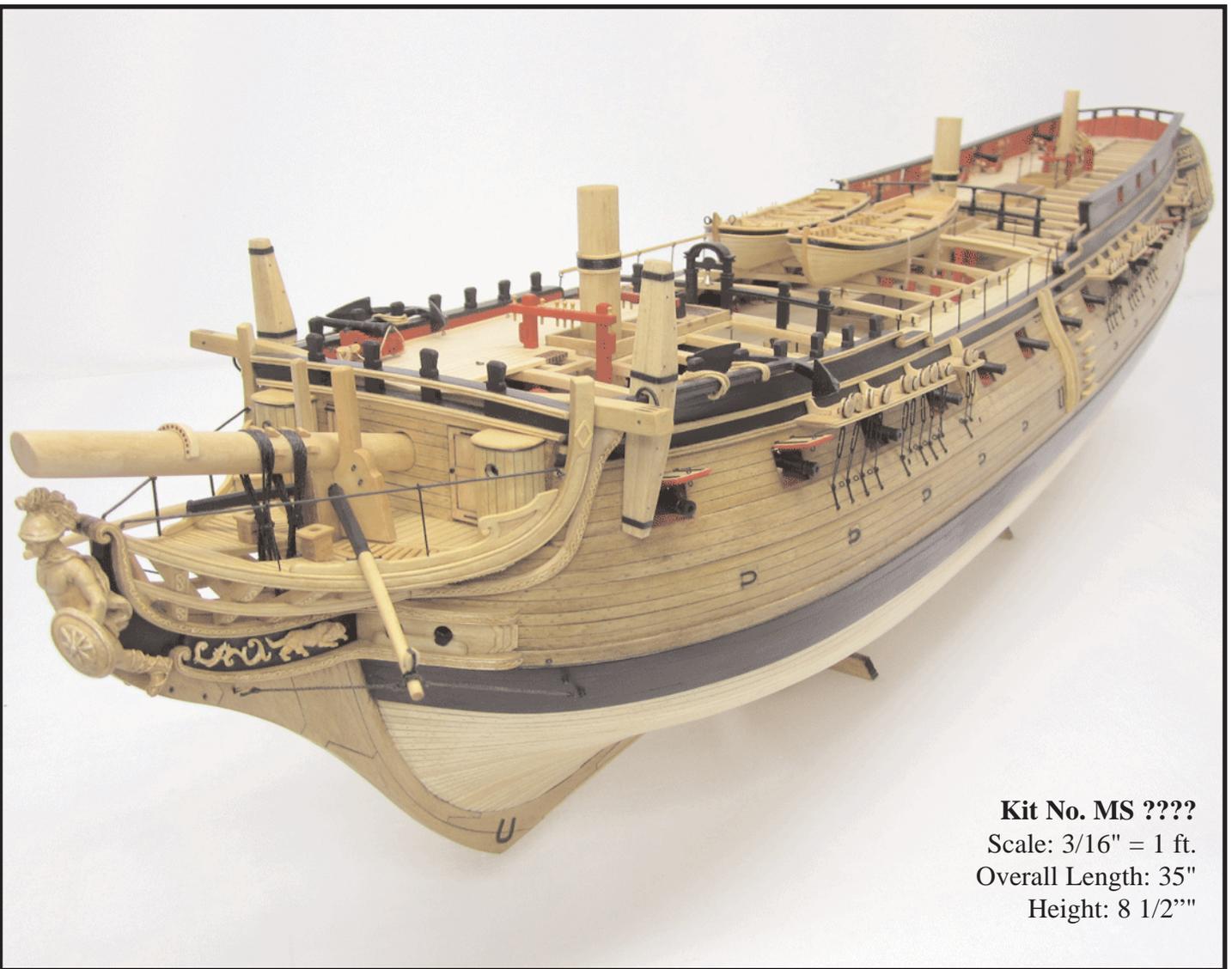


INSTRUCTION MANUAL



Modeling The US Frigate Confederacy 1778



Kit No. MS ????
Scale: 3/16" = 1 ft.
Overall Length: 35"
Height: 8 1/2"

Instructions and model prototype prepared by **Chuck Passaro**

Manufactured by Model Shipways, Inc - Hollywood Florida
Download the full color version of these instructions - www.modelexpo-online.com



A Short History of the Continental Frigate Confederacy

An introduction by Naval Historian Russell Barnes

Among the frigates built for the American Continental Navy was a 36 gun frigate built at Norwich Connecticut during 1777-78. On January 23, 1777, Congress "Resolved, That two frigates, one of 36, and the other of 28 guns, be immediately undertaken in the state of Connecticut." Construction began in February 1777 with Joshua Huntington overseeing the building of the new frigate. On February 18, Huntington's papers note "began to work".

Although the designer is unknown, it is possible to speculate who actually built the ship. Three names have been mentioned over the years. Howard Chapelle credited Jedidiah Willets, although he did not quote a source for that claim. Douglas Robinson believed that Joshua Huntington was the builder, because it was his shipyard where the ship was built. However, a 1779 Continental Congress Marine Committee

report refers to a "Mr. Tolman who built the Confederacy...." Dr. Robinson also mentioned that Benjamin Talman's widow credited him as the builder. Although Robinson gave no source for the widow's claim, a Rhode Island shipbuilder named Benjamin Tallman was possibly the "Mr. Tolman" in the Marine Committee report, building the ship under Joshua Huntington's supervision.

