

Sailor's Story

## Surgeon Amos Evans

### My name (and nick-name)

I am called Amos Evans, though the men know me instead as "Saw-Bones." I learned medicine from Ben Rush, one of our nation's greatest physicians. My love of the sea led me to become a navy surgeon's mate in 1808 (though I might have earned four times more ashore.) After two years I was promoted to full surgeon, and I sailed with *Constitution* in June 1812.



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### My steely, trusted assistants

My cabinet of instruments resembles a carpenter's tool box. Indeed, when a man is brought for surgery, I cover the knives and saws with a cloth, in case he fears that I will make a chair from his bones.

I also bring on board half an apothecary's shop. The jars contain: castor oil and Chinese rhubarb to move the bowels; extract of opium poppy to ease pain; chocolate to stimulate the appetite, and much else besides.



Massachusetts Historical Society Collection



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## How might we make sailors healthier?

Although cannonballs kill many brave sailors, the greater enemy is invisible and silent. I refer to disease, which kills four or five men for each one murdered in battle. I think the shocking mortality would decrease if healthier men enlisted. In particular, recruits should show proof that they have suffered smallpox (and thus cannot carry it.) Those who have no such proof should be vaccinated before coming on board.



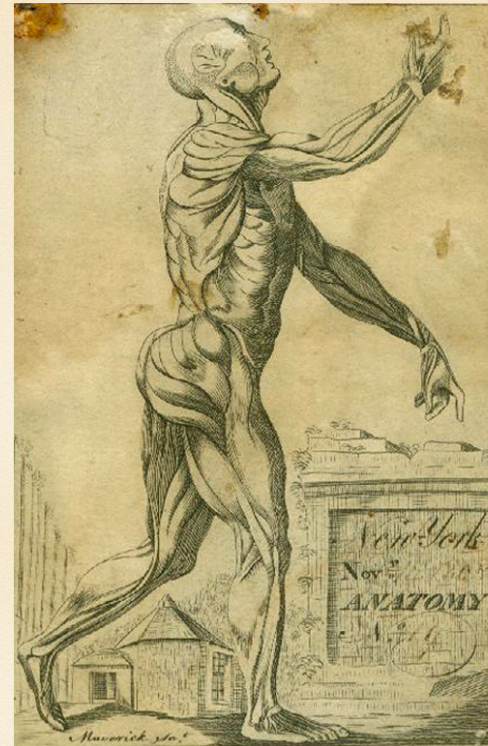


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### How did I fare?

I stayed with the *Constitution* for much of the war, treating the wounded in battles with *Guerriere* and *Java*. When war ended, I served aboard the *Independence*, and was then promoted, when aged 29, to Surgeon of the Fleet. However, when I married, I found my navy salary of \$50 a month insufficient for our needs, and I reluctantly decided to become a physician ashore.



USS Constitution Museum Collection

*Amos Evans died in 1848, aged 63. Eight years later the government awarded him a land grant of 160 acres!*