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The First American Fleet: The Sailing Warships of the Quasi-War, 1798-1801

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When President John Adams took office in March 1797, not a single American warship was in the water. The last ship of the Continental Navy, the frigate *Alliance*, had been sold in 1785. Three frigates which had been authorized in 1794 were still under construction—the *Constitution* 44 at Boston, the *United States* 44 at Philadelphia, and the *Constellation* 36 at Baltimore. It would be over a year before any of them were fitted out and ready for sea.¹ From this nearly non-existent naval force, the Federalists built up the first American fleet.² Over the

Abbreviations used in Footnotes:

<i>ASP-NA</i>	United States Congress, <i>American State Papers. Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States</i> , vol. 1, Class VI, Naval Affairs, 38 vols. (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832-61),
<i>BWD</i>	Dudley W. Knox, ed. <i>Naval Documents related to the United States Wars against the Barbary Powers</i> , 6 vols. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1939-44).
<i>QWD</i>	Dudley W. Knox, ed. <i>Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War between the United States and France</i> , 7 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1935-1938).\
<i>Statutes</i>	United States Congress, <i>The Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America</i> , vol. 1 (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1854).

1. The *United States* 44 at Philadelphia, Captain John Barry, was launched on May 10, 1797, and went to sea July 13, 1798. The *Constellation* 36 at Baltimore, Captain Thomas Truxtun, was launched on September 7, 1797, and went to sea June 23, 1798. The *Constitution* 44 at Boston, Captain Samuel Nicholson, having stuck on the ways October 10, was finally launched on October 21, 1797, and went to sea about 20 July, 1798. The *United States* The *Constellation* The *Constitution*, Ship data for this paper was compiled by comparing information in the following sources: Howard I. Chapelle, *The History of the American Sailing Navy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1949); K. Jack Bauer, and Stephen S. Roberts, *Register of Ships of the U.S. Navy, 1775-1990* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991); Donald L. Canney, *Sailing Warships of the US Navy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2001); Gardner W. Allen, *Our Naval War with France* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1909, reprint, North Haven, CT: Archon Books, 1967), 301-303; *QWD*, 7:364-71; and Mark Lardas, *American Heavy Frigates, 1794 – 1826* (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2003), and *American Light and Medium Frigates, 1794 – 1836* (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2008).

2. For the purposes of this paper the term fleet is used to denote the entire U.S. Navy force available for operations during the Quasi-War. The largest organizational units actually deployed were of squadron strength (usually three or more ships) under the senior captain with the nominal rank of commodore. Although the United States did not possess the principle capital ships of the time, that is ships of the line of 74 guns or more, its frigates

next four years, forty-two warships operated in the Caribbean and other waters. Most of them were laid, built, and launched after the creation of the Navy Department on April 30, 1798. All were to sea by 1800. When President Thomas Jefferson and his political allies supplanted the Federalists in the spring of 1801, however, naval policy took a dramatic turn. By the close of that year, only fifteen vessels of the forty-two previously commissioned were still on the Navy register.³ Of these, only six were on active service. The remainder were either undergoing repairs or laid up in ordinary (storage) without crews.⁴ The remaining vessels of the first American fleet would continue to provide the backbone of the United States Navy under sail well into the War of 1812 and beyond.⁵ The quick creation and subsequent rapid demobilization of the Federalist Navy provides a fascinating glimpse into the dynamic naval policy of the early American republic.

The forty-two warships of the Federalist Navy were built to defend American commerce against the depredations of French privateers and national ships during the Quasi-War, 1798 –

were of considerable size and strength and functioned as the core of each squadron. As in other navies, frigates were strong enough and fast enough to cruise independently as needed, which was rarely true of smaller vessels.

3. Only thirteen were authorized by law, and this number is often given as the total strength. However, besides the thirteen frigates retained by the Peace Establishment Act of March 3, 1801, two other vessels remained after 1801. These were the schooner *Enterprize* 12, serving with Commodore Dale's Mediterranean squadron, and the *George Washington* 24, a sloop-of-war returning from Constantinople and Algiers. The *George Washington* made a second voyage to the Mediterranean after its return, and was not sold until 1802.

4. Dale's squadron in the Mediterranean consisted of *President* 44, *Philadelphia* 36, *Essex* 32, and *Enterprize*. The small frigate *Boston* 28 was carrying diplomats to France, after which it had orders to join Dale. The frigates *Constitution*, *Constellation* and *Chesapeake* 36 were repairing at Boston, Philadelphia, and Norfolk respectively. The *Adams* 28 was laid up in New York. The *United States*, *Congress* 36, *New York* 36, *General Greene* 28, and *John Adams* 28 were all laid up at the new Washington Navy Yard. The *George Washington* was employed carrying tribute to Algiers.

5. Only the *Philadelphia* (captured at Tripoli on October 31, 1803) was lost before the War of 1812. The *United States*, *Constitution*, *Essex*, and *Enterprise* all won significant victories in the war. Three were captured: *Chesapeake* (June 1, 1813), *Essex* (March 28, 1814), and *President* (January 15, 1815). Three were burned at their moorings in Washington where they lay rotting on August 24, 1814: *New York*, *Boston*, and *General Greene*. *Adams* was burnt to avoid capture in the Penobscot River a few weeks later (September 3, 1814). Most of the remainder spent the war blockaded in port. Six Quasi-War veterans survived the War of 1812: *United States*, *Constitution*, *Constellation*, *Congress*, *John Adams*, and *Enterprise*.

1801.⁶ Responsibility for the creation this small defensive armada fell principally upon the first Secretary of the Navy, Benjamin Stoddert.⁷ When he stepped into his office in Philadelphia on June 18, 1798 there were only two Navy vessels at sea. The *Ganges* 24, a converted merchantman commanded by Captain Richard Dale, was patrolling the coastline between Long Island and Cape Henry; and the *Constellation*, Captain Thomas Truxtun, had cleared the Virginia Capes the day before. Three other merchant ships had been procured, and were undergoing alterations and being fitted as sloops of war. Long overdue, the *United States*, Captain John Barry, and the *Constitution*, Captain Samuel Nicholson were nearing readiness at Philadelphia and Boston. In addition, Congress had authorized the Navy to augment the existing force with cutters belonging to the Treasury Department and intended for the enforcement revenue collection.⁸ Further legislation was in the works that would eventually provide authority to build, purchase, or accept from citizens for 6 percent stock more substantial vessels. In all, twenty-seven ships were authorized by June 30, 1798, including: nine frigates, twelve ship-rigged sloops of war, and twelve smaller vessels of 18 or fewer guns. Within this legislative framework, Stoddert began piecing together the fleet. By a very flexible interpretation and application of the Congressional acts he sought to project American naval power throughout the Caribbean, to the shores of Europe, to the Mediterranean, and as far off as the East Indies.

6. Six percent of the American merchant fleet (about 5,000 vessels) were lost to French ships in 1797. In consequence the government's principle source of revenue, imports and exports, fell more than 10 percent. Insurance rates tripled. In all 2,309 vessels were taken by the French before peace in September 1800. See Michael A. Palmer, *Stoddert's War: Naval Operations during the Quasi-War with France, 1798-1801* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987, Reprinted, Annapolis, MD: Naval Press Institute, 2000), 6.

