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*The Second Corps of Cadets, Salem, Massachusetts, 1895*

# “Darkened by the Tides and Time”: The History and Material Culture of His Majesty’s Ship *Augusta*

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RELICS of the American past litter the museums, homes, and antique stores of our country. Often, collectors and historians examine the provenance of such artifacts for their historical accuracy alone. But relics often have multilayered stories to tell about historic events, mythmaking, and the human desire to capture fleeting history in a physical object. This article examines the relics of one historic event, the sinking of the British ship *Augusta* in 1777, from three perspectives. First, it examines the history of the ship and its accidental destruction. Second, it documents the 1869 salvage of the ship’s hull. Finally, it details the material culture associated with the ship, including artifacts recovered from *Augusta* and souvenirs made from the ship’s material. Each of these dimensions adds depth to the story of *Augusta* and its relics.

## *Augusta* at War

The summer heat bore down on the British fleet as it left New York City in late July 1777. Two hundred ships sailed under brothers Vice Adm. Richard Howe of the Royal Navy and Gen. William Howe of the Royal Army, who led an expedition to capture the capital of the new United States, Philadelphia. Among these was His Majesty’s Ship *Augusta*, a 64-gun, third-rate ship-of-the-line (FIG 1).<sup>1</sup> Launched in 1763 from the shipyard of Thomas Stanton and William Wells in Rotherhithe outside London, *Augusta* had seen only mundane

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Channel service and guard ship duties before setting out for America in the spring of 1777 under Capt. Francis Reynolds.<sup>2</sup> Excitement spread between the decks of *Augusta* as the crew made sail and departed on the Philadelphia Campaign.

The fleet made good progress south along the Atlantic seaboard, despite storms and oppressive heat, to the mouth of Delaware Bay, and then southwest to Chesapeake Bay.<sup>3</sup> The water of the Chesapeake appeared, to Chf. Engr. John Montrésor “coloured of a sap green, but not lively.”<sup>4</sup> Dwindling fresh water supplies forced some of the horse transports to throw animals overboard, but on 22 August, the fleet drew new water from the mainland.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, *Augusta*’s crew amused themselves by catching crabs that, Montrésor observed “swim nearly to the surface of the water.”<sup>6</sup> After the transports landed British troops at Head of Elk on the upper Chesapeake on 25 August, *Augusta* and the other British warships joined the vessels blockading the mouth of Delaware Bay, gradually moving north toward Philadelphia as the British troops did the same on land.

It was a treacherous time for ship captains on the Delaware. Defensive Americans had installed extensive networks of *chevaux de frise* and other submerged obstructions, which not only blocked the main channel of the river but also caused sediment deposits to shift, rendering charts of passable channels obsolete.<sup>7</sup> The day after the British land forces took possession of Philadelphia, they captured the American frigate *Delaware*, which ran aground near the city, and immediately manned her with a British crew.<sup>8</sup> American fortifications fur-

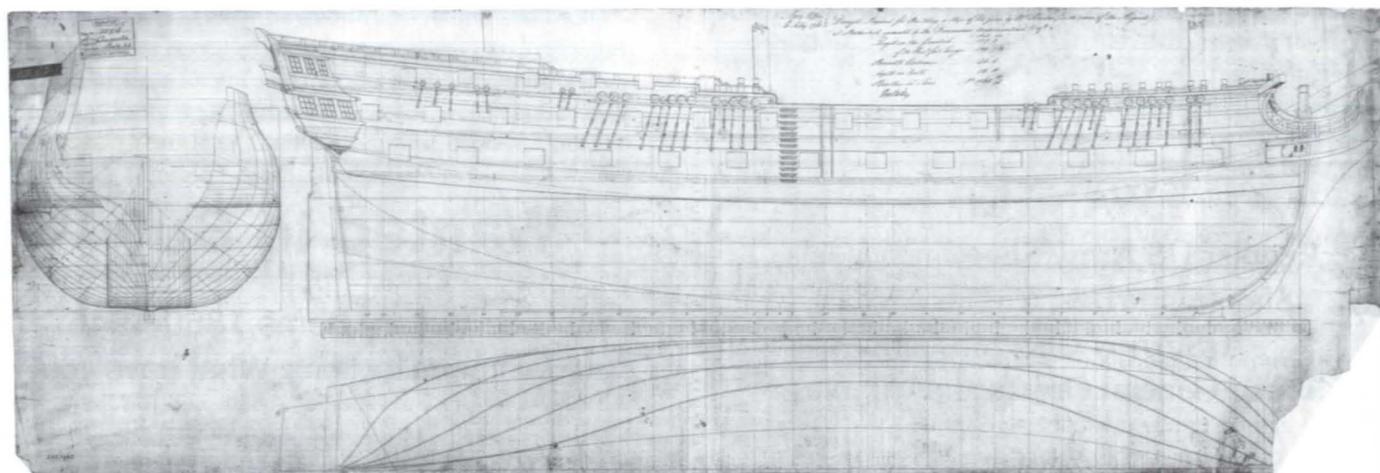


FIG 1. One of the set of 1761 draughts for *Augusta*, showing the body plan (left), sheer plan (right) and longitudinal half-breadth plan (bottom). National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

FIG 2a. This hand-drawn map shows the defenses and naval actions on the Delaware River in late 1777. In 1778, William Faden of London printed an engraving (a copy of which is also in the Library of Congress) based on this drawing, titled "The Course of the Delaware River from Philadelphia to Chester, Exhibiting the several Works erected by the Rebels to defend its Passage, with the Attacks made upon them by His Majesty's Land & Sea Forces." Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, Gm71000679.

