

# The Continental Navy of 1775



## The Enduring Nature of the Political Facts of Life

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USC SAE-550

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Painting Courtesy: [www.nuwc.navy.mil](http://www.nuwc.navy.mil)

# The Background



- ▶ American Colonial Revolution against Britain
- ▶ First Continental Congress, 1774 Philadelphia
- ▶ British Naval Blockade and Troop Reinforcement
- ▶ Colonial Naval Forces
  - Privateers – Captured over 2000 British Ships
  - States Navies - Row galleys, armed barges, CT & MA frigates
  - George Washington's Schooners



Chart courtesy: Naval Historical Foundation Washington, D.C. 1981

# Continental Navy



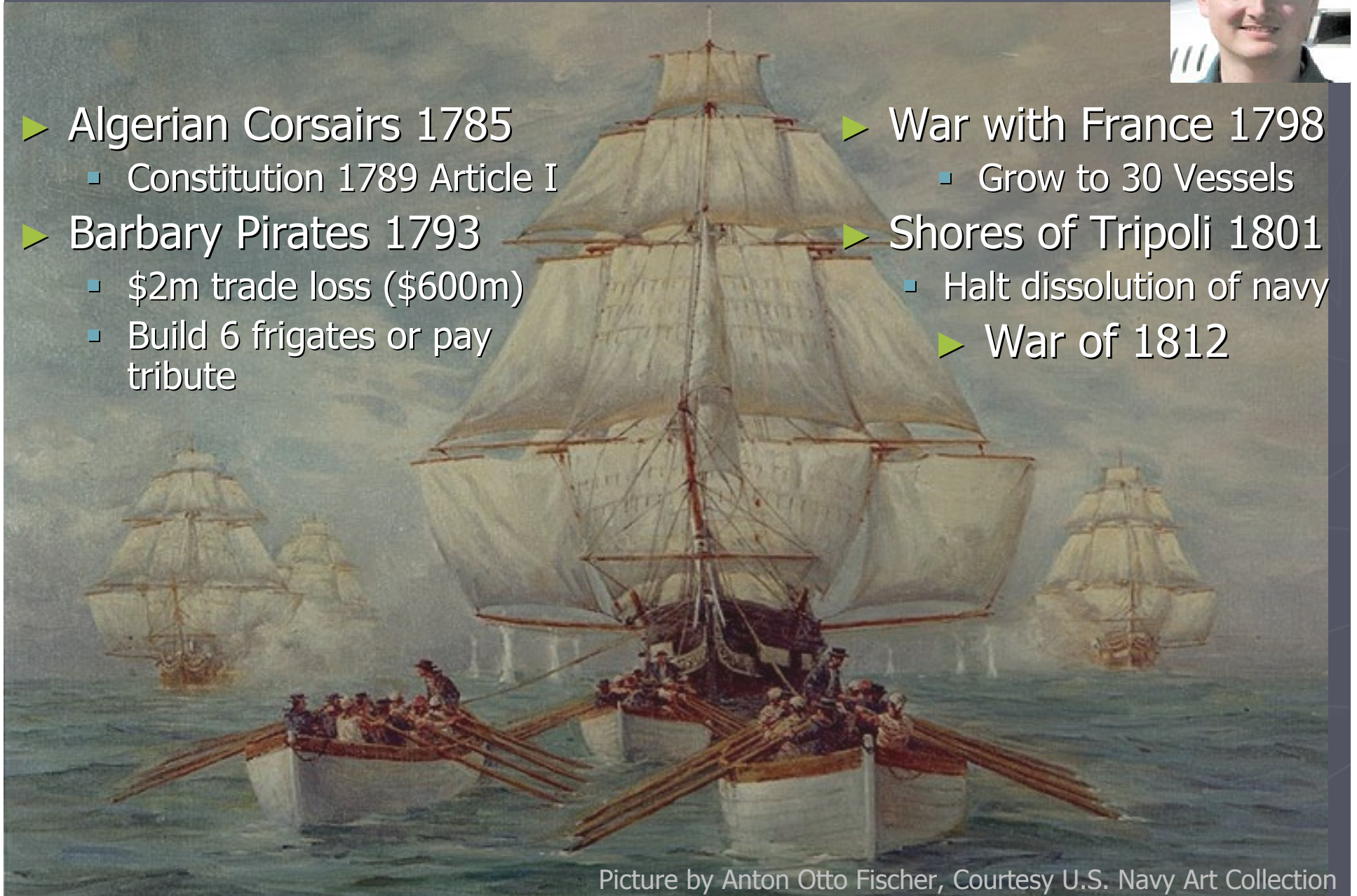
- ▶ October 13, 1775, 2nd Continental Congress resolves to:
  - fit out two vessels for *"intercepting such transports as may be laden with warlike stores and other supplies for our enemies, and for such other purposes as the Congress shall direct."*
- ▶ 13 vessels, \$880,000 (\$264 m) total
  - Most all are lost in battle or calamity
- ▶ French naval allies victory off Virginia Capes
  - British Surrender at Yorktown in 1781



