

The USS Constellation and Hank Cramer & the Constellation's Crew –
A Brief History of the frigate and of those who sing her praises.

Introduction

Many of you have listened to the artists that are part of the Constellation crew at 3RFS concerts and the Tumbleweed music festival. I am addicted to Tall Ships in movies; from the pirate swashbucklers starring Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. to the contemporary saga of the Pirates of the Caribbean, I'm hooked. So, having volunteered to help Hank out in Flattop Part in a few days, It seem like a great time to found out more about both the ship and Hank's involvement with the Constellation's. It's a bit long, but folks feel good — I've cut this down from the 33 pages of stuff I collected as being super important! Ain't you glad!

More seriously, I've pulled this article about Hank's group and the venerable frigate together from a variety of Googled sources, as they say for your reading pleasure. I am indebted to Dan Gilman whose Sing Out! Article on Hank Cramer and the Songs of USS Constellation, appeared in Sing Out! January 1/2004. Lot's of other links are included, I don't Yahoo, too many ads, but I'm sure there are lots of stuff on these folks and the great lady ship, there and at MSN. As you read, use the links to learn more about the Constellation and the fine virtual team of musicians that honor it.

Harry (doc) Babad

PS, Since 3RFS is a 501(c)3 organization I've used information posted on the internet in accord with accepted fair use policies that affect such material. Several attempt to contact folks to get permission failed so... But Hank has made his material open season to all 3RFS come-a-longs. Where practical I've acknowledged all sources for our mutual enlightenment.

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Hank Cramer and the Constellation's Crew

Complied and Edited by By Harry (doc) Babad

Nautical-music enthusiasts from the dry side of the mountains all should turn out to hear Hank Cramer and the Constellation's Crew performs their first 3RFS concert at Flattop Park in West Richland. Although based in the Pacific Northwest, this maritime band has received nationwide acclaim; performed as far away as Boston and Honolulu; and is the official ship's band for the famous sailing warship, the USS Constellation, moored at Baltimore, Maryland.

The band roster (not all of whom can make it on June 2nd at 7:00p) reads like a "who's who" of Northwest shanty-singers and instrumentalists: Heather Alexander,

Steve Akerman, Lori Brogoitti, David Hakala, Mark Iler, David Lange, Jessie McKeegan, Kit McLean, Burt and Di Meyer, Mike and Val James, Josie Solseng, and Robby Thran. Local 3RFS performer Michelle Cameron joins the Crew on cello and bass for many of their concerts.

The group's name originates from the sailing warship, USS Constellation, a national historic site in Baltimore's Inner Harbor. Originally launched in 1797, totally rebuilt in 1854, it is one of America's most historic ships. <http://www.constellation.org/>. It earned fame for winning spectacular sea battles, for intercepting slave traders off the coast of Africa and carrying food supplies to famine-stricken Ireland.



Shantyman Hank Cramer first visited Constellation in dry dock in 1996, as she was receiving an \$11 million restoration, and gave several solo concerts aboard her after she was refloated.

The ship's staff commissioned Hank to put together a CD of music, which would highlight the ship's history and help, fund its preservation. Although Hank would have been happy to record an album of only "sea shanties" (work songs), his research showed that music aboard a man 'o' war consisted largely of instrumental music and ballads.

We know that Hank Cramer followed with great interest the reconstruction of USS Constellation, visiting her in dry-dock and giving a shanty concert aboard her after she reopened to visitors. Noting the lack of recorded music in the souvenir shop, he volunteered to make a CD especially for the Constellation. Back at home in Winthrop, Washington, he contacted many of his musician friends to help with the project. Hank quickly recruited the best traditional instrumentalists and singers he could find. They released "Songs of USS Constellation" in May 2003, and quickly received nationwide airplay and critical acclaim. Sing Out! Magazine called it "the finest album of sea music we have ever heard."

Hank scheduled a release party at the Seattle Wooden Boat Center but realizing he was dealing with a "virtual" studio band, he set out to make it a performing ensemble. He rented a house at Ft Warden for a weekend, invited all the musicians for a monster jam session. They came together, and the CD release was a success. In July, they flew to the East Coast for 3 concerts at the Constellation in Baltimore and 2 concerts at the Constellation in Boston. Since then they have toured Vancouver Island, held a "Concert by the Bay" near Olympia, and a concert in Hank & Kit's hometown, Winthrop. For the future, another CD is in the works, they've been booked for a festival in Baltimore, and for a tall ships festival in 2005.

Although all its members also perform solo or with other bands, Constellation's Crew has kept up a busy schedule. They have performed several times aboard their namesake in Baltimore; and once in Boston for sister ship USS Constitution; when they welcomed the Tall Ships to Victoria the summer of 2005. They spent St. Patrick's Week in Honolulu, performing at every Irish pub in town. Now why does that not surprise me? Alas, for all the tales those were never recorded...