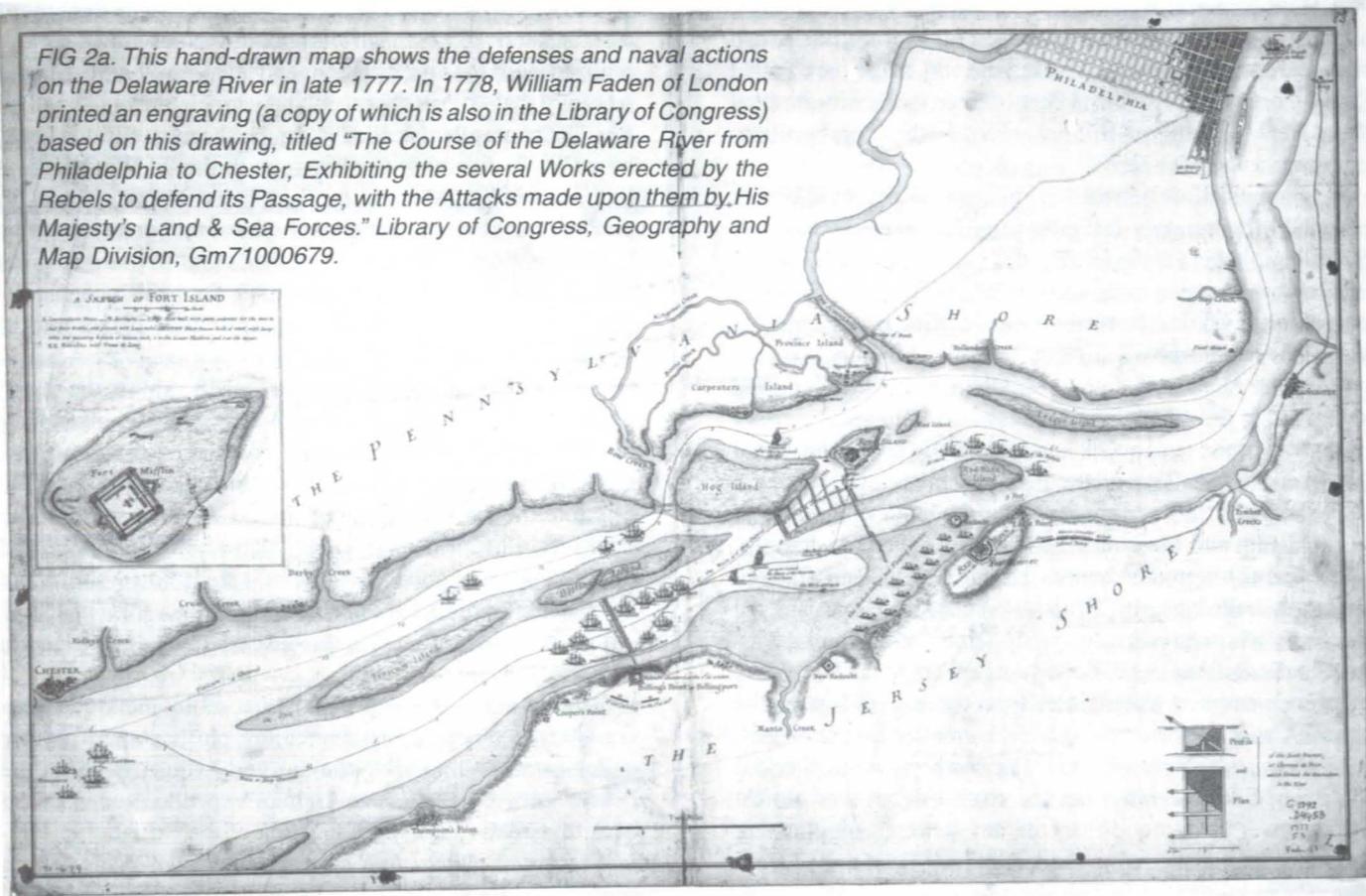


FIG 2b. This detail of the Faden map shows Fort Mifflin (top), Fort Mercer (right), various American defenses, and the courses (in red) and wrecks of Augustus and Merlin (center). Interestingly, the artist included a line between a battery near Fort Mifflin and Augustus wreck, suggesting he attributed the sinking to a shot fired from the fort. Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, Gm71000679.

ther complicated British occupation. In order to bring naval support to the city and supply the occupying army, the British first had to reduce three forts downriver, those they called "Mud Fort" (Fort Mifflin), Fort Mercer (sometimes called "Red Bank"), and Fort Billings, along with several artillery emplacements (FIG 2a-b).

