

Ancient Order of Hibernians and
U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis
present

Commodore John Barry Memorial Dedication Day



The Society of
THE FRIENDLY SONS OF ST. PATRICK
ORGANIZED MARCH 17, 1771 INCORPORATED APRIL 27, 1792

COMMODORE JOHN BARRY

FATHER OF THE AMERICAN NAVY

John Barry, born in Ireland, learned to sail at a very early age. At age 15, he emigrated to Philadelphia in 1760 and at age 21, he was awarded his first captaincy of a 62 ton schooner. In 1775, he was commissioned Captain in the Continental Navy, the same day on which John Paul Jones was commissioned Lieutenant. In the following year, Barry captured the first British war prize on the high seas. He assisted General Washington in the crossing of the Delaware, and fought in the battle of Princeton. He further aided Washington by obtaining supplies, food and uniforms to help keep the struggling army together.

While at sea, John Barry captured numerous British vessels of war and continued to pluck one prize ship after another through late 1779. Early on he had joined the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, and was an active participant in its affairs when not at sea.

Barry was sent to France in 1781 to escort a French ship loaded with clothing and six million gold coins to Boston, after which he continued to capture more British prizes. Even after Yorktown, he continued to fight through March and April of 1783, when he defeated the British ship Sybella, shortly before Washington ordered a cease fire.

In 1789, Commodore Barry offered his services to Washington in the war against Algiers. General Washington personally presented John Barry the first commission in the United States Navy in 1797, backdating it to 1794. He oversaw the construction of the new frigate "United States" and went on to patrol against French privateers.

Commodore Barry continued to serve under Presidents Adams and Jefferson, testing cannon and other weapons manufactured in Philadelphia and Maryland. He died at age 58 in 1803, following a long illness and is buried in St. Mary's Churchyard, Philadelphia.

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