



NAVY MEDICINE IN THE AGE OF SAIL

THE SIX FRIGATES

- The U.S. Navy Department was **formally established on April 30, 1798**. **Six sailing frigates** represented the might of the newly established Navy. Authorized by the **Navy Act of March 27, 1794**, these ships symbolized the nation's commitment to maritime strength and projected its growing influence on the world stage.
- Aboard these sailing vessels were the **charter members of today's Navy Medicine**—surgeons, surgeon's mates, and loblolly boys. Together they were responsible for the daily care of sick and injured Sailors and Marines, and build the foundations for medical readiness that continues to this day.



USS UNITED STATES

- Active: 1797 - 1865 // 44-Guns
- Complement: 350
- Notable milestones:
 - first U.S. Navy sailing frigate launched
 - victory over HMS *Macedonian* (Oct. 25, 1812)

USS CONSTELLATION

- Active: 1797 - 1853 // 36-Guns
- Complement: 340
- Notable milestones:
 - first frigate in combat (*L'Insurgente*, Feb. 9, 1799)
 - efforts in Barbary Wars / blockading Tripoli harbor

USS CONSTITUTION

- Active: 1797 - Present // 44-Guns
- Complement: 450
- Notable milestones:
 - War of 1812 victories (HMS *Guerriere* / HMS *Java* / HMS *Cyane* / HMS *Levant*)

USS CONGRESS

- Active: 1799 - 1834 // 44-Guns
- Complement: 340
- Notable milestones:
 - participated in the Second Barbary War (1815)
 - first U.S. Navy ship to visit China (1820)

USS CHESAPEAKE

- Active: 1799 - 1813 // 36-Guns
- Complement: 340
- Notable milestones:
 - participated in Quasi-War / First Barbary War
 - captured by HMS *Shannon* (June 1, 1813)

USS PRESIDENT

- Active: 1800 - 1815 // 44-Guns
- Complement: 400
- Notable milestones:
 - participated in Quasi-War / First Barbary War
 - captured by HMS *Endymion* (Jan. 15, 1815)

CHARTER MEMBERS OF THE U.S. NAVY - 1798

SURGEONS (Commissioned Officers):

Name / Place of Origin / Date Commissioned

George Balfour / Virginia / March 9
George Gillasspy / Pennsylvania / March 9
William Read / Massachusetts / March 9
John Rush / Pennsylvania / May 11
William Turner / Rhode Island / June 7
Joseph Anthony / Unknown / June 20
George Wright / Maryland / June 20
Larkin Thorndyke / Massachusetts / July 3
Thomas Rowland / Unknown / July 25
Thomas Reynolds / New Jersey / Sept. 10
Geoffrey Shanley / Maryland / Sept. 10
John Kovall Read, Jr. / Virginia / Sept. 12
Nathaniel Broadstreet / Mass. / Sept. 23
Joseph Lee / Unknown / October 27

SURGEON'S MATES (Warrant Officers):

Name / Place of Origin / Date of Warrant

Charles Blake / Massachusetts / March 9
John Bullus / England / March 9
Isaac Henry / Pennsylvania / March 9
John Parker / Delaware / May 11
Robert Harris / Pennsylvania / July 17
Henry Wells / Maryland / July 25
Hanson Catlett / Maryland / August 3
John Hart / Unknown / Sept. 10
Thomas Carpenter / Massachusetts / Oct. 27
Adolph Lent / New York / Dec. 31

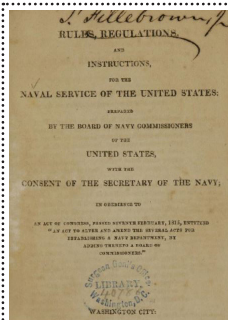
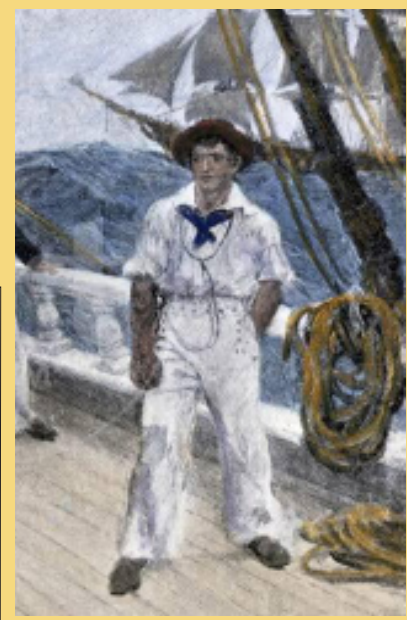
NAVY MEDICINE FAST FACTS

THE FIRST LOBLOLLY BOY

- Aboard the Navy's first sailing vessels were enlisted medical attendants called "loblolly boys."
- When John Wall of Alexandria, Virginia, reported aboard USS *Constellation* on June 1, 1798, he became the first loblolly boy of record.
- The name Loblolly boy was adopted from the British Royal Navy. The name was derived from the word "lob" meaning "to bubble and boil" and "lolly" meaning "broth or soup." Loblolly boys were associated with a porridge or thick gruel they administered to the sick and injured.
- The U.S. Navy formally adopted "loblolly boy" as an official rate in 1814.

WHAT DID A LOBLOLLY BOY DO?

- The Navy first outlined the duties of a loblolly boy in the **Navy Regulations of 1818**. Official duties included:
 - Ring a small bell "fore and aft the gun berth decks" to **notify the crew of sick call**.
 - Fill a small washtub with sand to receive the blood during any operation, and **prevent the deck of the cockpit (the location of the sickbay) from being bloodied**.
 - Ensure that the surgeon and surgeon's mates have all **necessary provisions and hospital stores for treating the sick and injured**.



"DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP!"

- On June 1, 1813, 25 miles off the coast of Boston, Mass., the sailing frigate USS *Chesapeake* was attacked by the Royal Navy vessel HMS *Shannon*.
- In the 15-minute melee, **85 Sailors and Marines aboard *Chesapeake* were wounded and 61 were killed outright or died from their wounds**. Among the casualties was the ship's captain, James Lawrence.
- The role of caring for the injured fell to the *Chesapeake*'s medical team--**Surgeon Richard C. Edgar and Surgeon's Mate John Dix**. From a cramped, dimly-lit cockpit hidden in the depths of the ship, Edgar and Dix dressed wounds, applied tourniquets, sawed off limbs and cauterized stumps with "hot pitch."
- Lawrence, their most notable patient, **suffered from musket wounds to his right leg and intestines**. His leg could be amputated, and he could be given laudanum for his pain, but the intestinal wound was fatal.
- In his anguished state, Lawrence is said to have cried out to his doctors to "keep the guns going" and, repeatedly, **"Don't give up the ship!"**
- Lawrence would linger another three days before succumbing to his injuries. **His final words, first spoken to Drs. Edgar and Dix, survive to this day as a motto of the U.S. Navy.**



SHIPBOARD SURGERIES AND ORLOP DECKS

- Aboard sailing frigates, surgeries were **performed in cockpits located in the stern of the orlop deck--the lowest deck aboard the ship**.
- Ambulatory patients were allowed to return to shipboard duties or given menial tasks. **Those needing more time to recuperate rested in their hammocks located in the berth decks (directly below the gun deck!)**

SOURCES:

Artwork:

- All artwork courtesy of Navy Art Gallery, Navy History and Heritage Command and USS *Constitution* Museum.

Publications:

- Greaves, A. (1904). *James*

Lawrence, Captain, United States Navy, Commander of the "Chesapeake." New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

- Langley, H.L. (1995). *A History of Medicine in the Early U.S. Navy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins.