



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Gallatin, 1807

Norfolk Virginia & Charleston, South Carolina

Masters Daniel McNeill, Edward Herbert & John Hubbard Silliman

The *Gallatin* was named for President Thomas Jefferson's Secretary of the Treasury, Albert Gallatin.

Builder:

Rig:

Length:

Beam:

Draft:

Displacement:

Cost: Purchased for \$9,432.93

Commissioned: 1807

Decommissioned: N/A

Disposition: Exploded in Charleston Harbor on 1 April 1813.

Complement:

Armament:

Cutter History:

Cutter: On December 5, 1807, revenue cutter master Daniel McNeill paid a balance of \$9,432.93 for *Gallatin* in Norfolk and sailed it down to Charleston for revenue cutter service. On March 31, 1813, *Gallatin's* magazine exploded and destroyed the cutter in Charleston Harbor.

Masters: Daniel McNeill received a master's commission for the State of South Carolina on December 5, 1807. He retained command of *Gallatin* until the cutter's transfer from Charleston to Norfolk in August of 1812. On July 7, 1812, Norfolk native and experienced merchant captain, Edward Herbert, was commissioned a master for revenue cutter duty. He was assigned to duty on July 24th of that year and the Norfolk customs collector hired Herbert's schooner to serve temporarily as a revenue cutter. In August, Herbert took command of cutter

Gallatin, after it sailed up to Norfolk, leaving McNeill behind in Charleston. On October 22, 1812, John Hubbard Silliman received his commission as a revenue cutter master in the State of South Carolina. Silliman took command of *Gallatin*, after it returned to its homeport of Charleston. [Note: During the early spring of 1814, Edward Herbert served as captain of the merchant schooner *Traveller*, and in April, the British captured the schooner down bound from Baltimore to Norfolk. Under a white flag, Norfolk locals negotiated for the Herbert's release and, on May 7, the Royal Navy paroled Herbert to Norfolk. On December 3, 1814, newspapers reported Herbert's death in Norfolk due to natural causes.]

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 20, 1812. Governor of South Carolina issues quarantine orders to "*The Collector, and all other Officers of the Revenue of the United States for this port [Charleston]; the Masters and Crews of all Revenue Cutters, and the Military Officers commanding Forts or stations around the harbor, will duly observe the above Regulations, and aid in the execution of the Quarantine and Health Laws of this state.*"

June 30, 1812. *Gallatin* (Daniel McNeill) returns from patrolling off the bar, near the harbor entrance of Charleston.

August 1, 1812. *Gallatin* (Daniel McNeill) captures the British brig *General Blake*, sailing from London to Amelia Island, and brings it to Charleston for adjudication. The British ship flew Spanish colors and carried an illegal cargo including African slaves. A French privateer subsequently captured *General Blake* when it departed Charleston in January 1813.

August 6, 1812. According to a newspaper report, *Gallatin* (Daniel McNeill) took a British vessel operating under a letter of marque bound from Jamaica, after an engagement lasting eight hours. [This report later declared false by the New York *Evening Post* and likely referenced the earlier capture of British brig *General Blake*.]

August 12, 1812. *Gallatin* (Edward Herbert) releases the HMS *Whiting* (12) in Hampton Roads and orders it to quit U.S. territorial waters. The Royal Navy schooner was the first naval vessel captured (by American Privateer *Dash*) in the war. *Whiting* was on a diplomatic mission at the start of the war, so American authorities ordered its release. A French warship captured *Whiting* on its return trip to England. [*Gallatin* transferred from Charleston to Norfolk in August and Herbert took command while *Gallatin*'s former master, Daniel McNeill, remained behind in Charleston.]

September 2, 1812. *Gallatin* (Edward Herbert) escorts into Norfolk the ship *Tom Hazard*, which carried an illegal cargo of British goods and was apprehended earlier by American privateer *Comet*, whose captain kept the ship's papers and manifest.

September 18, 1812. The Charleston newspaper publishes intelligence passed by *Gallatin* (Edward Herbert) to a Charleston-bound schooner, regarding the location of the British squadron off the Virginia Capes and its recent prize captures.

