

NAVY DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
DIVISION OF NAVAL HISTORY (OP 09B9)
SHIPS' HISTORIES SECTION

U. S. FRIGATE CONSTELLATION

On March 27, 1794, the President of the United States approved an Act of Congress authorizing the acquisition of six vessels for the protection of our commerce against the depredations of the Barbary powers. These vessels became the frigates UNITED STATES, CONSTELLATION, CONSTITUTION, PRESIDENT, CONGRESS and CHESAPEAKE. Construction on them started under the direction of the War Department, as the Navy Department was not formed until Act of Congress approved April 30, 1798. The Act of Congress approved April 20, 1796, authorized the completion of UNITED STATES, CONSTITUTION, and CONSTELLATION, but delayed the building of the other three frigates.

Designed by Naval Constructor Joshua Humphreys, the frigate CONSTELLATION was built at the shipyard of Samuel and Joseph Sterrett at Baltimore, Maryland, under the immediate supervision of Captain Thomas Truxtun, U. S. Navy, and Naval Constructor David Stodder. She cost \$314,212 to build.

The keel of the Baltimore frigate was laid in 1795. She was built of live oak, cedar, and pine brought from various parts of the country. CONSTELLATION was launched on 7 September 1797, the second of the new ships to go down the ways. The dimensions of the CONSTELLATION as originally built were: length between perpendiculars, 164 feet; breadth of beam, moulded, 40 feet, 6 inches; depth in hold, 13 feet, 6 inches.

Principal mast and spar dimensions (as issued by the War Department on July 18, 1794, for a 36-gun frigate) were:

	<u>Length</u>	<u>Head</u>	<u>Diameter</u>
Mainmast, whole length	93'4"	12'9"	31-1/3"
Foremast, whole length	86'2"	12'9"	20-2/3"
Mizen mast, whole length	86'2"	9'6"	21-1/2"

Arms

Main yard, whole length	80'	4'6"	17"
Fore yard, whole length	76'	4'3"	16"
Cross-jack yard, whole length	57'6"	3'2"	12"
Bowsprit, whole length	67'6"	--	28-3/4"
Jib-boom, whole length	43'2"	--	14-1/3"

CONSTELLATION was initially of 1,265 tons. First planned for 36 guns, being large enough, she generally carried 38; originally 28 and 24 pounders on her gun deck and 10 and 12 pounders on her spar deck. Her complement was 340 officers and men. Her sailing qualities were so fine that the British nicknamed her the "Yankee Race Horse".

