

Pirates & Privateers

The Making Of A Privateer - Part II

by Robert Bachand

Andrew Sherburne, a seasoned teenage sailor, was home on leave for his fifteenth birthday while his ship, the *Ranger*, was being refitted for another cruise. By early November, 1779, the warship was ready for sea. All of the officers and most of the original crew had reported for duty already when Andrew returned. A few days later the Continental Navy ship weighed anchor, joined by the *Providence* and *Queen of France*. Together, they sailed southward toward the South Carolina/Georgia coast, where they quickly captured small British merchant vessels.



Continental ship "Ranger"

On December 29, 1778, the British had captured Savannah, and from there they had made a futile overland attempt to take Charleston. A year later a large enemy force of more than 7,000 men, under the command of Sir Henry Clinton, sailed out of Sandy Hook, bound for Charleston. The passage was expected to take about 10 days, but soon after they turned southward, they ran into a series of severe coastal storms. Their ships were scattered, with the loss of some of their heavy guns and nearly all of the small craft transporting horses for the artillery and cavalry. Very few of the ships made it to the Tybee, Georgia rendezvous be-

fore the end of January.

With news of the impending invasion, the *Ranger* was ordered to attack a small enemy battery on James Island, at the entrance of Charleston Harbor. Though Andrew later expressed having had some anxiety regarding loading cartridges into his assigned four-pounder gun, he carried out his task well. The *Ranger* held its ground and bombarded the enemy battery until it fell silent; the American warship then moved up the harbor to the next enemy position. This time, however, the enemy was pre-

pared better. A violent shudder was felt from bow to stern as the ship was struck by a 24-pound cannon ball, but it did not penetrate the hull. Luckily, the projectile had hit the salt marsh first before finding its mark.

By mid-April, 1780, all of the American ships were destroyed or out of supplies. The men and some guns were moved to shore batteries, but on May 12, 1780, American General Lincoln was forced to surrender to Sir Henry Clinton. Prisoners were exchanged and Andrew, along with a number of other men, boarded a small vessel and made his way to Newport, Rhode Island. From there, Andrew returned to Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Andrew was home for just a short time when he was invited to join the crew of the privateer *Greyhound*, out of Salem, Massachusetts. The schooner, a former bank fisherman, was armed with four-pounders. "I was in my sixteenth year and pretty well grown," wrote Andrew in his memoirs. He had become a privateer. The captain of the *Greyhound* was just twenty-two years old. The ship had a full complement of officers, two ordinary seamen before the mast, and ... "between twenty to thirty boys,

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