



Give Me a Fast Ship: The Continental Navy and America's Revolution at Sea

Tim McGrath

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Five ships against hundreds—the fledgling American Navy versus the greatest naval force the world had ever seen...

America in 1775 was on the verge of revolution—or, more likely, disastrous defeat. After the bloodshed at Lexington and Concord, England's King George sent hundreds of ships westward to bottle up American harbors and prey on American shipping. Colonists had no force to defend their coastline and waterways until John Adams of Massachusetts proposed a bold solution: The Continental Congress should raise a navy.

The idea was mad. The Royal Navy was the mightiest floating arsenal in history, with a seemingly endless supply of vessels. More than a hundred of these were massive “ships of the line,” bristling with up to a hundred high-powered cannon that could level a city. The British were confident that His Majesty's warships would quickly bring the rebellious colonials to their knees.

They were wrong. Beginning with five converted merchantmen, America's sailors became formidable warriors, matching their wits, skills, and courage against the best of the British fleet. Victories off American shores gave the patriots hope—victories led by captains such as John Barry, the fiery Irish-born giant; fearless Nicholas Biddle, who stared down an armed mutineer; and James Nicholson, the underachiever who finally redeemed himself with an inspiring display of coolness and bravery. Meanwhile, along the British coastline, daring raids by handsome, cocksure John Paul Jones and the “Dunkirk Pirate,” Gustavus Conyngham—who was captured and sentenced to hang but tunneled under his cell and escaped to fight again—sent fear throughout England. The adventures of these men and others on both sides of the struggle rival anything from Horatio Hornblower or Lucky Jack Aubrey. In the end, these rebel sailors, from the quarterdeck to the forecabin, contributed greatly to American independence.

Meticulously researched and masterfully told, *Give Me a Fast Ship* is a rousing, epic tale of war on the high seas—and the definitive history of the American Navy during the Revolutionary War.

INCLUDES NINE MAPS AND SIXTEEN PAGES OF FULL COLOR ILLUSTRATIONS

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