THE RANGER, 1777

The eighteen-gun sloop of war Ranger, launched from Langdon's - now Badger's - Island shipyard on May 10, 1777, was the second Continental warship built by Piscataqua shipwrights, and certainly the most famous. The Ranger's immortality in both legend and history was assured by American Naval hero John Paul Jones when, as her Commander, he led a series of daring raids on the coasts of England and Scotland in 1778. However, the history of the Ranger herself, her builders, crews, and cruises under the American flag, while inseparable from the Paul Jones' saga at one period of time, is also important to an understanding Portsmouth maritime culture, the development of American shipbuilding, and the beginnings of the American naval establishment.

Even while the thirty-two gun frigate Raleigh was being rigged and fitted out in the summer of 1776, after a record construction time of sixty days from the laying of her keel to launch in May, 1776, her contractor, John Langdon, sought to attract more Contiental business to his shipyard. In August, Langdon dispatched one John Roche (Roch) to Philadelphia, with a letter of recommendation to the Continental Congress. Roche, a merchant mariner from Ireland, had arrived in America earlier as master of a ship loaded with furs, which he promptly auctioned off as his own property. Although the facts are cloudy,

and Roche was never prosecuted, he was supected of barratry and his dubious reputation precluded an officer's commission in the Continental Navy. However, Roche's lobbying efforts for construction contracts were successful, and he returned to Portsmouth in the fall with orders from Congress for Langdon "to build with the utmost expedition a Brigantine calculated for a Vessel of War...." The mandate contained specifications for the proposed warship and instructions to pay for the ship from Continental prize money - the government's share of auction sales for captured enemy merchant ships and cargoes. Meanwhile, after the Raleigh was complete - except for the lack of cannon which humiliated her contractor and prevented her sailing until August, 1777 - builders James Hackett, James Hill, and Stephen Paul, with their crews, had begun construction of a private armed vessel - a privateer -, the twenty-gun Portsmouth, in which Langdon himself owned a share. Upon receiving the news from Philadelphia, Langdon replied to John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, "I immediately ordered one of my master builders [probably James Hill] out of the yard with a gang of hands into the woods to cut and procure Timber for the ship I am to build." Langdon continued, "Ive a very compleat ship almost ready to launch [the Portsmouth] of the very same dimensions which must be of (belong'g to Private concern) the molds of which and many other matters will do exactly for this...." Langdon also suggested changes: "if

riged as a brig, the mainmast, maintop, and boom would be unwealdy." It would be better, explained Langdon, to use the traditional ship rig with three masts, main, fore and mizzen, which would lower the center of effort. A Brig would "by no means serve for these seas," wrote Langdon, "tho it might possibly do to the Southward or in fine weather, or in Rivers." [1]

That letter makes clear the the Ranger, like the Raleigh, was a product of local design, subject only to general specifications of the Marine Committee. It is also apparent that the Ranger, which Langdon refered to as "Roche's ship," and which he planned to christen Hampshire, was most likely built on the molded patterns of the privateer Portsmouth rather than to an original design. The Ranger was measured by Royal Navy architects and taken into His Majesty's Service as the Halifax after her capture in Charleston, South Carolina in 1780. However, historians have been unable to find a draught, if one was prepared. The Ranger's actual design and designer remain subject to specualtion. Many historians, following the lead of the late Howard I. Chapelle, attribute the Ranger's design to William Hackett, a Salisbury shipwright and cousin to the Ranger's builder, James Hackett. There is little evidence to support that conclusion. [2]

The scarcity of canvas and difficulty in obtaining cannon for the Raleigh that frustrated Langdon and the Raleigh's Captain, Thomas Thompson, forecast similar problems with the Ranger, and Langdon sent Roche to Providence and Boston in

November to purchase the necessary stores. Roche had little initial success. Also, while there was an abundance of accessible timber, plank, and just enough stockpiled iron in the Portsmouth area to complete the Raleigh, the Portsmouth, and the Ranger, other materials were in short supply. Langdon wrote to both Hancock and Congressional Delegate William Whipple in early December that the lack of supplies necessitated using the "rig" out of a captured British merchantman, the Royal Exchange. Furthermore, Langdon needed cash to pay his workers. Again in January, after the Portsmouth was launched, Langdon pleaded for money from Congress. He paid his workmen "every three weeks or fortnight," and without cash, work would stop. [3]

