1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: USS *Constellation* (Frigate)

Other Name/Site Number: United States Sloop of War *Constellation*

Designated a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior May 23, 1963.
Updated documentation approved by the Secretary of the Interior July 13, 2011.

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Pier 1, Constellation Dock Not for publication:__

City/Town: Baltimore Vicinity:__

State: Maryland County: Baltimore (Independent City) Code: 510 Zip Code: 21202

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property	Category of Property
Private: X	Building(s):
Public-Local:	District:
Public-State:	Site:
Public-Federal:	Structure: X
	Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing		Noncontributing	
buildings	0	buildings	0
sites	0	sites	0
structures	1	structures	0
objects	0	objects	0
Total	1	Total	0

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ Entered in the National Register
___ Determined eligible for the National Register
___ Determined not eligible for the National Register
___ Removed from the National Register
___ Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	Sub:
Transportation	water-related
Defense	naval facility
Current: Recreation and Culture	Sub: museum

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Naval Ship Sloop

MATERIALS:
Foundation: wood (hull)
Walls: wood (hull)
Roof: wood (deck)
Other: metal (guns)

Summary

The USS *Constellation*'s career in naval service spanned one hundred years; from commissioning on July 28, 1855, at Norfolk Navy Yard, Virginia, to final decommissioning on February 4, 1955, at Boston, Massachusetts.[1] During that century this sailing sloop of war, sometimes termed a "corvette," was nationally significant for its antebellum service, particularly for its role in the effort to end the foreign slave trade. It is also nationally significant as a major resource in the mid-nineteenth century United States Navy representing a technological turning point in the history of US naval architecture. In addition, the USS *Constellation* is significant for its Civil War activities, its late-nineteenth century missions, and for its unique contribution to international relations both at the close of the nineteenth century and during World War II.

At one time it was believed that *Constellation* was a 1797 ship contemporary to the frigate *Constitution* moored in Boston. This led to a long-standing controversy over the actual identity of the *Constellation*. Maritime scholars long ago reached consensus that the vessel currently moored in Baltimore is the 1850s US Navy sloop of war, not the earlier 1797 frigate.

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The USS *Constellation,* now preserved at Baltimore, Maryland, was built at the navy yard at Norfolk, Virginia. The ship was launched on August 26, 1854, and commissioned on July 28, 1855. Designed by the navy's chief constructor John Lenthall, the vessel was a sloop of war, sometimes called a corvette.[2] Both terms denote a square-rigged warship with its battery on a single deck. This is in contrast to a frigate which had the main battery divided: cannons on the main gun deck and on the raised forecastle and quarterdeck. Some later frigates had two complete gun decks.

The *Constellation* was originally armed with sixteen 8-inch, 64 pdr. shell guns and four additional 32-pdrs. on the gun deck. *Constellation* was built with a complete spar deck, protecting the main battery. Two 10-inch shell guns, one forward and one aft, were mounted on pivoting carriages on the spar deck. These mounts enabled firing each of these guns on either side, forward or aft.[3]

The ship was nearly as large as a frigate of the era. Lenthall's plan called for a hull 176 feet between perpendiculars and moulded beam under the planking of 41 feet; length (extreme) from knighthead to taffrail was 186 feet. For comparison sake, the frigate *Constitution* of 1797 measured 175 feet between perpendiculars and 43′6″ moulded beam; the original frigate *Constellation*, also from 1797, was 164′x 40′6″. The latter carried thirty-six guns, twenty-eight of which were on the gun deck, while the rest were on the forecastle and quarterdeck.[4]

The confusion between the 1797 ship and the rebuilt 1855 *Constellation* stemmed from the work done at the Norfolk yard in 1853 and 1854. The old frigate was no longer serviceable and would have to be replaced. As there was no congressional authorization to build a new vessel, funds authorized for "repair" would be used instead. The vessel would be "administratively rebuilt," and thus officially remain the old *Constellation*, when in fact a newly built vessel would replace the old *Constellation*.

This "administrative rebuilding" was not unusual and it was commonly done until the Navy adopted steam as auxiliary power for its warships in the 1850s. The structure of wooden naval ships was such that major portions

[1] She was moved to Baltimore, Maryland, in the summer of 1955.
[2] Glenn Williams, USS *Constellation* (Virginia Beach, VA: Donning, 2000), 12.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Donald L. Canney, *Sailing Warships of the U.S. Navy* (London: Chatham, 2001), 41–42; Howard I. Chapelle, *The History of the American Sailing Navy* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1949), 128.

of a ship could routinely be replaced. After a two- to three-year cruise, every vessel needed repairing and replacing due to wood rot. It was not a great stretch from simply replacing planking to replacing rotten structural pieces such as futtocks. Before the era of iron ship construction, the need for detailed, dimensioned plans was minimal. While the vessel was out of the water and portions were being replaced, actual changes in the ship's hull design could be introduced with minimal effort and little more acknowledgement than verbal instructions from the naval constructor to the work supervisors.

In this case, naval constructor John Lenthall designed a new sailing sloop of war, providing complete plans and specifications. The old frigate was then hauled out of the water at the yard's north slip and dismantling was begun. Meanwhile, 600 yards away, in Shiphouse B, a new ship was laid down; it was begun literally from the keel up. There were briefly two *Constellation*s, or at least one being torn down while another was being built.[5] The fact that the two were in separate locations raises the question that if the old vessel was to simply be repaired, why was that work not done in place? Furthermore, if only a major "repair" was envisioned, there would have been no need for complete plans for the entire ship.

Other salient facts point to the creation of a new ship, rather than an old one being rebuilt. Though the difference in breadth between the two ships is small (about a foot), the length differs by twelve feet. The hull design (shape) is also distinctly different: the old vessel possessed curved rising floors, typical of late eighteenth-century design. The new vessel had straight rising floors—that is a straight line could be traced from the point where the frames met the keel—upwards to the curve of the bilge.[6]

The most telling difference is in the "room and space," that is, the distance between the pairs of frames or the ribs of the vessels. The old frigate had 26-inch spacing; the new sloop had 32-inch spacing. The increase in frame spacing was possibly due in part to weight differentiations between the frigate and the sloop type vessels. The crew size changed from 340 for a 36-gun vessel to about 230 for a 22-gun sloop. A 36-gun battery weighed some 15 tons more than that of a 22-gun ship. Thus, for every given longitudinal dimension, fewer frames were necessary on the new sloop as opposed to the original frigate. Since the frames are the major lateral structural elements on a wooden ship, changing the "room and space" changed the entire hull structure.[7] The change in the gunports and the gunport spacing to accommodate the larger shell guns on the new ship were among the most visible changes.

The question of whether pieces of the old *Constellation*'s hull were incorporated into the new ship is still in dispute. A related point is how much of the new ship's hull was from the old vessel? Given the nature of wooden ship building, and the fact that the old was being cut up as the new was being built, some useful wood may have made it from the old ship to the new. However, given the reports of the time that a large percentage of the hull was rotten, the percentage reused may have been small.[8] Re-using some of the old vessel does not constitute carrying the old vessel's identity to a new ship being built from the keel up with a new design.

