



USS CONSTITUTION

Designer

Joshua Humphreys

Builder

Col. George Claghorn

Launch

October 21, 1797

Edmund Hartt's Shipyard, Boston, Massachusetts

First Sail

July 22, 1798 from Boston Harbor Commanded by Capt. Samuel Nicholson



Draft (aft)

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

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)

Armament

- War of 1812 ►
 - 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)

Sail Area

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

Top Speed

Approximately 13 knots (15 mph)

Displacement

War of 1812 ► Approximately 2,200 tons, loaded Today ► 1,900+ tons.

Length

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

Waterline

175 feet

Beam

43 feet 6 inches



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 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.

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