

USS CONSTITUTION MUSEUM

Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

by Jodie McMenamin
Development Officer

“ANDREW JACKSON’S MOUTH RETURNS”

The USS *Constitution* Museum has got it! The mouth section of USS *Constitution*’s Andrew Jackson figurehead that was decapitated in 1834 now resides at the Museum in Boston. The rest of the head that was split in two when it was removed in the dark of night from ‘Old Ironsides,’ is at the Museum of the City of New York. But the location of the mouth was a mystery until now.

Andrew Jackson never won a popularity contest in Boston. Because of his anti-mercantile policies, the seventh president had more than his fair share of detractors among the Boston elite. In the spring of 1834, when *Constitution*’s Capt. Jesse Duncan Elliot had the gall to order a new figurehead for the ship featuring Jackson’s gaunt frame and visage, Bostonians were outraged. Calling it a “foul disgrace” bordering on vandalism of their favorite ship, they vowed revenge.

In the middle of a dark and stormy night in July, a young Boston sea captain named Samuel Dewey procured a small rowboat and pulled beneath *Constitution*’s looming bow. All the sentries had retreated to the shelter of their boxes, and Dewey gingerly scaled the ship’s slippery side, til he clung to the side, face to face with “Old Hickory” himself. Drawing a saw, he began to hack away at the figure’s head. After a few strokes, he hit an iron bolt. Undeterred, he began a new cut just below the nose. A few minutes of frantic sawing and the head came free.

In the days following, as word of the decapitation spread, Dewey and his trophy were celebrated at a number of local parties. The mutilation also caused excitement in the rest of the country: Jackson’s followers were outraged, his critics amused. Eventually, the clamor died down and the figurehead was repaired and then replaced. Descending down the family tree of the Secretary of the Navy, the head, removed by Dewey ended up at the Museum of the City of New York. But the question remained, what happened to the lower part of the head? Last year, a woman from New York approached the “History Detectives,” a PBS-produced television program, with a mystery. She had in her possession a piece of painted wood featuring well-modeled lips and a chin. Could this be the missing piece of the Jackson figurehead? After setting the stage with a visit to the USS *Constitution* and the Museum, the detectives compared the piece to the rest of the head at



Above: The newly found mouth of Andrew Jackson.

the Museum of the City of New York. They matched! Thanks to the generous donors to the USS *Constitution* Museum’s Commodore’s Fund, the Museum was able to acquire the missing mouth and it will soon be on display in our galleries.

SAVE YOUR SHIP!

By Joseph W. Lombardi, AMS
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“GALVANIC POTENTIAL”

Every ship in water (fresh or salt) will experience the effects of galvanic corrosion if not protected. The first line of protection would be the paint system on your underbody; ensure it is intact as any free metallic surface will be attacked by stray electronic current causing at first, small pitting turning larger, until a hole is formed; not a good thing when water is flooding your ship.

Another way of protecting your vessel is the installation of an impressed cathodic protection system (ICPS). The ICPS is designed to negate the effects of galvanic potential. This system consists of a power source, rectifier, sensors and anodes. The ICPS should be designed to form a protective shield around your vessel in her habitual berth. This system must be MAINTAINED on a systemic basis. That means you must allocate and SPEND funds on a systemic basis