, the Navy was able to put 45 warships (including 13 frigates) to sea in the West Indies, to purchase and/or improve six navy yards (including Gosport), to purchase two islands for construction material, and to design six 74-gun ship-of-the-lines (which were not built until 1815). Even the eight and half million price tag is debatable, at least according to Smith. After the war, President Thomas Jefferson and Congress instructed the Navy Department to auction off many of the Navy's ships and ship stores used in the Quasi-War to private owners. The subsequent barn fire sale netted the Government about two and half million.

So in Smith's mind, the war only cost six million. The net profit to the Government was \$27,547,442. The Sage

would call that a victory. If only the historical interpretations of all wars could be so easy.

If one wanted to get *really* technical, even six million dollars is a low figure. As the Government still owns the land of four of the yards (Norfolk Naval, Portsmouth Navy,



Maryland's own Robert Smith, second Secretary of the Navy (1801-1809). (Naval Historical Center)

Washington Navy, and a portion of Philadelphia), plus the invaluable training given to many budding junior officers, the long-term benefits of the war to national security are beyond calculation.

There is one possible motive behind Smith's conclusions on the Quasi-War with France. On the surface of this document, it looks somewhat odd that Smith would be so smug about a war that he didn't have much to do with. After all, the Sage's favorite Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Stoddert ran the war. However, it is possible Smith was trying to stick it to Secretary of the Treasury John Gallatin by showing the Swiss-born accountant the true cost-benefit of an American fleet. Gallatin was well known for his views that the Navy used up too much of the Federal budget. 🏰

Truely A Fate Worse Than Death

For those of you who have been or already are in the Navy, the following information will come as no surprise to you. To the rest of us, this piece of historical trivia might come as a shock.

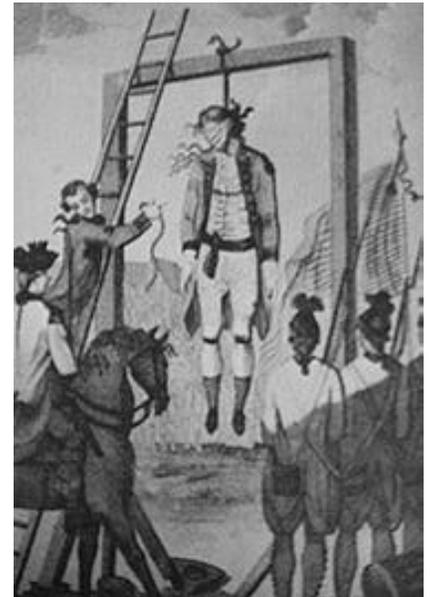
During the American Revolution, both the British government and the rebel leadership vied, through various carrot and stick approaches, for the support of the general public. The carrot approach would often include incentives such as a monetary bonus to enlist, land grants (upwards of many thousands of acres in some cases), or, in the cases of slaves, their freedom.

The stick approaches were sometimes quite brutal. Both sides would use intimidation, threats, or outright coercion to ensure loyalty among the ranks. One such legal method available to both sides was the treason laws. Treason is, for obvious reasons,

one of the most serious offenses a person can commit. In almost all cases the penalty for such a crime, past or present, is death.

Professor Linda K. Kerber of the University of Iowa discovered that at least one of the rebel colonies took a different approach on treason. She discovered that in 1776, the New Jersey Council of Safety (most colonies' provisional governments were usually called a "council of safety" or a "committee of safety") passed a treason law that stated that any male convicted of treason would be hanged without the benefit of clergy. Meaning, in the minds of the council, the traitor's soul would go straight to hell.

The council, however, allowed the condemned man one way out. The traitor could receive a pardon if he enlisted in the Continental Navy. So, we now have proof that the Navy is a fate worse than death.



In 18th century New Jersey, a traitor had two options: this or enlist in the Navy.

Useful Web Sites



www.defenselink.mil-This is the official web for the Department of Defense. It includes a search engine for all official DoD websites (including the museum's), as well as official press releases, news, and information on military activities.

www.nvr.navy.mil-We are often asked by veterans if their particular ship is still in service. This web site is a good place to start. This is the official Naval Vessel Register. All ships on this list belong to the Navy either on active duty or in a decommissioned status.





Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Stoddert came close to taking Truxtun to court over L'Insurgente's value, but in the end was able to convince the commodore to compromise. (Naval Historical Center photo)

Insurgent continued from page 9

From there Murray patrolled for a few days between Cadiz and the Straits, again without seeing any French ships. With that lack of success, Murray decided to move on to Madeira and Tenerife. Still not a French flag to be found. On 13 October, almost a month after his due date at Cayenne, Murray gave up his idea of European success and sailed for the West Indies.

