

French Ensor Chadwick



The American Navy

French Ensor Chadwick

The American Navy



Published by Good Press, 2022

goodpress@okpublishing.info

EAN 4064066419714

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[CHAPTER I](#)

[CHAPTER II](#)

[CHAPTER III](#)

[CHAPTER IV](#)

[CHAPTER V](#)

[CHAPTER VI](#)

[CHAPTER VII](#)

[CHAPTER VIII](#)

[THE PRINCIPAL SHIPS OF THE CONTINENTAL NAVY](#)

[CHAPTER IX](#)

[CHAPTER X](#)

[CHAPTER XI](#)

[CHAPTER XII](#)

[CHAPTER XIII](#)

[CHAPTER XIV](#)

[CHAPTER XV](#)

[CHAPTER XVI](#)

[CHAPTER XVII](#)

[CHAPTER XVIII](#)

[CHAPTER XIX](#)

[CHAPTER XX](#)

[CHAPTER XXI](#)

[CHAPTER XXII](#)

[CHAPTER XXIII](#)

[CHAPTER XXIV](#)

A SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

[Table of Contents](#)

THE navy in all countries has ever been, and, as far as we can now judge, ever will be, a preëminent instrument of government. It was through her navy that Greece destroyed the power of Persia; Rome that of Carthage; the allies at Lepanto that of the Turks; England that of Holland and later that of France in America; the navy of France, in turn, caused the relinquishment of Great Britain's sovereignty over the thirteen colonies which formed the United States, and a generation later it was the British navy which made the efforts of the great Napoleon the "baseless fabric of a vision."

Coming to days within the ken of many still living, the navy was the power which made possible the preservation of the Union in our great Civil War by the cutting off of the Southern Confederacy from its means of support by sea and reducing its forces thereby to practical inanition. For had the Confederacy had free access to the sea and control of the Mississippi River, no armies of the North could have conquered well-supplied armies of the South. So, too, the control of the sea decided the outcome of the Spanish War. When Sampson's fleet destroyed Spain's only battle squadron off Santiago de Cuba, Spain could no longer reinforce her army in Cuba, and surrender was a necessity. Even as this is written Germany's every sea outlet is closed by the British fleet, so superior in number to the German, and German commerce on the sea is for the time entirely swept away, leaving Great Britain for the moment navally

and commercially supreme upon the ocean. As one attempts to look into the future the vastness of the possible changes startles the imagination, but in it all is ever present the power that goes with the ubiquitous warship, from whose threat no port of the world is free. Military power fades to insignificance, through its narrow limits of mobility, when compared with the meaning of a great fleet. The present sketch of history is to show what the warship has done for us.

THE AMERICAN NAVY

CHAPTER I

Table of Contents

WHEN Great Britain attempted to reduce to obedience the rebellious colonies which were to form the United States of America she was dealing with a people who in the North at least had long been conversant with the building and sailing of ships. A New England built ship entered the Thames in 1638, only eighteen years after the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, Massachusetts. The New England men, with a sterile coast, with limitless fishing grounds and unsurpassed harbors, turned as naturally to the sea for livelihood as did the South, more kindly treated by nature, to agriculture. In 1670 it was estimated that two thirds of the British shipping was employed in the American trade. The Dutch, who had been great carriers on the sea, were excluded from this trade by the navigation laws of the period. Scotland was not admitted to the trade of the American plantations until her union with England in 1707, and Ireland not until 1780, while in 1670 nothing could be imported into the American colonies but what was laden in England in English-built ships. But while none of their products could be carried anywhere (except to other of the plantations) till they were first landed in England, the ships built in America were reckoned as English, and this fact gave great impetus to American shipbuilding. American shipping prospered amazingly. But while thus prospering, it was the attempted repression of our commerce afloat and ashore (which included such things as forbidding the exportation of hats, restricting the manufacture of iron, and forbidding

commerce with the foreign-owned islands of the West Indies) which did much more to develop the idea of independence than did the Stamp Act. But the net result of conditions was to foster shipping, and our competition had so increased by 1725 that in that year “the shipwrights of the river Thames came up to Whitehall with a complaint that their business had declined and their workmen emigrated because the plantations furnished England with ships.”