Dan Gilman in SING OUT, the premier folk music magazine in America, says: "Hank Cramer has produced a marvelous album of sea songs and tavern sing-alongs, using the old full-sail warship of the disc's title as a unifying theme. *The songs* are arranged chronologically to follow the history of the ship (actually two ships) bearing the name Constellation. Cramer begins with songs from the American Revolution and works his way through U.S. nautical history to the 1880s. The result is one of the most beautiful and accomplished albums of sea songs I've ever heard.

"Cramer's voice is a rich, mellifluous bass of superlative beauty--this guy was born to sing folk music. He handles these songs with masterful taste and restraint. Likewise, his many accompanists provide only what the songs need; there are no overblown instrumental tangents to distract from the elegance of the arrangements. As if that weren't good enough, Cramer has thoughtfully annotated all the pieces in the liner notes. It's a rare disc that boasts both expert musical skill and careful academic attention to detail.

"There are no bad tracks on Constellation, but a few stand above the rest. " Man of War" and "Truxtun's Victory" are macho, bellicose odes to the strength of America's fledgling navy in the Revolutionary period. You might not like to take tea with the men who composed these lyrics, but they're fun to sing along to--which, in the case of "Man of War," was exactly the point of the song. The gem of the disc, though, is "Pleasant and Delightful," an aptly named sentimental tavern song of a sailor leaving his love on shore. The melody slides up and down arpeggios, then jumps up a major sixth: not an easy interval. Not only does Cramer nail every note without a quaver, but also the whole company does the same in their several harmonies. The result is sublime." — DG

USS Constellation (1797)

By John W. Schmidt

From: From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Length:	164 feet (50 m)
Beam:	41 feet (12.5 m)
Propulsion:	Sail
Speed:	14 knots (26 km/h)
Complement:	340 officers and enlisted
Armament:	38 x 24 pounder (11 kg) long guns

Also check out:

http://members.cox.net/shipkiller/data/frigate/img/conny.gif&imgrefurl=http://members.cox.net/shipkiller/data/frigate/constellation_frigate.html&h=268&w=300&sz=68&tbnid=QkRIKVNxvE_LUM:&tbnh=99&tbnw=111&hl=en&start=35&prev=/images%3Fq%3DFrigate%2Bwith%2BSails%26start%3D20%26svnum%3D10%26hl%3Den%26lr%3D%26sa%3DN

On 9 February 1799, under the command of Captain Thomas Truxtun, Constellation fought and captured the frigate L'Insurgente of 36 guns, the fastest ship in the French Navy - the first major victory by an American-designed and -built warship. Other victories followed. In February 1800, Constellation fought a night encounter with the frigate



La Vengeance of 54 guns. Constellation was victorious after a five-hour battle. Her speed inspired the French to nickname her the "Yankee Racehorse."

Constellation served in the Barbary Wars against Tripoli and in the War of 1812 against Great Britain. In 1840, Constellation completed a voyage around the world, which included becoming the first U.S. warship to enter the inland waters of China. In 1853, Constellation was struck (its flag) and broken up at the Gosport Navy Yard in Norfolk, Virginia.

The Second USS Constellation

The second, the one the Constellation crew sings about, Constellation was a sloop of war that served from 1855 to 1933, and is preserved as a National Historic Landmark in Baltimore, Maryland. However, from 1854 to 1991, the US Navy

maintained that the second ship was the same as the first, this resulted in considerable damage to the ship, especially when as a museum ship she was "restored" to her "former appearance" as a frigate.

From her mystery-shrouded construction in 1854, through her numerous roles and assignments, to her several "restorations" over the last 40 years, this majestic vessel has a fascinating story to tell. This is the tale of a ship, or was it as later demonstrated two ships?

Check out: Unraveling The History Of A Storied Ship

Current View Says 1797 Constellation Was Scrapped in 1853--But Was She? <http://www.baltimoremd.com/monuments/sea02.html>

On Deck

Few things in our world today can be described as truly "unique", and yet, this word is aptly attributed to USS Constellation. The last all-sail warship constructed by the United States Navy, USS Constellation is the last surviving vessel afloat that actively served in the Union or Confederate Navies during the Civil War. While hundreds of battlefields commemorate the valor of the legions of soldiers who served in our nation's most divisive conflict, this ship is the last buoyant memorial to those who served their country and their cause upon the precarious seas.



The USS Constellation constructed in 1854 is a sloop-of-war and is the second United States Navy ship to carry this famous name. Her keel was laid on 25 June 1853, in the Gosport Navy Yard in Norfolk, Virginia, at the same time as the original 1797 frigate Constellation was being broken up.