As *Insurgent* reached Cayenne on 30 October, Murray fell in with the sloop of war *Maryland* commanded by now Captain John Rodgers. Murray learned that the British had captured Surinam and those isolated Cayenne, a former center of French privateer activity. The two ships sailed in company again without spying the enemy. Frustrated, Murray gave up and sailed north to Barbados. He arrived there with "a sickly crew" with six already dead and 20 on the sick list. Moreover, the copper sheathing was peeling off *Insurgent's* bottom. Despite these difficulties, Murray stayed on in the Lesser Antilles. He finally met with some success when, working with Commodore Richard Morris in the frigate *Adams*, *Insurgent* took part in the capture or recapture of four ships. In January, bad luck struck again. The masts, of which Murray had earlier complained, began to give out. *Insurgent's* fore mast was falling apart from decay. Arrangements were made with the

British to install a new one. During sea trials after the repairs, Murray discovered that the mast the Royal Navy dockyard at Antigua had provided was actually full of holes which had been disguised with putty.

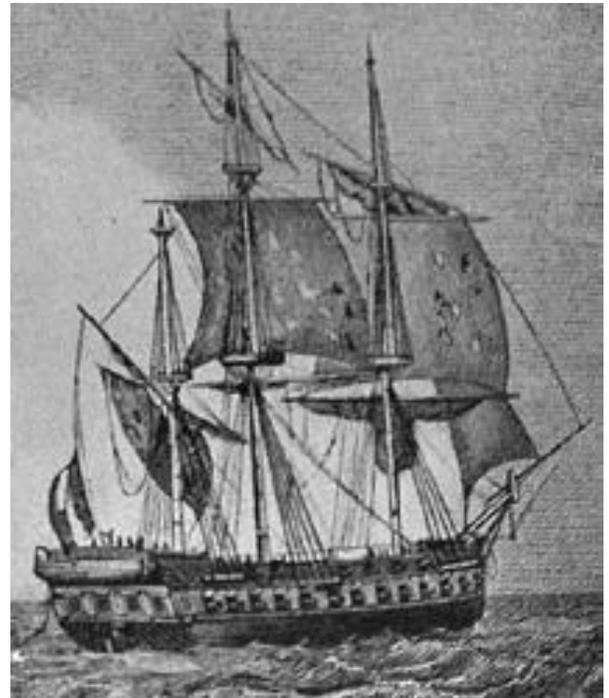
The British refused to remedy the problem. So it was with great relief that the despondent Murray learned from Truxtun that *Insurgent* had been ordered home to Baltimore via Jamaica. The trip back to the United States was distinctly unpleasant. On

13 March 1800, Murray wrote Secretary Stoddert, "[I] have the honor to announce my arrival after one of the most blustering passages I ever had which has made us almost a wreck." He warned the secretary that *Insurgent* was in desperate need of masts, bowsprit and coppering. "It will be," he cautioned, "a work of time to do all that is required."

Time, of course, was in short supply for Stoddert. He needed ships in too many places to have the luxury of letting a frigate sit too long in the yards. The Secretary wrote Archibald Campbell, the navy agent in Baltimore, detailing the repairs to be done. "Dispatch, economy and regularity must be attended to in refitting this vessel." As Captain Murray was slated to move on to replace Truxtun as commander of *Constellation*, Stoddert next needed to find a new captain for *Insurgent*. He settled on Patrick Fletcher, formerly in command of USS *George Washington*. Fletcher, like Murray, was a former lieutenant in the Continental Navy. Stoddert wrote of Fletcher, "He is an experienced and good officer - and is a good judge of the fitting of warlike vessels." On 29 April 1800, the secretary ordered the new commanding officer to Baltimore to take over *Insurgent*, "giving every aid in your power to promote her equipment & preparations for sea."

Since her old crew had been paid off in March, Fletcher was faced with the tasks of both repair and recruiting. The crew built up gradually toward her authorized complement of 227 men as recruiting rendezvous were set up in New York, Baltimore and Norfolk. As persistent as the workmen's hammers, came the steady pounding of Stoddert's demands to get the

ship ready for sea. French privateers held at bay by U.S. squadrons in the West Indies had found more lucrative grounds off the American coast. Merchants were complaining to President Adams, and Adams was complaining to Stoddert. On 3 July, the secretary wrote Fletcher, "The *Insurgent* must sail on the 15th of this month, whether she is prepared or not....She is wanted for a cruise on the coast for a short time, where it is not probable, she will meet with an enemy



Under the American flag, *Insurgent* made two cruises. Under Capt. Murray's command, *Insurgent* sailed to European coastal waters returning to the Lesser Antilles and then home to Hampton Roads. (HRNM photo of an 1842 engraving by William Croome)

of equal force, even if not completely prepared."