As construction continued into the summer and fall of 1778, Congress made several decisions regarding the new ship. Congress declared "That the new frigate building at Norwich, in Connecticut, and now nearly ready to be launched, be named the Confederacy." The choice of captain followed quickly. In late September, Richard Henry Lee wrote Connecticut Governor Trumbull that his friend, Seth Harding, was chosen "for the command of the Continental ship of war building at Norwich, in Connecticut." In early November, the Norwich Packet reported, "The ship CONFEDERACY, of 36 guns, built at Norwich River, was launched on Saturday last. By the best judges she is pronounced the finest ship yet built on the continent." The ship was launched on November 7, 1778, after nearly two years of construction.

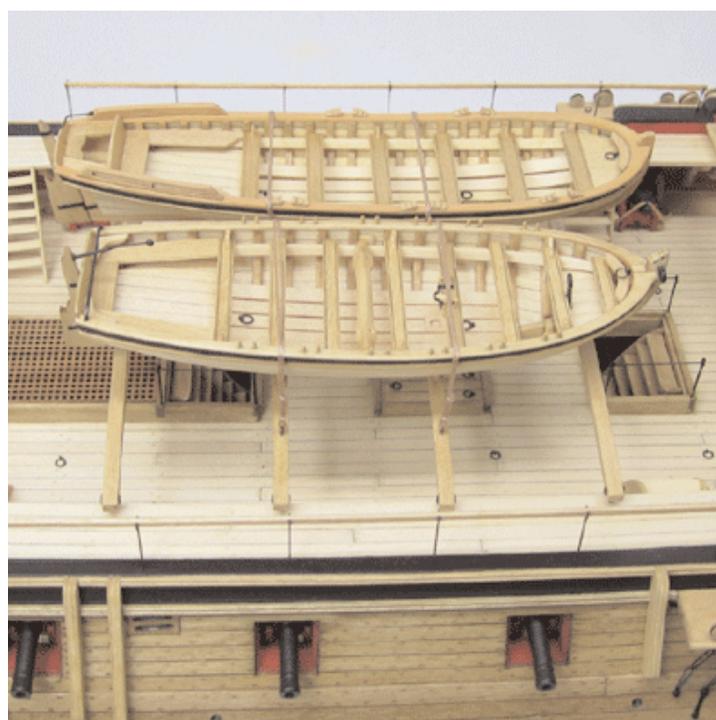
Modern observers have studied the Confederacy's design and agree that she was an



interesting vessel. Chapelle called her "a remarkable vessel", noting she was "very long for her rate" with a "narrow beam and shoal draft" and was "an ornate ship, profusely carved." She measured nearly 160 feet on the gun deck, 23 feet longer than a comparable British 36. John F. Millar wrote, "Although the hull form was quite sharp, making her potentially fast, she still retained the beakhead bulkhead which had been discarded by other frigate designers a long time previously." Robert Gardiner called "this highly unusual ship" a "throwback to the galley-frigates of the previous century" because of her numerous lower deck row ports.

Confederacy's active career did not begin until the spring of 1779. In May, Captain Clarke of the brig Joseph reported seeing Confederacy and that "the frigate sails admirably well." Although her fitting out had been delayed, Confederacy was given a series of important missions throughout the remainder of the year. In August, she was ordered to meet the American brig Eagle and escort her into port, the brig carrying a cargo "of much consequence to the public." In October, she was tasked with carrying a political delegation to Europe on an important diplomatic mission. John Jay and his family sailed in Confederacy only to see the ship dismasted by a hurricane near Newfoundland on November 7. Captain Harding managed to work the ship southward. She made Martinique in mid December with six feet of water in the hold and "in the midst of perils." She would remain at Martinique for several months trying to make repairs.

The following year proved difficult for Captain Harding and his ship. After an extended stay at Martinique, on March 17, 1780, the ship's chaplain reported to Benjamin Franklin that "the frigate Confederacy is now sparr'd, and rigged, and almost ready for sea." However, even after making jury repairs at Martinique, Confederacy was hardly in condition for any further action. Upon reaching Philadelphia on April 20, it became obvious that she would need extensive repairs. She did not return to sea for several months. She was reported in action in August when she captured several vessels near Newfoundland. In October, she was damaged in a collision with the newly launched ship Shelaly, "having her head carried away" in Philadelphia harbor