Communication between British naval and land forces remained frustratingly difficult, resulting in confusion over the order in which these fortifications should be attacked. On 22 October, Hessian troops advanced on Fort Mercer just as part of the naval fleet headed for Fort Mifflin, on the opposite side of the river.<sup>9</sup> Aboard *Augusta*, however, Captain Reynolds noticed the increasing signs of battle near Fort Mercer and sent word to the other ships of his squadron to move upriver in support of the land attack and to draw the fire of the armed American row galleys of the Pennsylvania Navy.<sup>10</sup> Around 1800, however, just as *Augusta* came into range of the guns of Forts Mifflin and Mercer, she suddenly lurched to a halt.<sup>11</sup>

Realizing his predicament as the ship ran aground, Captain Reynolds hailed nearby British vessels, the *Pearl* and the *Roebuck*, whose crews attempted to use anchors and cables to refloat *Augusta*.<sup>12</sup> As darkness descended on the Delaware, other men emptied water stores from the hold to lighten the ship.<sup>13</sup> A short distance downriver, a smaller British vessel, *Merlin*, was also aground. A strong northerly wind checked the rising tide, meaning that the river's depth was almost a foot lower at its flood than the day before, complicating the refloating of the two stranded ships.<sup>14</sup> Boat crews from *Augusta* and the other British ships spent a long night struggling to free them, while transports came upriver to remove excess weight.<sup>15</sup>

As the sun rose on 23 October, the gun crews in the American forts and their compatriots aboard various armed galleys realized *Augusta*'s predicament and let loose a bombardment so heavy that, to one observer "the very elements seemed on fire."<sup>16</sup> Thomas Paine called it "by far the most furious I ever heard."<sup>17</sup> To Jeremiah Greenman with the 2d Rhode Island Regiment in Fort Mercer "the Spectacle was magnificent, to see at once, the river covered with Ships, four great fire ships, in a blaze, floating on the Water/the Island & Main covered with Smoak & fire."<sup>18</sup> Likewise, to Greenman's compatriot, Sgt. John Smith of the 1st Rhode Island "the River seemd all on fire the Whole Day,"<sup>19</sup> Despite this barrage, Vice Admiral Howe maintained "the injury was inconsiderable to the ships" and praised the boat crews who helped fend off four incendiary fire ships sent downriver in an attempt to engulf *Augusta*.<sup>20</sup>

Contemporaries and later historians debated the precise origin of the fire that appeared aboard *Augusta* shortly after 1000. An oft-repeated American claim holds it was caused by a red-hot cannonball ("hot shot") from Fort Mifflin, but no contemporary British account substantiates this.<sup>21</sup> The few writers who speculated as to its cause concluded (with Howe) it was in "no otherway connected with the Circumstances of the Action but as it was probably caused by the Wads from her Guns."<sup>22</sup> *Augusta* maintained fire on the American row galleys, and it is possible the northerly wind "fresh on the Beam," according to Reynolds, blew expended gun wadding back toward the ship.<sup>23</sup> The logbook of the British ship *Vigilant* recorded, "*Augusta* took fire by her own Wads getting amongst the Hammacoes, which could not be extinguished."<sup>24</sup> Ambrose Serle, Vice Admiral Howe's secretary, was even more specific, writing *Augusta* "caught Fire upon the Poop

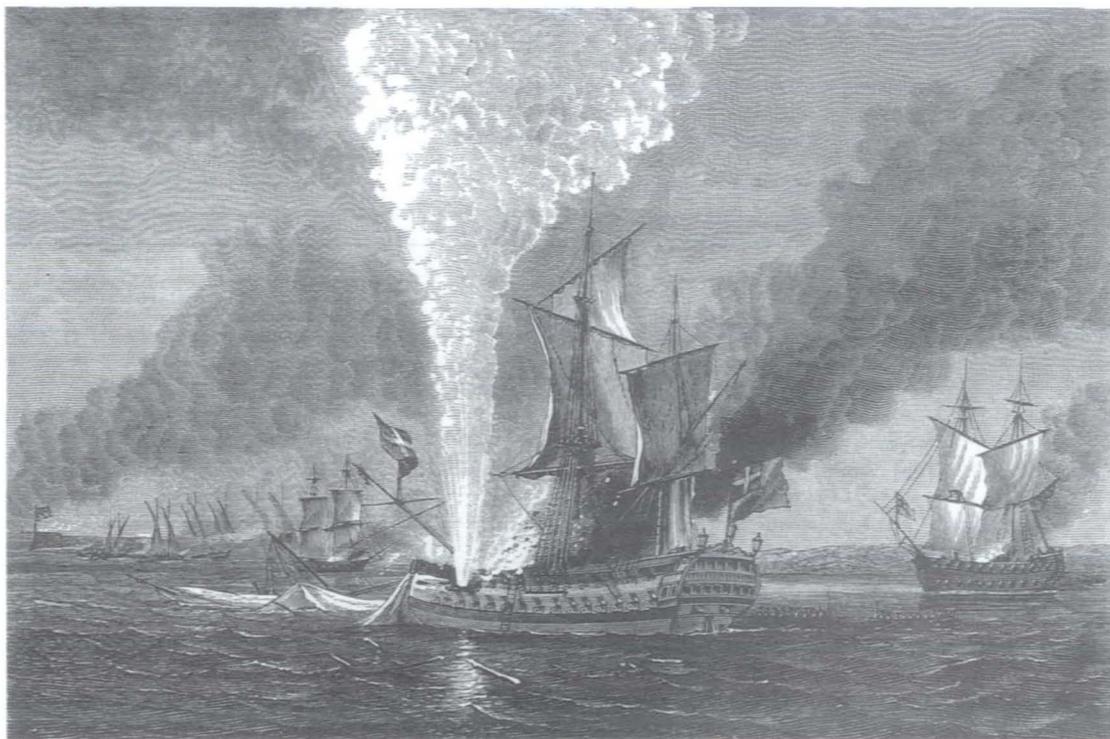


FIG 3. "The Destruction of *Augusta*," engraving after painting, Justin Winsor, Narrative and Critical History of America, Volume 6 (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1887), 388.