The same crews responsible for the Raleigh and the Portsmouth, under the direction of James Hackett, James Hill, and Stephen Paul, built the Ranger. In addition Langdon hired his first cousin, Tobias Lear, an able sea captain, as yard superintendent. Lear, who was the father of Colonel Tobias Lear, George Washington's personal secretary for fifteen years, kept the labor accounts for the Portsmouth and the later seventy-four gun America as well as the Ranger. [4]

After a late start due to warm January weather that made timber delivery from the forests, where it was cut and hewn, almost impossible, Langdon wrote to Hancock in February, "Roche's ship is off in good season." According to the Lear

accounts, work began on January 11, and the Ranger - then Hampshire - was launched into the Piscataqua on May 10, 1777, just short of a year after the Raleigh.[5] Masting, rigging, and finishing operations began, with most of the same joiners, blockmakers, riggers and other artisans that finished the Raleigh and the Portsmouth. Captain John Roche, who Langdon assumed would command the ship, had been occupied throughout the construction period acquiring materials from merchants in Boston and beyond. In April he managed to purchase the cannon, twenty six-pounders and six four-pounders, from Rufus Hopkins of Providence, and obtained 422 yards of canvas from Christian Starbuck of Nantucket.[6]

Total costs for the Ranger, according to Langdon's accounts, were £ 21,569.15.0, or, by his rate of exchange, close to $65,000. Continental dollars. She was more expensive than the Raleigh, a much larger ship, at $50,000., even though the design molding process was eliminated, her armament was smaller and less expensive, and second-hand materials were used in her rig, possibly including all spars. However, a progressive inflation during the period make precise comparisons between the two ships impossible. Of the grand total for the Ranger, various charges do indicate comparative expenses. Henry Sherburne's bill for the ironwork, for example was £ 2339.17.0. Tobias Lear's labor accounts, including his services at eight shillings per day for 114 days to launching,

amounted to £ 964.2.0. Langdon paid £ 1435.18.9 for the Ranger's cannon, and reimbursed Roche £ 3003.0.0 for canvas and other stores. The cordage and duck from **Nantucket**, including freight, amounted to £ 3108.8.6. James Hill's bill for "Timber, plank, hire of labor, oxen &c." totalled £ 954.7.1. There were additional amounts paid for sailmaking, ship's boats, bowsprit and figurehead carving, and separate payments to each of the three master builders, as well as Langdon's inevitable five percent commission on all charges. [7]

By early June the Ranger was virtually complete and Langdon was awaiting confirmation of Roche's appointment as captain. A number of circumstances caused a rapid change of plans. John Paul Jones, waiting in Boston for orders, was promised command of a large frigate building in Europe. The Marine Committee attempted to secure Jones a berth on a French ship, Amphitrite, which had arrived in Portsmouth laden with military stores for the Continental Army. According to their plan, her Master, Captain Fautrel, would captain the ship until an enemy was sighted, whereupon Jones would take command for the actual engagement and capture. Fautrel, naturally enough, refused to allow Jones aboard. According to some sources, Langdon then suggested that Jones sail the Ranger to France and relinquish her command when he took delivery of the European frigate. At the same time, Roche's shady past caught up with him, and, in a series of Congressional resolves of June 14, 1777, Roche was suspended from command

of the Hampshire, Jones appointed to supercede him, the ship officially renamed the Ranger, and co-incidently, the first official American flag was formally accepted. Shortly, William Whipple arrived in Portsmouth with these resolves as well as warrants, which authorized himself, John Langdon, and John Paul Jones to appoint the Ranger's officers. The first Congressional resolve, Roche's suspension, caused later embarassment to the Navy when it was found that he had been suspended from a command to which he had never officially been appointed. An investigatory board eventually cleared Roche of all charges and offered him a first lieutenancy in the Continental Navy which he chose not to accept. [8]