7. Benjamin Stoddert was not President Adams first selection—this was to retired Senator George Cabot of Massachusetts who declined to serve. Stoddert was a Georgetown, Maryland importer whose firm had offices in Bordeaux and London. During the Revolution he had served as Secretary of the Board of War. He was a correspondent of George Washington and Alexander Hamilton, and an influential and devout Federalist. See John J. Carrigg, "Benjamin Stoddert, 18 June 1798 – 31 March 1801," in Paolo E. Coletta, ed. *American Secretaries of the Navy*, vol. 1, 1775 – 1913 (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1980): 59 – 75; Palmer, *Stoddert's War*, 10-14.

8. July 1, 1797, "An Act providing a Naval Armament," Section 12, in *Statutes*, 1:523-25; reproduced in *QWD*, 1:7-9.

The genesis of Stoddert's fleet had preceded his arrival at the Navy Department by four years. The first warships contemplated after the ratification of the federal Constitution were the six frigates authorized in 1794.⁹ Objections to their construction had been overcome by the humiliation of relations with the state-sponsored corsairs of the Barbary Coast. These North African regencies routinely seized American merchant vessels and held their crews for ransom.¹⁰ After the United States had agreed to pay large sums in tribute, however, the Barbary States had been temporarily mollified in 1796, and the immediate need for the first frigates appeared less pressing.¹¹ President Washington had succeeded in urging the completion of the three frigates whose construction was most advanced. However, continuing delays in procuring the requisite timber and military stores to complete them slowed their progress to a near halt.¹² In 1797, when conflict with France seemed eminent, a further appropriation was required to finish them.¹³ The need for additional funding prompted a Congressional inquiry into the War Department's oversight of the frigate program, which, in turn, revealed the necessity for managing naval affairs

9. March 27, 1794 "An Act to provide a Naval Armament," *Statutes*, 1:350-51; reproduced in *BWD* 1:69-70. The appropriation for \$688,888.88 is in June 9, 1794, *Statutes* 1: 394-95. This sum was further reauthorized in March 3, 1795 *Statutes*, 1:459.

10. The Barbary Powers consisted of Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. For the debate over the necessity of warships to deal with their threat, see Craig L. Symonds, *Navalists and Antinavalists: The Naval Policy Debate in the United States, 1785 – 1827* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1980), 27-38; and Marshall Smelser, *The Congress Founds the Navy, 1787 – 1798* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1959), 35-86.

11. Algiers was pacified with an initial \$642,500 and a 32-gun frigate, followed by \$21,000 worth of naval stores as annual tribute, thereafter. Craig L. Symonds, "Defining an American Navy," in Kenneth J. Hagan, ed. *In Peace and War: Interpretations of American Naval History*, 30th anniversary ed. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008), 22. The 1794 Naval Act required the discontinuance of the construction of the six frigates should peace be concluded with Algiers. See Section 9, of "An Act to provide a Naval Armament," March 27, 1794, *Statutes*, 1:351; reproduced in *BWD*, 1:70.

12. Congressional legislation conforming to President Washington's wishes was "An Act supplementary to an act entitled 'An act to provide a Naval Armament,'" April 20, 1796, *Statutes*, 1:453-4; reproduced in *BWD*, 1:150. This reauthorized the previous appropriations, and added \$80,000 previously earmarked for the construction of galleys.

13. Already on March 3, 1797, Congress had added \$172,000 based on the War Department's estimates for that year on the cost to finish the three frigates (*Statutes*, 1:508-509). The second installment was an appropriation for an additional \$300,000 on July 10, 1797 which funded the July 1 "An Act providing a Naval Armament." (*Statutes*, 1:534-35)

under a separate department.¹⁴ The ensuing Congressional debate culminated in the creation the Department of the Navy.¹⁵

The XYZ Affair was the match that finally lit the forge of national will—leading to the creation of a substantial American fleet. American diplomats in France, who had been treated with disdain or ignored, were solicited for bribes in order just to initiate negotiations. Their refusal to submit resulted in the failure of their embassy to seek accommodation with France. Once news of this imbroglio reached the United States, the details of French cupidity created public rancor. This combined with the rising depredations along the American coast by French privateers to highlight the nation’s vulnerability to injury from the sea and its impotence to redress national insult.¹⁶ After one bold privateer off New York began boarding and looting inbound and outbound merchantmen, Alexander Hamilton wrote in disgust to his protégé, Secretary of War William McHenry: “I presume you will have heard before this reaches you that a French Privateer has made captures at the mouth of our harbor. This is too much humiliation after all that has passed—Our Merchants are very indignant—Our Government very prostrate is the view of every man of energy.”¹⁷

Responding to public outcry, Congressional activity in the late spring of 1798, relative to naval preparations, rose to a crescendo.¹⁸ A final appropriation to finish the equipping and

14. The final cost of the frigates was as follows: *Constitution*—\$302,718.84; *United States*—\$299,336.56; and *Constellation*—\$314,212.15. See *BWD*, 6:329. The Congressional inquiry resulted in Secretary of War James McHenry’s report to the House which can be found in *ASP-NA* 1:37-56.

15. Marshall Smelser and Stephen T. Powers, “The Fleetless Nation, 1781 – 1798,” in Coletta, *American Secretaries of the Navy*, 1:47-48; Palmer, *Stoddert’s War*, 7-8.

16. Older, yet unsurpassed in succinctness, is the overview of the diplomatic situation that sparked the naval war found in Gardner W. Allen, *Our Naval War with France* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1909), 1-40.

17. Alexander Hamilton to James McHenry, May 17, 1798, *QWD*, 1:75-76.

18. There was a similar vogue for other defense legislation resulting in fortification, cannon founding, and the raising of a substantial Provisional Army commanded by former President George Washington, ranked now as a Lieutenant General.

provide for the manning and operations of the three frigates already launched was passed.¹⁹ The President was authorized to strengthen the vessels of the Revenue Cutter Service, and employ them off the coast.²⁰ The then enormous sum of \$950,000 was appropriated “to cause to be built, purchased or hired” twelve vessels of 22 guns or less.²¹ Ten coastal defense vessels, or galleys, were authorized.²² To oversee the newly authorized establishment, the Navy Department was created, and the Marine Corps founded.²³ In addition, groups of shipping merchants, beginning in Newburyport, Massachusetts, were anxious to subscribe funds for the construction of additional warships. Further legislation authorized the government to accept such vessels by paying the subscribers in 6 percent stock.²⁴ Finally, a further appropriation was passed to restart the three frigates at Portsmouth in New Hampshire, New York, and Norfolk in Virginia discontinued in 1796.²⁵ It was within this milieu of legislative activity that Stoddert began assembling vessels of war for the first American Fleet.

19. March 27, 1798, “An act for an additional appropriation to provide and support a naval armament” appropriated \$115,833 to finish and prepare the frigates for service. An additional \$216,679 was authorized to man them for a year. There was also \$60,000 appropriated for the replacement of spent ordinance and wear and tear on the vessels. The total sum included in this act was, therefore, \$332,572. See *Statutes*, 1:547; reproduced in *QWD*, 1:46.

20. Section 12 of “An Act providing a Naval Armament,” July 1, 1797 (*Statutes* 1:523-5; reproduced in *QWD*, 1:7-9) had given this authority, but it was not until 1798 that the cutters were actively cruising off the coast.

21. “An Act to provide an additional armament for the further protection of the trade of the United States, and for other purposes,” April 27, 1798, *Statutes*, 1:552; reproduced in *QWD*, 1:58.

22. The galleys were authorized by “An Act to authorize the President of the United States to cause to be purchased, or built, a number of small vessels to be equipped as gallies, or otherwise,” May 4, 1798, *Statutes* 1:556; reproduced in *QWD*, 1:64.