by a marine firing into a Hammock, wch, being unperceived, communicated to the Shrouds, & from thence to other Parts past all Prevention."<sup>25</sup> Such speculation remained limited, however, and even the later court martial of Captain Reynolds included only a passing reference by one witness to the possibility of gun wads as the fire source.<sup>26</sup>

Whatever ignited the fire, Captain Reynolds was standing on the quarter deck shortly after 1000 when, he recalled, he "heard an odd Crackling kind of Noise," and "found the Sides, after-part of the Ship, and above the Cabin all in flames."<sup>27</sup> Aboard the British ship *Somerset*, the logkeeper recorded *Augusta* "took fire on the Poop & Soon was in Flames."<sup>28</sup> The presence of the transport vessels brought up to lighten *Augusta* was fortuitous. When it became apparent the fire was uncontrollable, these vessels and every available ship's boat evacuated most of the crew.<sup>29</sup> As the danger increased, however, panic swept the decks and men began diving from the burning ship.<sup>30</sup> As many as half the crew fled the ship into the water, including Reynolds, who was "in the act of sinking" when Captain Andrew Hamond's barge found him.<sup>31</sup> By this time, *Augusta* was "laying Broadside too aground, and the Flames issuing thro every Port she had," according to patriot Philadelphian William Bradford.<sup>32</sup> A few years after the event, an artist and naval officer named Gasgil depicted what happened next in an evocative if somewhat inaccurate historical painting displayed as part of Charles Willson Peale's Philadelphia Museum and later published as a book illustration (FIG 3).<sup>33</sup>

When the fire reached *Augusta*'s powder magazine, the sound and concussion, what Jeremiah Greenman called a "thundering noise," shocked people miles away.<sup>34</sup> Many struggled to put their sensations into words, comparing it to a variety of natural events. Joseph Plumb Martin, a Continental soldier who had just arrived at Fort Mercer, wrote the blast "seemed to shake the earth to its center, leaving a volume of smoke like a thundercloud."<sup>35</sup> To the citizens of Philadelphia such as Sarah Logan Fisher and Elizabeth Drinker, the concussions produced such a "prodigious noise" that "it appear'd to some like an Earth Quake."<sup>36</sup> The blast shook houses in Trappe, Pennsylvania, twenty-eight miles away, and some citizens of Reading, fifty miles from the blast site, reported feeling the concussion.<sup>37</sup> In Lancaster, Quaker Christopher Marshall "listened and heard a heavy firing from E.S.E., as I apprehended it, to be platoon or broadside firing."<sup>38</sup> Thomas Paine, outside Philadelphia when *Augusta* exploded, stood transfixed "stunned with a report as loud as a peal from a hundred cannon at once; and turning around I saw a thick smoke rising like a pillar, and spreading from the top like a tree."<sup>39</sup> With Washington's army outside Philadelphia, Col. Thomas Hartley "heard a monstrous explosion which shook the neighboring country and a prodigious column of smook rose towards the heaven," and breaking windows startled Postmaster Hugh Smyth.<sup>40</sup>

According to Continental officer Joseph Reed, the American galleys "kept up an incessant fire of grape-shot on the

burning ships and boats which came to [*Augusta*'s] relief."<sup>41</sup> Some of the galleys were so close when *Augusta* exploded that a sailor in one of boats was killed "by the fall of a piece of timber."<sup>42</sup> Another American described being "so near that some of our powder-horns took fire and blew up."<sup>43</sup> Soon after the explosion, the British abandoned their attempts to free the *Merlin*, evacuating and setting fire to the sloop. As *Merlin* "burnt to the water's edge," the remaining British ships moved downriver.<sup>44</sup> While the British transports and various ships' boats evacuated and recovered a substantial portion of *Augusta*'s crew, 2d Lieutenant Baldock, the chaplain, the gunner, and between forty and sixty men either died in the preceding fight, drowned in the waters around the burning ship, or were consumed by the tremendous explosion of the powder magazine.<sup>45</sup>

As the British fleet moved back downriver, the Americans immediately set about salvaging what was left of the two ships, and Commo. John Hazelwood of the Pennsylvania Navy personally led galley crews who "got a great many Jackets, & Breeches, and other Plunder" along with at least two cannon.<sup>46</sup> With these guns bolstering the forts' defenses, General Washington cautiously recommended the removal of other, heavier guns from the threatened Delaware forts as a precautionary measure.<sup>47</sup> A satisfied British Chief Engineer Montrésor reported one of Fort Mercer's *Augusta* guns burst during firing shortly afterwards, killing one American and wounding eight others.<sup>48</sup>