On the register of the underwriters at Lloyd’s for 1775, comprehending the shipping of the three preceding years, there were 3,908 British-built vessels of 605,545 tons, and 2,311 of American build with a tonnage of 373,618 tons. The average size of the ship of the time was about 400 tons displacement. One 100 feet in length and 26 to 28 feet broad was a good-sized ship. They were but cockle boats in comparison with the vast ships of to-day, many of which are full a hundred times 400 tons displacement.

The foregoing will show that when there came a time to dispute the sea with Great Britain there was no difficulty in supplying the ships, and the many ironworks which had been established, particularly in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, despite Great Britain’s restrictions, could furnish guns in the manufacture of which our foundries were adepts before the war.

The larger men-of-war of the period were greater in size than the largest merchantmen. The greater ships-of-the-line (by which expression is meant those which could take their place in the line of battle, the formation of which was in a single extended column) varied from 4,000 to 3,000 tons

displacement. The larger of these, which carried guns on three main decks and some light guns on the upper deck, to the number altogether of 100, or even 120, were 180 to 190 feet on the gun deck, with about 53 feet beam. The most usual size, however, was the "74," carrying nominally that number of guns, but usually six or eight more, on two main decks (and thus known as a two-decker). This class was about 168 feet long on the gun deck and 47 feet broad. Below this class there were many ships of sixty, fifty, or even forty-four guns, with two gun decks. Such, for a long period, formed part of the line of battle.

The frigates had but one covered gun deck. They varied in length from 115 to 130 feet on the gun deck, and were from 32 to 36 feet beam, roughly a fourth of their length. They formed no part of a line of battle, their duty when accompanying a fleet being to remain clear of the line and repeat the admiral's signals. There was also a small class of ship called a sloop-of-war, which carried guns on only the upper, or spar, deck as it came to be called. These vessels were ship-rigged; that is, they had three masts with square sails on each. They were usually about 100 feet long and about 27 feet beam.

The three-deckers, or 100-gun ships, carried about 900 men; the 74's about 600; the frigates about 160. The guns of the period were of course all smooth-bores and muzzle-loaders. In the large ships, the heavier guns, usually 32-pounders, were carried on the lower gun decks to give stability to the ship; 18's or 24's were carried on the middle deck, 9's and 12's on the upper, 9's and 6's on the quarter deck, which was the part of the upper deck aft of the

mainmast, and on the forecastle, which was the part of the upper deck forward of the foremast; the space between the two was called the waist. The larger frigates usually carried 18's on the gun deck; the smaller, 12's or 9's. The sloops carried 9's or 6's. The greatest range of even the heavier guns was but little over 2,000 yards, as the ports rarely allowed more than 8° or 9° elevation. Such guns were but toys compared with modern ordnance, but they were common alike to all nations, and all were thus on the same footing.

An immense difference between that day and this was in the motive power which then and for two and a half generations later consisted of lofty wooden masts, reaching skyward in the greater ships about 200 feet, crossed by "yards," the larger of which were about 100 feet long, the former supported by a great mass of rigging known as shrouds and stays, the latter moved by "braces" and the sails worked by a maze of running rigging. All this, of course, was subject to being shot away, and ships were thus frequently completely demasted or disabled in action. The same result was often, too, produced by a gale of wind, it being no uncommon thing for a fleet to be thus completely incapacitated for the continuance of a voyage.

Weeks or fortnights were spent in a voyage now done in days. Of certainty as to time of reaching port, there was none. And amid all there was the danger from enemies, legal or piratical, for the world was only slowly ridding itself of the latter; and from the inherent dangers of the sea itself to the clumsy ships which slowly worked their way across it. How great these last were, through the ignorance at that

time of the law of storms, may be known by the fate of a great fleet which in 1782 left the West Indies under Admiral Graves, with ten line-of-battle ships convoying nearly a hundred merchantmen. Among the former were six of the prizes taken in Rodney's great naval battle of April 12, 1782. Caught in a fierce gale southeast of Nova Scotia, five of the battleships foundered with nearly all on board. One of those which went down with every soul was the *Ville de Paris*, which had been the flagship of the unfortunate Count de Grasse. The total loss of men was estimated at 3,500.

Such was the setting of the period which saw the birth of the first American navy, which was to have an existence of but eight short years, to be succeeded, however, nine years after (1794) by the modest beginnings which have grown into the great fleet of to-day, and whose history is one of uninterrupted success and honor.