The status of the ship was not clarified by the navy itself. In the Secretary of the Navy's 1855 report, the *Constellation* was listed as "rebuilt". However, the "built" date in the same document is "1855". The 1860 report also repeats "rebuilt," but uses the date "1854". These and other annual reports of the era consistently

---

[5] Dana M. Wegner, *Fouled Anchors: The Constellation Question Answered* (Bethesda, MD: David Taylor Research Center, 1992), 90.

[6] Canney, Sailing Warships, 161; Chapelle, American Sailing Navy, 466–8.

[7] Wegner, *Fouled Anchors*, 38; Chapelle, *American Sailing Navy*, 466 & Plan 8; Gun weight calculations based on statistics from Spencer Tucker, *Arming the Fleet*, 147 and 197 (weights used are for the tube only); K. Jack Bauer and Stephen S. Roberts, *Register of Ships of the US Navy, 1775–1990* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 9 and 23.

[8] W. M. P. Dunne, "The Frigate *Constellation* Clearly Was No More: Or Was She?", *American Neptune* 53, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 93. Dunne suggested about 1800 cubic feet of the old frigate's timbers were re-used in the new ship. Wegner noted that the total amount of wood used for the ship was over 16,000 cu. ft.

listed the vessel as being built at Norfolk ("Gosport") yard. The navy's annual reports continued this identification through the turn of the century.[9]

In 1909, the navy's annual report listed the vessel as being built in Baltimore in 1797. A few years later Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, testified in Congress advocating for funding for alterations to return the ship to its War of 1812 configuration. No mention was made of the 1850s rebuild. By 1921, the government-published *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, listed *Constellation* as the 1797 frigate.

It is noteworthy that the *Constellation* was one of the surviving historical vessels included in a more general effort to preserve and glorify the nation's naval and maritime heritage. In 1935, legislation was introduced to allow federal funds for preserving *Constellation, Constitution,* steam sloop *Hartford*, *Olympia,* and the first America's Cup winner, yacht *America*. President Franklin D. Roosevelt supported having all these vessels preserved and on display together on the Potomac in Washington, DC. The legislation eventually failed due to disagreements over location of the proposed site. In any event, this failure, and others, led to the eventual loss of two of the ships: *Hartford* and *America*.[10]

The ship's authenticity was first questioned in the 1940s, and, in 1949, historian and naval architect Howard I. Chapelle published *The History of the American Sailing Navy*, in which he unequivocally stated that the existing ship was built at Norfolk in 1853–54.

Through the next four decades the controversy over the ship continued, involving naval architects, historians, local, and state historical groups, Congress, and the press. Supporters of the Baltimore-built argument produced documents, allegedly "original," addressing the major differences between the old and new ships. Using these documents the Baltimore-built supporters claimed that the major changes in the ship occurred before the 1850s rebuild, supporting a continuous timeline for the ship from 1797 to the present.

At some point the authenticity of these supporting documents came under question. It was soon proven, through modern investigative techniques, and the participation of the FBI, that all the documents purporting to show the vessel was still the 1797 ship were the work of a modern hand. A faked National Archives rubber stamp and a modern typewriter were used in the creation of these documents. The perpetrator, or perpetrators, of this work even invented entire archival collections which did not exist, as the source of many of these questionable documents. The "originals" for many of these documents were allegedly destroyed in a fire in the facility.

In 1991, the navy's David Taylor Research Center published *Fouled Anchors: The Constellation Question Answered* which detailed the investigation and finally lay to rest many of the questions. The center concluded that the ship was built in Norfolk in 1853–55. One of the major authorities, who had argued for the 1797 date for the vessel, finally agreed with *Fouled Anchors'* identification of the ship. Supporters of the 1797 date still contend, however, that the relic's "spiritual provenance"—supported by the potential reuse of some of the frigate's timbers—dated to 1797.[11] While this viewpoint is questionable, it does not detract from the significance of the ship as it is preserved today.

[9] Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1855, 134; Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1860, 235; Wegner, Fouled Anchors, 6.

[10] Wegner, *Fouled Anchors*; USS *Constitution* was designated an NHL in 1960, the USS *Constellation* in 1963, and the USS *Olympia* in 1964.

[11] Dunne, "The Frigate *Constellation*," 95.

Historical Changes to the Vessel

The various uses of the *Constellation* have determined the changes made over the years. In her active duty years, few changes were made, or necessary. During the training ship years, modifications were made to her battery and to some of her accommodations. When it was a "historical relic" and displayed for War of 1812 anniversary celebrations, cosmetic changes to approximate her appearance from that earlier era, were done. Variations on these changes occurred through the years while moored at Baltimore, until the controversy was settled. Most recently, a major effort was made in the late 1990s to thoroughly repair and refit the ship to her appearance dating to before and during the Civil War.

During her pre-Civil War and Civil War years there was one major change, and that was in the ship's battery. Captain Charles H. Bell, the commander during its first cruise in the Mediterranean, had the two 10-inch shell guns removed, as inimical to its sailing qualities. This was done despite ample evidence of its speed during this cruise.[12] During the Civil War, the two upper deck guns were much lighter Parrott rifles, one forward (30 pdr.) and one aft (20 pdr.) These two guns were also on pivot rails.[13]

When the ship began its training role in the post-Civil War years, some obvious changes were made in its interior arrangements to accommodate the midshipmen. These included cabin spaces, washrooms, and waterclosets. To ease in conning the vessel, a navigating bridge was built across its upper deck. Its main battery was reduced to eight 9-inch Dahlgren smoothbores plus two larger guns. In the winter of 1871–72, two large gun ports were made, one on each side of the gun deck, amidships. Each was ten feet long to provide a good field of fire for one 100-pdr. Parrott rifle and one 11-inch Dahlgren. Both guns were mounted on pivot rails for ease in training the guns to either side.[14]

With the centennial of the War of 1812 and Star Spangled Banner Centennial celebration, *Constellation* underwent a restoration to the 1812 period. This entailed fabricating guns of the earlier era, removing the navigating bridge, and replacing the iron capstans with wooden ones.[15]

In World War II, modifications, particularly in the heating of the ship to accommodate the admiral of the Atlantic fleet in relative comfort, were made. The changes may also have included two small houses on the fore part of its spar deck, seen in photos of the ship during the war and afterward.

