USS CONSTITUTION
ANCHORS, CABLES & STOWAGE

1798-1815

USS Constitution sailed on her first voyage from Boston on July 22, 1798. Between that first voyage and the end of the War of 1812, the following anchors are referred to in different sources:

1798
Dec. Main anchor weighed 59[hundred weight].2[quarters].21 lbs [over 6690 lbs]¹

1799 Sheet & waist² anchors referenced in Constitution’s logs

1803 Oct. Reference made to two 120-fathom 22” anchor cables³

1810 2 Aug Stream anchor stowed in larboard fore chains⁴

1812 8 Sep Received a 1671 lb stream anchor⁵
12 Oct Received a 468 lb kedge anchor⁶

General references are made to the anchors being stowed on the “gunwales”, in the “chains” (i.e. rigging channels), in the waist, and even a stream anchor that was un-stocked and placed in the main hold.

² “Waist” anchors were a stowed aft of the rigging channels, flanking the waist – the open, center section of the upper deck – hence the nomenclature ‘waist’ when referencing that anchor.
³ USS Constitution’s log book. National Archives & Records Administration (NARA)
⁴ ‘Stream anchor …carried as a spare…, normally about one-third of the weight of the bower anchors and sheet anchor, but larger than kedge[anchor].’ The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea, ed. Peter Kemp, 1994. Constitution log entry, NARA
⁵ Navy Agent Amos Binney, Summary Account, 1-30 September 1812, RG217, 4th Auditor’s Accounts, Alphabetical Series, Box 39, NARA
⁶ Binney, 4th Auditor’s Accounts, 1-31 October 1812
Based upon the above references, USS Constitution carried at least the following anchors between 1798 and 1815:

- 2 Bower Anchors
- 1 Sheet Anchor
- 1 Stream Anchor (possibly 2)
- 1 Kedge Anchor (possibly 2)

See below the cropped portions of the plans of the spar deck (left) and of the cable tier (right) of USS United States. Note the stowage of the bower and sheet anchors and the 4 different cables coiled on the cable tier.  

Spar deck, USS United States, c. 1820, plan by Charles Ware

Cable tier, USS United States, c. 1820, plan by Charles Ware

USS President, watercolor attributed to Antoine Roux, c. 1805. 

Detail, ‘waist’ anchor stowed aft, starboard channels, USS President

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7 ‘Plans of the Frigate United States Decks’, c. 1820, Charles Ware. Plan #70887196