Paul Jones arrived in Portsmouth on July 12, 1777 and secured lodgings at the house of widow Sarah Purcell. Mrs. Purcell was ex-Governor Benning Wentworth's niece, and, after the death of her husband, took in boarders to support herself. This house is now the home of the Portsmouth Historical Society and a memorial museum to John Paul Jones. Jones' sailing orders from the Marine Committee were unspecific. The Ranger's cruising station was limited only to "wherever existed the greatest chance of success." Jones was ordered to "take, sink, burn or destroy all such of the enemies ships, vessels, goods and effects as you are able." [9]

Personal ties and political influence were obvious in the officer selection. Thomas Simpson, appointed first lieutenant (or first mate), was a brother-in-law of John

Langdon, and related to John Hancock. The second lieutenant, Elijah Hall, the Lieutenant of Marines, Samuel Wallingford, and the surgeon, Dr. Ezra Green of Dover, were Portsmouth friends of either Langdon or Whipple. The appointment of the other officers and crew reflected a similar "localitis." Although Jones sent recruiting officers with handbills, that glorified the Ranger and suggested the possibilities of personal profit, to Boston and Providence, a crew roll of the Ranger indicates that more than two-thirds of her crew of 145 were from the Piscataqua region, including the nearby towns of Wells and York, Maine. Enlisting and keeping a crew was a constant problem, chiefly because of the competition for seamen from local privateers and the still unarmed Raleigh. At one point Jones sought permission from the New Hampshire Committee of Safety to enlist - or impress - "matrosses" (cannoneers) guarding the fortifications of Portsmouth Harbor. [10]

Along with the difficulties of finding a crew, Jones faced other problems before the Ranger could sail. Recognizing that the ship was over-sparred, and unable to replace the masts - even though the Piscataqua region had been the center of the mast trade until recently - Jones lowered the Ranger's topside weight and her center of gravity by reducing the number of cannon to eighteen six-pounders. The lack of sail-cloth was particularly frustrating. Jones arrived in Portsmouth in July, yet it was October 20 before he managed to obtain one

finished suit of sails, and half of those were of an inferior loose-woven cloth known as "hessian." [11] Some of the delays were due to the material scarcity that Langdon feared; other problems were the product of Jones' personality. His authoritative manner and incessant demands exasperated Langdon who eventually withdrew all but minimal assistance. Without local support and personal affinities with suppliers, as well as established credit, Jones' task was doubly difficult. Jones also complained loudly about the rum supply aboard the Ranger when she sailed, only thirty gallons for a crew of 140 men. The normal ration of one-half pint per day per man for a thirty day cruise called for more than 260 gallons. Such a shortage is inexplicable, and Jones' comments about Langdon's stinginess and failure to assist seem justified. Entries in the Langdon Daybook in the collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society suggest another interpretation. A significant number of the officers and crew sold their allotted ration to Langdon for cash. Evidently, their immediate financial needs were greater than a prospective future thirst. Jones later cited the rum shortage as a principal cause of near mutiny. [12]

Eventually preparations were completed, and, after waiting out a series of northeast gales, the weather cleared from the northwest, and the Ranger sailed for France on November 1, 1777. Although accounts vary about the course to France and the violence of storms en route, Jones' version,

written to his friend John Wendell in Portsmouth, declared that the voyage was uneventful until past the Azores when the Ranger captured two brigs, the Mary and the George, bound from Malaga to England, and loaded with fruit and wine. After putting prize crews aboard, the Ranger attempted to engage other enemy vessels without success as she proceeded to Nantes, France, arriving on December 2, after an Atlantic passage of thirty-one days. [13]

Jones had hoped to be the first to announce Burgoyne's surrender, but the French ship, Penet, carrying dispatches that announced the British humiliation, arrived only a few hours before the Ranger. Thus, rather tha hurrying to Paris to tell the American Commissioners, Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane, and Arthur Lee, Jones remained in Nantes and arranged repairs and changes to the Ranger's rig, that included shortening the spars, adding thirty tons of additional ballast, replacing the inferior sails, and cleaning the Ranger's bottom, which had become foul since her May 10 launching. [14]