CHAPTER II

Table of Contents

IN SEPTEMBER, 1744, there met at Philadelphia, then our foremost city, representatives of each of the thirteen colonies, called together on account of the increasing difficulties which had arisen with the mother country. These difficulties arose mainly from the tendency of parliament to govern the colonies as it would, say, any county of England. This right the Americans denied. They were good subjects of the King, but they objected to parliamentary rule. The underlying idea which governed the action of the Americans was thus that of a federalism which only in these latter days has laid hold in any considerable degree of the minds of the English, who now debate the possibility of England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa becoming states of a federation somewhat akin to our own. But at the time of the outbreak of our Revolution there was no widespread idea of separation. It was, however, in the air, and by some openly advocated. Had there been a complete renouncement of the right of parliament to make laws governing the colonies there would, for the time at least, have been a reconciliation. It was upon this principle we divided. Thus the war began.

There was at this time on our coast a British naval force of four ships of from seventy to fifty guns (these at Boston), and twenty from twenty to six guns distributed from New Hampshire to Florida. The whole was a very moderate force considering the long-standing discontent and the difficulties of the existing situation. The British navy, in which, as in the

administration of every other department of the British public service of the period, inefficiency and dishonesty reigned to an almost unbelievable degree, had been allowed to run down sadly after the Seven Years' War which ended in 1763. The total number of ships was but 270 and the number of seamen but 18,000. Before the war closed the ships were to number 468, of which 174 were ships-of-the-line (carrying from sixty to one hundred guns), and the seamen were to number 110,000.

The situation of the United States was much akin to that of the Southern Confederacy. Its resources were too meagre to carry on a war without the importation of much that was necessary to keep an army in efficiency. Thus the true plan of England was a strict blockade and the reduction to inanition of our forces, such as we ourselves carried on against the South in our Civil War. This action was advocated strongly by Viscount Barrington, the Secretary for War, who urged that the navy only should be employed, and that the ships should take possession of all our ports and establish a complete blockade. Fortunately for the revolutionists, his advice was not heeded.

On April 19, 1775, at Concord and Lexington, the long-prepared fagots of revolution were lighted into flame. Two months later, June 17th, came Bunker Hill and the immediate assembling near Boston (where lay almost the whole of the British force in America) of a multitude of country people ill-provided with everything that goes to make the efficiency of an army but high determination and spirit. By a stroke of prescience which would seem a

providence, Washington was appointed the commander-in-chief.

There had been fights afloat between the Americans and the British some years before the actual outbreak of the Revolution. In 1769 the sloop *Liberty*, employed in revenue protection, had been seized and burned by the people of Newport, Rhode Island; in 1772 a schooner, the *Gaspee*, used for similar service in Narragansett Bay and which had grounded while in chase of a suspected vessel near Providence, was boarded by a party of men who burned her, and but a month after the first fights ashore occurred there were attacks with some loss of life upon an armed schooner and barges which attempted the seizure of livestock on the islands of Boston Bay. The lively fights at Machias in June, 1775, in which the inhabitants had captured the sloop *Unity* and another which had been sent to Machias for lumber and which were under the escort of an armed tender, the *Margaretta*, were, however, the first of the actual War of the Revolution. They are proud recollections of local history and have caused the name of the town to appear on the navy list as that of a small cruiser of to-day. On August 9, 1775, the *Falcon*, sloop-of-war under Captain Linzee, pursued into Gloucester harbor two schooners bound from the West Indies; one he seized, and the other succeeding in getting into the harbor was attacked by boats from the *Falcon*. The militia and inhabitants gathered, and the action which came on and which lasted several hours resulted in the capture of thirty-five of the *Falcon's* men who had come into the harbor

in the captured schooner and in their own boats, both schooners remaining in the hands of the Americans.

To Washington himself was due the first organized force of the Americans in the Revolution upon the sea. Throughout his career he recognized the importance of its control, and immediately on his arrival at Cambridge to take the command of the American army then collected before Boston, he began to look into the question of a naval force, with a view to capturing the enemy's supplies. Such capture would not only be a deprivation to the British forces, but a much needed aid to the Americans who needed everything which goes to support an army, excepting food, which the surrounding country supplied for the moment plentifully enough. But arms, both small and great, clothing, ammunition, and tentage were imperatively needed. Such in quantities were on the ocean on their way to America for the British army, and the first need was to bring them into American hands. Washington thus established a little navy of his own, with a prize court necessary to pass upon the propriety of the capture and commissioners to take charge of captured material. He continued such efforts even after the transfer of the army to New York, and did not cease from them until the Continental Congress took the subject in hand.

