



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Commodore Barry, 1812

Eastport, Maine
Master Daniel Elliot

Commodore John Barry is considered by some to be the father of the United States Navy. He served as an officer of the Continental Navy and commanded the frigate *Raleigh*. Barry's gallant conduct at the time of her loss in September 1778 ensured that he received further active employment. After a time as captain of a privateer, in 1780 he was given the frigate *Alliance*, in which he captured three enemy privateers and three Royal Navy warships during 1781-1783. *Alliance* also carried American diplomats across the Atlantic to France and performed valuable services in the Caribbean area. Following the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783, Barry returned to the merchant service. In 1794 he was appointed the senior Captain of the newly established United States Navy and subsequently was in charge of constructing the large frigate *United States*. Captain Barry commanded the new ship in the West Indies during the 1798-1801 Quasi-War with France, including a period as Commodore of U.S. Navy forces in the region. He served ashore at Philadelphia for the remainder of his life. Commodore John Barry died there on 13 September 1803.

Builder: Unknown

Rig: Schooner

Length:

Beam:

Draft:

Displacement: 98-tons

Cost:

Commissioned:

Disposition:

Compliment:

Armament: 6 guns (unspecified type)

Cutter History:

On March 20, 1812, *Commodore Barry* was purchased at Sag Harbor, Long Island, from Stephen Mitchell for \$4,100. *Commodore Barry* was pierced for ten guns, but carried only six and the cutter displaced ninety-eight tons. She was captured by warships of the Royal Navy on August 3, 1812; authorities in Saint John, New Brunswick, acquired the vessel for provincial naval service by August 20, 1812, and renamed it *Brunswicker*.

Master: On April 13, 1812, Daniel Elliott received a commission as revenue cutter master in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. His officers included Charles J. Woodward, first mate, and John

McKeller, second mate. After the capture of *Commodore Barry*, Elliott continued to serve in the Maine region commanding the "revenue boat" *Income*.

War of 1812 Events and Operations:

June 18, 1812. President James Madison signs a declaration of war and the War of 1812 officially begins. The congressional authorization states "*that the President of the United States is hereby authorized to use the whole land and naval force of the United States . . . against the vessels, goods, and effects of the government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and the subjects thereof.*"

June 18, 1812. Treasury Secretary Albert Gallatin sends a circular to all customs collectors, writing only the sentence: "*Sir, I hasten to inform you that War was this day declared against Great Britain*". In a separate circular, Gallatin orders the news dispatched to U.S. naval vessels by revenue cutters stationed at Savannah; Norfolk; Charleston; New York; Portsmouth, New Hampshire; Wilmington, North Carolina; and Wilmington, Delaware.

June 27, 1812. *Commodore Barry* seizes the schooner *Cranberry*, carrying British goods in Maine waters.

June 28, 1812. *Commodore Barry* escorts the detained schooners *Theresa*, *Cranberry* and *Rising Sun* from Eastport, Maine, to Portland. These vessels had all been carrying banned British goods.

June 29, 1812. *Commodore Barry* detains the schooner *Nymph* in Maine waters for carrying an illegal cargo.

August 2, 1812. *Commodore Barry* guarding five detained smuggling vessels in the Passamaquoddy District of Maine.

August 3, 1812. *Commodore Barry* and privateer *Madison* captured by boats sent from a Royal Navy squadron, which included HMS *Spartan* (38 guns), HMS *Maidstone* (36), HMS *Indian* (18) and HMS *Plumper* (12). Forewarned of the attack, the Americans beached their vessels at Little River, Maine, and set up shore batteries behind defenses improvised from cordwood. The British sent in five barges with approximately 250 officers and men and suffered several dead and wounded, but carried the day. According to a local fisherman, at "*about 1 p.m. five launches of men (about 250) started from "them [Royal Navy warships] for the harbor. In a few minutes the firing commenced and continued for nearly two hours, then it ceased.*" All but three of the Americans escaped into the woods, and these three captured cuttermen (Daniel Marshall, Charles Woodward and William Babson) are considered the first POWs in revenue cutter and Coast Guard history.