Captain Jones' primary reason for being in France was to take delivery of the forty-gun frigate, L'Indien, being built in Amsterdam for American interests. However, by the time the Ranger arrived, the American Commissioners, in desperate need of funds, had sold L'Indien to the French. When he heard this, Jones hurried to Paris to confer with the Commissioners and even protested over Franklin's head to the

the French Ministry of Marine. All he received was "evasive promises" and Jones returned to a refurbished Ranger in the end of January. [15]

The work of recutting sails, re-rigging, and cleaning the Ranger had kept her crew busy. However, they were not pleased at Jones' return. Lietenant Simpson had expected to take command when the Ranger reached France; he had encouraged the crew to think likewise. Also, while the crew had been recruited with the promise of profits, the Ranger had taken only two prizes, and the crew had not recieved their shares from either. Jones was more interested in fighting and destroying shipping than taking prizes. Furthermore, Jones, a Scot, and alien to the New England crew, was a military disciplinarian. Simpson was a merchant captain and familiar in manner, speech, and custom to his men. Jones attributed the grumbling to homesickness. Whatever the causes, the Captain faced insubordination from both officers and crew before the Ranger left Brittany.

The American Commissioners sent Jones his sailing orders in Janury 1778. "After equipping the Ranger in the best manner for the cruise you propose," they wrote, "that you proceed with her in the manner you shall judge best for distressing the Enemies of the United States, by sea or otherwise...." Jones' proposal, or "scheem," as he wrote, was to make a surprise attack on an English port to destroy shipping. The

Ranger left Painbeouf, at the mouth of the River Loire and anchored in nearby Quiberon Bay, where, on February 14, Jones requested and received formal recognition of the official American flag in the form of a nine-gun salute - in response to the Ranger's thirteen-gun salute - from the flagship of French Admiral LaMotte Piquet. Although the Ranger was not the first ship to be saluted by a foreign power, she was the first to be accorded that honor while flying the Stars and Stripes. [16]

The Ranger spent the rest of the winter and early spring cruising between Quiberon Bay and Brest, testing her rig and trim in the squally winds and extreme tidal currents of the area. At Brest in March, in an effort to improve the Ranger's windward ability, shipwrights set the masts further aft, sail-makers shortened the sails, and the crew shifted the ballast. The threat of small pox and crew desertion added to Jones' troubles at this time. To appease his junior officers who resented sharing prize money, Jones dismissed Marine Captain Matthew Parke. Finally, in early April, after careening and graving the Ranger's hull once more, Jones ordered her sails set, and the Ranger left France, bound for the west coast of England.

On April 14, the Ranger captured the brig Dolphin with a cargo of flaxseed: Jones ordered the merchant ship scuttled after removing her crew. Two days later the 250-ton Lord Chatham, carrying wine, was taken and sent into Brest for condemnation

and sale. April 18th found the Ranger in a skirmish with His Majesty's revenue vessel Hussar. Although the Ranger outsailed the Hussar, the smaller cutter escaped into shallow water where Jones dared not follow. A day later, the Ranger, now in the North Channel between Ireland and Scotland, captured and sunk two more ships. Captain Jones learned of the 20-gun British warship Drake in the vicinity and tried a surprise attack in the night. The plan failed both because of an unwilling crew and a drunken quartermaster who failed to heave the anchor at the precise moment for a tactical advantage. The Ranger was fortunate to escape.[17]

At this point Jones decided to put his "scheem" into action, and on November 22, headed for Whitehaven on the Scottish coast, the port from which Jones had departed at the age of thirteen for Virginia. His familiarity with the seaport obviously influenced his choice of the objective. Jones planned a "hit-and-run" attack to destroy the shipping in the harbor. While this strategy was undoubtedly correct from a military perspective, it held little attraction for the Ranger's crew, who saw no possibility of profit and a great deal of potential danger in the venture. Crew objections led to attempted mutiny. Jones retained control and led assault teams of forty men in two ship's boats ashore, rowing three hard miles against the tide, arriving as the sky grew light in the east.