Shipboard tempers became short in the face of these time demands. A number of the crew became involved in a riot ashore in the Fells Point area of Baltimore. Midshipman Enoch Brown was slashed on the hand while trying to break up the altercation. He had to be left behind as the ship sailed down the Bay for a short stop in Norfolk before heading to sea. *Insurgent* sailed on 8 August for her operations area. By Stoddert's plan she would return to Annapolis after about a month at sea. She was never heard from again. Ships arriving in Norfolk in mid-September reported a violent storm at sea off the Carolina coast. *Insurgent* probably lost to an eternal enemy of much greater force than herself. Midshipman Brown had received the "million dollar wound." 

Battleship *Wisconsin* is here!

Find Out More about the Ship, Planned Exhibits, and how YOU can get Involved!



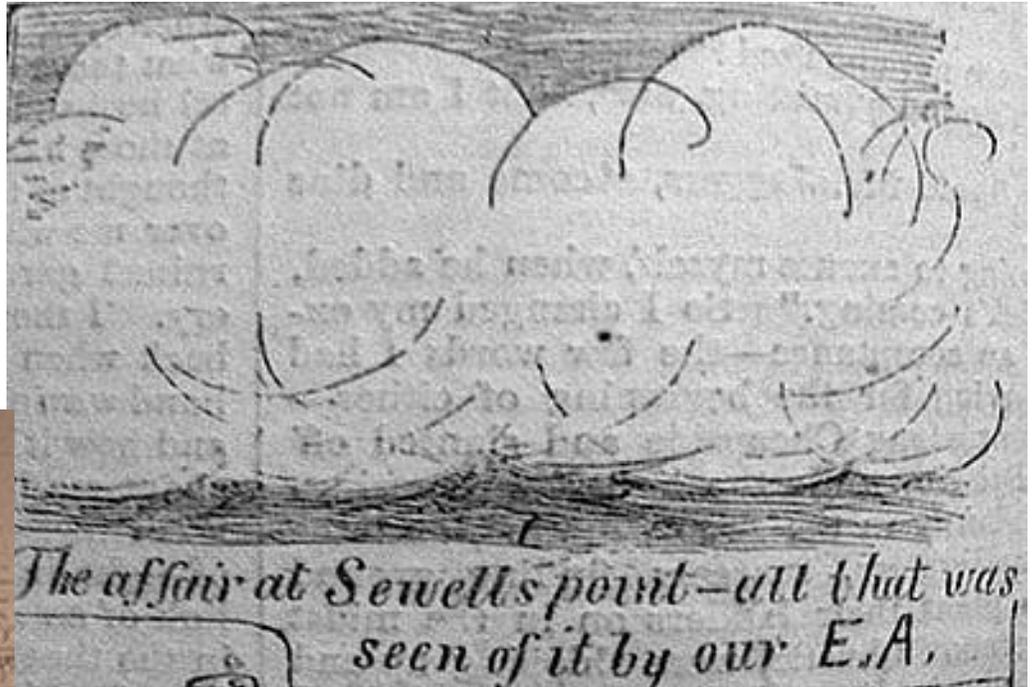
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[Http://www.hrn.m.navy.mil](http://www.hrn.m.navy.mil)



Harper's Weekly *Goes to War*



The reality and grand spectacle of battle has been vividly portrayed by numerous sketch artists and photo journalists sent out into the field of battle. One such artist, who went by the initials "E.A.," sketched for Harper's Weekly during the American Civil War. In these sketches, however, we see a very comical attitude towards war. The sketch above is supposed to portray the 1861 exchange between U.S. Navy gunboats and Confederate batteries at Sewells Point. Instead of warships and forts, all we see is a cloud of smoke. The sketch to the left is a humorous look at Allen in the field donning a "bullet proof" dress.

In Our Next Issue....

- *Battleship Wisconsin Enters the Field of Battle*
- New Items and Changes to the Gallery
- Book Reviews- *Germany's Last Mission to Japan: The Failed Voyage of U-234* by Joseph Mark Scalia and *The Submarine Book: An Illustrated History of the Attack Submarine* by Charles Lawliss

