

## Marine Lieutenant William Sharp Bush

### How I came to be here

I am Marine Lieutenant William Sharp Bush. I was born in 1786 in Wilmington, Delaware, and grew up there. There is a long tradition of soldiering in my family, so when the British began to insult and provoke our nation recently, I felt it was my duty to join the Delaware militia. I volunteered for the Marines in 1809, and was posted to *Constitution* with the rank of First Lieutenant when this present war began.



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### I lead the ship's smartest men

I am proud to command the bravest, best turned-out men on board the *Constitution*. When battle begins (and I pray this happens soon) I shall deploy them with their muskets on the deck and in the fighting tops, to pick off the enemy one-by-one. Until then, I am – in effect – in charge of the ship's guards and police force.



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### Where you will find me

In battle my station is on the quarterdeck, with the naval officers of the *Constitution*. At other times I am harder to find, for my work takes me wherever my 50 men may be. Some guard the spirit store or grog tub, others the captain's cabin. Sometimes you can find me by following the sound of musket shots, as I watch my sergeants drill the men at marksmanship.





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### Navy and Marines

It is an honor to serve on the *Constitution*, but the ship's seamen make it clear they do not welcome Marines on board. They would rather that a company of *dogs* defended their ship! Even officers fail to respect my men's skills. They are trained fighters, not laborers, yet when it is time to raise the anchor my men are forced to work the capstan alongside *common sailors*!

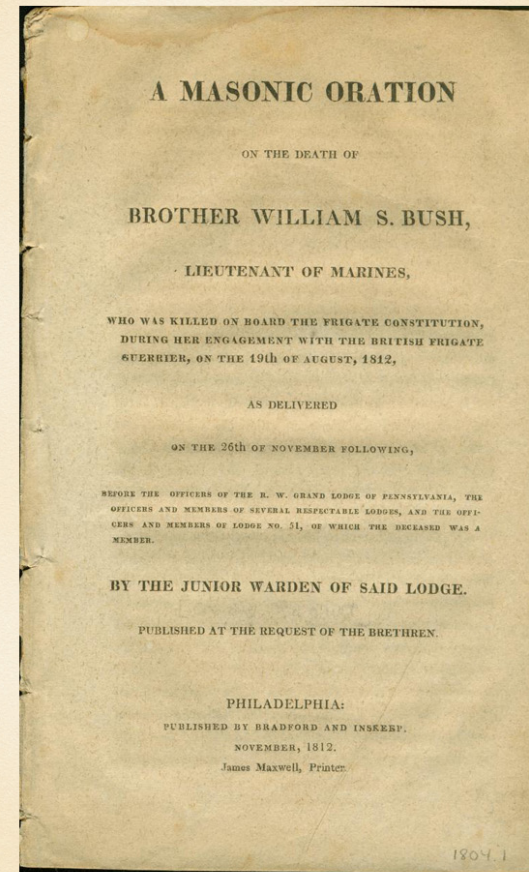




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### What happened to me?

Marine Lieutenant Bush's career on USS *Constitution* was short and ended tragically. In the battle with HMS *Guerrierre*, the rigging of the two vessels became tangled, locking them close together. Seeing an opportunity to jump easily onto *Guerrierre*'s deck, Bush shouted "Shall I board her, sir?" At that moment a Royal Marine shot him through the head, and he died instantly. Congress later honored him with a medal for his part in the battle.



USS Constitution Museum Collection