The beginning of Washington's fleet was the schooner *Hannah*, which sailed under Captain Nicholas Broughton from Beverly, Massachusetts, on September 5, 1775, and returned two days later with a prize. Naturally many of the improvised army assembled at Cambridge, which was mainly made up of New Englanders, were men of the sea,

and thus soon there were eight small vessels, officered and manned from the army in service. The administration of this improvised navy was not an easy task. Washington, writing to the President of the Congress on December 4, 1775, says: "The plague, trouble, and vexation I have had with the crews of all the armed vessels is inexpressible. I do not believe there is on earth a more disorderly set." Successes came, however, and with these greater contentment among the crews. Captain John Manley was particularly successful, especially in the capture of the brigantine *Nancy*, which carried ordnance stores of the highest value to our poorly equipped army. The inventory of her cargo gives, among other things, 2,000 muskets, thirty-one tons of musket shot, 3,000 round shot, a considerable quantity of powder, and a thirteen-inch mortar, which was promptly mounted in Cambridge and called the "Congress."

The British evacuated Boston through want of food, on March 17, 1776, going first to Halifax and thence to New York. Washington had already transferred his army thither and continued his navy, such as it was, until he himself retreated from New York as the result of the unfortunate battle of Long Island.

Rhode Island had, however, taken action toward a sea force several months before Washington had formed his little fleet. The Rhode Island Assembly had, on June 15, 1775, two days before the battle of Bunker Hill, ordered the chartering of two sloops and had appointed Abraham Whipple to the chief command. Whipple was prompt to act, for on the same day he captured the tender to the frigate *Rose*, the first prize of the war. His evident courage and

vigor caused his appointment later as captain in the regular navy which was soon to come.

Rhode Island has also the honor of being the first state to take action toward the establishment of a national navy. Her delegates were instructed on August 26, 1775, to bring the question of a fleet before Congress. This was done on October 3d. The subject received an almost immediate impetus through the arrival of information of two brigs which had left England for Quebec with arms, powder, and stores. A committee of three was proposed to prepare a plan to intercept these, but the idea met with strong opposition as being initiatory to a Continental navy, as in fact it was. It was declared by some opposed to be the "most wild, visionary, mad project that had ever been imagined. It was an infant taking a mad bull by the horns, ... it would ruin the character and morals of our seamen; it would make them selfish, piratical, mercenary, bent wholly upon plunder." Much of such criticism of the project might have been spared. Our seamen had been living through an age of privateering, and one in which the latter often reaped but too little of legal capture, and they had too long been accustomed to the general system of illicit commerce with the islands of the West Indies belonging to France and Spain to have their morals upset by fighting for their country. The better sense prevailed and the three men who had urged most strongly the proposed action were, on October 5, 1775, appointed a committee to report a scheme of action. These were John Adams of Massachusetts, John Langdon of New Hampshire, and Silas Deane of Connecticut.

The immediate advice of the committee which was to instruct Washington to procure two cruisers in Massachusetts, one to carry ten, and the other fourteen, guns, for the purpose of intercepting the two brigs mentioned, was soon changed in a report of October 30, 1775, advising to add two more vessels, one to mount not more than twenty, the other not more than thirty-six, guns, to be employed "for the protection and defence of the United Colonies." The question of the capture of special ships had been dropped; the subject had become national.

On December 14, 1775, the "Naval Committee" was replaced by a committee of thirteen chosen by ballot. The membership was remarkably like that of some naval committees of later times. Scarcely any on it were really conversant with matters of the sea, but it held one man, Robert Morris of Pennsylvania, whose energy, resource, and ability caused Congress to put in his sole control, before the war ended, all the affairs of the navy. Agents were employed to superintend construction, and prize agents were appointed. On November 6, 1776, Paul Jones wrote in his usual vigorous way to Robert Morris, declaring the necessity of a Board of Admiralty, and on October 28, 1779, one was established. Two of the members were to be members of Congress; the other three, called commissioners, were to be men possessing knowledge of naval matters. The Marine Committee then came to an end, but the navy boards at Philadelphia and Boston, each of "three persons well-skilled in maritime affairs," appointed by Congress "to execute the business of the navy under the direction of the Marine Committee," in what became known as the Middle and

Eastern districts, and the navy agents were retained under this reorganization. The Board of Admiralty, however, never materialized. On February 7, 1781, Congress resolved that naval affairs should be under a single person, to be called the Secretary of Marine. The office was never filled. Naval matters had, as just said, gradually drifted into the efficient hands of the Superintendent of Finance, Robert Morris, and there they remained until the navy of the Revolution disappeared in the sale of the last ship, the *Alliance*, in August, 1785. The fact is that naval affairs in the Revolution suffered equally with those of the army through the ineptitude and inefficiency of a Congress which was rather a board of advice than a government, even when the Articles of Confederation were adopted, which was not finally done until March 2, 1781.

