News of Constitution's victory spread quickly. Crowds gathered on the pier to greet the Ship and to give us a hero's welcome.
A ship becomes a symbol

After USS Constitution’s string of surprising victories over the British during the War of 1812, Americans no longer saw “Old Ironsides” as an ordinary warship. Instead, the Ship became a symbol of the country’s strength and proof that the young nation would succeed.

In My Own Words

“She has been a good friend to many a worthy tar and carried them through long and perilous cruises and done more honor to herself than any other ship in the Navy.”

- Midshipman Pardon Mawney Whipple, 1814

In My Own Words

“Let us keep Old Iron Sides at home. She has, literally, become a Nation’s ship, and should be preserved in honorable pomp, as a glorious monument of her own, and our other naval victories.”

- National Intelligencer May 23, 1815
Captain Isaac Hull’s success in the Guerriere battle made him a national hero. A grateful nation presented him with gifts like this silver urn made by Thomas Fletcher and Sidney Gardiner.

Silver Urn presented by the citizens of Philadelphia to Captain Isaac Hull, 1813
Made by Thomas Fletcher and Sidney Gardiner, Philadelphia, 1813
Private collection
Sing a Victory Song

The song depicted here was printed shortly after Constitution’s victory over HMS Guerriere on August 19, 1812. Set to the tune of “Yankee Doodle” it celebrates the brilliant naval victory when Constitution earned the nickname “Old Ironsides” and became a national symbol.

This song was sung in taverns across the country. Give it a try and sing along. Create your own song set to the tune of “Yankee Doodle” to celebrate an important moment in your family’s life.
THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION FRIGATE'S
ENGAGEMENT WITH THE BRITISH FRIGATE GUERRIERE.

Which after an action of 25 Minutes, Surronded, and being completely Shattered, was blown up, it being impossible to get her into port.

C O M M I T t’em, ye heroes of gold,
Cause all your cars and glories,
Be fun the order of the day,
A health to all our men.
Yankee doodle keep it up,
Yankee doodle dandy,
As hot as British John can sup.
We’ll give it ten hands.

The Constitution long shall be
The glory of our Navy,
For when the Trumpet with a fee
She shall her to old Davy.
Yankee doodle keep it up,
Yankee doodle dandy.
We’ll let the British know that we
At fighting are quite handy.

Not long ago Fine British Ships
Unto her gave a chase on,
But spite of all their guns and cannons
She last was in the race on,
Yankee doodle, keep it up,
Yankee doodle dandy,
Though ten to one, the Yankee ships
At fighting are quite handy.

At length the British ship Guerriere,
Quite generally come across her,
And Davy said, in last to hour,
In his head surely was her,
Yankee doodle, keep it up,
Yankee doodle dandy,
But a sudden hurricane sent they hutch’d,
Became the egg more handy.

But soon, said poor Davy, round
That he was quite mistaken,
And though he got himself well off
By saving of his Bacon.
Yankee doodle, keep it up,
Yankee doodle dandy,
The Yankee Boys for fighting fine,
Are always much more handy.

And now begun the bloody Avery,
The Hull &c thick and but air,
To kill all hope the job was done,
The Constitution went to pot sir,
Yankee doodle, keep it up,
Yankee doodle dandy,
The British did not like the sun,
And yet soon our two handy.

Now here’s a health to CAPTAIN HULL,
And all his noble crew sir,
And should be chosen to fight again,
Big ladies will see him through sure.
Yankee doodle, keep it up,
Yankee doodle dandy,
For riddling British ships I’m sure,
Brave HULL is quite the dandy.

May safe in Boston you may it be,
One girl with smiles shall meet us,
And many true American,
What bad fortune shall we meet us,
Yankee doodle, keep it up,
Yankee doodle dandy,
The brave commander may well count
In punch, and wine, and drinks.

“The American Constitution Frigate’s Engagement with the British Frigate Guerriere” Broadside, c.1812
Collection of the USS Constitution Museum, Boston
What happened to the sailors?

USS Constitution’s sailors returned victorious three times during the War of 1812. Sailors enjoyed their success and received extra pay called prize money. Eventually, they returned to their ordinary lives with just the memory of an extraordinary moment.