Aboard what was left of *Augusta*, American William Bradford was shocked by the evidence of the ship's chaotic abandonment, finding "among the Rubbish ... a great number of Cloaths, part of their Books, &c ... they seem to have taken nothing with them but what they had on."<sup>49</sup> All these goods tempted the galley crews from their main mission of recovering more of the guns. Washington discouraged those in charge from allowing their crews to expose themselves to enemy fire in such attempts, especially "if their object be only the plunder of Seamen's Chests &ca."<sup>50</sup> Pennsylvania Navy storekeeper Joseph Blewer recorded in his account book some of the plunder, which included the ship's flags, four wagons' worth of sails "Sundry Doctors Instruments," and

1 Uniform [Marine] Coat, 49 Red Coats, 6 Blue Coats, 6 Waistcoats, 164 Jackets, 4 Striped Jackets, 1 pair velvet bretches, 1 pair white bretches, 40 pairs Bretches, 3 Frocks, 44 plain shirts, 6 ruffled shirts, 5 white shirts, 2 check shirts, 22 pairs Drawers, 46 ½ pairs of stockings, (silk, thread, and cotton) 18 pairs Shoes, 2 stocks, 2 cravatts, 1 hat, 1 handkerchief, and 2 walking cains.<sup>51</sup>

The jackets alone included red, blue, green, white, and "linsy" (linen) garments, and were among the clothes sold in Philadelphia shortly afterwards.

Unfortunately for plunder-seeking American sailors and their officers who hoped to salvage more of *Augusta*'s guns, a three-day storm and the renewed presence of the remainder of the British fleet prevented any significant further salvage.<sup>52</sup> Before abandoning the hulk, the Americans threw some of the guns they could not remove into the Delaware.<sup>53</sup> Taking over where their enemies had left off, the British salvaged some ten

FIG 4. "Augusta, 1895 Market St. Gloucester City steamer Fish Hawk in distance," VF-Augusta 15, Gloucester County Historical Society Library, Woodbury, NJ.



cannon, two anchors, a swivel gun, and other ironwork from the wreck.<sup>54</sup> In the first days of November, the Americans worried British boat crews had landed on the wreck in the night to erect a battery on the remains of *Augusta*.<sup>55</sup> In the end, however, it was only lower tides, "which left a greater part of the Wreck naked" that fooled these observers.<sup>56</sup>

Although they took advantage of the materials aboard *Augusta*, the Americans made little use of the ship's destruction

in other forms, largely overlooking the symbolic potential of such a significant, albeit accidental, American victory—the destruction of the largest British warship in the area and, in fact, the largest British ship lost during the Revolution.<sup>57</sup> The Howe brothers, at pains to minimize the disaster, reduced casualty figures in their official reports.<sup>58</sup> Americans, conversely, were wont to inflate British losses. Lt. Col. Adam Hubley, of the 10th Pennsylvania Regiment, believed only three boatloads of men



FIG 5. The remains of *Augusta* on the Glasgow waterfront, 1904. C. Henry Kain, *The Military and Naval Operations on the Delaware in 1777* (Philadelphia: Printed for the City History Society of Philadelphia, 1910), 188.

from both *Augusta* and *Merlin* survived.<sup>59</sup> A panicky British deserter told Commodore Hazelwood that some 150 or 160 men had been lost with *Augusta*.<sup>60</sup> However, in most American circles, the ship's destruction remained a side-note to the greater campaign.<sup>61</sup> The eventual British capture of the entire Delaware River corridor overshadowed *Augusta*'s destruction. Moreover, rumors of a more significant achievement for the American cause, the capitulation of Gen. John Burgoyne's British army at Saratoga, New York, reached Philadelphia the day after *Augusta*'s explosion.<sup>62</sup> As 1777 came to a close, *Augusta* slipped beneath the waves of history.

### The Recovery of *Augusta*

Long after the ship exploded and sank, *Augusta* continued to haunt the Delaware. On 17 December 1793, a shallow loaded with cargo ran "foul of the wreck of *Augusta*, on which she stuck fast and sunk," and in 1803, the brig *Sally* struck the wreck and it was "feared she has been bilged."<sup>63</sup> *Augusta* could also be a blessing disguised as a navigational hazard for men who relied on the river for their livelihoods. In 1820, a surveyor working on the river watched men "whose subsistence depends on that business" raising rust-free eighteen pounder cannon from the wreck for scrap value.<sup>64</sup> By that time a "considerable shoal" covered the hull, rising to only six feet underwater at low tide.<sup>65</sup> Well into the twentieth century, barges dredging that section of the river pumped up cannonballs.<sup>66</sup>

*Augusta*'s brief wartime presence on the Delaware also left an indelible mark on local memory. Over a century later, locals still remembered how the ship's explosion "broke nearly all of the windows in the town" of Essington, just across the river in Pennsylvania.<sup>67</sup> The "Steamboat Hotel" in Chester, Pennsylvania, featured a circular window on its riverside gable end, ostensibly added after *Augusta*'s "commander, in

sheer wantonness, opened fire on the defenseless town" and "shattered the wall" of the building.<sup>68</sup> Just as locals created apocryphal stories about British "wantonness," they distorted other details of the ship's history. Some accounts misconstrued the ship's size (often calling her the "Frigate *Augusta*"), and one tale even claimed she had been sunk "by an American schooner."<sup>69</sup> Many riverside residents believed that *Augusta* contained a significant quantity of coinage "for the especial purpose of paying off the Hessian troops."<sup>70</sup>

