

## U.S. Navy – Ships-of-the-line

### A Frigate vs A Ship-of-the-Line: What's the difference?

**FRIGATE**: A vessel of war which is: 1) “ship” rigged, i.e. – with at least three masts (fore, main, & mizzen) & each mast carries the horizontal yards from which the principle sails are set; 2) this “ship-rigged vessel of war” is a **FRIGATE** because it has one covered, principle gun deck – *USS Constitution* is therefore a **FRIGATE** by class (illus. left)

**SHIP-OF-THE-LINE**: A vessel of war which is: 1) “ship” rigged (see above); 2) this “ship-rigged vessel of war” is a **SHIP-OF-THE-LINE** because it has two or more covered gun decks – *HMS Victory* is therefore a **SHIP-OF-THE-LINE** by class (illus. right)



*Constitution* preparing to battle *Guerriere*,  
M.F. Corne, 1812 – PEM Coll.

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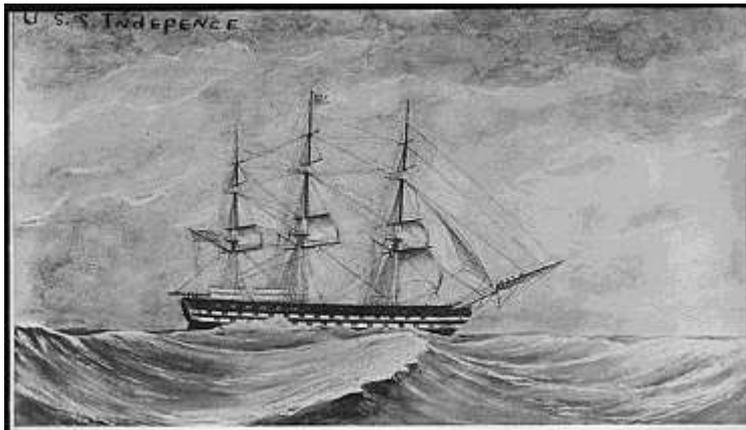


*HMS Victory* (1765); 100+ guns; 820 officers  
& crew; oldest commissioned warship in the  
world, permanently dry docked in England

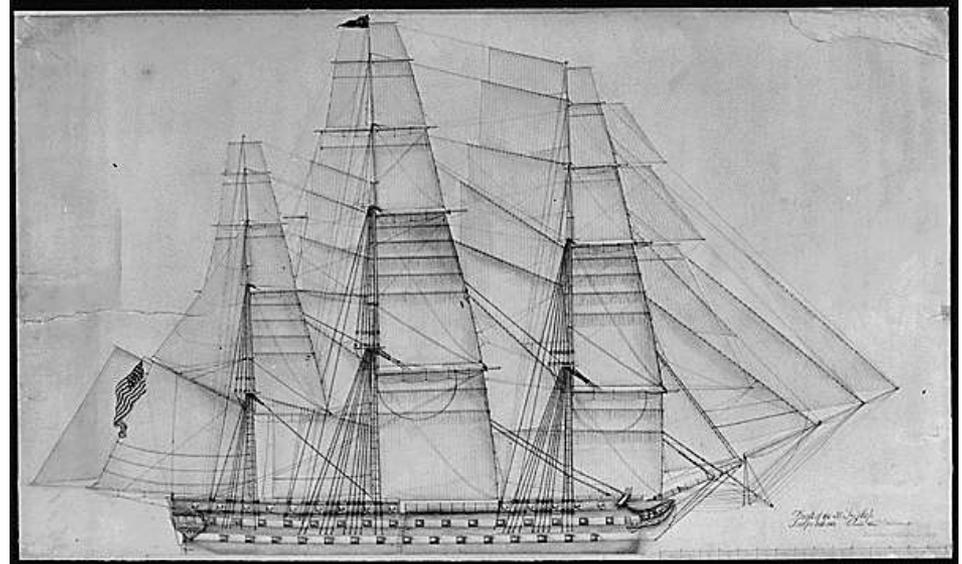
NMM Coll.

