



Edward Preble



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Edward Preble

Edward Preble (15 August 1761 – 25 August 1807) was a [United States](#) naval officer who served with great distinction during the [1st Barbary War](#), leading American attacks on the city of [Tripoli](#) and forming the officer corps that would later lead the [U.S. Navy](#) in the [War of 1812](#).

Early life and Revolutionary War



Coat of Arms of Edward Preble

Preble was born at Falmouth, Eastern Massachusetts, now [Portland, Maine](#), 15 August 1761, the son of General [Jedidiah Preble](#). As a boy, his home was destroyed in the [burning of Falmouth](#) by British Naval Commander [Henry Mowat](#). It is said that this action compelled Preble to join the Navy. It also contributed to his terrible temper later in life. In 1779 he was appointed to the [Massachusetts State Navy](#), becoming an officer in the 26 gun ship *Protector*. Becoming a [British](#) prisoner when that ship was captured in 1781, he was held for a time in the infamous prison ship *HMS Jersey*. On his release, he served in the Massachusetts Navy sloop *Winthrop* and led a boarding party to cut out a British [brig](#) at [Castine, Maine](#). At the opening of this action, *Winthrop* passed by the enemy ship so quickly that only Preble and 14 of his 45-man boarding party managed to get aboard. As *Winthrop* came back around to make another pass, *Winthrop's* captain, George Little, asked Preble if he wanted more men. Preble, realizing that he would lose the element of surprise if he disclosed his far weaker position, coolly replied, "No. We have more than we want. We stand in each others' way!" Going below with pistols in hand, he caught a portion of the crew still in their hammocks. Preble then announced that all were prisoners and that any resistance would be

in vain. As British soldiers on shore began firing, Preble worked his prize out to sea while the *Winthrop* turned to deliver a broadside in reply before making her escape.

United States Navy service

Fifteen years of merchant service followed his Revolutionary War career and, in April 1798, he was commissioned as a [lieutenant](#) in the United States Navy. In January 1799, he assumed command of the 14 gun brig *USS Pickering* and took her to the [West Indies](#) to protect American commerce during the [Quasi-War](#) with [France](#). Commissioned as a [captain](#) in June of 1799, he took command of the 32 gun frigate *USS Essex* in December and sailed from [Newport, Rhode Island](#) in January 1800 for the Pacific to convoy home a group of East Indiamen.

Upon his return, Preble announced to the Secretary of the Navy that he intended to retire from the Navy due to his health. Not wanting to lose such an experienced and capable officer, the secretary decided to put Preble on indefinite sick leave until a good post could be found for him.

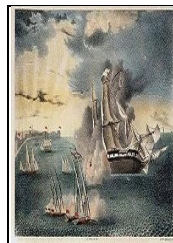
During this time, the United States was engaged in naval warfare with the city-state of Tripoli, whose corsairs were causing havoc amongst American merchantmen in the Mediterranean. The U.S. Navy had sent squadrons under two commanders, [Richard Dale](#) and [Richard Valentine Morris](#), to protect American interests in the region. While Dale ran an effective blockade of [Tripoli](#), the endless routine bored his officers. Upon his return, Dale left the Navy over a promotion dispute. The tenure of Richard Valentine Morris, on the other hand, was an utter fiasco, as Morris was neither an effective commander nor a very smart one. Morris spent most of his time socializing in Gibraltar and Malta, and he managed to be taken hostage by the Bey of Tunis, who felt that the American did not give him an adequate farewell (the ransom was paid by the American and Danish consuls). When he finally did arrive at Tripoli, he tried to play diplomat and sue for peace, which destabilized the strong negotiating position the Americans had been building up to that point. When Morris returned home, he was stripped of his commission by President [Thomas Jefferson](#) without so much as a court-martial.

With Morris ordered home, President Jefferson needed a new officer to command the Mediterranean Squadron. Bypassing several senior officers, Preble was asked to travel to Boston and ready *USS Constitution* for duty in the Mediterranean. He accepted, and was given a promotion to Commodore along with his new ship. He sailed on August 14, 1803.

