



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

James Madison, 1807

Savannah, Georgia
Master George Brooks

James Madison was the fourth President of the United States.

Builder: Baltimore, MD

Length: 86-ft

Beam: 21-ft

Draft:

Displacement:

Cost:

Rig:

Commissioned: 1807

Disposition: Captured 22 August 1812

Complement:

Armament:

Cutter History:

Cutter: The Treasury Department authorized the Baltimore customs collector to build the cutter *James Madison* on June 26, 1807. Measuring eighty-six feet in length and twenty-two feet wide, the cutter served out of Baltimore during 1808 and, on January 18, 1809, *James Madison* sailed from Baltimore to take up station at Savannah, Georgia. Captured by the British on August 22, 1812, the cutter was surveyed by the Royal Navy on October 13, 1812, and found unfit for British naval service. Ex-*James Madison* was sold to the 2nd Earl of Belmore, Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, on June 16, 1813, and converted into an armed yacht named *Osprey*.

Master: On December 19, 1811, George Brooks received his commission as revenue cutter master and took command of cutter *James Madison*. Brooks had received a commission as 1st mate for *James Madison* on September 17, 1810. On August 22, 1812, the British frigate HMS *Barbadoes* captured the *James*

Madison, taking Brooks and his crew as prisoners. On November 28, 1812, the British paroled Brooks at New York from the cartel brig *Diamond*. There is no record of him serving as a revenue cutter master thereafter.

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.

July 5, 1812. *James Madison* detains the British schooner *Wade* at Amelia Island, in Spanish Florida, after its capture by navy gunboats. *Wade*'s cargo included pineapples, turtles and 20,000 dollars in specie. *Niles Weekly Register* reported, “*The prizes lately made in this place [Amelia Island] are of great value.*” Before the war, Amelia Island had been a center for receiving British goods before smugglers brought them into the United States.

July 17, 1812. George Brooks announces he is to set sail from Charleston to chase six British merchantmen sailing “unprotected” up the coast from Jamaica.

July 23, 1812. *James Madison* captures the 300-ton British brig *Shamrock* after an eight-hour chase. *Shamrock* carried six guns and a crew of sixteen men, and was bound from London to Amelia Island with a cargo of arms and ammunition.

August 1, 1812. *James Madison* captures the Spanish brig *Santa Rosa*, likely at or near Amelia Island, and brings it to Savannah for adjudication.

August 13, 1812. *James Madison* sets sail on a cruise out of Savannah in consort with privateers *Paul Jones* and *Spencer*, in search of British merchantmen.

August 21, 1812. *James Madison* locates a large British convoy bound from Jamaica, and runs into the fleet. According to newspaper reports, the cutter cuts out two merchantmen and sends them as prizes to the U.S.

August 22, 1812. *James Madison* attacks the same convoy at night a second time and mistakes the frigate HMS *Barbadoes* (32) for a large merchantman.

According to reports, Brooks orders the cutter to fire several guns and attempts to board the British frigate before realizing his mistake. For seven hours afterward, the *Barbadoes* chases *Madison*, which jettisons two guns but is eventually becalmed. The frigate finally captures the cutter after deploying barges to tow the Royal Navy warship to the cutter's position. *Barbadoes's* captain, Thomas Huskisson, noted that he had already chased *Madison* once before and complimented the cutter on its fast sailing qualities. HMS *Polyphemus* (64), which also escorted the convoy, sent a prize crew of twenty men on board *Madison* and the American prisoners were split up between the two British warships.

October 7, 1812. Prisoners from the *James Madison* formally designated as "prisoners of war." The British place all of the officers on board the cartel brig *Diamond* for parole at New London. Nine enlisted men are sent to Halifax and four to Boston. The rest placed in prison at Chatham, England. Four men considered black slaves were captured with *Madison* as well as three men described as "mulatto," who were not considered slaves and sent to England as POWs. Of the latter group, fifteen-year-old Beloner Pault of Savannah is the youngest recorded POW in the history of the Revenue Cutter Service and modern Coast Guard.

November 24, 1812. *James Madison's* captured officers arrive at New York on board a cartel ship. According to a *New York Evening Post* report, "*Among the prisoners arrived at New York, Tuesday, November 24, 1812, by Cartel Brig Diamond, are Captain Brooks and his officers of the Revenue Cutter Madison of Savannah.*"

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.*"

May 28, 1813. Seaman John Barber (or Bearbere), from *James Madison*, becomes the first revenue cutter POW to die in captivity. He dies on board the British hospital ship *Le Pregase* at Chatham, England.

June 16, 1813. Ex-*James Madison* sold to the 2nd Earl of Belmore, Enniskillen, Northern Ireland; renamed *Osprey*; and converted into an armed yacht.

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 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:

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