# An Act, 2 January 1813 – for the construction of the U.S. Navy's first Ships-of-the-line

**USS *Independence* was the first ship-of-the-line launched for the USN from the Boston (Charlestown) Navy Yard on 22 June 1814:**



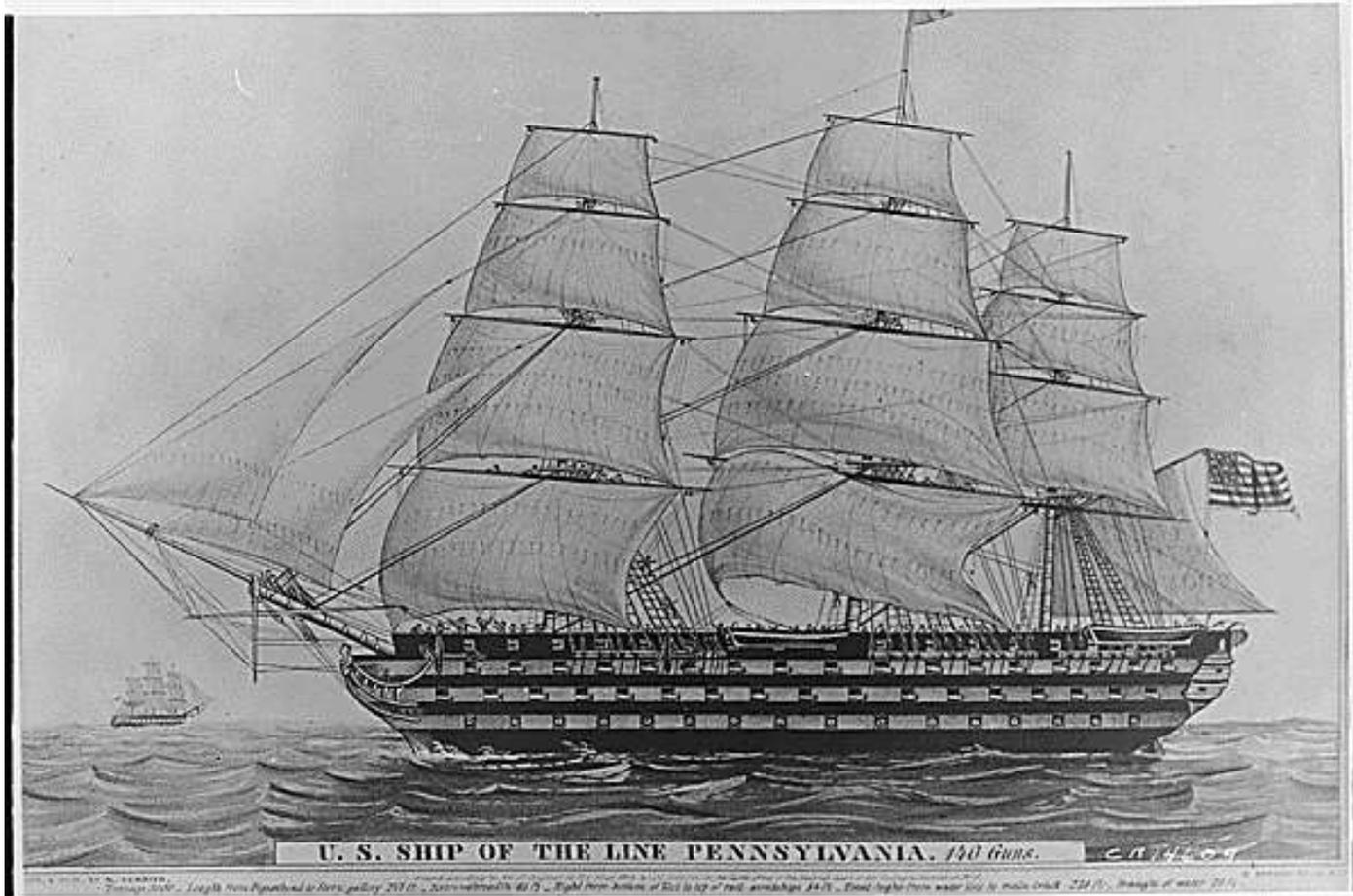
**While rated for 74-guns, *Independence* was armed with 87 guns when she was launched.**