23. The Navy Department was created by “An Act to establish an Executive department, to be denominated the Department of the Navy,” April 30, 1798, *Statutes*, 1:553; reproduced in *QWD*, 1:59-60; and *BWD*, 1:246-7. The Marine Corps was created by “An Act for the establishing and organizing a Marine Corps,” *Statutes*, 1:594-6; reproduced in *QWD*, 1:188-9.

24. Frederick C. Leiner, *Millions for Defense: The Subscription Warships of 1798* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2000). The legislation was “An Act supplementary to the act, intituled [sic] ‘An Act to provide an additional Armament for the further protection of the trade of the United States, and for other purposes,’” June 30, 1798, *Statutes*, 1:575-6.

25. “An act to make a further appropriation for the additional Naval Armament,” July 16, 1798, *Statutes*, 1:608-609; reproduced in *QWD*, 1:211. The act appropriated \$600,000.

In the interim, the Adams administration had not been idle.²⁶ Before Stoddert took office, four merchant ships had been purchased from Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore.²⁷ Although there were many other ports from which vessels could have been procured, the lack of naval infrastructure dictated some limitations. A precedent for spreading naval contracts had been set in 1794 when President Washington had decided to allocate the frigate program between six ports: Portsmouth, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Norfolk.²⁸ Each of these contained substantial ship-building industries, and thus would be able to provide the necessary skilled labor and countless items required for ocean-going vessels of such size. Since the inception of the Continental Navy, it had been government practice to disperse contracts as widely as practicable along the coastal ports. Furthermore, it would probably have been impossible to build six vessels the size of frigates in only one, or even two, ports. Instead of contracting for the ships directly, naval agents had been appointed to manage their construction. These agents were in turn assisted by the captains of the respective frigates who would superintend the work. After the discontinuance of the three frigates at Portsmouth, New York, and Norfolk in 1796 the agents and superintending captains at the remaining three ports were the sum total of government's shore establishment. It was logical, therefore, to utilize the agencies still active in building the frigates at Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore to affect the purchases

26. Although Secretary of War James McHenry was nominally in charge of naval preparations, Secretary of the Treasury Oliver Wolcott was also highly involved. This was not only because of the incapability of McHenry, but because the Treasury Department already had a basic infrastructure because of the Revenue Cutter Service. Secretary of State Timothy Pickering was also delegated by the President to lend a hand in naval affairs. Palmer, *Stoddert's War*, 14-15. Much to Adams's latter annoyance, all three men were protégés of arch-Federalist Alexander Hamilton. In fact, when McHenry wanted to draft instructions for Captain Dale of the *Ganges*, he wrote to Hamilton soliciting advice. *QWD*, 1:74-5, James McHenry to Alexander Hamilton, May 12, 1798. Hamilton's reply (May 17, 1798) ends with his bitter remark on the prostrate condition of the government. See *QWD*, 1:75-6.

27. These were the 504 ton *Ganges*, purchased at Philadelphia on May 3, 1798 for \$58,000; the 422 ton *Adriana* (renamed *Baltimore*) purchased the same day at Baltimore for \$27,000; the 321 ton *Hamburgh Packet* (renamed *Delaware*) purchased two days later at Philadelphia for \$45,000; and the 279 ton *Herald*, purchased at Boston on June 15 for \$21,000. Their first respective commanders were: Richard Dale, Isaac Phillips, Stephen Decatur, Sr., and James Sever. See *QWD*, 2:114-116.

28. See then Secretary of War Henry Knox's instructions to Joshua Humphreys on April 21, 1794. *BWD*, 1:71-74.

of merchant ships. The principal naval constructor, Joshua Humphreys of Philadelphia, was called upon to survey the proposed purchases to ensure the vessels could be fitted out as naval cruisers. Stoddert continued McHenry's practice by procuring another vessel at Baltimore in his home state of Maryland the week after he entered office.²⁹ Eventually, eight vessels—six ships and two brigs—were purchased for the Navy in this manner.³⁰

It was abundantly evident that three ports and three navy agents were insufficient to complete the inventory of warships contemplated by Congressional legislation. Accordingly, Stoddert moved quickly to expand the number of naval agents. The former agencies at Portsmouth, New York, and Norfolk were resurrected. In addition, new agents were appointed as ships were purchased or contracts made.³¹ In the case of the recently purchased vessels, the prior owners often became the agents. The *Ganges* of Philadelphia, for example, was fitted out by its former owners Thomas Willing and Thomas Francis.³² Once converted to a warship, the *Ganges* also put to sea under its former merchant commander Richard Dale who, conveniently, had been one of the six captains appointed in 1794 to superintend a frigate.³³ Agents were paid on a 2 percent commission on all purchases they made for the government. It was to them that captains applied for money and repairs when putting into port. The nature of their duties

29. This was the 347 ton *Montezuma*, purchased at Baltimore for \$28,000 on June 26, 1798. *QWD*, 2:116.

30. The remaining three were: the 624 ton ship *George Washington*, purchased at Providence, Rhode Island in September 1798 for \$44,000 (\$30,000 in 6 percent stock); the 200 ton brig *Norfolk* taken over on the stocks at its namesake in 1798 (price not found); and the 175 ton brig *Augusta*, also purchased at Norfolk (date and price paid unknown). *QWD*, 2:114-116. The cost of completing the two brigs (purchase price plus conversion and military stores) was \$18,720.55 and \$16,294.29 respectively. *BWD*, 6:330.

31. From north to south the principle agents were Jacob Sheaffe (Portsmouth, NH), Stephen Higginson (Boston), Gibbs and Channing (Newport, RI), Nehemiah Hubbard (New London, CT), Joseph Howland (Norwich, CT), James and Ebenezer Watson (New York), Willings and Francis (Philadelphia), Jeremiah Yellott (Baltimore), William Pennock (Norfolk), Amaziah Jocelin (Wilmington, NC), William Crafts (Charleston, SC), and Ebenezer Jackson (Savannah, GA). *QWD*, 4:212. There were also important agencies at: Salem and Newburyport, MA; Providence, RI; Georgetown and Washington, DC; and St. Mary's, GA.

32. For the purchase document see *QWD*, 1:63-64. Willings and Francis were appointed to the agency the next day. *QWD*, 1:65. The name of the agency was Willings and Francis—the individual proprietors being Thomas Willings Francis, Thomas Willings, and Thomas Mayne Willings.

33. Dale had been the superintendant of the frigate to be built at Norfolk—one of the three discontinued in 1796. He was appointed to command the *Ganges* under Navy colors a month prior to her purchase, April 3, 1798. It is probable, therefore, that Dale had a hand in recommending the purchase. *QWD*, 1:51.

required them to be established shipping merchants in their respective locations. Another important qualification was that they be good Federalists. Many, like Stephen Higginson at Boston, were long acquaintances of Stoddert, who had himself been a successful importer. Stoddert relied on them not only to see to the fitting out and repair of vessels, but also for the recommendation of officers and the arranging of other naval contracts.