The last major changes in the ship, before its major reconstruction in the 1990s, were made after it was moved to Baltimore in the 1950s. Working on the assumption that the vessel was the 1797 frigate, the new owners of the ship worked to restore the vessel to the era when the frigate *Constellation* made its reputation. The most obvious modification was reconstructing the head. The enclosed head characteristic of the conservative 1850s style was replaced by turn-of-the-nineteenth-century style open rails. Other minor changes included replacing the two-piece (upper and lower) gunports with single hinged units, removing modern door knobs, and replacing them with iron latches. A large carved eagle was also mounted on its stern.[16]

In November 1998, the *Constellation* underwent its most recent rebuilding. It was towed to a dry dock near Fort McHenry in Baltimore and taken out of the water. The goal was to restore the ship to its original appearance as

[12] Paul Powichrowski (*Constellation* ship manager), interview by author, June 16, 2009; Williams, USS *Constellation*, 14.
[13] Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navy in the War of the Rebellion…ser. 2, vol. 1, 66.
[14] Williams, USS *Constellation*, 57.
[15] Ibid., 62–63.
[16] Powichrowski, interview.

a mid-nineteenth century sloop of war. In the process, the ravages of the years would also be addressed. A total of 9 million dollars was raised for the project which lasted about nineteenth months.[17]

The first and most critical part of the process was removal of the "hog" in its hull. "Hog" is the term for the "drooping" or sagging of the ends of a vessel. *Constellation*'s "hog" measured 38 inches; in other words, at its center the keel was 38 inches higher than at each end. This problem, with its obvious dangers, had to first be addressed. The process began by setting the hull on pre-set keel blocks of heights graduated to match the curve of the keel. This prevented a sudden redistribution of weight which would occur if the hull was placed on a flat surface. The keel blocks were systematically reduced in height to gradually return the keel to straightness. It took about six months to bring the keel down and straighten it. Along with it, the entire interconnected framework of the ship came down.[18]

Then demolition of the hull was begun, top to bottom. All rotten planks and frame timbers were removed in preparation for their replacement with new material. The use of live oak, which had been used originally for its frames, was not practical as it was now a protected species and very expensive. The restoration used purple heart, tatabu, and mora, South American hard woods which were equal in density, if not weight, to live oak.[19]

As the planking was removed it became obvious that the top timbers and third futtocks would all have to be replaced. The planking itself was removed at least to the turn of the bilge. The lower twelve strakes of planking were still viable and could be retained, as well as the lower part of the hull structure. Copper fastenings found in the hull that were stamped "GNY" testified to the complete construction of the hull at Gosport Navy Yard, not Baltimore. Additionally, the entire stem was found to be in poor condition and was removed. Hull timbers were always replaced one-for-one. If rot was found in a futtock, for instance, rather than having the rotten portion removed and replaced, the piece was entirely replaced.[20]

Once the deteriorated frame pieces were replaced with bronze fastenings, a new process to replace the planking began. Consideration of cost, economy, and longevity led to a change in the form of planking for the area above the lower nine strakes. This saved more than ten to twenty million dollars and allowed the project to be completed within a reasonable budget. The "cold mold" method involved layers of wood and epoxy glue. The inner layer was of Douglas fir, 2″ thick by 6″, attached by bronze lag bolts to the frames and running longitudinally. This was planed and faired, then topped by a ¾-inch fir layer, laid diagonally. A second diagonal layer followed this, crossing the first layer. Finally, another 1 ½-inch layer was laid on fore-and-aft, for a total of 5 inches. This was equal to the thickness of the original planking. The whole new structure formed an impervious, solid mass which actually added significantly to the ship's strength, and the longitudinal stability and integrity of the hull, in particular. In addition, the process was designed to be reversible, in the event a more traditional rebuild is possible in the future. The entire process made it possible for about 50 percent of the ship's hull structure to be preserved.[21] Every bit of the material removed and replaced was photo documented to a high standard and the work was approved by the Maryland State Historic Preservation Office, the US Navy, and the National Park Service before proceeding.[22]

[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.; Williams, USS *Constellation*, 68.
[19] Powichrowski, interview.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.; Williams, USS *Constellation*, 68.
[22] National Park Service Maritime Heritage Program Files, Washington, DC.

The major exterior change made during this work was the replacement of the head, cutwater, stem, etc. Using original plans, the entire structure was built to conform to the enclosed head of 1854. At the stern, the carved eagle was removed. By July 1999, the ship was out of drydock and back in Baltimore's Inner Harbor.[23]

As of 2009, the ship closely conforms to its configuration during the Civil War. On the spar deck, a reproduction Parrott rifle is used for demonstrations. Near the stern is a double steering wheel, an exact reproduction of one taken from the old ship. The original is now on display in the museum area of the main building. On the gun deck are reproductions of its 8-inch guns, all made to specifications from its original gun plans. Also on the gun deck is the iron galley and the captain's cabin, the latter done with excellent joiner work and finish. The next deck below is the berth deck, which includes the crew's quarters, officers' ward room, and cabins. Much of the original woodwork was still useable with repairs and refinishing. Forward is the cockpit (sick bay). Cabinetwork in this area has been refinished and modified with glass windows for exhibits. The orlop deck, aft, has storage areas for the sailmaker and the dispensary. Along with ballast, the hold and some of its original frames, can be seen. Throughout the ship, modern additions such as electrical wiring are carefully hidden or disguised to be as inconspicuous as possible. A portable escalator has been installed for the handicapped as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Maryland State office in charge of compliance.[24]

There is more work to be done, but none of it is critical to the fabric of the vessel and its historic integrity. The ship is very high in the water. It is estimated that another 250 tons is needed to bring the ship down to its designed 18 foot draft. This shortfall stems from the lighter timber used in the new construction, as well as the lighter weight of the reproduction guns. There is also no longer a two-hundred plus crew on board. Replacing the original water tanks will add much of the needed weight. The water tanks were of iron and, when funds are available, they will be reproduced. When filled, the tanks and water will weigh about 150 tons.[25]

There are no gunport lids on the ship as of October 2009. These were originally two-part structures, opening half upward and half downward. Plans are ready to reproduce these when funds are available. At present, the hull is not coppered but this will be very expensive and the cost is not within the budget. Currently, the ship is scheduled to be back out of the water by January 2010. This will be the ship's first time out of the water since 1998–99.[26]

[23] Ibid., Williams, USS *Constellation*, 68.
[24] Powichrowski, interview; Visit and tour of ship by author, June 16, 2009.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: X Statewide:__ Locally:__

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B__ C__ D__

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A__ B__ C__ D__ E__ F__ G__

NHL Criteria: 1

NHL Theme(s): IV. Shaping the Political Landscape
3. military institutions and activities
VIII. Changing Role of the United States in the World Community
1. international relations

Areas of Significance: Military
Politics/Government

Period(s) of Significance: 1853–1945

Significant Dates: 1859–1861

Significant Person(s): n/a

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Architect/Builder: n/a

Historic Contexts: V. Political and Military Affairs, 1783–1860
J. The Rise of Sectionalism, 1840–1859
K. The Army and Navy
VII. Political and Military Affairs, 1865–1939
D. America Becomes a World Power, 1865–1914
2. Politics and Diplomacy
XXXI. Social and Humanitarian Movements
D. Abolitionism

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The USS *Constellation*'s career in naval service spanned one hundred years: from commissioning on July 28, 1855 at Norfolk Navy Yard, Virginia, to final decommissioning on February 4, 1955, at Boston, Massachusetts. She was moved to Baltimore, Maryland in the summer of 1955. During that century this sailing sloop of war, sometimes termed a "corvette," was nationally significant for its antebellum service, particularly for its role in the effort to end the foreign slave trade. It is also nationally significant as a major resource in the mid-nineteenth century United States Navy representing a technological turning point in the history of U.S. naval architecture. In addition, the USS *Constellation* is significant for its Civil War activities, its late-nineteenth-century missions, and for its unique contribution to international relations both at the close of the nineteenth century and during World War II.