**USS *Washington* was launched at the Portsmouth Navy Yard, 1 October 1814**

## USS *Pennsylvania* – largest sailing warship built for the USN

USS *Pennsylvania* – rated for 136 guns on three covered gun decks + guns on her upper (spar) deck – the largest sailing warship ever built.



Complement of 1,100 officers & men...

**Questions I have received from *Constitution* Crew:**

**1. “Shit List” – does this pertain to emptying the CO’s chamber pot?  
NO – “shit list” as a vulgar term comes into being in WORLD WAR II!  
There was NO chamber pot in the Captain’s quarter gallery head in the  
W/1812 era...**

**2. “Toilet paper” for crew – a rope that dragged in the water, with a rag  
attached – men could clean themselves, then let the rag drop back into  
the water to cleanse the cloth for the next crewmember...**

**NO – there is NO evidence of this; likely the crew used bits of rag or scraps  
of paper and tossed the soiled cloths into the sea; a rope or ropes dragging  
from the bow was dangerous and given the action of the heavy seas,  
neither the rope nor the cloth would have survived.**

**Let’s talk about the skylight in the Captain’s after cabin....**

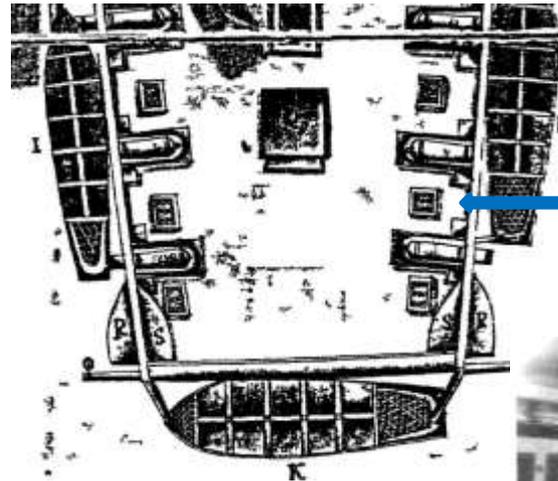
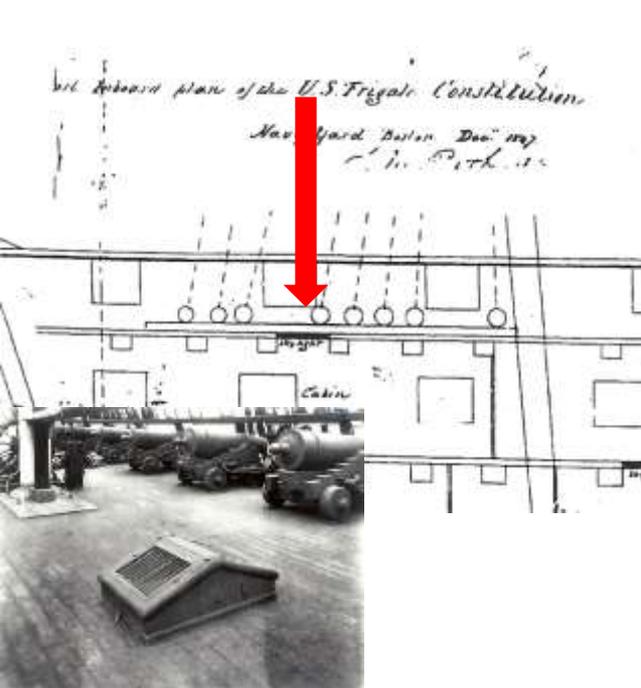
# USS Constitution – 200 Years of Change