August 7, 1812. A Maine court adjudicates three vessels seized by *Commodore Barry* (Daniel Elliott). Prior to its August 3rd capture by the Royal Navy, *Commodore Barry* apprehended the sloops *Favorite*, *Patsey*, and *Randolph* and a skiff, which had carried illegal British cargoes in the Passamaquoddy District of Maine, near the border with Canada. The skiff belonged to a British vessel smuggling goods into the U.S.

September 18, 1813. Baltimore *Patriot* reports that the revenue boat at Machias, Maine (likely the *Income* under Daniel Elliott), captures an American schooner, which had been captured by the British privateer *Dart* and sent as a prize to Halifax. The captured schooner had a prize crew on board, but was piloted through thick fog to the revenue boat by the only remaining member of the original crew.

February 22, 1814. Patrolling off of Jonesport, Maine, in the Machias, Maine-based revenue boat *Income*, Master Daniel Elliott encounters the British privateer *Hare of St. Johns* (the former American privateer *Wasp* of Salem, Mass.), beaches his vessel at nearby Sawyer Cove and takes cover. An armed landing party from the vessel rows ashore to take possession of the vessel. However, with the aid of local militia Elliott drives off the British landing party, which suffers one killed and two wounded

before escaping to the privateer waiting off-shore. The enemy vessel fires a few cannon shots at Elliott and his men before departing for Halifax, Nova Scotia.

March 4, 1814. Commanding revenue boat *Income*, Daniel Elliott takes possession of British prize vessel *Porpoise* from American privateer *Nonsuch* and sends it to the customs collector at Machias, Maine.

December 24, 1814. Peace treaty (Treaty of Ghent) signed between representatives of the United States and Great Britain at a ceremony in Ghent, Belgium.

January 4, 1815. In response to the destructive effects of the war on commerce, New England delegates to the Hartford Convention claim that "*Commerce, the vital spring of New England's prosperity, was annihilated. Embargoes, restrictions, and rapacity of revenue officers, had completed its destruction.*"

January 8, 1815. Americans defeat a British army in the Battle of New Orleans in the last major land engagement of the war.

February 11, 1815. Under the white flag, HMS *Favorite* (18) delivers the peace treaty, Treaty of Ghent, to New York City.

February 16, 1815. President Madison signs Treaty of Ghent officially ending the War of 1812.

February 25, 1815. Treasury Secretary Alexander J. Dallas issues a circular to all customs collectors regarding future policy in light of the conclusion of the war. In the two-page circular, he instructs, "[cutter] *officers and men must be recommended for their vigilance, activity, skill and good conduct.*" Dallas later directs that "*Smuggling, in every form, must be prevented, or punished. And if it be not prevented, the officers of the customs, according to their respective duties and stations, will be held answerable to prove, that there was no want of vigilance on their part.*" In the final paragraph, Dallas lists other duties to be carried out by the customs officials, hence their respective cutters, including "*immediate measures will be taken, for restoring the light-houses, piers, buoys, and beacons, within your district and jurisdiction, to the state in which they were before the war.*"

March 3, 1815. Congress repeals "*the acts prohibiting the entrance of foreign vessels into the waters of the United States*", thereby repealing elements of the Non-Intercourse and Non-Importation acts.

May 30, 1815. Treasury Secretary Alexander Dallas writes the New York customs collector about building one or more schooner-rigged cutters to replace those lost in the war.

July 4, 1815. New Brunswick authorities auction off *Brunswicker* (ex-Commodore Barry) in Saint John, New Brunswick. It had served provincial authorities for 770 days, before its re-sale for £730.

Images:



"Capture of the [Revenue Cutter] COMMODORE BARRY"
A watercolor by Irwin John Bevan;
from the Mariners' Museum Bailey collection (QW 280).

Courtesy of the Mariners' Museum.

Sources:

Cutter History File, Coast Guard Historian's Office.

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