October 10, 1812. *Gallatin* (Edward Herbert) detains vessels *Active*, of London, and *Georgiana*, of Liverpool, for "violation of the non-importation law."

October 19, 1812. *Gallatin*, reportedly under the command of South Carolina revenue master Daniel McNeill once again, sights a British warship while patrolling near Savannah, Georgia.

October 25, 1812. *Gallatin* departs Charleston on a cruise under newly-commissioned master John Hubbard Silliman.

November 7, 1812. *Gallatin* (John H. Silliman) joins famed privateer *Saucy Jack* to track down the enemy privateer *Caledonia* off the coast of Charleston. They return empty handed.

December 28, 1812. In response to a letter from the Boston Customs Collector, Treasury Secretary Albert Gallatin writes, "A Revenue Cutter cannot be expressly fitted and employed for the purpose of cruising against an enemy except under the 98th Section of the collection law in which case the Cutter must be placed under the direction of the Secretary of the Navy."

March 4, 1813. Twenty-five-year-old seaman George Crafts deserts *Gallatin*. Master John Silliman offers a ten-dollar reward for the deserter's apprehension or information leading to the capture of the seaman.

March 27, 1813. Captain of the schooner *Malaparte* publishes his thanks to the captain and crew of *Gallatin* (John H. Silliman) for helping save the ship's cargo after the vessel went ashore near Savannah.

March 31, 1813. *Gallatin* (John H. Silliman) arrives in Charleston after a five-day cruise from Savannah in which he noticed British naval cruisers off Port Royal, South Carolina.

April 1, 1813. At 11:00am in the morning, while *Gallatin's* (John H. Silliman) crew cleaned the ship's muskets, the powder room explodes and blows off the cutter's stern and quarterdeck, killing three crewmembers and seriously wounding five more. The cutter sank immediately at its anchorage several yards off Blake's Wharf in Charleston Harbor. Captain Silliman was on shore when the accident occurred. The Charleston newspaper reported, "*We have to state a most melancholy occurrence which took place in our harbor this morning—the blowing up of the Revenue schooner Gallatin, commanded by Captain John Silliman. She arrived here yesterday from Savannah and a cruise, and was anchored abreast the City. The confusion and distress which this accident has occasioned, have prevented us from obtaining any correct information as to its cause, or to the number of persons who have suffered. We have seen four of the unfortunate men who were picked up and who are lacerated and torn in a manner the most pitiable.*"

March 31, 1814. The Charleston newspaper reports that a diving bell has been built to help salvage ordnance and equipment from the wreck of the sunken cutter *Gallatin* (John H. Silliman). It also reports that since the March 1813 explosion, attempts have been made to raise the entire hull of the cutter.

April 10, 1814. Under a white flag, Norfolk locals negotiate with the British for the release of former cutter master Edward Herbert. Herbert was captain of the merchant schooner *Traveller*, bound from Baltimore to Norfolk, when the British captured it.

May 7, 1814. The Royal Navy paroles Edward Herbert, one-time master of *Gallatin*, to Norfolk, Virginia.

July 19, 1814. In response to correspondents from the New Haven area, Treasury Secretary George Campbell writes the New Haven customs collector to remind local residents that the "*the Cutter 'Eagle' being exclusively intended for the protection of the Revenue, cannot with propriety be employed in the manner they wish [as a naval warship].*"

August 8, 1814. Peace negotiations between the United States and Great Britain begin in Ghent, Belgium.

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.

Sources:

Cutter History File, Coast Guard Historian's Office.

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships. Washington, DC: USGPO.

Donald Canney. *U.S. Coast Guard and Revenue Cutters, 1790-1935*.
Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995.

U.S. Coast Guard. *Record of Movements: Vessels of the United States Coast Guard: 1790 - December 31, 1933*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1934; 1989 (reprint).

Wells, William R., II. "US Revenue Cutters Captured in the War of 1812."
American Neptune 58, No. 3, pp. 225-241.