The Founding Fathers left unsettled several grave questions in the United States Constitution. The most serious of these related to limitations on the slave trade within and outside the country. On the international front, would the foreign slave trade end, and when? The Constitution itself set in place a half-measure, calling for an end to the foreign slave trade on January 1, 1808, but without a method of enforcing the law. When the small local Revenue Cutter Service proved inadequate to the task subsequent laws both broadened the powers of the Revenue Cutters and added a United States naval squadron to capture American slavers on the Atlantic. The single most important surviving remnant of that African Antislavery Patrol today is the corvette *Constellation*, a one-time flagship of the squadron and a successful hunter of piratical slavers on the coast of Africa.

From her beginning, *Constellation* marked a turning point in the technological history of the United States Navy. By the mid-1850s, steam power had progressed from a dangerous novelty to a necessity for any naval warship going into battle. From *Constellation* onward, the Navy built only steam-powered vessels, though many continued to carry sail as auxiliary means of propulsion. The *Constellation*'s intrinsic historical significance as a US naval vessel illustrates the ultimate development and pinnacle of the wooden sailing warship.

Early Service and the Africa Squadron

USS *Constellation*'s first tour of duty was on the Mediterranean station. From 1855 through mid-1858 it was involved in typical naval activities on that station, showing the flag and protecting the interests of the nation in that quarter. The tour was generally uneventful, with the exception of coming to the aid of an Austrian barque in distress, for which it was recognized by an official letter from the emperor. The ship returned to New York in June, but was immediately redirected to cruise the north coast of Cuba. This somewhat *ad hoc* posting was a foretaste of its next regular assignment; *Constellation* was directed to protect American commerce from interference by vessels of foreign powers and to interdict slave traders. Shortly thereafter, the navy department assigned four other vessels for this duty and allowed *Constellation* to return to New York for decommissioning on August 8, 1858.[27]

After a re-fit, *Constellation* was given its most important assignment, to be the flagship of the US Navy's squadron off the West Coast of Africa. With flag-officer Captain William Inman on board, the refurbished sloop of war departed from Boston for its station on July 19, 1859. The primary mission of the squadron was the suppression of the slave trade, as mandated by Congress and authorized by the United States Constitution in 1789.

The original Constitutional authority for ending the importation of slaves is found in Article 1, Section 9 where the trade was to cease on January 1, 1808. However, as early as 1794, a law was made calling for fines and

[27] Williams, USS *Constellation*, 14; Donald L. Canney, *Africa Squadron*, 221–2.

forfeiture of vessels involved in the trade. However, the law had no specific enforcement provisions, leaving it to the already overtaxed duties of the Treasury Department's revenue cutter service. Being the default enforcer was a job far too large for the revenue marine with fewer than a dozen small vessels stationed at major port cities; not until 1800 was the navy authorized to seize slave trading vessels. In 1808, when the Constitutional mandate came into play, a law called slave trading a "high misdemeanor" and instituted more fines, forfeitures and, for the first time, prize money for each slave freed.

In the decade following the War of 1812, unrest in the Caribbean contributed to the rise of piracy in that area. This contributed to the next anti-slave trade legislation. In 1819–20, the navy was authorized to patrol the coast of Africa, seize slavers, and turn the freed blacks over to federal marshals. Significantly, the same penalties which applied to acts of piracy were applied to convicted slave traders, including the death penalty. This legislation made the US law the most strenuous anti-slave trade legislation in existence.

From the 1820s to 1843, the navy's enforcement activities off the coast of Africa were sporadic and enforcement was limited to occasional captures. The British already had established an active anti-slave trade squadron off the West Coast of Africa. When the British Royal Navy stopped American merchant ships suspected of slave trading, an uproar ensued in the United States. These actions added to the abolitionists' demand that Congress do something to stop the slave trade. The Anglo-American Webster Ashburton Treaty of 1842 mandated that the US Navy establish a squadron off the coast of Africa, with ships carrying an aggregate of "80 guns," directed to intercept American vessels carrying Africans into slavery. The creation of this Africa squadron in accordance with the 1842 treaty finally instituted a regular enforcement unit dedicated to the suppression of the slave trade by the navy. The squadron made its first capture of a slave ship in 1844, and its first capture of a slave ship with its human cargo on board in 1845.[28]

The Navy's Africa squadron operated from 1843 to the outbreak of the Civil War. The unit typically had four or five vessels on a cruising ground that spanned from present-day Angola north to Gambia—a distance of over 2,000 miles. Unfortunately, the squadron was hampered by poor logistics, the threat of diseases such as malaria, and a lack of support from pro-Southern federal courts. Furthermore, the small number of ships—all of which were sailing vessels—could not effectively patrol the long coastline in question. In the first sixteen years of its existence, the squadron only seized twenty-two vessels—barely more than one per year.[29]

The small nation of Liberia had been founded in the early 1820s by a group of free blacks from the United States, with some federal assistance, and material aid and protection by US naval vessels. The original object was to provide a place to repatriate former American slaves to Africa. Throughout the antebellum period, Liberia became a regular stop for US naval vessels cruising off the west coast of Africa. When it came time to find a place to locate Africans freed from captured slave ships, Monrovia, the capital of the nation, was the place of choice. The availability of Liberia, where the US government had an agent for this purpose, as a drop-off point for the freed Africans provided a convenient compromise.[30] Its location, on the southwest coast, was relatively convenient for US naval vessels, returning from the "slave coast," en route to the navy depot at Porto Praya on the Cape Verde Islands. Before the Africa squadron ended its work, over 4,500 Africans had been freed and transported to Liberia.[31] Thus, the United States Navy was the first federal agency, through its Africa squadron, to emancipate slaves.

[28] Canney, *Africa Squadron*, 1–7, 233.
[29] Ibid., 233–4.
[30] Release of the Africans where found would only have resulted in their reenslavement by the coastal slave-trading tribes and their European allies.
[31] Warren S. Howard, *American Slavers and the Federal Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 223.

