



# USS CONSTITUTION

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## 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

## 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

## Draft (aft)

War of 1812 ► Approxi-  
mately 24 feet (aft) fully  
loaded  
Today ► 22 feet 6 inches  
(aft)

## 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)

## Crew strength

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

## 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)

## Special Duty

Today, *Constitution* is the oldest commis-  
sioned 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 understand-  
ing of the Navy's history and heritage in war  
and peace through outreach programs,  
ceremonies, and demonstrations of historic  
seamanship skills.

## 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]

## 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.

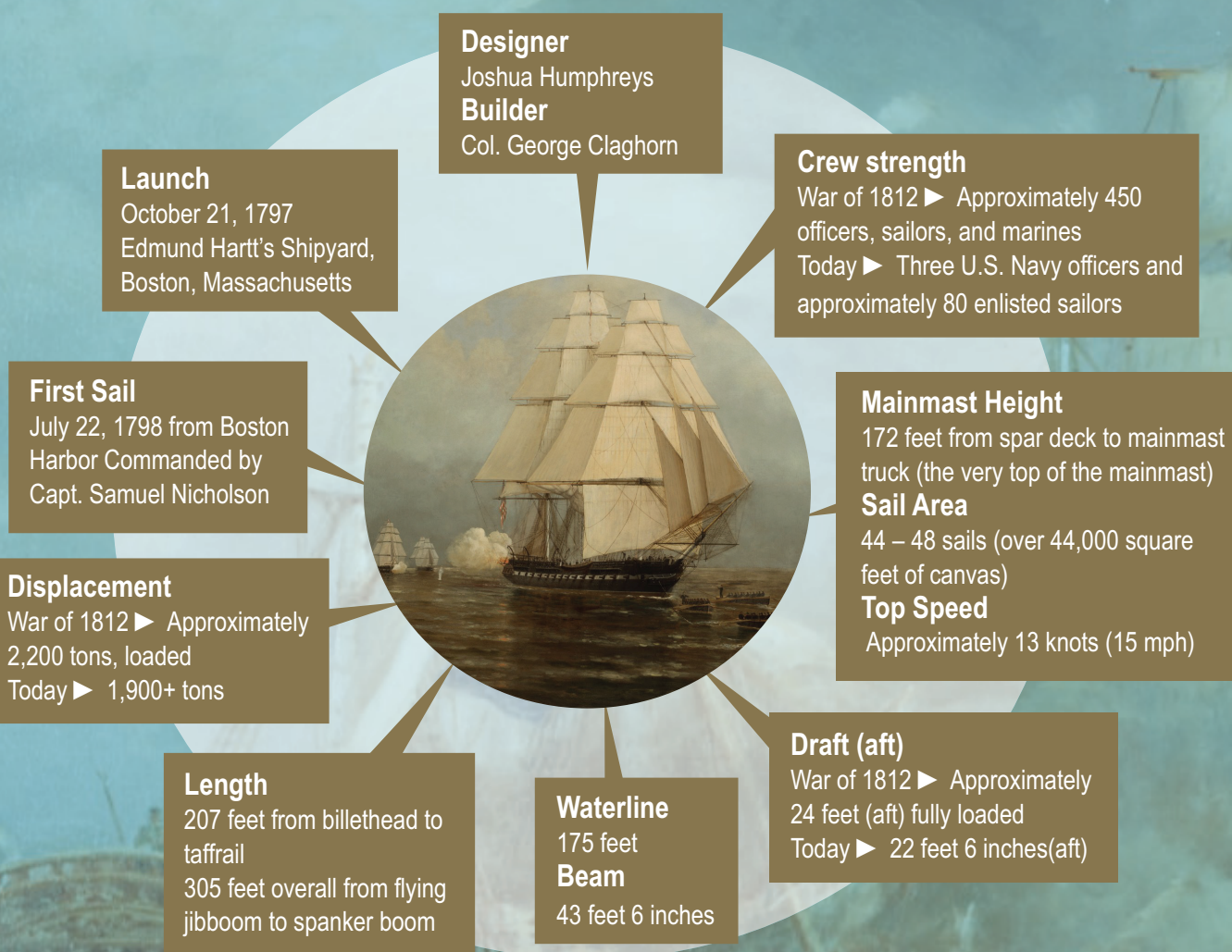


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