

## USS REUBEN JAMES Namesake

Reuben James was born in Delaware, Ohio in 1775. A veteran of the quasi-war with France (during which he was captured), James saved the life of Lieutenant Stephen Decatur.

It was during the infamous Barbary Wars that the American frigate PHILADELPHIA was captured by the Barbary pirates. Having run aground in the pirate capital of Tripoli on the southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, the crew had to abandon ship and formulate a plan of attack. LT Decatur, along with a group of volunteers which included Boatswain's Mate Reuben James, entered Tripoli harbor under the cover of darkness in an attempt to set the PHILADELPHIA on fire so the pirates could not make use of her.

The American volunteers boarded the PHILADELPHIA on February 16, 1804 and were met by a group of the savage Barbary pirates who were guarding their prize. A furious battle ensued, and during the the bloody chaos of hand-to-hand combat, a villainous pirate made ready to end the life of LT Decatur. Reuben James, with both of his hands already wounded, in an act of selfless dedication and courage did throw his hand before the cleaving blade! Willing to give his life in defense of his captain, Reuben James took the blow from the scimitar. This courageous intervention allowed Decatur to retrieve his pistol and slay his assailant.

Boatswain's Mate James continued to serve under Decatur onboard the frigates CONSTITUTION and CONGRESS. During the War of 1812, he served in the frigates UNITED STATES and PRESIDENT, the latter captured by four British ships on January 15, 1815. Taken prisoner, James was released after peace was declared and went on to serve in USS GUERRIERE, again under Captain Decatur.

With the cessation of war with Britain, the battles against the Barbary States resumed and on June 17, 1815, GUERRIERE engaged and defeated the Algerian flagship MASHOUDA, a victory that was instrumental in ending the Barbary Wars.

Wounded three times during his wartime service, Boatswain's Mate James was compelled to retire in 1836 because of declining health and the loss of one leg. He died on December 3, 1838 at the U.S. Naval Hospital in Washington, DC.