Such myths were in the air in 1867, when five local men began planning the recovery of *Augusta*.<sup>71</sup> Her location remained part of the region's memory, but twenty-four feet of sediment and eight feet of water now covered the wreck.<sup>72</sup> After investing two years and \$4,000 in the project, the salvors began their operation in November 1869.<sup>73</sup> A dredging barge removed the bulk of the sediment covering *Augusta*, and divers fed heavy cables under the hull. The crews of ten barges attached these cables to winches placed on beams between the boats.<sup>74</sup> By filling the boats with water, attaching the chains, and then pumping the water out, the crews managed to use their boats' increasing buoyancy to help raise the hull.<sup>75</sup> Slowly, they wrenched remains of *Augusta* from the bed of the Delaware nearly a century after the ship settled there.

Although the salvors' goals beyond the recovery of treasure remained unarticulated, they eventually grounded the wreck nearby, just off Gloucester City, New Jersey. When no Hessian gold materialized, the recovery team hid the hull behind canvas sheeting and charged curious locals a small fee to examine the ship.<sup>76</sup> This sort of showmanship was not unprecedented. Throughout the late nineteenth century, residents of other coastal American areas raised historic ships in similar fashions, sometimes going as far as reconstructing the vessels.<sup>77</sup> But visitation to *Augusta* quickly declined,



FIG 6. "Old Augusta 1929," VF-Augusta 8, Gloucester County Historical Society Library, Woodbury, NJ.

salvors sold a few choice artifacts to collectors and when no local historical organization expressed interest in the hulk, it was left on the shore, the skeletal remains exposed every day at low tide

By 1875, when members of the Centennial Commission visited the wreck to determine the feasibility of moving it to the Exhibition grounds in Philadelphia's Fairmont Park, *Augusta* was derelict and reduced to "her beams and planking" (FIGS 4-5).<sup>78</sup> The ship never made it to the Centennial Exhibition, but a bayonet and musket lock from the wreck attracted the attention of visitors to the Pennsylvania building at the Chicago Columbian Exhibition of 1893.<sup>79</sup> By 1905, when the Gloucester Historical Society considered moving the hull to the grounds of the nearby Whitall Mansion, *Augusta* was being "gradually carried away by relic hunters."<sup>80</sup> The historical society never attempted any movement, but did continue to host periodical viewings of the remains in place.<sup>81</sup> Enthusiastic residents fired a cannon recovered from the ship at city events until 1910, when it exploded during a ceremony.<sup>82</sup> Local historians occasionally discussed the ship, but in general no one had the money or the time to deal with an old shipwreck. In 1929, Gloucester City installed a new concrete embankment that ran directly over the hull, burying the forward half of the ship (FIGS 6-7). What was left of the aft section of *Augusta* remained visible at least until the 1960s at low tide (FIG 8).<sup>83</sup>

### The Material Culture of *Augusta*

Before abandoning *Augusta*, the 1869 salvors scoured the hull for any interesting artifacts. Hopefulness turned to resignation as no Hessian gold appeared among the timbers. Nevertheless, *Augusta* offered up a few fascinating artifacts. These included a group of silver spoons marked with "a coat of arms consisting of an ancient-shaped cross" and "H.W., 1748," "a pair of curling tongs," "an old English bulls-eye watch," English and Spanish coins, three cannon, "a small signal gun," muskets and bayonets melted "by the heat of the powder exploding," "a portion of a tallow candle in a triangular shaped copper lantern," "copper buttons bearing the device of an anchor and cable," 60 tons of cannon balls, and 100 tons of "kentledge" pig iron ballast marked with broad arrow of the British government.<sup>84</sup> A particularly unique artifact was a one-by-three-inch strip of copper on which was stamped the Lord's Prayer and "David Pyeth, Delt. And Cult., Edinburgh, March, 1774."<sup>85</sup> Three human skulls, one "remarkable for its thickness," and numerous other bones testified to the human loss aboard *Augusta*.<sup>86</sup> A sextant recovered from the ship seemed "in almost perfect condition," and a piece of caulking included "hair instead of oakum."<sup>87</sup> One of the salvagers later told a local historian that "the strangest 'find'... was a firkin of butter."<sup>88</sup>

These artifacts of *Augusta* began to scatter to the winds almost as soon as the hull broke the surface of the Delaware.



FIG 7: "Billy" Thompson's Home. Gloucester City, New Jersey. Some remains of the ship *Augusta*, which can be seen at low tide, lie on the beach of the Delaware River. Probably taken about 1900.<sup>84</sup>VF-Augusta16, Gloucester County Historical Society Library, Woodbury, NJ. This photo was actually taken some time after the installation of the retention wall in 1929.



FIG 8. The approximate location of *Augusta*'s final resting place today, Gloucester City, NJ. The author was not able to discern any evidence of the hull among the rocks and pier timbers shown here at low tide. Photograph by the author, 2012.