An Illustrated Tour

## Spar Deck

### Skylight – Captain’s Cabin

There was NO skylight over the Capt.’s cabin in 1812; see *United States* c.1820 plan (center) – note NO skylight on quarter deck – a skylight would have been in the way of the carronades; note shot racks between carronades (blue arrow). The 1847 USSC plan (left) – may be the 1<sup>st</sup> evidence of skylight for Capt.’s cabin; there was still a skylight aboard c.1910 (lower left); the present skylight was installed in the 1927 restoration (top right) & has NO history with the War of 1812.



Shot rack from Bainbridge portrait



c. 1910, Capt.’s cabin skylight, MIT coll.

USN photo, USSC Capt.’s Cabin, c.1931, showing skylight

## **Her Royal Highness, Queen Elizabeth the Second...**

**Queen Elizabeth II visited USS *Constitution* in July, 1976 – why?**

**The participate in the United States celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the American Declaration of Independence.**

**What did or DID NOT happen in the Queen's tour of the ship?**

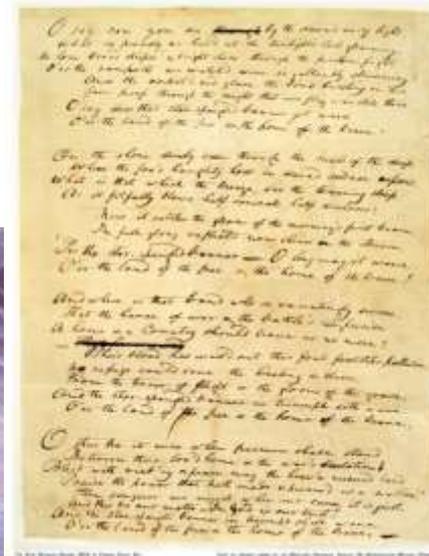
**Queen Elizabeth II did NOT assist, in any way, with research or proposals for reinstalling diagonal riders in USS *Constitution*.**