On November 21, 1859, the *Constellation* arrived off the Congo River to begin its first patrol of the "Slave Coast." The year 1859 marked two major changes in the Africa squadron, both of which had been advocated for since its inception. First, the squadron supply depot was moved. It had been in the Cape Verde Islands, to the far north of the cruising area, and well off the Africa coast—a location which added hundreds of miles to the typical coastal cruise and markedly hampered the squadron's efficiency. The new depot relocated to the coast of present-day Angola—ending days spent simply sailing back and forth for supplies. The second change was the addition of four more ships to the squadron. All four of these new ships were steam powered. For the first time, the squadron numbered eight vessels, reducing the patrolling distances by half. The arrival of *Constellation* coincided with a change in the capabilities of the Africa squadron itself.[32]

The result of these changes was quickly apparent, both for the squadron as a whole, as well as the *Constellation*. Under the flagship *Constellation*, from September 1859 through June 1861, a period of about twenty-one months, there were more slave ships seized than were captured in the first eight years of the squadron combined. In addition, there were more captures in 1860 than in any previous year of the squadron's existence.[33]

Under the command of Captain John S. Nicholas, and under squadron commander Inman, the *Constellation's* first capture was exactly one month after arriving on station off Africa. Inman's object was to cruise on a north-south line with its southern limit at St. Paul de Loando, where the new depot was being set-up. His intent was to cut off any slave ships heading west. On December 21, a strange sail was discerned and a ten-hour chase ensued. The *Constellation's* speed enabled it to capture the brig *Delicia*. The officer in charge of this vessel admitted it had "no nation, had no flag, no log, no orders," and stated that he was merely the mate. The captain was ashore with cash, buying slaves. Their plan had been to rendezvous later and load the slaves the captain had purchased. Under oath the mate declared the ship had "every preparation" for embarking slaves, and, in fact, the men aboard it at the time of its capture were busily laying the temporary slave deck. Inman immediately sent *Delicia* to the United States for adjudication, but the federal court dismissed the case before trial. The courts often set very high standards for proving a vessel was involved in the slave trade, especially when no slaves were on board when seized.[34]

During December 1859, the squadron vessels made forty-four boardings along the African coast, of which six were by *Constellation*. The maximum number of boardings by one ship, the steamer *Sumpter*, was twenty-one.[35]

Nine months would pass before *Constellation* would seize another slave ship. In the meantime, Inman was involved in setting up the supply depot, patrolling, and organizing the cruising patterns for his squadron. The addition of steam-powered ships to the squadron for the first time made it possible for the cruisers to adhere to a schedule somewhat independent of wind and weather conditions. This was an asset in a situation requiring coverage of a long coast line in a quasi-blockade.[36]

On the evening of September 25, 1860, *Constellation* sighted the barque *Cora* and gave chase, firing their guns as warning shots. The 405-ton barque, out of New York, responded by putting on all sail and throwing overboard boats and other topside weight. The chase was short, and, when boarded, the vessel was found to have 705 Africans on her permanent slave deck. An approximate calculation indicates a vessel the size of *Cora*

---

[32] Canney, *Africa Squadron*, 201–5.

[33] Ibid., 233–4.

[34] Canney, Africa Squadron, 217–8; Williams, USS Constellation, 20–1; Howard, American Slavers and the Federal Law, 220.

[35] List of boardings by Capt. William Inman, 10 January 1860, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, M89, RG 45, (Squadron Letters), National Archives; Canney, *Africa Squadron*, 217.

[36] Canney, *Africa Squadron*, 218–9.

would have a slave deck measuring about 100 feet by 27 feet, giving about 3.5 square feet of deck space for each slave on board. As was usual with these slave ships, the slave deck was laid at such a height to prevent the captives from standing. One *Constellation* crewman wrote: "705 natives came tumbling out of the hold, yelling and cringing. They ran forward and crouched on the bow…They were nearly starved, but they responded to treatment and after keeping them awhile we landed them in Monrovia." The total number freed included 320 boys and 199 women and babies.[37]

Inman dispatched the *Cora* to the United States, under a prize crew. A prize crew consists of members of the crew of the capturing vessel who return the captured ship into a United States port for adjudication by a prize court. Two of the vessel's officers escaped before trial. Two others were convicted, and each received ten months in prison and a $500 fine.[38]

The *Constellation* had one other notable seizure, the brig *Triton,* on May 21, 1861. This vessel had no slaves on board, but was set up for their reception. As the ship was registered in South Carolina, and the Civil War had begun about a month before, the vessel became one of the first captures of the war.[39]

During the capture of the *Triton,* Capt. Nicholas required assistance in approaching his quarry. When approaching Punta da Lenha on the Congo River where the slaver was anchored, Nicholas hinted as much to the captain of the Royal Navy steamer *Prometheus,* part of the British anti-slave trade squadron. The British offered help and towed a US Navy boat with a boarding party to the *Triton,* enabling its capture.[40] Anglo-American cooperation was not common among the Africa squadron, but this incident exhibited the willingness of the US Navy to use all means to accomplish their mission.

The *Constellation* ended its tour off of Africa in August 1861 and returned to the US for duty in the Civil War, having captured three slave ships and freed 705 Africans. Possibly more important than the slavers *Constellation* captured was the record of the Africa squadron while *Constellation* was its flagship. Beginning in September 1859, the other vessels of the squadron captured eleven slave ships with a total of 3,909 Africans freed, including the 705 freed by *Constellation*. All of the freed Africans were returned to Africa. The squadron's record under the flag of *Constellation* was unmatched by any previous period in the nineteen-year history of the unit.[41] This performance, though belated, reflected growing concerns in the Northern states about the slave trade, as well as the increased tensions which brought about the Civil War.

The USS *Constitution* (NHL, 1960), the famous War of 1812 navy sailing frigate preserved in Boston, was also at one point part of the Africa squadron. It was the flagship from March 1853 to March 1855. During the ship's time as flagship, there were two slave vessels captured, one of which was by *Constitution* herself, the *H. N. Gambrill*, off the Congo River. Neither slave ship captured had a slave cargo.[42] The *Constitution* is most significant for its role as a symbol of early American naval skill and military might while the *Constellation* has the strongest association with American efforts to halt the slave trade.

Naval Architecture

From the beginning, *Constellation* marked a turning point in the technological history of the United States Navy. Noted naval and maritime historian Howard I. Chapelle described the vessel as: "The last sailing man-of-

[37] Ibid., 219; Williams, USS *Constellation*, 21.
[38] Williams, USS *Constellation*, 21–2.
[39] Canney, Africa Squadron, 220.
[40] United States Navy Department, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1894), 24.
[41] Canney, *Africa Squadron*, 209–20.
[42] Ibid., 157–71.

war designed and built for the United States Navy."[43] By the mid-1850s, steam power had progressed from a dangerous novelty to a necessity for any naval warship going into battle. No longer could a warship rely on the vagaries of wind to do what an engine and boiler could accomplish on demand. Thus, the next generation of American sloops-of-war following *Constellation* were the steam powered vessels such as the USS *Hartford* and others of its class from 1857. Although these ships continued to carry a full sailing rig, sails no longer provided the primary power for the vessel in combat, as the Civil War would soon demonstrate.

The last "pure" sailing vessels and the final US Navy sailing frigates were USS *Santee* and USS *Sabine,* launched shortly before *Constellation* in 1855. The last sailing ship-of-the-line would be the USS *New Hampshire*. Though the latter was not completed until 1864, it was designated a store ship, not a line-of-battle vessel.[44] From *Constellation* onward, the Navy built only steam-powered vessels, though many continued to carry sail as auxiliary means of propulsion. The diverse sailing vessels used by the military during the Civil War were purchased for the exigencies of the conflict only, and not built by the Navy.