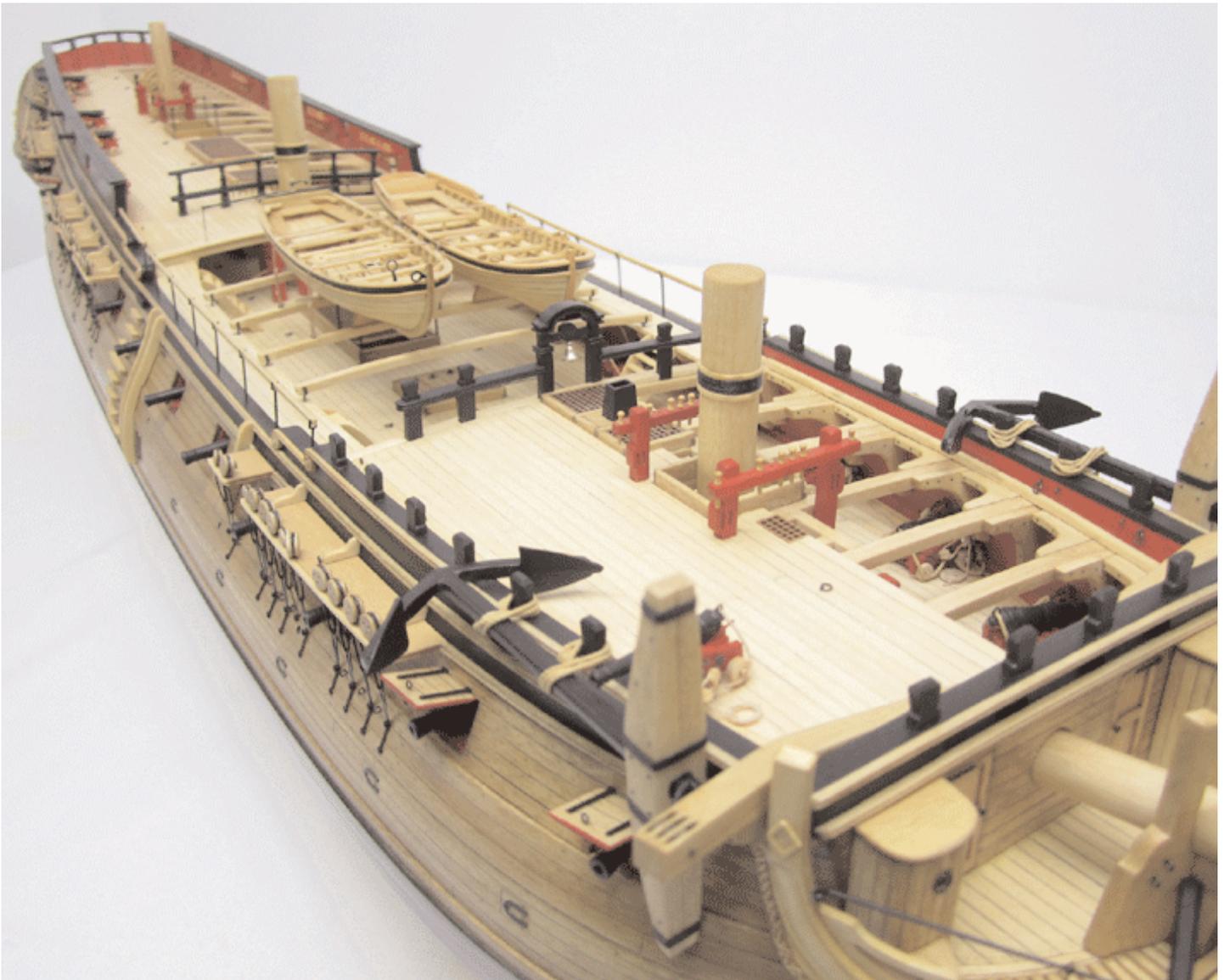




The year 1781 began with some success when, in March 1781, Confederacy and the sloop Saratoga captured a 32 gun ship. The Connecticut Journal reported that this ship was the Stag, carrying 200 slaves "and a large quantity of plunder" from St. Eustatius. However, bad luck soon followed. In April, she was escorting a convoy of 32 merchant ships bound for Philadelphia when they encountered a British warship off the American coastline. Captain Harding ordered the merchant ships to scatter and he cleared for action, sailing straight for the British ship. Soon, another British ship appeared and Confederacy was now hopelessly outnumbered. Captain Harding ordered Confederacy's surrender. The first ship he encountered was the 44 gun Roebuck, while her consort was the new Amazon class 32 gun frigate Orpheus. The initial reports of Confederacy's capture indicated that she would be a useful addition to the Royal Navy. Vice Admiral Arbuthnot reported

that the ship "is well constructed and proportioned, and only two years old." The ship was taken into the Royal Navy under the name Confederate. The suggestion was made to add to her upper works to make her a two-decker since she had the necessary keel length.





However, a subsequent survey found extensive rot and other problems in her hull and suggested breaking her up. Dr. Robinson wrote that green timber used in her construction was the cause for her poor condition upon her capture.

Although a very attractive ship, Confederacy's career was typical of the American naval effort during the Revolution. There were great plans and beautiful ships, but in the end, it was a failure. She was, as Dr. Robinson noted a "beautiful, but unlucky ship." Fortunately for future generations, the British took her lines and preserved them. We can now study these designs and build models of these ships to celebrate the history they represent as well as the ingenuity of the American colonial shipwright and their unbounded faith in the American dream of freedom.