As noted earlier, for some time, there was controversy over whether or not the 1854 sloop was a new ship, or a rebuilt version of the 1797 frigate. Much of the controversy was created when the city of Baltimore promoted the ship and even rebuilt sections of the ship to resemble the 1797 frigate. Additionally, when the ship was to be rebuilt in the 1990s, naval historians that favored the theory that the ship was indeed the 1797 original, relied on three main points:

- Some of the funds used to build the sloop were originally allocated to rebuild the frigate

- Some timbers from the broken-up frigate were used in the construction of the sloop
- The frigate was never formally stricken from the Naval Vessel Register—a wooden, sailing man-of-war called Constellation was continuously listed from 1797 until 1955.

Supporting the position that they are different ships are the facts that the sloop was designed anew from the keel up (without reference to the frigate), and was planned to have been built even if the frigate had not arrived in the yard at that moment. The paper "Fouled Anchors: The Constellation Question Answered", by Dana M. Wegner, et al., published by the Navy's David Taylor Research Center in 1991, concludes that they are different ships. The conclusive proof came during the renovation concluding in 1999 in which all evidence pointed to the construction of an entirely new sloop-of-war from the 1850s era. The study convincingly concluded "Many people are even today unaware that the ship is the 1854 sloop-of-war rather than the frigate of 1797."

The USS Constellation was launched at the Gosport Navy Yard in Norfolk, Virginia in 1854. Bearing the same name as the famous frigate of 1797, she is a sloop-of-war (this means she carried her guns on one deck) of 22 guns. Her original battery was comprised primarily of 8" muzzle loading shell guns. The ship is 179 ft. long on deck with a maximum beam of 41 ft. and draws 21 ft. of water. She displaces approximately 1400 tons and is the largest all-sail sloop-of-war built by the Navy. Constellation is "ship" rigged: each of her three masts carries squaresails with a fore'n aft sail or "spanker" on her mizzen mast. She set 20,000 square feet of sails and is the last all-sail warship built by the U.S. Navy.

She was commissioned 28 July 1855, with Captain Charles H. Bell in command. From 1855 to 1858, Constellation performed largely diplomatic duties as part of the US Mediterranean Squadron. She was flagship of the US African Squadron from 1859 to 1861. In this period, she disrupted the African slave trade by interdicting three slave ships and releasing the imprisoned slaves. The last of these was captured at the outbreak of the US Civil War: Constellation overpowered the slaver brig Triton in African coastal waters, effecting one of



the first Union Navy captures of a Confederate ship. In total, she captured three slavers and saved a total of over 700 men, women & children from the defilement of slavery. One of the slavers, Triton, was the first naval capture of the War Between the States. The Constellation spent much of the war as a deterrent to Confederate cruisers and commerce raiders in the Mediterranean Sea.

Constellation then spent two more years on the Mediterranean station attempting to capture the Confederate commerce raider Sumter (captained by Raphael Semmes of St. Mary's Co., MD, later Captain of C.S.S. Alabama). The ship served briefly with Admiral Farragut's West Gulf Blockading Squadron. After the war, she saw various duties, carrying famine relief to Ireland and carrying precious American works of art to the Paris Exposition of 1878. She served as a training ship for Naval Academy midshipmen from 1873 to 1893. She also spent a number of years as a receiving ship (floating naval barracks).

After the Civil War, Constellation saw various duties such as carrying famine relief stores to Ireland and exhibits to the Paris, France Exposition Universelle (1878).

After being used as a practice ship for Naval Academy midshipmen, Constellation became a training ship in 1894 for the Naval Training Center in Newport, Rhode Island, where she helped train more than 60,000 recruits during World War I.

Decommissioned in 1933, Constellation was recommissioned as a national symbol in 1940 by President Franklin Roosevelt. She spent much of the Second World War as relief (i.e. reserve) flagship for the US Atlantic Fleet, but spent the first 6 months of 1942 as the flagship for Admiral Ernest J. King and Vice Admiral Royal Ingersoll.

Constellation was later again decommissioned on 4 February 1955, and stricken from the Naval Vessel Register on 15 August 1955—about two weeks and one hundred years from her first commissioning. She was taken to her permanent berth—Constellation Dock, Inner Harbor at Pier 1, 301 East Pratt Street, Baltimore, Maryland—and designated a National Historic Landmark (reference number 66000918) on 23 May 1963. She is the last existing American Civil War-era naval vessel and the last sail-powered warship built by the US Navy. She has been assigned the hull classification symbol IX-20.