One reporter for the *Philadelphia Day* invited readers to visit his office and view a musket lock he procured "which, considering the length of time it has been under the water, is in a fair state of preservation."<sup>89</sup> A piece of caulking attracted attention when it arrived in Portland, Maine, in the winter of 1870.<sup>90</sup> Many museums received these pieces of *Augusta*'s story.<sup>91</sup> The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, for instance, occasionally exhibited *Augusta* relics; in one such show, meant to entertain World War I servicemen stationed in the city, they displayed a "plate of safe, key and bayonet" from the wreck alongside many other historical objects.<sup>92</sup> In 1884, a "sub-marine diver" presented Post 7 of the Pennsylvania Grand Army of the Republic with a cannonball from *Augusta*.<sup>93</sup>

Individuals appropriated other artifacts. One Civil War veteran returned to his home in Los Angeles, California, in 1902, with a small piece of the hull.<sup>94</sup> Anyone could own a part of *Augusta* for a price; in 1906, a Philadelphia man offered 170 of the ship's cannonballs, weighing 18 and 22 pounds each, for sale.<sup>95</sup> The distribution of *Augusta*'s remains continued until at least 1972, when a donor presented a shovel and cannonball from the wreck to the Fort Mifflin historic site at its fourth annual opening.<sup>96</sup>

The greatest artifact was *Augusta* herself, and long after 1867 the ship attracted souvenir hunters with, as one newspaper put it, its "Irish oak ... pronounced as good as when

put together."<sup>97</sup> Many visitors scavenged fragments of the hull and those who could not visit themselves might write to the *Philadelphia Record* and receive a labeled block of the ship's wood (FIG 9).<sup>98</sup> Often, people and institutions coveted and displayed these fragments alongside other relics of



FIG 9. A souvenir fragment of *Augusta*. Copyright Christian C. Sanderson Museum, Chadds Ford, PA.



FIG 10. Augusta souvenir objects, Gloucester County Historical Society, Woodbury, NJ. Gavel made for Charles W. Early, Master of Forest Grove Lodge, Free & Accepted Masons; small cup; cross; and cane, 34.75" long.

FIG 11. Furniture made from Augusta wood by Morgan Colt of New Hope, PA, around 1915 for Sybil Jones Tatum. Gloucester County Historical Society, Woodbury, NJ.



American history. In 1878, for instance, journalist William H. Cunnington donated a fragment of the hull to the “National Museum” at Independence Hall along with a bullet extracted from Perry’s recently raised Lake Erie flagship *Lawrence*.<sup>99</sup> Relics from other historic American ships proliferated in this same period, as eager collectors gathered fragments of and souvenirs made from pieces of other nineteenth-century ships like the *Lawrence*, *Constitution*, *Niagara*, and various Civil War vessels.<sup>100</sup>

Rather than simply taking souvenir fragments, however, some local craftsmen used *Augusta* wood to create new keepsakes (FIGs 10–11). One local made a book from the ship’s wood and presented two neighborhood policemen with clubs turned from the dried timbers.<sup>101</sup> Another carved an *Augusta* wood gavel for fraternal lodge use and read a history of the ship to the Patriotic Order Sons of America in 1913.<sup>102</sup> Local civic commissions mounted Revolutionary War cannon on carriages “made from one of the ribs of the old warship” and displayed them in Camden and Gloucester City.<sup>103</sup> Some of the reused *Augusta* wood traveled well beyond New Jersey. In 1919, the Massachusetts Historical Society accessioned a box made from the ship’s wood donated by the daughter of naval officer Rear Adm. George Henry Preble.<sup>104</sup> In a rather ironic twist, the British National Maritime Museum holds in its collections a cross and two gavels made from fragments of the ship.<sup>105</sup>

The most ambitious undertaking involving *Augusta* fragments was the construction of an entire room in the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.) Memorial Continental Hall in Washington, D.C., which contained dedicated spaces for each member state (FIG 12). Between 1905 and 1910, Ellen Matlock, recent organizer of a chapter in New Jersey, oversaw the installation of the state’s room, paneled and furnished using *Augusta* timbers.<sup>106</sup> Henry Lysholm of the New York Shipbuilding Company (Camden) organized parties of men and horses to help dismantle large sections of the wreck at low tide.<sup>107</sup> It took two years to dry the wood and find a local sawmill willing to risk machinery damage or worker injury from the metal still embedded in the timbers.<sup>108</sup> The oak “darkened by the tides and time” according to one report, remained so hard that “it almost turns the edges of steel tools.”<sup>109</sup> Some of the furniture, made in the “Jacobin” style, stood on display in Trenton before installation along with paneling in Washington.<sup>110</sup> After the construction of the D.A.R. room, New Jersey members used *Augusta* souvenirs as gifts, like a gavel presented to the Boise, Idaho, D.A.R. chapter in 1909.<sup>111</sup> When President William Taft addressed the organization’s national convention of 1910, the New Jersey representative presented him with a chair made from *Augusta* wood.<sup>112</sup> Through such rituals, *Augusta* took on new meanings, and its relics helped solidify civic and social bonds long after the ship’s demise.