On November 2, 1775, \$100,000 was voted for ships, and the committee was authorized to select officers and seamen. On November 10th were authorized two battalions of marines. The first intention was to take them from the army, but Washington objecting to such weakening of his force, they were to be raised independently and, with a curious misunderstanding of their use, it was provided that they should be "such as are good seamen." Rules for the government of the navy were passed November 28th, and the offices of Captain, Lieutenant, Master, Master's Mate, Surgeon, Chaplain, and Warrant Officer established. The monthly pay of captain was \$32; of able seaman \$6.67, later raised to \$8. A prize court was established. The rules, naturally, were taken from those of the British service, and throughout the whole existence of our navy there has run a

strong similarity, until of late years when there have been many changes in the nomenclature of the ratings of the enlisted men. Both services had the “Banyan day,” when no meat was served,^[1] though in the American navy this soon ceased to be an actuality. Such phrases as “Chips” (the carpenter) and “Jimmy Legs” (the master-at-arms) were among the many common to both services; but one, “Jack-of-the-Dust” (an adjunct of the paymaster’s department), which is to-day a rating in the American navy, is no longer a part of British ratings.

On December 13, 1775, Congress authorized the building of thirteen frigates, and next day, December 14th, a committee of thirteen was chosen by ballot to superintend their construction and equipment; five of these were to be of 32 guns; five of 28; and three of 24. The *Raleigh*, of 32 guns, was built at Portsmouth, New Hampshire; the *Hancock*, 32, and *Boston*, 24, at Salisbury and Newburyport, Massachusetts; the *Warren*, 32, and *Providence*, 28, at Providence, Rhode Island; the *Trumbull*, 28, at Chatham, on the Connecticut River; the *Montgomery*, 24, and *Congress*, 28, at Poughkeepsie, New York; the *Randolph*, 32, *Washington*, 32, *Effingham*, 28, and *Delaware*, 24, at Philadelphia; the *Virginia*, 28, at Baltimore. Six of these—the *Montgomery*, *Congress*, *Washington*, *Effingham*, *Delaware*, and *Virginia*—never got to sea, all being destroyed to prevent capture except the *Virginia* which, having grounded and lost her rudder in the Chesapeake, was taken by a British force in the bay.

These ships were to cost on the average but \$66,666, and the whole were expected to be ready by March, 1776.

They varied from 121 to 132 feet in length on the gun deck, with a breadth of from 32.6 to 34.5½. Their armament was that of the frigates of the day: 12-pounders on the main deck and 6-pounders on the quarter deck and forecastle. All should have been ready by the time named, for the *Raleigh* was launched at Portsmouth but two months after her keel was laid. But ill-luck pursued them throughout, and particularly in that the free life and greater gains of the privateersman made it almost impossible to get crews.

Thus the four ships the purchase of which was authorized on October 30, 1775, were the first of our navy. These were the *Alfred*, of 24 guns; *Columbus*, 20; *Andrew Doria*, 14, and the *Cabot*, 16.

Such was the beginning of the Continental navy which was to have a life of but ten years. A few words will complete our story of naval construction. On November 20, 1776, Congress resolved to build "immediately" a 74 in New Hampshire; a 74 and a 36 in Massachusetts; a 74, a brig, 18, and a packet boat in Pennsylvania; two frigates, 36 each, in Virginia; and two frigates, 36 each, in Maryland. But in July, 1777, on account of the high cost of wages and material, Congress authorized stopping work on such as the committee might judge proper, and the final result was the completion and getting to sea of but three: the *Alliance*, 36, the *General Gates*, 18, both built in Massachusetts, and the *Saratoga*, 16, in Pennsylvania. Only one 74 was built. This was the *America*, at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and she was not launched until the war had practically ended.

During the early part of 1776 there were built on Lake Champlain, under the direction of Benedict Arnold, two