The *Constellation*'s intrinsic historical significance as a US naval vessel also illustrates the ultimate development of the wooden sailing warship. In particular, the vessel incorporated the shell gun as the standard broadside gun, replacing the traditional solid-shot cannon which had been standard for hundreds of years. The first half of the nineteenth century had seen the development of the practical naval gun firing exploding shell projectiles, termed Paixhan guns, in French and British service. These were generally larger, both in physical size and in bore diameter, than traditional solid-shot guns. Naval ships carrying shell guns could carry fewer shell guns than similar-sized vessels of the older standard. For example, the original USS *Constitution* (of War of 1812 fame), carried at least forty-four guns, each with a maximum projectile weight of 32 pounds. The 1854 sloop of war *Constellation*, though similar in size, only carried twenty-two guns. Sixteen of these were in broadside, capable of throwing shells each weighing 64 pounds, and two were 10-inch shell guns mounted on pivoting carriages fore and aft and firing shells weighing 104 pounds. In addition, it carried four 32 pounders in broadside.[45] In practical terms, the larger, heavier guns required more deck space for each gun. Therefore, this ship was a precursor of modern naval weaponry. For the first time shell guns made it possible to increase the power of a ship's battery while simultaneously reducing the number of guns on board. The *Constellation* was a technological anomaly; it had the latest in modern weaponry but carried it on a vessel with obsolete, or at least obsolescent, sail power.

Civil War Career

The *Constellation* was no longer considered a first line warship by the United States Navy during her Civil War and post-Civil War years. Steam powered vessels, able to meet potential adversaries on equal terms, were now the first line warships. Those vessels with sail power alone were relegated to duties which did not require rigid scheduling or which would involve them in unequal competition or combat with foreign national steam-powered vessels. Thus, during the Civil War, *Constellation*'s tasks were unconnected with the blockade and attacks on the Southern coasts and the conflict on the rivers.

Constellation's Civil War career centered in the Mediterranean area, and, for the most part, was limited to the traditional duties of "showing the flag" and protecting American interests. It was a time-honored routine

[43] Chapelle, History of the American Sailing Navy, 466.

[44] K. Jack Bauer and Stephen A. Roberts, *Register of Ships of the U.S. Navy*, *1775–1990* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991) 2, 14.

[45] Williams, USS *Constellation*, 12; Spencer Tucker, *Arming the Fleet*, 197.

involving port calls, with no particular urgency and no schedule to be met. The *Constellation*'s Mediterranean tour began in early 1862 and ended when it departed for the U.S. in May 1864.[46]

The *Constellation* did assist in the capture of the Confederate commerce raider C.S.S. *Sumter*. It had been preying on Union merchant vessels for over six months, ultimately capturing eighteen ships. In need of repairs, it put in to Gibraltar. There the Confederate ship was trapped by the arrival of three U.S. Navy cruisers. *Constellation* arrived shortly thereafter at Cadiz. The confluence of Union vessels prevented the raider's escape, and the ship was abandoned by its crew, ending its destructive career.[47]

About a year later, *Constellation*'s commanding officer wrote to the Navy Department requesting assistance upon learning from the State Department that another suspected Confederate commerce raider, the *Southerner*, was due to arrive in the Mediterranean. The rumor was that the Confederate ship's crew was to meet the vessel in an Italian port. The potential raider arrived as predicted, but the presence of *Constellation* and other Union influences prevented the crew from manning the vessel, ending this threat to United States merchant trade in the Mediterranean. The incident emphasized the potential dangers from the wide-ranging destructive careers of several Confederate commerce raiders, such as *Sumter* and, later, the notorious *Alabama*.[48]

After departing from the Mediterranean, *Constellation* was assigned to the West Gulf Blockading Squadron, headquartered in Mobile, Alabama. En route, it cruised in the West Indies, in search of Confederate vessels, both blockade runners and commerce raiders, arriving in Mobile in November 1864.[49] During this cruise, *Constellation* encountered a rebel blockade runner emerging suddenly from a fog off the southeast coast. General quarters was sounded and a chase ensued, with *Constellation* firing its forward guns at the adversary. The swift steam-powered rebel escaped. This occurred in late December 1864 and served to mark the end of the *Constellation*'s active service as a warship. It was soon sent via Pensacola to Norfolk to be decommissioned.[50]

On returning to Norfolk, *Constellation* was reclassified as a receiving ship. Receiving ships were usually obsolete vessels transformed into floating barracks and used as temporary housing for new recruits. *Constellation* remained in this role until 1869.

Recent scholarship has revealed much about the number of blacks in the Civil War navy. In the antebellum navy, a regulation limited the number of blacks to 5 percent of any ship's crew—implicitly suggesting that the numbers would be much larger if allowed.[51] The nature of naval service (as well as merchant marine service) meant that crews were often international: one could sign on from wherever the ship made a port call. African Americans, as well as native Africans, were not uncommon on many US Navy ships. There was no "official" inequality in their pay or treatment.

The coming of the Civil War quickly changed the situation for the navy in regard to black sailors. Very early in the war, blacks escaped from slavery and found their way to the federal lines wishing to sign up to fight against their previous masters. To circumvent long-standing concerns regarding their status as private property, they were termed contrabands and allowed to join the navy. Naval pay was the same for white and black sailors—unlike the army which paid them less than the white enlistees.[52]

---

[46] Williams, USS *Constellation*, 26.
[47] US Navy Department, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies, ser. 1, vol. 1, 381.
[48] Ibid., ser. I, vol. 2, 371–2.
[49] Williams, USS *Constellation*, 27–8.
[50] Ibid., 28.
[51] Joseph P. Reidy, "Black Men in Navy Blue during the Civil War," *Prologue* 33, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 2.
[52] Ibid., 3.

As the war progressed and federal forces took over more and more of the rebelling states, the percentage of blacks in the navy increased dramatically, and the pre-war 5-percent limit was ignored. Older historical studies have put the number of blacks in the navy at about 8 percent of the enlisted men, a more recent figure, drawn from actual muster rolls, is over 18,000 blacks in the service, or about 20 percent of the men.[53]

The number of black sailors on individual combat vessels was sometimes over 60 percent, particularly on the vessels of the Mississippi squadron and on the blockade. The percentage was considerably less on ocean-going vessels such as *Kearsarge* and *Constellation,* which were rarely in port in the United States. The former vessel, famous for the destruction of the *Alabama*, had 5 to 10 percent blacks in its crew.[54]

Recent studies have identified fifteen blacks in *Constellation's* wartime crew. Some of these apparently were free blacks, recruited early in the war. At the most, the total number of enlisted sailors on the ship was 283. Therefore, the blacks made up about 5 percent of the crew. This discovery sheds new light on modern understanding of the role of African Americans in the Civil War, revising the idea that African-American participation was limited to the many black regiments in the army.[55]

The *Constellation* is the only surviving, intact, ship from the Civil War era and represents the navy's role in that conflict. The frigate *Constitution* was never active during the Civil War but remained a training vessel throughout the war years. Another ship from that period, Admiral Farragut's *Hartford*, survived until 1956. Currently, there are two other US Navy "ship artifacts" remaining from that conflict: the rusted remains of portions of John Ericsson's *Monitor* (NHL, 1986), which after over one hundred years beneath the Atlantic is being preserved at the Mariner's Museum in Virginia, and sections of the river ironclad *Cairo*, are preserved in Vicksburg, Mississippi.