Not all sailors were so lucky. Some were injured in battle, and others didn’t return at all.

**William Bush**

Lewis Bush learned of his brother’s death in a letter:

“[William Bush] mounted the taffrail, sword in hand and as he exclaimed ‘Shall I board her’ received the fatal ball in his left cheek… Thus fell that great and good officer who when living was beloved & now gone is deeply regretted by his country & friends but he died as he lived, with honor to both.” - John Contee, Lt. Marines, September 13, 1812

A descendant of Lewis Bush carried this letter with him while serving in World War II to gain strength from the memory of his brave ancestor. The letter is now in the collection of the USS Constitution Museum.

**David Debias**

I joined Constitution’s crew at the tender age of eight. At thirty-two I was serving as a sailor on a merchant ship when it stopped at a port in Alabama. Although born free in the North, officials there suspected I was a runaway slave and imprisoned me. Every day is a nightmare as I wait for proof of my Navy record to arrive and I am free again.

A lawyer sent a letter to the Secretary of the Navy pleading Debias’ case and requesting that his Navy record be sent to his captors as proof that he was not a slave. The Secretary of the Navy responded, confirming his naval service and status as a free man.
Jesse Williams
I helped Constitution earn victories over Guerriere and Java. Later I fought in the successful Battle of Lake Erie for which my state of Pennsylvania awarded me a medal. My luck ran out while assigned to USS Scorpion. The British captured us and we became prisoners of war until the peace treaty was signed.

Williams received the equivalent of 2 1/2 years of wages in prize money. He slips out of history after 1830, when he was living alone in Strasburg Township, Pennsylvania.

Richard Dunn
I suffered a terrible wound in my leg during the battle with Guerriere and the surgeon sawed it off. Because of this, I received a lifetime pension of $6.00 per month and Captain Hull collected $1,000 in donations for me. And for the next 25 years, he found me work at every navy yard he commanded.

Dunn died at age 76 on February 1, 1863.

Pardon Mawney Whipple
Serving in the Mediterranean in 1821 I rescued ten sailors from storm-toss’d boats. Though these deeds brought me some glory, I now realize they were rash because – perhaps as a result – I contracted the Wasting Disease. This has ended my service in the Navy, and I fear may also end me.

Whipple’s worst fears came true when he died from tuberculosis in 1827 at the age of 37. In his will, Whipple left his French books and his shell and mineral collection to his sweetheart, Eliza.
Are you ready for a promotion? Test your seafaring knowledge to find out.

**You will need:**
- Constitution Challenge game board (in back pocket or download from the “Hands-on Activities” link on www.asailorslifeforme.org)
- List of questions (Go to the “Hands-on Activities” link on www.asailorslifeforme.org to print the questions needed)
- 1 die
- Playing pieces (select pieces from another game or use something you have around the house such as buttons or coins)

**How to play:**
- Put player pieces on the “start” square.
- The youngest player goes first.
- After rolling the die, move the appropriate number of spaces forward.
- Depending on the roll, a player will land on either chance spaces or yellow spaces.
  - **Chance spaces** are the squares with images and directions. Example, “For bravery in battle, roll again.”
  - **Yellow spaces** require answering a question.
    - The person to the right of the player reads a question.
    - If the question is answered correctly, the player moves ahead one space.

**To get promoted and win the game:**
- The winner of the game is the one who lands on the end square first with an exact roll.
USS Constitution is the oldest commissioned warship afloat in the world. Launched in Boston in 1797, she saw service in the Quasi War with France, the Barbary Wars, and the War of 1812, emerging with an undefeated record. In 1997, in honor of the 200th anniversary of her launch, Constitution sailed under her own power for the first time in 116 years. She was made America’s Ship of State in 2009. Today, you can visit USS Constitution in Boston, MA year round!

Visit the Ship’s website at:
www.history.navy.mil/ussconstitution/

The USS Constitution Museum is an award winning museum that invites visitors of all ages to participate in the story of “Old Ironsides” through hands-on exhibits and dynamic programming. Come swing in a hammock, fire a cannon, furl a sail, or scrub a deck to see if a sailor’s life is for you. Located next to USS Constitution in Boston, the Museum is open daily.

Go to www.ussconstitutionmuseum.org to plan your visit.