To the Mediterranean

On September 10, *Constitution* was approaching [Cadiz](#) on a black, moonless night. Suddenly, the dim silhouette of a warship loomed out of the darkness close aboard. Preble immediately ordered *Constitution* cleared for action. Preble hailed her, only to receive a hail in return. He identified his ship as the United States frigate *Constitution* but received an evasive answer from the other ship. Preble replied: "I am now going to hail you for the last time. If a proper answer is not returned, I will fire a shot into you." The stranger returned, "If you give me a shot, I'll give you a broadside." Preble demanded that the other ship identify herself and the stranger replied, "This is His Britannic Majesty's Ship *Donegal*, 84 guns, [Sir Richard Strachan](#), an English commodore." He then commanded Preble, "Send your boat on board." Preble was now devoid of all patience and exclaimed, "This is United States Ship *Constitution*, 44 guns, Edward Preble, an American commodore, who will be damned before he sends his boat on board of any vessel." And then to his gun crews: "Blow your matches, boys!" Before the incident escalated further, however, a boat arrived from the other ship and a British lieutenant relayed his captain's apologies. The ship was in fact not *Donegal* but instead *HMS Maidstone*, a 32-gun frigate. *Constitution* had come alongside her so quietly that *Maidstone* had delayed answering with the proper hail while she readied her guns. This act began the strong allegiance between Preble and the officers under his command, known as "Preble's boys", as he had shown that he was willing to defy a presumed ship of the line.

Second Battle of Tripoli Harbor



After signing a peace treaty with [Morocco](#), Preble established a blockade off [Tripoli](#). [Stephen Decatur](#), [William Bainbridge](#), [Charles Stewart](#), [Isaac Hull](#), [Thomas Macdonough](#), [James Lawrence](#), and [David Porter](#) served under his command at Tripoli.

While commanding in Tripoli, Preble masterminded the burning of *USS Philadelphia* by Lieutenant Stephen Decatur on February 16, 1804, preventing the captured frigate from falling into enemy hands. Had Tripoli gained the use of *Philadelphia*, the entire blockade would have been wasted. [Stephen Decatur](#) and his younger brother, James Decatur, led the actual operation.

James Decatur was killed in the fighting later that year aboard one of the squadron's attack craft.

Over the course of his career, Preble helped establish many of the modern Navy's rules and regulations. Described as a stern taskmaster, he kept high discipline upon the ships under his command. He also dictated that his ships be kept in a state of readiness for any action while under sail, something many US naval officers at the time did not insist upon. Future sea captains such as Decatur, Lawrence, and Porter took his procedures to heart at a time when the US Navy was highly unregulated.

Edward Preble



Born	August 15, 1761 Falmouth, Province of Massachusetts Bay, British America
Died	August 25, 1807 (aged 46) Portland, Massachusetts, US United States of America
Allegiance	 Massachusetts United States Navy Massachusetts Navy
Service/branch	United States Navy Massachusetts Navy
Years of service	1798-1804
Rank	Commodore <ul style="list-style-type: none"> USS Pickering USS Essex USS Constitution
Commands held	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revolutionary War Quasi War First Barbary War
Battles/wars	
Awards	Congressional Gold Medal
Spouse(s)	Mary Deering

USS Philadelphia
aground off **Tripoli**, in
1803.

Many of Preble's procedures became doctrine after the establishment of an official US Navy. The officers serving under him during his career also went on to become influential in the Navy Department after his death, and together they proudly wore the unofficial title of "Preble's Boys". (When Preble took over command he discovered that his oldest officer was 30 and the youngest 15 years old. He therefore grumbled the **Secretary of the Navy** had given him "just a pack of schoolboys".)

Preble's Mediterranean cruise led directly to the US government's firm anti-negotiation stance. Many Mediterranean states, including Tripoli, had been pirating American shipping vessels, ransoming the sailors, and demanding tribute to prevent future pirate attacks. The tribute rose after each successful payment, as did the brutality and boldness of the attacks.

End of career

In September 1804, Commodore Preble requested relief due to a longtime illness. He returned to the **United States** in February 1805 and became engaged in the comparably light duty of shipbuilding activities at **Portland, Maine**. By congressional resolution in March 1805, a **gold medal was struck** and presented to Commodore Preble for the "gallantry and good conduct" of himself and his squadron at Tripoli. President Jefferson offered him the Navy Department in 1806, but Preble declined appointment due to his poor health. He died in Portland of a gastrointestinal illness on 25 August 1807. He is buried in **Eastern Cemetery**, Portland, Maine.

Legacy

- Six ships of the United States Navy named **USS Preble**
- Preble Hall, the museum at the **United States Naval Academy**
- Preble County** in **Ohio**
- Fort Preble** at Spring Point in **South Portland, Maine**
- Preble Street** in **Portland, Maine**
- Preble Street** in **South Portland, Maine**
- Preble Street** in **Bremerton, Washington**
- Preble Ave. in **Norman, Oklahoma**
- Preble Township, Minnesota**
- Town of Preble, Cortland County, NY**
- Preble, Wisconsin**, a former **town** in Wisconsin, now part of the city of **Green Bay**
 - Preble High School** in Green Bay, Wisconsin

In popular culture

Preble appears as a character in the science fiction novel *Time for Patriots*, ISBN 978-1-60693-224-7, performing much as he did historically.