In addition, *Constellation* represents the culmination of the wooden sailing warship in the United States Navy and is also the only remaining survivor of the navy from the entire era between the *Constitution* and the USS *Olympia* (NHL, 1964), the sole survivor of the "Great White Fleet" and the Spanish-American War.

Post-Civil War Career

In the post-Civil War navy, Congressional appropriations dried up and most of the ships acquired during the war were scrapped. Economic restraints were such that regulations called for fines on ship's captains who used steam power when not absolutely necessary.[56] Thus, there was still a place for sailing vessels.

The *Constellation* was still an ocean-going, seaworthy vessel. It had been at sea for less than ten years. Many of the navy's pre-war-built wooden sailing warships had extraordinarily long careers. *Saratoga*, for example, survived from 1843 until 1907, and was active and at sea most of those years.[57] *Constellation* could be expected to have many years left in active service.

*Constellation'*s first duty, following the years as a receiving ship, was to train young sailors. It was refitted and modified appropriately, and became a practice ship, stationed at the Naval Academy in Annapolis. It would sail in the spring and return at the end of summer to be decommissioned for the winter months. Destinations would range from Europe to the West Indies to the East Coast of the United States. This routine continued for twenty-two years, with three breaks.[58] The first was in 1878 when *Constellation* was assigned to transport American

[53] Ibid., 2; Michael J. Bennett, *Union Jacks,* 12.
[54] Reidy, "Black Men in Navy Blue during the Civil War," 4–5.
[55] Williams, USS *Constellation*, 31, 33–34.
[56] Donald L. Canney, *The Old Steam Navy*, vol. 2, *The Ironclads: 1842–1885* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1993), 145.
[57] Canney, *Sailing Warships*, 201.
[58] Williams, USS *Constellation*, 57.

exhibits to the international Paris Exhibition. This was followed shortly thereafter by a voyage taking supplies to the navy's Mediterranean squadron.[59]

Still performing supply ship duty, *Constellation* was next appointed to take provisions to Ireland. That country had seen one of its periodic famines, and the Irish Relief Fund was instrumental in gathering food. *Constellation* was modified for the purpose and carried 2,500 barrels of potatoes to Cork, Ireland, in March 1880.[60] *Constellation*'s final supply voyage was in 1892. At that time, it carried European artwork to the United States for the 1893 Columbian Exposition celebrating the discovery of America.[61]

On September 2, 1893, *Constellation* was decommissioned, ending almost four decades of sea service. It became a stationary practice ship in 1894.[62]

The ship's supposed identity as the original 1790s frigate resulted in two events where it was used as a pageant ship/historical artifact. The first of these occasions was on the centennial of the War of 1812 when it was towed to Baltimore and Washington for the celebrations. The second occasion was in Philadelphia for the Sesquicentennial of the Declaration of Independence in 1926. In between these two events, it was in Newport, Rhode Island, being used once more as a receiving ship.[63]

The coming of World War II brought a new use for the vessel. With an eye to preserving the historic ship, the navy redesignated it as *IX-20* and prepared new office spaces in her hull. The ship became the Relief Flagship of the US Navy's Atlantic Fleet. The admiral of that fleet used *Constellation*'s offices when the official flagship, the cruiser USS *Augusta,* was needed at sea.[64]

Following the war, *Constellation* was towed to the Boston Navy Yard and moored beside the USS *Constitution*. In 1955, the sloop of war was towed to Baltimore, Maryland, and presented to the people of that city, where the vessel has remained as a historic vessel and museum ship to the present time.[65]

Other Existing Wooden Naval Vessels of the Era

USS Constitution

The frigate *Constitution*, famously nicknamed "Old Ironsides," was built in Boston and commissioned in 1797, one of six frigates authorized by Congress through the Naval Act of 1794, to spearhead the newly formed navy. The old navy had been disbanded after the War of Independence. The force was created originally to confront the predatory Barbary pirates operating from the north coast of Africa, who extorted money and obeisance in exchange for allowing American merchant vessels safe passage along their coasts. In addition, the young naval force proved highly useful in the quasi-war with France in the late 1790s. *Constitution*'s first combat was against the Barbary Powers in the first decade of the nineteenth century, but it became famous in the War of 1812. In one-on-one combat, *Constitution* defeated two Royal Navy frigates, *Guerriere* and *Java*, leaving them both total wrecks. Later in the war, it defeated two smaller Royal Navy vessels, *Cyane* and *Levant,* in one engagement. These victories electrified the nation and caused great consternation in Britain. They were shocked

[59] Ibid., 58.
[60] Canney, Sailing Warships, 84; Williams, USS Constellation, 59–60.
[61] Williams, USS *Constellation*, 61.
[62] Ibid., 61.
[63] Ibid., 62–3.
[64] Ibid., 63–4.
[65] Canney, *Sailing Warships*, 163.

the former colonies had ships and men capable of defeating, in single combat, vessels of the navy whose fleet had played a great part in defeating Napoleon a few years prior.

Constitution's active career continued through 1855, including a two-year stint on the Africa anti-slave trade patrol. Afterwards it became a training ship and efforts were made to preserve its structure through the years. Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. wrote a poem which impacted the navy's attempt to scrap the vessel in the 1830s. The ship underwent a massive overhaul and rebuilding in the 1990s, culminating in putting it under sail in 1997 for the first time since 1880.

The ship, despite numerous major overhauls and rebuilding, has retained its original design and structure. Other than modifications to its fore structure to enclose the head and headrails as was the fashion in the 1830s, few changes have been made to the ship in over two hundred years. Those changes made to the ship over the years have been adequately documented, making it obvious that the present ship is substantially the same as the original. However, it would be difficult to determine what percentage of the ship's original hull remains. The recent overhaul removed the more modern changes and returned the ship to its appearance during the War of 1812. It is the oldest commissioned naval vessel in the world. *Constitution* is open to the public and is in an excellent state of preservation.

The *Constitution* is the only other existing wooden naval vessel of the era in the United States. There are four other wooden ships in the world that should be mentioned here to indicate the rarity of this type of ship. They are: the **Royal Danish Frigate *Jylland,*** launched in 1860 and possibly the only example of the steam-sail transition period in existence, remaining nearly as it was built; the **H. M. Frigates *Trincomalee* and *Unicorn,*** two examples of the Leda-class frigates, one of the most successful British frigate designs of the late sailing era (*Trincomalee,* launched in 1817, is located in England and *Unicorn,* launched in 1824, is in Dundee, Scotland); and the ***D. Fernando II e Gloria,*** the last sailing frigate built by Portugal in 1843, restored to its 1850s appearance between 1990 and 1992, and now a museum ship at the Museu da Marinha in Lisbon.