Three frigates and a handful of converted merchantmen made up the two components of the force immediately available to Stoddert in 1798. The third came from the vessels of the Treasury Department's Revenue Cutter Service. Ten of these vessels had initially been authorized in 1790. The first generation of these cutters was in the process of being replaced by more formidable topsail schooners or "jackass brigs."³⁴ The first of this new generation of revenue vessels were launched in 1797.³⁵ The President had been authorized to increase the number of men serving on them, but left this task to the Treasury Department under Wolcott.³⁶ This made accounting sense, since the money for their completion and augmentation had been allocated to the Treasury Department before the creation of the Navy Department. Once fitted for sea, however, these vessels were turned over to the Navy Department for operational direction.³⁷ Their officers continued to hold their commissions in the Revenue Cutter Service, although a few were eventually transferred to the Navy.³⁸ While the Treasury Department continued to maintain some of the cutters, eight vessels operated under the Navy from 1798 until

34. Chapelle, *History of the American Sailing Navy*, 146-7.

35. Palmer, *Stoddert's War*, 53.

36. Section 12 of "An Act providing a Naval Armament," July 1, 1797, *Statutes* 1:523-5; reproduced in *QWD*, 1:7-9. Authority to strengthen the vessels even further was granted by "An Act to amend the act, intituled [sic] 'An Act providing a Naval Armament,' and the act intituled 'An act to authorize the President of the United States to cause to be purchased or built a number of small vessels, to be equipped as gallies or otherwise,'" June 22, 1798, *Statutes*, 1:569; reproduced in *QWD*, 1:127.

37. See Benjamin Stoddert to Stephen Higginson, July 5, 1798, *QWD*, 1:166 (166-67); and Benjamin Stoddert to Oliver Wolcott, July 5, 1798, *QWD*, 1:167.

38. Captains Jonathan Chapman, and Hugh G. Campbell both received Navy commissions on September 10, 1798 and October 16, 1800 respectively (Campbell had earlier held the Navy rank of Master Commandant).

the summer of 1799.³⁹ Additional legislation allowed the Navy to permanently commission those cutters it considered of sufficient utility. Three were eventually taken onto the Navy establishment, the rest being returned to the Revenue Service along with their officers.⁴⁰

The remainder of the fleet was created from the keel up. Having authority to build ships of up to 22 guns under the March 27 legislation, Stoddert contracted for six additional vessels in 1798. Four of these were constructed under contracts paid by the ton.⁴¹ The remaining two were built under naval agents in the same manner as the 1794 frigates.⁴² These same two methods of contracting were also employed for the final completion of the revenue cutters, although the funding came from Treasury Department appropriations. Four of the cutters were built under agents, and four under by-the-ton contracts.⁴³ Additionally, the brig *Norfolk* 18, which had been purchased incomplete on the stocks, was finished under an agent.⁴⁴ Most of the contracted ships made it to sea in less than a year.⁴⁵

39. These were the brig *Scammel* 14 out of Portsmouth, the brig *Pickering* 14 out of Boston, the schooner *Governor Jay* 14 out of New York, the schooner *Diligence* 12 and brig *Eagle* 14 out of Philadelphia, the small sloop *General Greene* 10 (not to be confused with the small frigate of the same name) out of Baltimore, the schooner *Virginia* 14 out of Norfolk, and the schooner *South Carolina* 12 out of Charleston. Each of these vessels shared a common hull design estimated at 187 tons, but were masted and rigged individually. Accordingly, their final tonnage must have varied from ship to ship. They were armed with 4 and 6-pounders—the lightest main armament of any Navy vessel. Their crews were authorized at either 34 or 70 men, depending on the number of guns carried. *QWD*, 2:115, 120-1. There was also a brig out of Charleston, the *General Pinckney* that was taken over by the Navy while under construction for the Revenue Service. Initially carried as part of the regular establishment, it was transferred to galley funding after the loss of the *Retaliation* (see notes 79 and 80 below).

40. The three retained were *Eagle*, *Pickering*, and *Scammel*—all 14 gun brigs. The remainder were returned as they returned from cruises in the West Indies in 1799: *Governor Jay* sometime in May, *General Greene* on May 20, *Virginia* on June 3, *Diligence* on June 4, and *South Carolina* on August 20.

41. These were the 190 ton brig *Pinckney* 18 built at Charleston, the 590 ton sloop *Portsmouth* 24 built at its namesake in New Hampshire, the 530 ton sloop *Connecticut* 24 built in Middleton, and the 530 ton ship (later frigate) *Adams* 28 built in New York. 530 tons was the estimated weight of a 24 gun ship, so the *Connecticut* and *Adams* tonnage was probably different once completed. *QWD*, 2:114-116.

42. These were the 530 ton ship (later frigate) *General Greene* 28 built at Warren RI, and the 200 ton brig *Norfolk* 18 completed at its namesake port.

43. Those built under agents were the *General Greene*, *Virginia*, *Eagle*, and *Diligence*. Those built by the ton were the *Governor Jay*, *Pickering*, *South Carolina*, and *Scammel*. *QWD*, 2:116. All were likely fore and aft rigged schooners except the brigs *Eagle*, *Pickering*, and *Scammel*, and the tiny sloop *General Greene*. *QWD*, 2:115.

44. *QWD*, 2:116.

45. The exception was the *Connecticut*.

The patchwork of completed frigates, converted merchant vessels, revenue cutters, and quickly-built sloops and brigs was all circumscribed in the next important piece of legislation which passed just twelve days after Stoddert took office. Responding to the desire of merchants to build warships by subscription, Congress passed an additional act on June 30, 1798.⁴⁶ Not only did this act authorize the government to accept ships built by the citizens for 6 percent stock, it also defined the maximum strength of the total naval force authorized to date. In addition to the three frigates already completed, the fleet could include up to six vessels of not less than 32 guns (frigates), twelve more of from 20 – 24 guns (ship-rigged sloops), and six smaller vessels of 18 or fewer guns (usually brigs and schooners). Also authorized, but not included in this act were ten galleys for coastal defense.⁴⁷ This galley authorization would prove to be both a boon and a bane for Stoddert, as we shall see. The remainder of the fleet, however, had to somehow be fit into the categories assigned by Congress.

Stoddert proved extremely dexterous in creating a force that fit the legislation technically, but exceeded it practically. His foremost problem was how to fill up the number of frigates. The three which had been abandoned in 1796 were the obvious starting point. Timber and yards for their construction were in varying states of disarray, but still existent in 1798. The Secretary was helped immeasurably by an additional \$600,000 appropriation for their completion on July 16, 1798.⁴⁸ That still left him shy three of the big ships, for none of which he had any appropriations

46. "An Act supplementary to the act, intituled [sic] 'An Act to provide an additional Armament for the further protection of the trade of the United States, and for other purposes,'" June 30, 1798, *Statutes*, 1:575-76. The 6 percent stock was in lieu of any additional appropriation. For some reason this act was excluded from both *BWD* and *QWD*.

47. "An Act to authorize the President of the United States to cause to be purchased, or built, a number of small vessels to be equipped as galleys, or otherwise," May 4, 1798, *Statutes*, 1:556; reproduced in *QWD*, 1:64. This act appropriated \$80,000.

48. "An act to make a further appropriation for the additional Naval Armament," July 16, 1798, *Statutes*, 1:608-609; reproduced in *QWD*, 1:211. The frigates were the *President* 44—built at New York, the *Congress* 36—built at Portsmouth, and the *Chesapeake* 36—built at Norfolk.

left to spend. If they were to be built at all, these would have to come from the larger seaports as subscription built vessels.

