



## **Gun Streak (stripe) on USS *Constitution***



c.1833 Michel Felice Cornè Painting, Navy Art Collection  
Showing ochre (yellow) gun streak



Celebration of Washington's  
Birthday (Harbor at Malta)  
James G. Evans, 1809-1859  
1967.010

c.1837 James Evans Painting showing white gun streak  
United States Naval Academy Museum

Documentation concerning USS *Constitution* & the color of her gun streak:

**1804**      October, Nathaniel Haraden, *Constitution* Sailing Master notes several times in his log book that the crew was employed painting

the hull of the ship black and the gun streak/stripe yellow; see *Naval Documents Related to the United States Wars with the Barbary Powers*, Volume 5, between pps. 73-81.

- 1811** April: Painting the “white streak”...  
USS *Constitution* Log, National Archives & Records Administration [NARA]  
**[NOTE: This log entry does not provide enough information to determine if the gun streak had been ochre (“yellow”) up to this time, or if the crew were only repainting the streak white]**
- 1812** Model of USS *Constitution* made by crew for Captain Isaac Hull and presented by Hull to the East India Marine Society (present-Peabody Essex Museum) – gun streak/stripe is white.
- 1814** February 11: Painted the gun streak yellow.  
USS *Constitution* Log, NARA
- 1824** Watercolor portrait, “U.S. Ship *Constitution* 1824” by Nicholas Cammillieri; collections of the USS *Constitution* Museum, Boston – gun streak/stripe is white.
- 1842** January: Board of Naval Commissioners decreed that US Navy ships were to have black hulls with a white gun streak/stripe.  
  
Circular letter, Board of Naval Commissioners, 19 January 1842, RG45, Cir. Ltrs., BNC, NARA
- 1844** “December 20...Since leaving Rio, the ship has been painted white or lead color with a red streak, in place of black with a white streak...the ship is cooler, both inside and out...”  
***Around the World in Old Ironsides, The Voyage of the USS Constitution, 1844-1846*** – Henry George Thomas, Ship’s Carpenter

The Mission of the Naval History & Heritage Command Detachment Boston, who has direct physical care of USS *Constitution*, is to “...maintain [*Constitution*] in satisfactory material condition to perform its mission... and, as far as practicable, ensure material compliance and documentation with the historic requirements of the ship, **as close to its 1812 configuration as possible.**” [emphasis added] The decision, therefore, has been to represent *Constitution* with her white gun streak, as the black and white color scheme is what she displayed for most of the War of 1812.