Conclusion

The *Constellation*'s role as flagship of the navy's Africa Squadron commemorates the first organized American attempt to stop the international slave trade, as mandated by the Constitution of the United States. As a consequence of this role, the *Constellation*, and the squadron of which it was flagship, materially affected and inhibited the slave trade during the two years preceding the Civil War. In fact, it was during this two-year period that the navy's Africa Squadron was the most effective, freeing nearly four thousand Africans from the holds of slave ships. *Constellation* itself seized three slave ships and freed 705 Africans.

In addition, the US sloop of war *Constellation* is the only surviving US Navy ship which served actively in the Civil War and is the only survivor of the period between the War of 1812 frigate *Constitution* and the Spanish American war's USS *Olympia*, preserved today in Boston and Philadelphia, respectively.

The *Constellation* is an example of the last days of the sailing navy as it was the last major sailing warship built by the US Navy. The ship was built even as steam power was becoming the standard for naval vessels, and all subsequent navy-built warships were steam powered though many continued to carry a sailing rig.

Constellation also marked the ultimate development of the sailing sloop of war, in that its design incorporated, from the beginning, a battery consisting of the latest smooth-bore shell guns. These weapons replaced the traditional solid-shot cannon and were generally physically larger and heavier than the older guns. Even the smaller shell guns on board *Constellation* fired projectiles twice the weight of the previous solid-shot guns. After *Constellation*, all the newer sloops of war carried shell guns and were powered by steam.

The *Constellation's* career after the Civil War also contributes to her status as a historic naval vessel. For over twenty years the ship was instrumental in training US Navy midshipmen for officer careers, preparing them for the triumphs of the Spanish-American War, and the duties of World War I.

Finally, in the twentieth century the *Constellation* became an iconic symbol of the navy's early years. Her selection as Relief Flagship of the Atlantic Fleet during World War II reflects the continued importance the navy attached to the ship as a manifestation of the heritage of the service. *Constellation* continues to represent the vital part played by the United States Navy in American history not only as a military force but as an instrument of international humanitarian efforts.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1855. Washington, DC, 1855.

Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1860. Washington, DC, 1860.

Bauer, K. Jack, and Stephen S. Roberts. *Register of Ships of the US Navy, 1775–1990*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991.

Bennett, Michael J. *Union Jacks: Yankee Sailors in the Civil War*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Canney, Donald L. Africa Squadron: The US Navy and the Slave Trade, 1843–1861. Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2006.

———. Sailing Warships of the US Navy. London: Chatham, 2001.

———. The Old Steam Navy. Vol. 1, Frigates, Sloops, and Gunboats, 1815–1885. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990.

Chapelle, Howard I. *The History of the American Sailing Navy*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1949.

———, and Leon Polland. *The Constellation Question*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1970.

Dunne, William H. P. "The Frigate *Constellation* Clearly Was No More: Or Was She?" *American Neptune* 53, no. 2 (Spring 1993).

Howard, Warren S. *American Slavers and the Federal Law*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963.

Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, vol. 1, ser. I. Washington, DC, Government Printing Office, 1894.

Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, vol. 1, ser. 2. Washington DC, Government Printing Office, 1921.

Reidy, Joseph P. "Black Men in Navy Blue during the Civil War." *Prologue* 33, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 155–168.

Tucker, Spencer. Arming the Fleet: US Navy Ordnance in the Muzzle-Loading Era. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1989.

Wegner, Dana. *Fouled Anchors: The Constellation Question Answered*. Bethesda, MD: David Taylor Research Center, 1992.

Williams, Glenn F. USS Constellation: A Short History of the Last All-Sail Warship Built by the US Navy. Virginia Beach, VA: Donning, 2000.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

__ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
__ Previously Listed in the National Register.
__ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
_X_ Designated a National Historic Landmark. NR# 66000918, Designated May 23, 1963
__ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
__ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

__ State Historic Preservation Office
__ Other State Agency
__ Federal Agency
__ Local Government
__ University
__ Other (Specify Repository):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: less than one acre

UTM References:

Zone	Easting	Northing
18	361000	4349560

Verbal Boundary Description: The National Historic Landmark designation for the USS *Constellation* is limited to the ship itself. *Constellation* is presently located at a dock at the south end of South Street at Pratt Street in the Inner Harbor area of downtown Baltimore.

Boundary Justification: The boundary of the *Constellation* is the external dimensions of the ship as it is presently located at the pier site described above.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Joseph Scott Mendenhall, Historian (original nomination)

Address: Historic Sites Survey
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Date: February 25, 1975

Name/Title: Donald L. Canney (revised nomination)

Address: 3419 El Paso Drive
Columbus, Ohio 43204

Telephone: (614) 493-4313

Date: June 2009

Edited by: Kevin Foster, Maritime Historian
National Park Service
Park History Program
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Telephone: (202) 354-2260

Edited by: Patty Henry, Historian
National Park Service
National Historic Landmarks Program
1849 C Street NW, Mail Stop 7228
Washington, DC 20240

Telephone: (202) 354-2216


U.S. Frigate Constellation
U.S.G.S. 7.5' series map
Baltimore, Maryland East
Quadrangle
UTM
18.361000.4349560
BALTIMORE
NORTHWEST
HARBOR
Basin
Locust Pt
Feils Point
South Baltimore
Riverside Yard
Fort McHenry
Whetstone Pt
Winans Cove
Port Covington Yard
Canton Yard
Swann Park
Riverside Park
Federal Hill Park
Latrobe Park
Locust Pt Marine Terminal
Southern High Sch
Johns Hopkins Hospital
Dunbar High Sch
Tighman Sch
Henderson Sch
Patrick Henry Sch
Robt E Lee Sch
Pratt Library
Mercy Hospital
Municipal Office Bldg
City Hall
Courthouse
Shot Tower
U S Customs
TV Tower (WMAR)
U of Md Sch of Medicine
Camden Station
General Hospital
Johnson Sch
Paca Sch
Canton Sch
Highlandtown Sch
Reading Clinic
Radio Towers
Conveyor
Oil
Gas
Light
Fort
30 FEET NOV 1941
MC COMAS ST
B & O
WESTERN MARYLAND



Spar deck looking forward from main hatchway. Photograph by Donald L. Canney, August 2009.



Spar deck looking forward showing bowsprit and foremast. Photograph by Donald L. Canney, August 2009.



Bow quarter view. Photograph by Donald L. Canney, August 2009.



Captain's Cabin. Photograph by Donald L. Canney, August 2009.



Main deck looking forward with guns run out. Photograph by Donald L. Canney, August 2009.



Officers' quarters in stern below decks. Photograph by Donald L. Canney, August 2009.



Ships hold showing original fabric, looking along frames and past hanging knees. Photograph by Donald L. Canney, August 2009.



Modern companionway in main hatch, passing from spar deck down to the main deck. Photograph by Donald L. Canney, August 2009.



Stern quarter view showing rounded stern design typical of the 1850s. Photograph by Donald L. Canney, August 2009.



Bow quarter view of Constellation tied up in Inner Harbor. Photograph by Donald L. Canney, August 2009.