The first citizen committee that met to subscribe to build a warship convened at Newburyport in Massachusetts. The merchants of the port were no strangers to cooperative endeavor. There was a bank, a woolen mill, a turnpike, and a bridge in the environs of the village, all built by syndicates. In addition, many had pooled their financial resources to fit out privateers during the Revolution.⁴⁹ Having lost several vessels to French privateers, a committee of merchants met on May 23, 1798, and resolved to build a 20-gun ship. Through their congressman, Bailey Bartlett, they offered this vessel to the government, requesting 6 percent stock in lieu of its building cost. Their efforts were in harmony with the American tradition of privateering, but took that custom to a new and more public-minded level. It was the closest the nation ever came to a functioning citizen-naval militia. It was hoped, the committee had written Bartlett, that their actions would “lead to proportionate exertion in larger and wealthier towns.”⁵⁰ News of Newburyport’s intent spread along the Atlantic seaboard, appearing in the papers of Boston (May 26), Philadelphia (June 1), New York (June 2), and Charleston (later in June).⁵¹ By June 6, Senator Benjamin Goodhue of Massachusetts introduced a bill authorizing the President to accept “armed vessel[s] built within the United States, and voluntarily offered to him for the use of the United States, to be employed in the public service.”⁵² Eventually this resulted in the June 30, 1798 Naval Act.⁵³ This act not only called for the six additional frigates, it also provided the mechanism for Stoddert to see to their procurement.

49. Leiner, *Millions for Defense*, 21, 29-30.

50. Leiner, *Millions for Defense*, 21.

51. Leiner, *Millions for Defense*, 23.

52. Leiner, *Millions for Defense*, 24.

53. “An Act supplementary to the act, intituled “An Act to provide an additional Armament for the further protection of the trade of the United States, and for other purposes.” June 30, 1798, *Statutes*, 1:575-6.

When Secretary Stoddert arrived at Philadelphia to take up his duties on June 24, he must have been greeted by many public-spirited citizens already engaged in the capital city's own subscription drive. Eventually both Philadelphia and New York would subscribe for frigates, and both required little urging from Stoddert.⁵⁴ The Secretary hoped to acquire the remaining frigate-sized vessel from either Boston or Baltimore. Three days after entering office, he wrote to Jeremiah Yellott, the naval agent at Baltimore, "The Merchants here [at Philadelphia] are about to begin a Ship of 1000 Tons to carry 44 Guns. I hope one at least as large can be built at Baltimore, where the Spirit of the Merchants and Citizens has been so patriotically displayed in the size of their contribution."⁵⁵ Hedging his bets, a little over a week later he wrote to David Sears, chairman of the Boston subscription committee, "It is very desirable that Boston, which has taken the lead in public-Spirit, as evidenced by their liberal Subscriptions, Should not be outdone in the Size of their Ship."⁵⁶ That same day he again appealed to Yellott. "I am sorry you prefer small Vessels to be built at Baltimore, to one Ship of larger size." To this he added, "You will perceive that six Ships of 32 Guns at least, are to be procured. It has been calculated that Baltimore would afford one of these. The smaller Ships can be obtained in smaller places . . . and I cannot relinquish the hope that my Native State, not less Federal, and not less in earnest to defend the rights of the Country, than any in the Union, will afford one of these."⁵⁷ In the end he

54. These were the *New York* 36 and *Philadelphia* 36 (sometimes named the *City of Philadelphia*, and listed as a 44-gun ship). Both were originally intended as 44-gun ships, and in the case of the later always carried at least that number. However, the true 44s (*United States*, *Constitution*, and *President*), carried 24-pounders on their main gun deck. Both the *New York* and *Philadelphia* were 18-pounder frigates, and although far superior in size and firepower to an equivalent European 36-gun frigates, were not the equal of the true 44s.

55. Benjamin Stoddert to Jeremiah Yellott, June 27, 1798, *QWD*, 1:146.

56. Benjamin Stoddert to David Sears, July 6, 1798, *QWD*, 1:170.

57. Benjamin Stoddert to Jeremiah Yellott, July 6, 1798, *QWD*, 1:173.

was disappointed in both Boston and Baltimore, they having chosen instead to contribute lesser vessels.⁵⁸

By the end of July the first glimpse of the cumulative results of Stoddert's various efforts appears. In a letter to President Adams on July 31, 1798, Stoddert laid before the President the status of the vessels in service and the efforts to build others to augment them. Reminding the President that "The Acts of Congress authorize the President to cause to be procured from the Public Money appropriated for the purpose, and the public Spirit of the Citizens, Six vessels not to exceed 18 Guns each, Twelve—not to exceed 24 Guns, and Six—not less than 32 Guns,"⁵⁹ Stoddert then describes the progress in filling this quota. Of the smallest class, three were being built, the *Norfolk* purchased at the city of the same name, and two vessels by the citizens of Baltimore.⁶⁰ The three remaining of this class he hoped to procure from Charleston, Providence, and Salem.⁶¹ Five of the second class of vessels had been purchased and converted.⁶² Four others were being built by contract.⁶³ Boston and Newburyport were building two by subscription, and Stoddert hoped to have another built from the combined subscription of the Virginia towns of Richmond, Petersburg, and Norfolk.⁶⁴ Of the larger frigates, the construction of five had been arranged, but Stoddert confessed, "I am at a loss at present to Judge from

58. Baltimore provided two 380 ton sloops, the *Maryland* 20 and the *Patapsco* 20. Boston chose to build a 24-gun sloop, but this was of substantial size and was ultimately completed as a small frigate—the 700 ton *Boston* 28. The *Boston* tonnage is sometimes given as 530 tons, but this was the estimated weight for a 24-gun ship, which was how the vessel was carried on the Navy books in order to fit it within the authorized establishment. *QWD*, 2:114.

59. Benjamin Stoddert to John Adams, July 31, 1798, *QWD*, 1:262-3.

60. The *Maryland* and *Patapsco* were carried on the naval establishment as 18-gun ships although they were built to carry more. See *QWD*, 1:114.

61. All of these locations ended up contributing larger vessels. Charleston built a small 544 ton frigate, *John Adams* 28 which the Navy books carried as a 24-gun ship. Providence, Rhode Island did not subscribe enough money to build a vessel, but the government purchased the 624 ton sloop *George Washington* 24 there instead, partly by offering 6 percent stock. Most remarkable was Salem, Massachusetts which subscribed enough money to contribute an 850 ton medium frigate *Essex* 32.

62. The *Ganges*, *Delaware*, *Baltimore*, *Montezuma*, and *Herald* (see notes 27 and 29 above).

63. The *Portsmouth*, *Adams*, *General Greene*, and *Connecticut* (see notes 41 and 42 above).

64. The *Boston* (see note 58), and the 467 ton *Merrimack* 24, built at Newburyport, Massachusetts. The Virginia towns instead purchased a the 200 ton brig *Richmond* 18.

whence the Ship of 32 Guns or upwards will be obtained.”⁶⁵ Notwithstanding his consternation, with the single exception of this frigate, Stoddert had managed to cobble together the force authorized by law in the remarkable period of just over a month.

