

COMMODORE JOHN BARRY

Few people are well acquainted with the gallantry and heroic exploits of naval commander, Commodore John Barry. Barry was Philadelphia's Irish mariner known as the "Father of the American Navy," a title bestowed on him by his contemporaries in 1813.

Born in 1745 in County Wexford, Ireland, Barry determined at an early age that his fame and fortune would come from the high seas. He worked his way up from cabin boy to ship's captain, and adopted Philadelphia as his home port. He developed his command skills at the helm of several merchant ships sailing between Philadelphia and the West Indies.

Barry was known for his leadership and courage in the Revolutionary War, where he was victorious in nearly twenty naval engagements versus the British. When the Revolutionary War started, he was given a commission as Captain of the Continental Navy on March 14, 1776. Entrusted with the command of the USS Lexington, Barry was credited with the first capture of a British warship by a commissioned American cruiser. He was the only Continental Captain to make a series of double captures. He was also the first to fly the new American flag in battle.

When the Revolutionary War ended and the Navy dissolved, Barry returned to the maritime trade, sailing to China and other ports. However, Barbary pirate raids on American ships brought about the Navy's revival. On June 4, 1794, he was selected Captain of the Federal Navy and received Commission Number One from President Washington. Barry played a vital role in establishing the earliest traditions of the Navy in serving faithfully to protect the rights of the sovereign United States.

He remained head of the Navy until his death at age 58 on September 12, 1803, from complications of asthma, at his home in Strawberry Hill, 3 miles north of Philadelphia. He received his country's last salute in a full military burial in Old St. Mary's Churchyard on September 14, 1803.



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See: www.amchs.org/03a_commodore_barry.html
www.wexfordweb.com/barry.htm
Read more: www.aoh.com/history/archive/commjohmbar.htm