In the 1926 silent film *Old Ironsides*, Preble was portrayed by actor **Charles Hill Mailes**.

Preble appears as a character in the James L. Haley historical fiction novel "The Shores of Tripoli", **Template:ISBN 978-0-425-27817-8**.

Preble appears In "With Preble at Tripoli : a story of "Old Ironsides" and the Tripolitan war" Pub 1900, Author: James Otis, Publisher: Boston ; Chicago : W.A. Wilde Co. Youth Fiction found here <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/28534333>

The *Constitution* under Preble's command makes a very brief appearance in **C. S. Forester's** novel *Hornblower and the Hotspur*.

Notes

- ↑ This was the instruction for the gun crews to blow on their slow matches to make them white hot for igniting a cannon. The modern-day equivalent might be "prepare to fire".



EDUARDO PREBLE
DUCI STRENUO
COMITIA AMERICANA.
(The American
Congress to Edward
Preble, a valiant officer.)



Reverse of
Congressional Medal.
VINDICI COMMERCII
AMERICANI. (To the
vindicator of American
commerce.) Exergue:
ANTE TRIPOLI
MDCCCIV. (Off Tripoli,
1804). Representing the
bombardment, by the
American fleet in the
foreground, of the forts
and town of Tripoli in
the background. The
American vessels are
drawn up in line, and
several boats manned
are seen in the water
casting off to the attack
of the enemy's shipping
and batteries.

References

- ↑ Toll (2006), p. 180.
- ↑ Maclay and Smith (1898), Volume 1, pp. 241-242.
- ↑ Allen (1905), p. 142.
- ↑ Fletcher Pratt, "The Compact History of the United States Navy", 1957
- ↑ Upham, Warren (1920). *Minnesota Geographic Names: Their Origin and Historic Significance*. Minnesota Historical Society. p. 194.

Further reading

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- Preble, George Henry**. *A genealogical Sketch of the First Three Generations of Prebles in America* . Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1868. **Excerpt**, pp. 162-180.
- Pratt, Fletcher. *Preble's Boys: Commodore Preble and the Birth of American Sea Power*. New York: William Sloane, 1950.
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External links

- USSPreble.org
- Congressional Gold Medal

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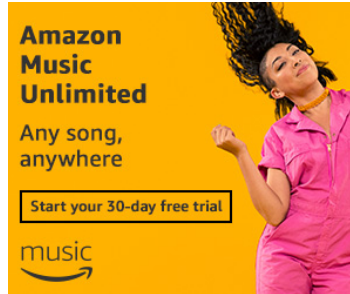
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- Ed Sheeran
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- Jay-Z
- Justin Bieber

Coat of Arms of Edward Preble. Preble was born at Falmouth, Eastern Massachusetts, now Portland, Maine, 15 August 1761, the son of General Jediah Preble. As a boy, his home was destroyed in the burning of Falmouth by British Naval Commander Henry Mowatt. It is said that this action compelled Preble to join the Navy. It also contributed to his terrible temper later in life. In 1779 he was appointed to the Massachusetts State Navy, becoming an officer in the 26 gun ship Protector. Edward Preble last edited by jazz1987 on 11/14/18 12:30PM View full history. No description. Font-size General Information Super Name Edward Preble Edward Preble Real Name Real Name Preble — may refer to:People* Edward Preble, U.S. naval officer, who rose to the rank of Commodore (most of the items listed below are named for him) * George H. Preble, nephew of Edward Preble, U.S. naval officer, who also rose to the rank of ... Wikipedia. Preble County — Courthouse in Eaton Verwaltung US Bundesstaat Ohio ... Deutsch Wikipedia. Preble, Wisconsin — Preble was a town in Brown County, Wisconsin, United States

edward preble, edward preble medal for sale Edward Preble 15 August 1761 – 25 August 1807 was a United States naval officer who served with great distinction during the 1st Barbary War, leading American attacks on the city of Tripoli and forming the officer corps that would later lead the US Navy in the War of 1812. Early life and Revolutionary War. Coat of Arms of Edward Preble. Preble was born at Falmouth, Eastern Massachusetts, now Portland, Maine, 15 August 1761, the son of