One further legislative appropriation gave Stoddert considerable difficulty. Since commerce raiding and coastal defense had been the primary objectives of American naval strategy during the Revolution, there evolved a public sense that flotillas of shallow-draft vessels were needed to defend ports and harbors. In the Southern Atlantic ports—Wilmington, Charleston, and Savannah—the need for defense from French raiders was especially keen because of their proximity to privateering bases in the Caribbean. The 1794 naval program had also included an appropriation for ten coastal defense galleys.⁶⁶ Although this money had subsequently been subsumed into the capital ship program, the precedent of frigates (for commerce raiding and force projection) augmented by galleys (for coastal defense) had thus been set. When, in 1798, Secretary of War McHenry offered to the House of Representatives his recommendations on defensive measures to be taken, he included the construction of galleys.⁶⁷ It is not surprising then that in the midst of the barrage of defensive legislation during the spring

65. The frigates then being built were the *President*, *Congress*, *Chesapeake*, *New York*, and *Philadelphia*. The missing frigate would be supplied from an unexpected quarter—Salem’s *Essex*. However, when Truxtun and the *Constellation* captured the French frigate *L’Insurgente* 36 on February 9, 1799, it replaced the *Essex* as one of the authorized frigates, and the *Essex* was instead justified under the 24-gun ship authorization. Stoddert apparently felt justified in doing so since there were five ships of only 20 guns of this class—although this is just the author’s conjecture at present.

66. “An Act to authorize the President of the United States during the recess of the present Congress, to cause to be purchased or built a number of Vessels to be equipped as Galleys, or otherwise, in the service of the United States,” June 5, 1794, *Statutes*, 1:376.

67. James McHenry to Samuel Sewall, April 9, 1798, *QWD*, 1:52 (51-53). Here again it is not improbable that Hamilton assisted the Secretary in drafting the recommendations. Hamilton had been a member of the Washington’s cabinet during the passage of the 1794 measures.

of that year, Congress again authorized the construction of ten galleys on May 4, 1798.⁶⁸

Following the same course used to effect the procurement of larger vessels, Stoddert turned to naval agents in the Southern ports.⁶⁹ The legislation had not confined galley building to the South, but after considering the needs of Long Island Sound and Rhode Island, the Secretary confined their construction to the three most southern states.⁷⁰ Two galleys were built at Wilmington in North Carolina. Three were constructed in South Carolina—two at Charleston, and a third at Beaufort. The remaining two were built at Savannah and St. Mary's in Georgia.⁷¹ The total number of vessels, therefore, was apparently only seven. However, even the Navy Accountant's office was unsure just how many had been built as late as April 9, 1800. In a letter to the naval agent, the Accountant's office belatedly observed that "It has been lately discovered in the examination of your accounts that there are sundry charges for Cost and equipment of five Gallies . . . but from information received from the Secretary of the Navy it appears that but three have been built under your agency . . ." ⁷² There is no evidence that this discrepancy was ever resolved. In a list of expenditures on vessels submitted to Congress in 1806, five Charleston galleys were still listed with their respective costs—each sufficient to have built a vessel.⁷³

68. "An Act to authorize the President of the United States to cause to be purchased, or built, a number of small vessels to be equipped as galleys, or otherwise," May 4, 1798, *Statutes*, 1:556; reproduced in *QWD*, 1:64. The act also appropriated \$80,000 to build the craft, which was the exact amount appropriated in 1794 (see note 66). For a useful but somewhat flawed article on these galleys see William R. Wells, "The Perception of Naval Protection: The Southern Galleys, 1798-1800," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 737-58.

69. These agents were Amaziah Jocelin at Wilimington (North Carolina), William Crafts at Charleston and Jonathan Chapman, Jr. at Beaufort (South Carolina), and Ebenezer Jackson at Savannah who also oversaw the galley at St. Mary's (Georgia).

70. Benjamin Stoddert to Jonathan Chapman, July 28, 1798, *QWD*, 1:246-7; and Benjamin Stoddert to James McHenry, August 1, 1798, *QWD*, 1:265.

71. The names of the galleys were the *Governor Davie* and *Governor Williams* at Wilmington, the *Charleston (Mars)* and *South Carolina (Protector)* at Charleston, and the *Beaufort*, *Savannah*, and *St. Mary's* at those respective cities.

72. Thomas Gillis to William Crafts, April 9, 1800, *QWD*, 5:401.

73. Thomas Jefferson to the House of Representatives, February 18, 1806, *BWD*, 7:330 (329-30). The galleys in question were the *Mars* and *Protector*. The Navy Accountant assumed these to be the original names of the vessels completed, but they are listed separately in 1806.

Part of the difficulty for Stoddert was distance. Eventually he despaired of trying to control the management of these craft and requested the regional Army commander, Major General Charles Pinckney to oversee them. “I have arranged with the Agents at different places on the subject of supplies pay, etc.,” Stoddert wrote, “but cannot, at so great a distance, and with little knowledge of the Country, direct their operations.”⁷⁴ The following day he added,

I confess I have but little expectation that it is possible to employ these vessels usefully in the present situation of our affairs. If the French were superior to us on our own Coast, then the Gallies [sic], cooperating with a land force, might be of importance. But the Laws have directed the equipment and employment of the Gallies. The people most exposed will be better satisfied; and to satisfy any part of the people that the [Government] is not inattentive to their Safety, is an object worth more than the expense.⁷⁵

Despite Stoddert’s misgivings, Georgia Governor James Jackson for one was importuning the government to do more for the protection of the coast of his state.⁷⁶ It is perhaps for this reason that the register of vessels that Stoddert sent to the House on December 24, 1798 listed four galleys under construction in Georgia although at the time only two were actually being built, and there is no evidence that any more were ever contemplated for Georgia.⁷⁷

Stoddert’s December 24 communication to the House provides a convenient view of what had been further arranged since his letter to the President at the end of July. It contains several items that illustrate the “creativity” of the Secretary in matching his ship-building program within the extant legislation. Many of the ships then under construction are listed as either 24 or 18-gun ships although they were subsequently completed to carry a heavier armament. For example, all four of the vessels that would be built as 28-gun light frigates were listed as 24-gun ships in this report.⁷⁸ The recently captured French schooner *La Croyable*, purchased and taken

74. Benjamin Stoddert to Charles Pinckney, March 20, 1799, *QWD*, 2:492-93.

75. Benjamin Stoddert to Charles Pinckney, March 21, 1799, *QWD*, 2:497-98.

76. See Timothy Pickering to James Jackson, September 22, 1798, *QWD*, 1:437-38; and Benjamin Stoddert to James Jackson, November 26, 1798, *QWD*, 2:49.

77. *QWD*, 2:115.

78. That is the *General Greene*, the *Adams*, and the then unnamed ships building at Boston and Charleston (the future *Boston* and *John Adams*). The future *Maryland* and *Patapsco* being built at Baltimore are likewise listed below their intended rate as 18 rather than 20-gun ships. *QWD*, 2:114.

into the Navy as the *Retaliation* 14, was justified under the galley appropriation.⁷⁹ After Stoddert learned of this vessel's recapture by the French, he instead substituted the *Pinckney* in its place. This allowed him to purchase another 18-gun vessel.⁸⁰ By hook or crook, therefore, Stoddert had succeeded in less than six months in assembling a fleet of twenty-nine vessels augmented by the cutters and galleys authorized in Congressional legislation (See Table 1)

Stoddert now directly contributed to the next increase in force authorized by Congress when he forwarded his recommendations for the 1799 naval appropriations bill. By now the Secretary was thinking long term, and proposed that

The protection of our Coast, the security of our extensive Country from invasion in some of its weaker parts, the safety of our important Commerce; and our future peace when the Maritime Nations of Europe war with each other all seem to demand that our Naval force should be augmented—so much augmented indeed, as to make the most powerful nations desire our friendship—the most unprincipled respect our neutrality.

To this end, he called for a fleet of twelve 74-gun ships, twelve frigates, and 20-30 smaller vessels as the necessary force. “[If] we had possessed this force a few years ago,” he pontificated, “we should not have lost by depredations on our Trade, four times the sum necessary to have created and maintained it during the whole time War has existed in Europe.”