# Evolution of the Navy



- ▶ Algerian Corsairs 1785
  - Constitution 1789 Article I
- ▶ Barbary Pirates 1793
  - \$2m trade loss (\$600m)
  - Build 6 frigates or pay tribute
- ▶ War with France 1798
  - Grow to 30 Vessels
- ▶ Shores of Tripoli 1801
  - Halt dissolution of navy
- ▶ War of 1812

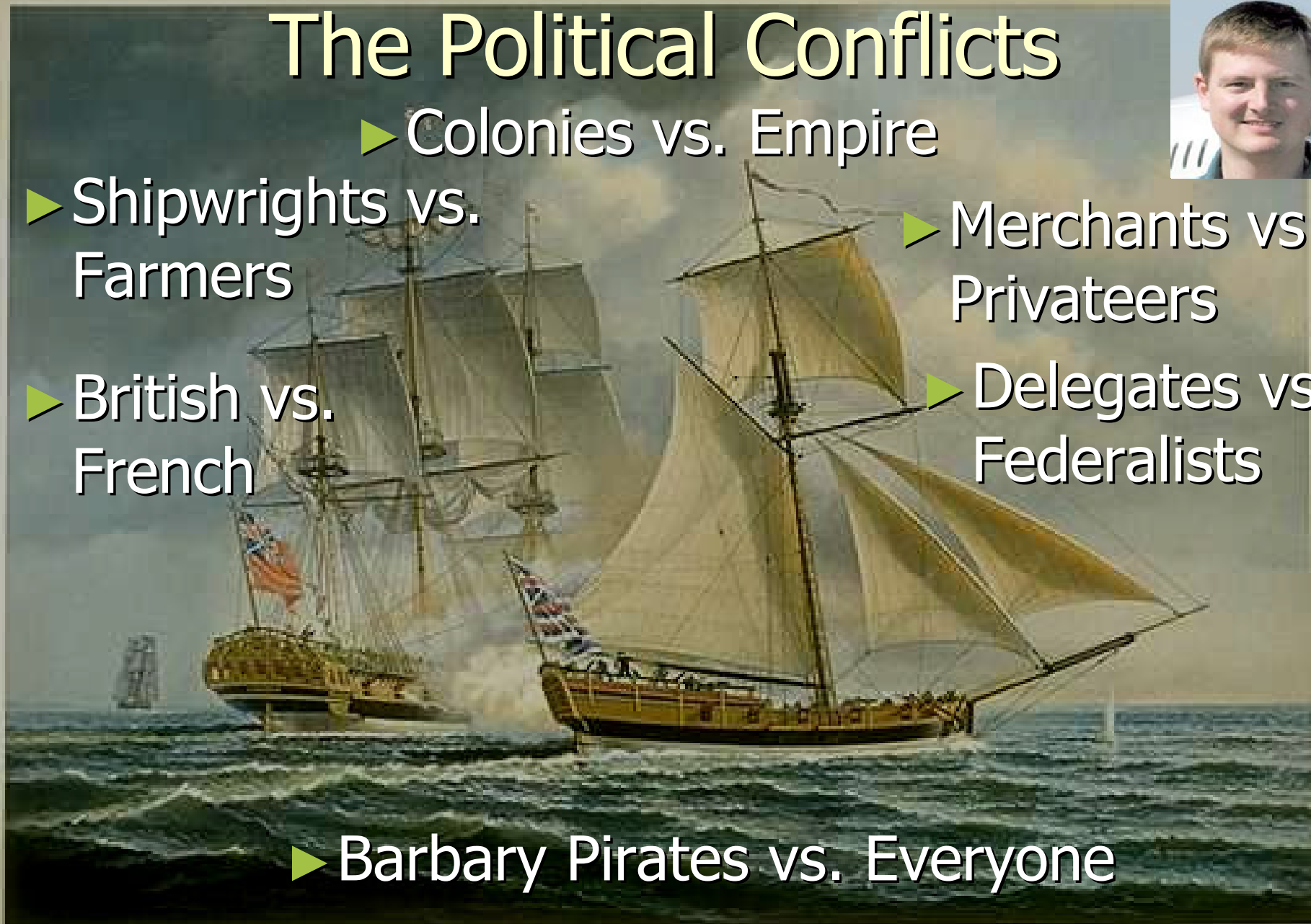


Picture by Anton Otto Fischer, Courtesy U.S. Navy Art Collection

# The Political Conflicts



- ▶ Colonies vs. Empire
- ▶ Shipwrights vs. Farmers
- ▶ Merchants vs. Privateers
- ▶ British vs. French
- ▶ Delegates vs. Federalists
- ▶ Barbary Pirates vs. Everyone

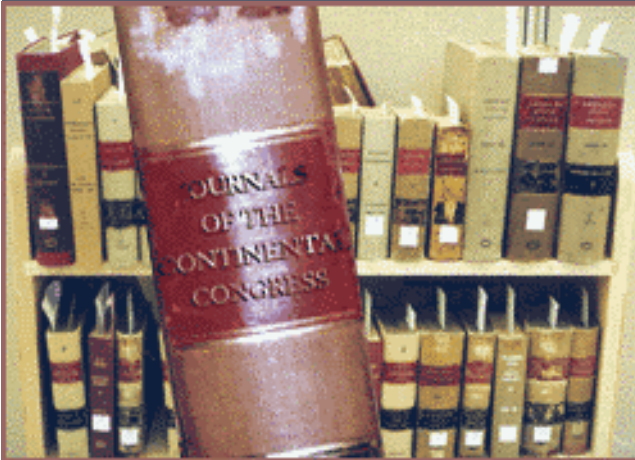


*The Continental Ship "Providence"*

Providence vs. HMS Cerberus <http://www.nuwc.navy.mil>

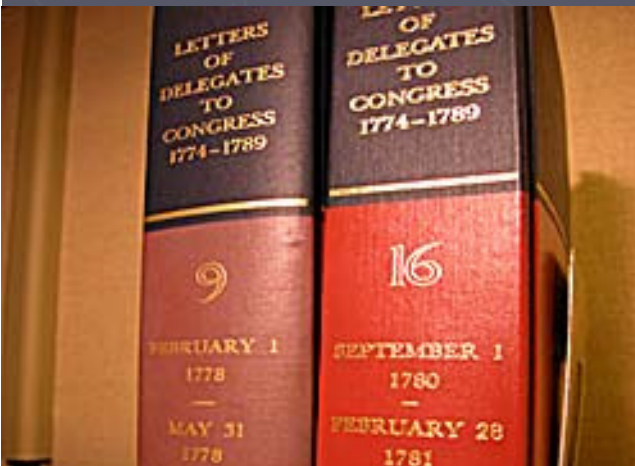


# The Research



## ► Journals of the Continental Congress 1774-1789

- Compiled in 1905
- Momentous declarations intermixed with mundane resolutions
- <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwjc.html>



## ► Letters of Delegates to Congress 1775

- Compiled in 1976
- Silas Dean, October 16, 1775, "*I have a prospect now...in getting Our Connecticut Vessels into Continental pay*"
- <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwdg.html>

## ► Toll, I. *Six Frigates, the Epic Historical Founding of the U.S. Navy.* 2006

# Findings



- ▶ FOL#1 – 5 in historical abundance
  - 1. Politics limiting the design of vessels
  - 2. Ship builders presenting optimistic operational costs
  - 3. Colonial Constituencies, Merchant Constituencies
  - 4. Technical Problems – Enemy aggression
  - 5. Pay for a fleet or pay for appeasement
- ▶ Interesting Historical Events
  - *I have not yet begun to fight!* – Captain John P Jones
  - *Constitution* still commissioned and afloat.
- ▶ Differences from today
  - Congress of old had a better grasp on Life-Cycle Costs
  - Honor as a motivator –duels, correspondence

# Questions?



Picture Courtesy United States Navy, Photographer's Mate Chief John E. Gay