In 1955, Constellation's dilapidated hull was delivered to Baltimore in a U.S. Navy floating dry dock. Decommissioned by the Navy, she had been donated to a local non-profit foundation. With little money and no government support it was nearly a decade before she was restored enough to allow the public aboard. She was configured to resemble the 1797 frigate Constellation that was built in Baltimore. In 1968, she was installed in her present permanent berth in the Inner Harbor. When Baltimore began its revitalization effort in the late 1970's Constellation served as the centerpiece for the Inner Harbor. The height of the pavilions at Harbor place was dictated by the height of her jib boom. Since then over seven million people have crossed her decks and countless more have been photographed with her towering wooden hull as the backdrop.

In 1994, Constellation was condemned as an unsafe vessel. She was towed to drydock at Fort McHenry in 1996, and a \$9-million restoration project was completed in July 1999.

History of the USS Constellation (1854)	
By John W. Schmidt From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia	
Career	
Ordered:	
Laid down:	25 June 1853
Launched:	26 August 1854
Commissioned:	28 July 1855
Decommissioned:	4 February 1955
Fate:	Museum ship
Struck:	15 August 1955
General Characteristics	
Displacement:	1,400 tons
Length:	199 ft (61 m) overall, 181 ft (55 m) waterline
Beam:	43 ft (13.1 m) extreme, 41 ft (12.5 m) waterline
Draft:	21 ft (6.4 m)
Propulsion:	Sail
Speed:	
Range:	
Complement:	20 officers, 220 sailors, 45 marines
Armament:	25 guns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 × 8 inch (203 mm) chambered shell guns • 4 × 32 pounder (15 kg) long guns • 1 × 20 pounder (9 kg) Parrott rifle • 1 × 30 pounder (14 kg) Parrott rifle • 3 × 12 pounder (5 kg) bronze boat howitzers

USS Constellation is still afloat at the Baltimore Harbor. On 26 October 2004, Constellation made her first trip out of Baltimore's Inner Harbor since 1955. The trip to the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, lasting 6 days, marked the ship's first trip to the city in 111 years. Tours are regularly



available, self-guided or with the assistance of staff. Nearly all of the ship is accessible, and about half the lines are present (amounting to several miles). A cannon is demonstrated daily, and tour groups can participate in demonstrations such as turning the yards. See the USS Constellation home page:

<http://www.constellation.org/>

For more about the restoration effort check out:
The Constellation Restoration Effort - After Two Years
<http://www.maritime.org/conf/conf-linden.htm>
Louis F. Linden, Executive Director
Constellation Foundation, Inc. Dated: 14 July 1997

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What's a Frigate [From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia]?

A frigate was a medium-sized sailing warship with one gun deck, plus guns on the spar deck. It was faster than the larger ship of the line and larger than a sloop-of-war. British sailing frigates during the period 1640-1860 were rated fourth-rate, fifth-rate and sixth-rate according to the rating system of the Royal Navy.

Frigates were perhaps the hardest-worked of warship types during the age of sail. They scouted for the fleet, went on commerce-raiding missions and patrols, conveyed messages and dignitaries, and filled in places in the line of battle if there was a shortage of battleships (from the term "line of battle" ship). Usually frigates would fight in small numbers or singly against other frigates. Unlike larger ships that were placed in ordinary, frigates were kept in service in peacetime both as a cost-saving measure and to provide quality experience to frigate captains and officers, which would be useful in wartime. Frigates may also carry marines or naval infantry for land-based and ship-boarding operations.

In the 17th century, frigates were masterpieces of engineering and design; the British added more sails and weapons, the Dutch made frigates with a shallow draft and the French added bow and stern weapons and Baroque designs. Frigate armament ranged from 22 guns on one deck to up to even 70+ guns on two decks. Common armament was 32 to 44 long guns, from 8 to 24 pounders (3.6 to 11 kg), plus a few carronades (large bore short range guns), which weren't counted in the rating of the ship. In the early steam age (1840-60) steam frigates were the fastest ships around, finally evolving into the cruisers of the 20th century.

The oldest commissioned warship in the US Navy is USS Constitution, better known as "Old Ironsides", a frigate launched 21 October 1797.

It is the oldest commissioned warship afloat in the world; HMS Victory, although older, is maintained in drydock. The US Navy's 44-gun frigates (or "super-frigates"), which usually actually carried 56-60 guns, were very powerful and tough. These ships were so well-respected that they were often seen as equal to

4th-rate ships of the line, and RN fighting instructions ordered British frigates (usually 32-guns or less) to never engage American frigates at any less than a 2:1 advantage.

In the late 1800s, the term "frigate" fell out of naval fashion; ships that had been designated frigates were redesignated "cruising-ships," and from there to cruisers. The term "frigate" would lie mostly unused until after the Second World War, when it would be reappropriated to describe ships that during that war had previously been called destroyer escorts.

That's all folks — I'm working on a Chieftains article since I found out I missed them when folking up in the 50-60-70's — soon I hope! Harry