



Capt. Frederick Lee

By Petty Officer 2nd Class Jetta H. Disco

Capt. Frederick Lee, born in 1766, lived and thrived in the quaint New England town of Guilford, Conn.

Throughout Lee's life, members in his community deemed him a hero for his maritime defense against the British and contributions to his town.

Lee became one of the founders of the small town of Madison, Conn., for which he named after President James Madison. He was also involved in the development of the Durham-East Guilford Turnpike and the West Wharf.

More notably, he founded the first high school in Madison, named for him. Lee's Academy was constructed directly across from his home. Atop the Academy rests a bell believed to have belonged to the Revenue Cutter Eagle for which he and his crew defended against the British, who ultimately claimed it.

In addition to his actions ashore, Lee was the master of his own vessel, the *Adriana*. On one such trip to the U.S., a passenger aboard the *Adriana*, Gen. Thadeuz Kosciusko, an artillery expert and artist, painted a watercolor portrait of Lee. The original is safely kept at a museum in Guilford.

At the age of 43, Lee was commissioned by President James Madison to serve as a master of the 130-ton schooner *Eagle II* in the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service. Lee and his crew of 25 men and six cannons set out to protect U.S. ports and defend against piracy.

In 1814, nearly two years into the war of 1812, Lee and his crew were called upon to rescue an American merchant ship sailing out of New Haven, Conn. A British crew aboard the *HMS Dispatch* forced Lee and his crew to beach the *Eagle*. The opposing sides exchanged musket and cannon fire throughout the day and night. Finally, the British retreated and Lee and his men thought they were victorious as they tried to save their ship. But the British returned and captured the beloved *Eagle*.

After the war ended, Lee served in the cutter service for another 15 years as the master of a newly built *Eagle*.

Lee died in 1831 at the age of 65.