Monday Maritme Matters

Description

Last week, I discussed the first Naval Ship Constructor for the United States Navy, Joshua Humphreys.



This week, another name from the beginnings of our naval history: John Rodgers (1772-1838).The reason to distinguish this man by date is because his son and great-grandson also distinguished themselves in the Naval Service. John Rodgers entered our naval history as a Second Lieutenant assigned to the commissioning crew, commanded by CAPT Thomas Truxton. LT Rodgers was responsible for recruiting a crew to man the 38 gun vessel from an office at Cloneyâ€™s tavern in the maritime district of Fellâ€™s Point near Baltimore, MD. It was a difficult time to recruit for the Navy, as merchant wages were better, but LT Rodgers managed to fill about half the shipâ€™s compliment with his effort.The USS CONSELLATION sailed south to the Caribbean and began to hunt for French warships, and on February 9th, 1799, a lookout sighted the French Frigate *Lâ€™Insurgente*. CAPT Truxton gave chase and, after a brutal, well fought battle, including vicious broadsides fired at close range and boarding parties engaged in bloody hand to hand combat on the deck of the French frigate, the first US Navy victory at sea was in hand. John Rodgers, having commanded a merchant vessel at the age of 25 before joining the navy, was promoted to the rank of Acting Captain of the captured vessel and was responsible to repair and outfit *Lâ€™Insurgente*.Much controversy was eventually raised when the issue of paying, as was the tradition, the crew of the USS CONSTELLATION for their share of the value of the captured vessel. Detailed in â€œSix Frigatesâ€• by Ian Toll, were influence and maneuvering were done to try and show more value (placed at $120K) for the ship than it may have been worth. In the long run, it is a tale where a showdown between the politicians and the crew who would benefit from the payout faced off. In the long run, the final value of $84,500 was settled upon, and further possibilities of cashiering out officers suspected of inflating values was avoided.John Rodgers next appears in history as the Captain of the USS JOHN ADAMS, a light frigate, sailing with the squadron of CAPT Preble, of the USS CONSTITUTION in 1803 in the Mediterranean. From there, he rose to command USS CONGRESS, which was directed to be activated and put to sea by oder of th President Jefferson after the USS PHILADELPHIA had been captured at Tripoli. CONGRESS was assigned to the squadron of Samuel Barron. By 1810, John Rodgers was assigned as a commodore a position he held into the beginning of the War of 1812.In honor of Commodore John Rodgers, the Navy has named three ships (directly) for him. The first USS JOHN RODGERS was a lighthouse tender

(1917-1919).

The second USS JOHN RODGERS (DD-574), a FLETCHER Class Destroyer, was commissioned on Feb 9, 1943 and saw action at Marcus Island, Tawara and Wake Island in 1943, Kwajalein Atoll and later the Mariannas Island campaigns, then was at Leyte Gulf in Oct, 1944. After a refit stateside, RODGERS joined ADMIRAL Spruanceâ€™s Task Force 58 and participated in the assaults on Iwo Jima and Okinawa, and was one of the first ships to enter Tokyo Bay for the surrender ceremonies. Decommissioned in 1946, the USS JOHN RODGERS (DD-574) won 12 battle stars for combat action.



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The third USS JOHN RODGERS was a SPRUANCE Class Destroyer, hull DD-983, in honor of all three famous John Rodgers. Commissioned Sep 4th, 1979, RODGERS conducted Naval Gunfire Support (NGFS) operations off Beruit in Sep, 1983. Decommissioned Sep 4th, 1998, she has been broken up for scrap.Three vessels of the US Navy have also been named to honor John Rodgers, but also included honoring his son and great grandson, each bearing the name USS RODGERS.But by a small twist of fate, I would have served aboard the USS JOHN RODGERS (DD-983). I was in the list for orders to one of the pre-commissioning SPRUANCE Class crews, with RODGERS at the top of the list for myself and the Navy. There was difficulty in getting my relief through Communications Officer School and to the ship in the Mediterranean on time for me to join training for the Combat Systems team at Fleet Combat Training Center, Atlantic. As a result, I was assigned to USS LEFTWICH (DD-984).

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