Once ashore, in order to prevent desertion and guarantee

his retreat, Jones posted a loyal guard by the boats. Then, after leading about half the men to the fortress where they successfully spiked most of the cannon, Jones and his party returned to the harbor and began a fire in one of the merchant ships tied to the wharf. The other twenty men, according to reports, were carousing in local pubs. Another crew member, David Freeman, an Irishman who had enlisted on the Ranger only to secure passage home, betrayed the raid by sounding the alarm throughout the town. As the crew rowed back to the Ranger an enraged populace followed them along the shore. The few unspiked cannon were fired at the long boats with little effect. As only one ship burned, the economic consequences of the Whitehaven raid were minimal. However, its propaganda effects were tremendous. London newspapers made Jones and the Ranger's crew into terrifying pirates and instant anti-heroes. A colonial war which had little relevance for complacent English men and women was now a reality, and on their very doorstep![18]

Later that same morning, the Ranger sailed to St. Mary's Isle, twenty miles across the Solway Firth. Much of Jones' childhood had been spent in the area: he knew the people and the lay of the land. At St. Mary's Paul Jones attempted the most original part of his plan. Long concerned with the plight of American seamen in English prisons, Jones decided to abduct the local noble, Lord Selkirk, and hold him for

the ransom of American captives. The idea was frustrated by Selkirk's absence. When he heard this Jones decided to return to the Ranger but the armed party with him objected: they wanted to loot the mansion. Jones finally compromised to the extent of allowing the removal of the Selkirk household silver. Jones refused to accompany the men and remained by the boats. After being impressed with his officers' descriptions of Lady Selkirk's conduct, Jones wrote a lengthy letter to the Lady, and eventually redeemed the silver, estimated at 160 pounds, with his personal funds, and returned it to the Selkirks. Although the attempted kidnapping increased Jones' reputation as well as the anxiety level of coastal England, it was also foolish. Lord Selkirk had little influence with either King George or his court, and was openly critical of ministerial conduct toward the Colonies. He would have been a poor pawn to play. [19]

The countryside was now completely aroused by the Ranger's two mainland raids in twenty-four hours. The Admirality sent two warships, HMS Stag and Doctor, to persue the Ranger and protect shipping in the North Channel. Captain Jones was oblivious to the threat and decided to attack the 20-gun Drake he had missed two days before. He managed to decoy the enemy ship into firing range by disguising the Ranger and, just before dusk on April 24, began the action with a broadside of grapeshot that raked the Drake's decks. Depending on whose

version one accepts, the combat lasted from twenty minutes to one hour and five minutes. It ended abruptly with the death of the British senior officers, Captain Burden and Lieutenant Dobbs, and the Drake's subsequent surrender. The Ranger lost three men. After burying the dead with appropriate ceremony and jury-rigging the Drake, Jones appointed Lieutenant Simpson prize master, set him aboard the ship with a crew and orders to "take your station on the Ranger's starboard quarter at about the distance of a Cable's length," and proceeded to sail for France around Northern Ireland.

It was a wise decision. By May 1, the Admirality had sent the 36-gun frigate Thetis, the sloop-of-war Heart of Oak, the Boston, and a number of smaller warships to intercept the elusive Ranger. They failed to find Jones, and as the Ranger approached the coast of France on May 4, having taken the disabled Drake under tow, Jones spied a ship to leeward that he considered a worthy prize. Casting off the towline, he called to the Drake, ordering Simpson to follow. Simpson, however, either misunderstood the orders or deliberately disobeyed the commands and kept his course to Brest. Jones chose to believe the latter and when the Ranger caught the Drake two days later, Jones relieved Simpson from command and put him under arrest. The two ships arrived in Brest on May 8, 1778.[20]

Paul Jones found more problems than praise when he landed. The French were indifferent to his adventures. There was no prize money, and worse still, no cash for crew provisions.

