



The American Revolution

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Sons of the American Revolution

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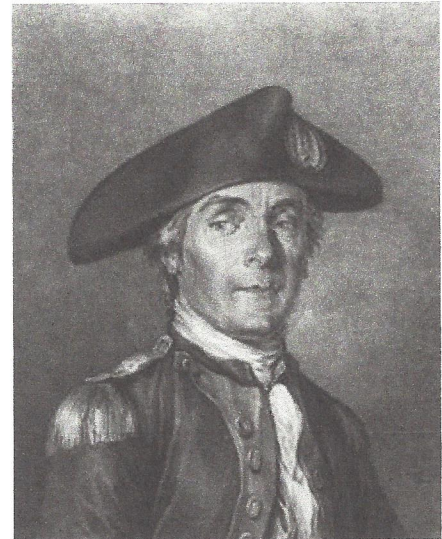
The Continental Navy: Article 1 of 1

The first movement for the creation of a continental navy was made by the 2nd Continental Congress proposing a resolution detailing the construction, financing, and maintenance of a fleet, “sufficient in force as to be effective in its annoyance of America’s enemies.” This resolution was first proposed by representatives in the Rhode Island Assembly, so that merchants engaged in the smuggling of goods could be protected from the British fleet. It was met with an uproar of criticism, especially from the Maryland delegates at the 2nd Continental Congress. John Adams was a strong supporter of the resolution, but conceded that the opposition to this measure was loud, strong and condemning. The measure was introduced on the Rhode Island Assembly floor on 26 August 1775, and then on 3 October 1775, it was introduced at the 2nd Continental Congress. The Congress tabled the motion. Rhode Island proceeded on with its project and Governor Nicholas Cooke signed orders naming Captain Abraham Whipple as Commander of the sloop *Katy*.

Concurrently, General George Washington began acquiring ships, and by paying from his own pocket, he purchased the schooner *Hannah*, and had her commissioned and launched on 5 September 1775. On 13 October 1775, the 2nd Continental Congress,

meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, passed the resolution creating a Continental Navy. This is the date of official creation for the United States Navy. They also authorized the purchase of two vessels intended for armament, and attacking of British merchant ships. The vessels were the *Andrew Doria*, and the *Cabot*. The first ship to be commissioned was the *Alfred*, which was purchased on 4 November 1775, and commissioned on 3 December of that year.

The 2nd Continental Congress authorized the construction of thirteen frigates, five ships of 32 guns each, five ships of 28 guns each, and three ships of 24 guns. This action came on 13 December 1775. The 32 gun vessels were: *Hancock*, *Raleigh*, *Randolph*, *Warren* and *Washington*. The 28 gun vessels were: *Effingham*, *Montgomery*, *Providence*, *Trumble*, and *Virginia*. The 24 gun vessels were: *Boston*, *Congress*, and *Delaware*. Several politically influential commanders were selected for service. Thus, Esek Hopkins, Dudley Saltonstall, and John Burroughs each received his political appointment. Simultaneously, Abraham Whipple, Nicholas Biddle, and John Paul Jones were appointed to command positions, because of their marine experience. Among these latter, young Lieutenant John Paul Jones would stand out singularly. Esek Hopkins was named Naval Commander-in-Chief, while Saltonstall, Biddle, Hopkins and Whipple were made Captains of the *Alfred*, *Andrew Doria*, *Cabot*, and *Columbus*, respectively. This fleet along with the *Providence*,



*Captain John Paul Jones,
Continental Navy, 1776*

Wasp, and *Hornet* led the first major naval action conducted by the Continental Navy during their March, 1776, assault on Nassau, Bahamas. On 6 April 1776, while returning from Nassau, this squadron accompanied by the *Fly*, encountered the 20 gun HMS *Glascow* in combat, which proved to be a disaster for the Continental Navy. All could have been lost, but for the quick action, bravery, intelligent command and sea worthy skills of a young Lieutenant, John Paul Jones.

Guarding American commerce and raiding British commerce were the main duties of the Continental Navy. Privateering was also a lucrative business, quietly sanctioned by the continental government. Privateers seem to have enjoyed success at this. Lloyd's of London calculated that 2,208 British ships were taken by Yankee privateers, and this amounted to almost \$ 66 million in booty. Next article; if the Navy is here, the Marines must not be far behind!