He further proposed measures to secure a stock of seasoned timber, for the fostering of the hemp,

79. The *La Croyable* was taken by Captain Stephen Decatur, Sr. in the *Delaware* on July 7, 1798 off Egg Harbor. It was purchased by the government on July 30 (*QWD*, 1:261-62), and renamed *Retaliation*, but was recaptured by the French on November 20, 1798. Obviously, Stoddert did not learn of this until after composing his register for the House of Representatives. Its purchase price of \$7,000 was taken out of the money appropriated for galley construction. See Benjamin Stoddert to John Adams, August 3, 1798, *QWD* 1:269-70.

80. The decision to place the *Pinckney* on the galley establishment was taken on or before December 11, 1798, although this was not reflected on the register sent to the House on December 24. This does not mean that Stoddert knew of the loss of the *Retaliation* yet, however, since only seven of the ten galleys were yet provided, although the document lists nine (including the two “bogus” Georgia galleys). Not listing the *Pinckney* may have been a shrewd way to influence Southern support since weakening coastal defense to support another cruiser would not have been well received. See Benjamin Stoddert to James Simons, December 11, 1798, *QWD*, 2:82. The eventual replacement was the 400 ton sloop *Trumbull* 18 (although originally intended to replace the *Herald*). This vessel was contracted for on March 30, 1799, and built under naval agent Joseph Howland at Norwich, Connecticut. *QWD*, 3:502. Although the Secretary and explicitly ordered it as an 18-gun ship, it was built with capacity for more—a design change that upset Stoddert. *QWD*, 4:262. Because of the strength of its construction it was armed with eighteen 12-pounders. For this reason it is often rated as a 24-gun ship since its weight of metal would have been similar to the 9-pounder armed 24-gun ships. *QWD*, 5:297. The *Trumbull* is listed in *QWD*, 7:371 as having been built by subscription, but the documents related to its construction make this conclusion very doubtful.

TABLE 1	
AS OF DECEMBER 24, 1798 THE TOTAL FLEET INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING:	
<u>Frigates authorized in 1794:</u>	
1- <i>United States</i> 44	in service and at sea
2- <i>Constitution</i> 44	in service and at sea
3- <i>Constellation</i> 36	in service and at sea
<u>Frigates authorized by Act of June 30:</u>	
4- <i>President</i> 44	under construction by agent at New York
5- <i>Chesapeake</i> (44)	under construction by agent at Norfolk (still contemplated as 44)
6- <i>Congress</i> 36	under construction by agent at Portsmouth
7- <i>New York</i> (44)	under construction by subscription at New York (18-pounder main armament made the true rating 36 instead of 44)
8- <i>Philadelphia</i> (44)	under construction by subscription at Phila. (18-pounders also)
9- <i>Essex</i> 32	under construction by subscription at Salem
<u>Sloops of war authorized by Acts of April 27 and June 30:</u>	
10- <i>Ganges</i> 24	purchased at Philadelphia and at sea
11- <i>Delaware</i> 20	purchased at Philadelphia and at sea
12- <i>Baltimore</i> 20	purchased at Baltimore and at sea
13- <i>Montezuma</i> 20	purchased at Baltimore and at sea
14- <i>Portsmouth</i> 24	built by contract at Portsmouth and preparing for sea
15- <i>Merrimack</i> 24	built by subscription at Newburyport, MA and preparing for sea
16- <i>Adams</i> (24)	under construction by contract at New York (completed as 28)
17- <i>General Greene</i> (24)	under construction by agent at Warren, RI (completed as 28)
18- <i>Connecticut</i> 24	under construction by contract at Middletown, CT
19- <i>Boston</i> 24	under construction by subscription at Boston (completed as 28)
20- <i>John Adams</i> 24	under construction by subscription at Charleston (completed as 28)
21- <i>George Washington</i> 24	purchased and being converted at Providence, RI
<u>Smaller vessels authorized by Act of June 30:</u>	
22-ship <i>Herald</i> 18	purchased at Boston and at sea
23-brig <i>Norfolk</i> 18	purchased at Norfolk, completed by agent, and at sea
24-brig <i>Pinkney</i> 18	taken from Revenue Service at Charleston, fitting for sea (see notes 72, 7
25-brig <i>Richmond</i> 18	purchased by subscription at Norfolk, fitting for sea
26-ship <i>Maryland</i> (18)	under construction by subscription at Baltimore (completed as 20)
27-ship <i>Patapsco</i> (18)	under construction by subscription at Baltimore (completed as 20)
<u>Revenue cutters authorized for Navy:</u>	
28-schooner <i>Diligence</i> 12	built at Philadelphia and at sea
29-brig <i>Eagle</i> 14	built at Philadelphia and at sea
30-sloop <i>General Greene</i> 10	built at Fells Point, MD and at sea
31-schooner <i>Governor Jay</i> 14	built at New York and at sea
32-brig <i>Pickering</i> 14	built at Newburyport, MA and at sea
33-brig <i>Scammel</i> 14	built at Portsmouth and fitting for sea
34-schooner <i>South Carolina</i> 12	built at Charleston and fitting for sea
35-schooner <i>Virginia</i> 14	built at Hampton, VA and at sea
<u>Captured and purchased with galley funds:</u>	
36-schooner <i>Retaliation</i> 14	captured Jul 7, 1798; purchased Jul 30; recaptured Nov 20, 1798
<u>Vessels added to the establishment after December 24, 1798:</u>	
37-frigate <i>L'Insurgente</i> 36	captured Feb 9, 1799 by Truxtun and <i>Constellation</i> off Nevis
38-ship <i>Trumbull</i> 18	built by agent at Norwich, CT
39-ship <i>Warren</i> 18	built by agent at Newburyport, MA
40-brig <i>Augusta</i> 14	purchased at Norfolk
41-schooner <i>Enterprize</i> 12	built by agent at Baltimore
42-schooner <i>Experiment</i> 12	built by agent at Baltimore

canvas, and copper industries, and for the establishment of more a permanent naval infrastructure.⁸¹ Congress, however, was not willing to go quite so far.

In the end, the naval program of 1799 fell far short of Stoddert's recommendations. Only six of the twelve 74-gun ships were authorized.⁸² His desire for shore establishments was reduced to the procurement of only two repair docks, although a measure was passed to secure timber.⁸³ Thus constrained, Stoddert began the unauthorized creation of navy yards by purchasing the ground upon which the 74-gun ships would be built at Portsmouth, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, and Norfolk. With the money appropriated for timber, he purchased land and began the process of harvesting, shipping, and seasoning a strategic supply. None of these objectives, however, would reach completion before the Federalists were replaced in 1801.⁸⁴ The only immediate gain from the 1799 legislation was the addition of six more small vessels.

The addition of six more vessels of 18 or fewer guns was the occasion for the final shuffle in the authorized establishment. Two small schooners were contracted for at Baltimore.⁸⁵ A small brig was purchased at Norfolk after the Secretary was assured that it could quickly be readied for sea—an assertion that proved incorrect.⁸⁶ Three brigs from the Revenue Service were permanently taken onto the Navy establishment, while the other five were returned to the

81. Benjamin Stoddert to Josiah Parker, December 29, 1798, *QWD*, 2:129-34.

82. See "An Act for the augmentation of the Navy," February 25, 1799, *Statutes*, 1:621-2; reproduced in *QWD*, 2:399-400.