A draft for $4800. to be shared among the officers and crew that Jones presented on the credit of the American Commissioners was not honored. He was forced to mortgage the prizes to feed the crew. Lieutenant Simpson's case was more complicated. Jones wanted Simpson courtmartialled for insubordination, but the legal procedure required the presence of three ranking Continental Captains. There not being three in France, Simpson was kept under mild house arrest. Seventy-seven crew members, styling themselves "the Jovial Tars Now on Board the Continental Sloop of War Ranger", petitioned the Commissioners for Simpson's release. One petition complained about Jones, "His Government arbitrary his temper and treatment insufferable, for the most trivial matters threatening to shoot the Person or persons whom he, in Sallies of Passion, chooses to call Ignorant or disobedient." Benjamin Franklin, Arthur Lee and John Adams - who had replace Silas Deane - pressed Jones to be lenient, and on July 27, Simpson rejoined the Ranger "to the joy and satisfaction of the whole ship's company." Jones stayed ashore awaiting assignment from the Commissioners to command a new and larger ship. When Captain Abraham Whipple reached Brest in August, Paul Jones tried to renew the charges, but Simpson's popularity with the crew and their counter accusations about Jones' "mode of government" on board ship and their complaints that Jones had deliberately obstructed the sale of their prizes, assured Simpson's vindication. [21]

The Ranger's connection with John Paul Jones ended when she cleared Brest in late August under Thomas Simpson's command. Jones went on to greater glory in the Bon Homme Richard. However, the Ranger continued to support the American cause. Reaching Portsmouth, New Hampshire in company with the Providence and the Continental ship Boston on October 15, with three prizes taken in the Atlantic, she was completely overhauled, rerigged and reballasted during the winter. Setting sail again on February 24, 1779, the Ranger cruised the North Atlantic with the Continental ships Queen of France and Warren. By April, seven prize ships had been sent to colonial ports for condemnation and sale. In the middle of June, the Ranger was underway again, this time with the Queen of France and the Providence. Two ships from Jamaica were captured in July, and the Continental ships took nine enemy vessels off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland in August. Although three of these prizes were recaptured, the eight remaining, and their cargoes, were auctioned in Boston for over one million dollars.

That fall, the Ranger was ordered to Charleston, South Carolina to assist in the defense of that city. Arriving in December, the Ranger and the Providence captured three transport vessels at Tybee, Georgia (near Savannah) where they obtained intelligence of the British assault force that was gathering for the attack on Charleston. Simpson and other Continental captains felt General Lincoln's plan to barricade the mouth of the harbor with moored warships was untenable because of

shoal water and a constantly shifting sand bar and the difficulty of maintaining an advantageous position while anchored on the bar. When their opinions were proven correct and the British fleet sailed easily past them into the harbor, the Continental ships moved into the Cooper River where they were effectively trapped when the city fell May 11, 1780. The Ranger was taken in to the Royal Navy under the name of Halifax. Simpson, a prisoner for a short time, joined the merchant marine when he was freed and was eventually lost at sea. Second Lieutenant Elijah Hall, a vociferous critic of Jones on the Ranger, surfaced again as Paul Jones' first mate on the 74-gun America, a short lived commission. Most of the other officers and crew resumed their former lives in the Piscataqua area.[22]

The Ranger - Halifax arrived in Portsmouth, England in the summer of 1781, and was decommissioned almost immediately. In September, she was advertised for sale as "fit for any trade in the merchant service." Appraised at £1115.10.3, her sale price to a Mr. William Scott, "merchant of Plymouth," on October 13, 1781, was a mere £650.0.0. One historian speculated that the discovery of dry rot in her hull hastened the end of her Royal Navy service.[23]

The official career of the Portsmouth, New Hampshire-built sloop-of-war that terrorized mainland England and harassed British shipping for a brief period of four years ended humbly as a coastal trader. Yet for all the romance, literature, and historical documentation that surrounds the Ranger and Paul Jones'

