USS CONSTITUTION

Designer Joshua Humphreys Builder Col. George Claghorn

Crew strength

War of 1812 ► Approximately 450 officers, sailors, and marines Today ► Three U.S. Navy officers and approximately 80 enlisted sailors

Mainmast Height

172 feet from spar deck to mainmast truck (the very top of the mainmast)

Sail Area

44 – 48 sails (over 44,000 square feet of canvas)

Top Speed

Approximately 13 knots (15 mph)

Today ► 1,900+ tons

First Sail

Displacement

2.200 tons. loaded

Launch

July 22, 1798 from Boston

Harbor Commanded by

Capt. Samuel Nicholson

War of 1812 ► Approximately

October 21, 1797

Edmund Hartt's Shipyard,

Boston, Massachusetts

Lenath

207 feet from billethead to taffrail 305 feet overall from flying jibboom to spanker boom

Waterline 175 feet Beam

43 feet 6 inches

Draft (aft)

War of 1812 ► Approximately 24 feet (aft) fully loaded Today ► 22 feet 6 inches(aft)



Scan for more information

War of 1812 ▶

Armament

- · 24 32-pound carronades on the spar deck with a range of 400 yards (4-8 crew members per gun)
- 1 18-pound bow chaser on the spar deck
- 30 24-pound long guns on the gun deck with a range of 1,200 yards (7-14 crew per gun)

Facts

- One of six frigates authorized by Congress with passage of the "Act to provide a Naval Armament" [colloquially referenced as the "Naval Armament Act"] of 1794
- · Constructed with timbers from Maine to Georgia, as well as its first bell, supplied by Paul Revere
- Known best for its actions during the War of 1812 when it captured numerous merchant ships and defeated four British warships in three sea battles: HMS Guerrière, Java, Cyane, and Levant
- · Earned her nickname, "Old Ironsides," during battle with HMS Guerrière when crew noticed that at least one enemy shot hit a hard hull plank which "fell out and sank in the waters." The cry went out: "Huzza! Her sides are made of iron! See where the shot fell out!" [Moses Smith, Naval Scenes in the Last War, or, Three Years aboard the Frigate Constitution and the Adams..., 1846]

Special Duty

Today, Constitution is the oldest commissioned warship afloat. Its crew is are all active-duty members of the U.S. Navy, and the assignment is considered special duty. They use Constitution to promote understanding of the Navy's history and heritage in war and peace through outreach programs, ceremonies, and demonstrations of historic seamanship skills.

Constitution Grove

In 1976, select white oak trees on the Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC), Crane, Indiana, were designated for use in USS Constitution restorations. As white oak trees are harvested for Constitution's preservation, new trees are selected and allowed to mature for future restoration work.