83. "An Act authorizing the establishment of Docks," February 25, 1799, *Statutes*, 1:622 (only \$50,000 appropriated); and "An Act authorizing the purchase of Timber for naval purposes," February 25, 1799, *Statutes*, 1:622 (\$200,000 appropriated).

84. For Stoddert's efforts to improve the Navy's infrastructure see Palmer, *Stoddert's War*, 126-9.

85. Both schooners, *Enterprise* and *Experiment*, were 135 tons and carried twelve 6-pounders.

86. The 175 ton brig *Augusta* 14 was purchased upon the recommendations of Captain Truxtun and naval agent William Pennock. However, when Stoddert sent the vessel to Boston to be fitted, the intended commander and naval agent complained that it would make a poor cruiser. Exasperated, Stoddert had the brig brought to Philadelphia where he had naval constructor Joshua Humphreys fit it for sea with as little alteration as possible. It eventually was sold out of the Navy in 1801 for only \$3,000 less than it had cost to purchase and fit for sea. See *QWD*, 7:307; *BWD*, 6:330.

Treasury Department.⁸⁷ One of the purchased vessels, the *Montezuma*, which had proved to be both rotten and a dull sailer, was sold.⁸⁸ To replace it, a new ship was contracted for at Newburyport.⁸⁹ Also, a captured frigate, *L'Insurgente* 36 was purchased.⁹⁰ Stoddert had managed to get twenty-two vessels to sea by 1799, with twenty more under construction or outfitting. By June of that year the fleet reached its maximum operational strength of thirty-two warships—accounting for sales, losses, and returns.⁹¹

Stoddert's days at the helm were numbered, however. In January of 1801, after the loss of Adams to Jefferson in the election, he penned his final proposal to the Congress. He recommended the sale of all vessels but the thirteen frigates. He also advocated several measures to continue the building of the 74-gun ships, the collection of a timber reserve, and the establishment of adequate shore facilities.⁹² When the Congressional legislation was laid before President Adams on his last day in office, it did little to address these objectives. It did, however, follow the Secretary's recommendations concerning the liquidation of the fleet.⁹³ With little hope of further gains, the lame-duck President Adams signed it into law. Three days later

87. The three retained were the *Eagle*, *Pickering*, and *Scammel*. The *Pickering* was lost at sea with all hands in September 1800.

88. Sold December 30, 1799. Bauer and Roberts, *Register of Ships of the U.S. Navy*, 33.

89. This was the 385 ton sloop *Warren* 20, contracted for at Newburyport, but built at Salisbury, Massachusetts. It went to sea on December 31, 1799. *QWD*, 4:591.

90. *L'Insurgent* was captured by Truxtun in the *Constellation* off Nevis on February 9, 1799. After cruising with its captor for a few months, it returned to the United States and was purchased for \$85,000. It was lost at sea with all hands in September 1800. Lardas, *American Light and Medium Frigates*, 42.

91. The twenty not yet at sea included the two Baltimore schooners (*Enterprise* and *Experiment*), seven ships (*Connecticut*, *George Washington*, *Maryland*, *Patapsco*, *Trumbull*, and *Warren*), and eleven frigates (*President*, *Chesapeake*, *Congress*, *New York*, *Philadelphia*, *L'Insurgente*, *Essex*, *Adams*, *Boston*, *General Greene*, and *John Adams*). Palmer, *Stoddert's War*, 128.

92. Stoddert's proposal is in Benjamin Stoddert to Chairman of the Committee of Naval Affairs, January 12, 1801, *QWD*, 7:80-84. The enclosures that accompanied it are in *ASP-NA*, 1:76-78.

93. "An Act providing for a Naval peace establishment, and for other purposes," March 3, 1801, *Statutes*, 2:110-11; reproduced in *QWD*, 7:134-35.

Stoddert mournfully wrote to Captain Truxtun concerning his recommendations, "I thought it so moderate and so proper that it would be adopted."⁹⁴

Although it is not fair to assign the total demolition of the Naval establishment to Stoddert's January proposal, yet the choice of which vessels to retain and which to sell were clearly influenced by his wishes. Two factors conditioned Stoddert's rationale for the sale of all but the frigates. First was his experience over the course of the war. This had taught him how quickly a force of small vessels could be improvised and constructed in an emergency; it was only the larger warships that could not be got to sea in a reasonable amount of time. Second, many of the vessels then in service were deficient in construction, durability, and sailing qualities. Once a good supply of seasoned timber had been secured, it was reasonable to expect that the 20-30 smaller vessels he had proposed would be constructed to a superior standard. From among the remaining force of frigates, Stoddert had recommended that six be kept in active service. This was in harmony with the original intent of the 1794 authorization, and accorded well with the return of peace with France. Furthermore, six frigates appeared to be more than adequate to deal with the paltry flotillas of the still threatening Barbary States. It was thought that the seven frigates placed in ordinary could be quickly brought into service to defend the coast in the case of European depredations. Lastly, although the 1801 legislation did not supplement appropriations for the 74-gun ships, neither did it call for their cancellation. The next administration never had any reason to complete these ships, and their construction remained in abeyance until resurrected by the demands of the War of 1812.⁹⁵

The year 1801 saw the dismantling of Stoddert's achievements. One by one as the vessels returned to port they were paid off, stripped of their military equipment, and sold at auction.

94. Benjamin Stoddert to Thomas Truxtun, March 6, 1801, *QWD*, 7:140.

95. Palmer, *Stoddert's War*, 127.

Over \$275,000 was recouped from the sale of the smaller vessels.⁹⁶ Stoddert left office on March 31, 1801 having stayed on a few weeks to ease the transition to the new administration. Four frigates and a schooner were on their way to the Mediterranean by June 1, to open the next chapter in the saga of the U.S. Navy. Four frigates were kept in port, undergoing repairs, to spell them as necessary. Meanwhile, the remaining frigates navigated their way up the Potomac to their new moorings on the Eastern Branch where they settled into the mud and awaited their recall. One never made it out again; two others would rot away in sight of the capital after a single Mediterranean cruise.⁹⁷

The tide of national fervor against France that had created the forty-two warships of the first fleet had crested with the return of peace. Naval policy now receded back to the *status quo ante bellum*. The tide of war had left behind only thirteen frigates, a sloop, and a schooner. Ten of the thirteen surviving veterans from the Quasi-War would hoist their sails in the War of 1812. Six would survive it.⁹⁸ The creation of the Federalist Navy remained a monument to the determined naval policy of Benjamin Stoddert and his associates. Stoddert lived until 1813, long enough to see the validation of his naval vision.⁹⁹

96. *QWD*, 7:307. The exact amount is \$275,767.73 which only includes the sale of fifteen vessels liquidated between March 3 and December 8, 1801.

97. The *General Greene* was condemned in 1805. *Boston* and *New York* never left ordinary again after their first Mediterranean cruises.

98. See note 5.

99. Stoddert left office financially devastated. Commodore Thomas Truxtun, who had gained a small fortune from prize money during the Quasi-War, combined with friends of the former Secretary to subscribe for enough capital for Stoddert to restart his business concerns. Failed land speculations, and the Embargo, however, denied him a return to fortune. He died on December 12, 1813. Eugene S. Ferguson, *Truxtun of the Constellation: The Life of Commodore Thomas Truxtun, U.S. Navy, 1755-1822* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956), 216-17; Coletta, *American Secretaries of the Navy*, 1:72.