# The “Star Spangled Banner” Poem, Anthem, and Flag

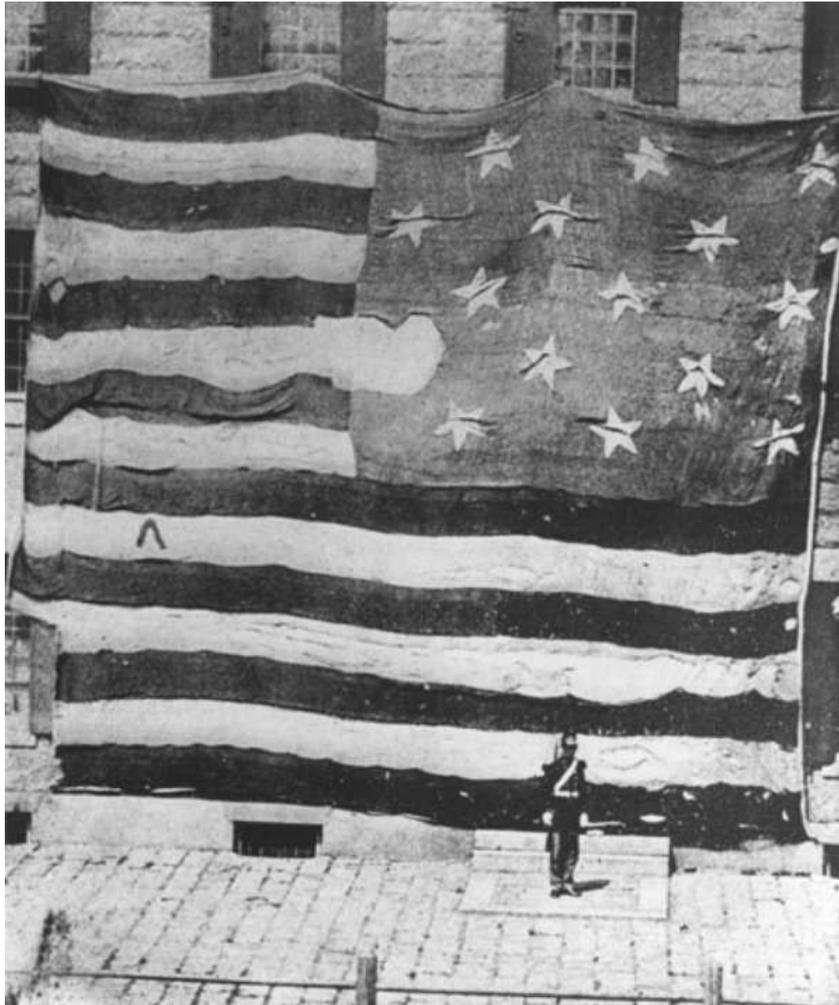
The time period: the War of 1812

Francis Scott Key was an American lawyer, sent to help to free an American civilian imprisoned by the British; Key was detained aboard a British warship when the bombardment of Baltimore’s Fort McHenry began on September 13, 1814. When the twenty-five hour bombardment of Fort McHenry from a British troopship anchored some four miles away was completed, Key saw, the next morning, that the American flag was still flying over Fort McHenry – with great joy he began jotting down the lines of the song that became the United States national anthem.



## The “Star Spangled Banner” Flag...

Hand-sewn by Mary Pickersgill and her daughter, the “Star Spangled Banner” flag has had a long and varied career. After flying over Ft . McHenry in Baltimore it was held by the Armisted family in the later 1800s. In 1873, the flag was here in the Charlestown Navy Yard, when Commandant George Henry Preble was in charge of the Yard:



Star Spangled  
Banner in  
Charlestown  
Navy Yard, 1873

Star Spangled  
Banner displayed  
at the  
Smithsonian’s  
National Museum  
of American  
History, 1980s





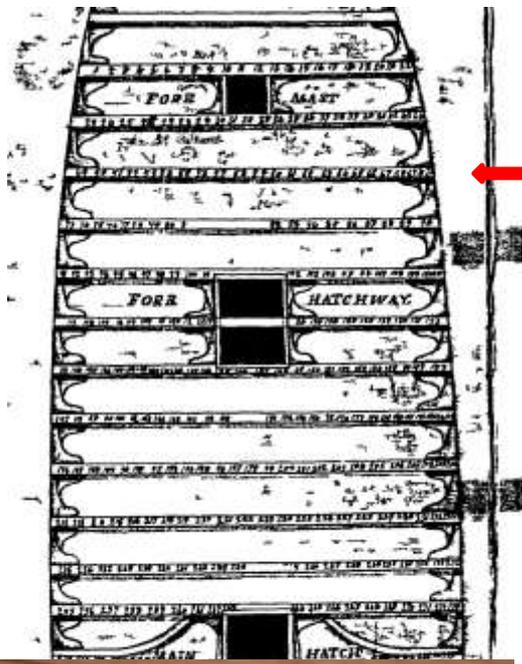
# Hammocks

Each USSC sailor had 2 hammocks – one to sleep in when the other was being cleaned; they were slung from wooden battens from overhead beams on the berth deck (below right); the hammocks were arranged by number (center)

Plan (right), USS *United States*, hammock numbers, overhead berth deck beams, c.1820 – NARA



M. Brenckle photos, left & below center



(above) Royal Navy Marine with hammocks stowed in netting - see number on hammock  
NMM coll.

Hammock, mattress, blanket (above); hammock “clews” (right); clew lashed to wooden batten on beam (far right)  
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HMS *Victory*