command of her, the Ranger, firmly fixed in the pantheon of American Naval and Revolutionary history, remains, in a singular way, a mystery ship. Although both fictional and substantiated descriptions abound, no plan or picture of the Ranger, either as built or as altered by Jones in France, has survived. Even her dimensions, as recorded by the Royal Navy, are the subject of historical debate. For example, Samuel Eliot Morison, taking the official dimensions as 97'2" on the gun deck, 77'9" length of keel, 27'8" beam, 12' depth of hold, and tonnage of 318.5, wrote that the Ranger was 110' overall. Yet, Howard I. Chapelle, late curator of Transportation at the Smithsonian Institution, wrote that the Admirality dimensions of the Ranger indicate that her overall length would be over 125 feet, with a beam of 34 feet. Morison claimed categorically that Chapelle's figures were wrong. Local historian and past president of the Portsmouth Athenaeum, Garland Patch carried on a long correspondence with Morison about the dimension and appearance of the Ranger. Probably, the model of the Ranger in the Portsmouth Historical Society, commissioned by Garland Patch, is the most definitive example. The problem of the Ranger's appearance was further complicated by fictional descriptions that pretended to be History. Augustus A. Buell, an early biographer of Paul Jones, was the foremost practitioner of such creative efforts. Buell was able to succeed in influencing later generations of historians to accept his fiction about Jones and the Ranger by both the quality of his writing, salty

and dramatic, and by the clever technique of inventing sources. Among the myths Buell fashioned about the Ranger are that she was the first American ship to be copper-bottomed and that a group of Portsmouth ladies, a sewing circle, were responsible for the first American flag flown by the Ranger on her maiden voyage to France. While there is considerable negative evidence about the Ranger's copper bottom, and the sewing circle tale is generally regarded as local folklore, Buell's description of the Ranger, supposedly from the journal of Elijah Hall, her Second Lieutenant, has survived in most accounts, including William Saltonstall's Ports of Piscataqua, as an authentic contemporary observation. However, Buell not only wrote the passage, he invented Hall's journal, worth quoting here as a fitting conclusion.

> "With the wind anywhere abaft the beam, or going free, she could run like a hound, and on those points of sailing could show her heels to anything afloat, great or small. In outward appearance she was a perfect beauty, her sheer being as delicate as the lines of a pretty woman's arm, and, as she was rather low in the water for her length and her masts raked two or three degrees more than any other ship of the day, she was on the whole, the sauciest ship afloat."

NOTES TO THE TEXT

1. William Bell Clark, Naval Documents of the American Revolution, Washington, DC, 1969, vol.7, 58.

2. Howard I. Chapelle, The History of the American Sailing Navy, New York, 1949, 86.
Langdon kept very detailed accounts for the skilled workmen in his shipyard. Nowhere is William Hackett mentioned except as a carpenter in the construction of the 74-gun America.

3. Naval Documents, 7, 362, 461.

4. Joseph Foster, "Captain Tobias Lear of Portsmouth: Builder of the 'Ranger'," Granite Monthly, 39, 1907, 85.

5. Naval Documents, 7, 1226., "Capt. Tobias Lear," 86.

6. John Langdon Daybook, Collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, NH, 74.

7. Langdon Daybook, 146, 83, 85, 89, 106, 170.

8. Samuel Eliot Morison, John Paul Jones: A Sailor's Biography, Boston, 1959, 102.; Joseph Foster, "Birth of the American Navy," Granite Monthly, 1927.

9. Lincoln Lorenz, John Paul Jones: Fighter for Freedom and Glory, Annapolis, 1943, 114.

10. Morison, 107-111.

11. Mrs. Reginald DeKoven, Life and Letters of John Paul Jones, New York, 1913, 220.

12. "Diary of Dr. Ezra Green," New England Historical and Genealogical Register, Boston, 1875, vol.29, 13.

13. "Diary of Ezra Green,", 15; DeKoven, 31.

14. Morison, 121.

15. Ibid., 124.

16. "Diary of Dr. Ezra Green," 15.

17. Morison, 138.

18. Lorenz, 144-149.

19. Morison, 143-155.

20. Morison, 157-163.

21. "Diary of Dr. Ezra Green," Jared Sparks Journal in Sparks Manuscript, Harvard College Library.

22. Morison, 171; Saltonstall, 101.

23. Morison, 171.

24. Notes from Samuel Eliot Morison in Portsmouth Athenaeum Files,"Letter from Howard I. Chapelle to Garland Patch," Portsmouth Athenaeum files, Dec.1, 1958.

25. Augustus C. Buell, Paul Jones, New York, 1900, vol.1, 80.; See Morison, Appendix 6, 425, for a partial list of Buell's fabrications.

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