



Tales of Texas Newsletter



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This issue of Tales of Texas details an influential 1932 Visit of the *USS Constitution*.

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“Old Ironsides” & Texas

In 1932, the United States marked an extraordinary occasion: the sesquicentennial of George Washington's birth. To commemorate the event, the Navy's most famous vessel, the *USS Constitution*, embarked on a historic tour of the United States, including an unprecedented visit to the Texas coastline. This journey brought the storied frigate, affectionately nicknamed "Old Ironsides," to a state with its own rich maritime

history, cementing a symbolic connection between the early Republic and the Lone Star State.

Built in 1797, the *USS Constitution* represented the fledgling United States' determination to assert its naval power. Named by President George Washington himself, the ship was designed to protect American commerce and project the young nation's strength on the high seas. With her oak hull famously deflecting British cannonballs during the War of 1812, she became a legend of naval warfare. By 1932, “Old Ironsides” was no longer an active warship but a floating museum and symbol of America's naval heritage. Her preservation was the result of public and governmental efforts, including a successful fundraising campaign involving children across the country in the 1920s. After extensive restoration, the *USS Constitution* was deemed seaworthy once more, ready to embark on her final significant voyage.



Tales of Texas



Port of Call:
Port Arthur, Texas



Panama Canal
Texas to California

The *Constitution's* 1932 tour was an ambitious undertaking, spanning over 22,000 nautical miles and visiting 76 ports along the Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific coasts. The Navy saw this as an opportunity to connect citizens to their shared national heritage and strengthen ties with communities across the country. The ship was staffed by a dedicated crew of U.S. Navy personnel, who not only sailed her but also acted as living historians, engaging the public with tales of her storied past.

Texas, with its strategic position on the Gulf of America and its own naval traditions, was a logical stop on this monumental journey. The state's coastal cities were eager to welcome the *Constitution*, and preparations were made to ensure her visit would be a memorable occasion.

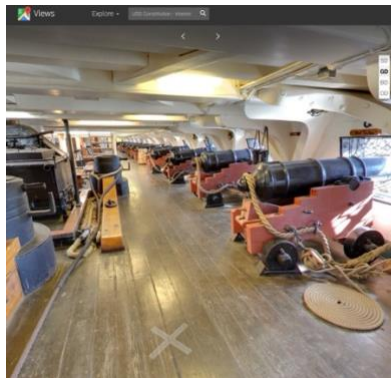
The *USS Constitution* arrived in Galveston, Texas, in April 1932, greeted by enthusiastic crowds and a flotilla of local vessels. Galveston, a major port city with a history of naval activity dating back to the Texas Revolution, was an ideal setting for Old Ironsides' arrival. The visit drew thousands of spectators from across the state, many of whom had never seen the iconic vessel in person.

Upon docking, the *Constitution* became a temporary museum, open to the public for tours. Texans young and old marveled at her towering masts, her intricately rigged sails, and the sturdy wooden hull that had earned her fame. The Navy crew conducted demonstrations of period naval drills, and local dignitaries delivered speeches emphasizing the historical ties between Texas and the United States.

For Texans, the *Constitution's* visit carried special significance. Though Texas had been an independent republic during much of the *USS Constitution's* early service, the ship symbolized the broader ideals of liberty and self-determination that had driven the Texan fight for independence from Mexico in the 1830s. The visit underscored Texas's integration into the Union, which had been solidified nearly a century earlier when the state joined as the 28th member of the United States.



Tales of Texas



Gun Deck and Yes, They Really Work



Cmdr Billie Foster, USN
Captain of the
USS Constitution

Moreover, the Constitution's presence highlighted the shared maritime heritage of Texas and the United States. The Gulf Coast had long been a hub for trade, exploration, and naval activity. During the Civil War, Galveston served as a strategic Confederate port and the site of a pivotal naval battle. The frigate's visit offered Texans a chance to reflect on their state's connection to the larger national narrative.

The *Constitution's* time in Texas was marked by a series of celebrations. In Galveston, a parade featuring local officials, military personnel, and schoolchildren wound through the city's streets, culminating in a ceremony at the harbor. Bands played patriotic tunes, and spectators waved American flags as speakers recounted the ship's legendary battles and her role in shaping American history.

Houston, just a short distance inland, also embraced the occasion. Special trains were organized to transport residents to Galveston to see the ship, and schools used the visit as an opportunity to teach students about American history. Across the region, newspapers featured stories about the Constitution, igniting a renewed interest in naval history and the nation's founding principles.

The USS Constitution's 1932 visit to Texas was more than just a stop on a nationwide tour—it was a powerful moment of unity and reflection. As Texans stood on the docks of Galveston, gazing up at the ship's iconic masts, they were reminded of the sacrifices and triumphs that had shaped both their state and their nation. Nearly a century later, the legacy of that visit endures, a testament to the enduring power of history to inspire and unite.

Today, the USS *Constitution* resides in Boston, Massachusetts, where she serves as a commissioned ship in the U.S. Navy and the world's oldest floating warship. Her 1932 tour, including her stop in Texas, stands as a testament to the nation's commitment to preserving its history and fostering a sense of shared identity among its citizens.