FIG 12. The New Jersey Room in the D.A.R. Memorial Continental Hall, Washington, DC. Photograph courtesy the Daughters of the American Revolution Museum, Washington, DC.

Just as *Augusta's* fate had become the stuff of legend, her salvage was eventually shrouded in mystery. One newspaper reported the New Jersey D.A.R. gathered wood for its furniture from a still-sunken wreck as "the timbers were gradually displaced and some rose to the surface."<sup>113</sup> Local and national reports began to mistake the date of the ship's recovery, in one case given as late as 1906.<sup>114</sup> The ever more fragmentary remains languished on Gloucester City's waterfront, attracting speculation and stories, like one told in 1909 of a storm-tossed pleasure boat that made for a mysterious light on the New Jersey shore and ran aground squarely "between two of the giant ribs of the hulk."<sup>115</sup> In the end, the meaning and significance of *Augusta* relics and stories had less to do with historical events than with patriotic fervor and local mythmaking.

The gavels, canes, crosses, cups, and furniture made from *Augusta* often embodied local pride more than they commemorated an American war victory. In other cases, the fabric of the ship, recycled for patriotic purposes, became imbued with new myths and meanings. In "Numinous Objects," an article published in *The Public Historian*, Rachel P. Maines and James J. Glynn examine the *numen*, or evocative, spiritual qualities of artifacts associated with historical events which emotionally embody "memory and physical connection to the past."<sup>116</sup> In the case of *Augusta*, those who treasured relics of the ship imbued their artifacts with an increasingly fictional *numen*. Men and women valued pieces of *Augusta* without knowing much at all about the ship's actual history. They did not save these fragments because they were pieces of a great American victory or in an effort to make sense of a traumatic event, even though *Augusta* and its destruction were both of these things. The men who raised *Augusta* were looking for Hessian gold. Some who paid admission to see the hull believed they were looking at a frigate sunk by American gunners. The people who cut off pieces of the hull and carried them across the country had little or no personal connection with New Jersey or the Revolution. For many, the pieces of *Augusta* were not talismans of a single, relatively minor, historical event. These artifacts were fragments of the entire Revolution, relics of America, and, indeed, American history itself. Their connotations expanded well beyond the actual history and historical significance of *Augusta*. And yet, lurking beneath these new meanings resides a less spiritual history, the story of an accidental fire, an explosion, and a salvage operation. Each relic of *Augusta* carries these multiple histories, but they are accessible only when we combine the artifacts and their stories with an older historical record. No single interpretation of their meaning is most accurate, because each is associated with specific aspects of a complex history. Whether we believe that a small piece of wood came from a ship-of-the-line that caught fire in 1777 and was raised in 1869 or from a British frigate sunk in battle with an American schooner and recovered in 1906, each object has many stories to tell. The story of *Augusta*, like its artifacts, is "darkened by tides and time." Its artifacts speak about 1777, 1869, and 1909 with equal fluency, but they are most eloquent when

we see all three of *Augusta's* lives, warship, shipwreck, and relic, with equal clarity.

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### Notes

1. *Augusta* measured 159 feet in length: Rif Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail 1714–1792* (Saint Paul, MN: MBI Publishing Company, 2007), 99. The abbreviation "HMS" did not come into common usage until after the Revolutionary War: "Frequently Asked Questions of the Sailing Navy Gallery," National Museum of the Royal Navy (Portsmouth), [http://www.royalnavalmuseum.org/visit\\_see\\_sailfaq.htm](http://www.royalnavalmuseum.org/visit_see_sailfaq.htm), accessed 16 August 2012. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the ship became "the Frigate *Augusta*" in several accounts, although she was significantly larger than the frigates of her day.
2. *Augusta* and her sister ship *Saint Albans* were ordered on 1 January 1761: Winfield, *British Warships*, 99. Reynolds later became Lord Ducie when he inherited a peerage: William S. Stryker, *The Forts on the Delaware in the Revolutionary War* (Trenton, NJ: the John L. Murphy Publishing Co., 1901), 25. Another notable member of *Augusta's* crew was Lt. Edward Edwards who would go on to command HMS *Pandora* as it searched for the mutineers of HM Armed Ship *Bounty* in 1790–91. Edwards testified at Reynolds' court martial (cited below). See also "The Last of the *Pandoras*," *United Services Magazine*, 3, (September 1842): 2.
3. John Montrésor noted on 1 August the first action of the campaign commenced when boat crews, perhaps from *Augusta*, drove off an American privateer attempting to capture one of the horse transports: G. D. Scull, ed., "Journal of Captain John Montrésor, July 1, 1777, to July 1, 1778, Chief Engineer of the British Army," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 5, no. 4 (1881): 398–399.
4. Montrésor, 15 August 1777, in *ibid.*, 405.
5. Montrésor, 19–22 August 1777, in *ibid.*, 407–408.
6. Montrésor, 20 August 1777, in *ibid.*, 408.
7. Admiral Howe attributed the later groundings of *Merlin* and *Augusta* to "the Change in the natural Course of the River caused by the Obstructions, appearing to have altered the Channel," Vice Admiral Viscount Howe to Philip Stephens, 25 October 1777, in Michael J. Crawford, ed., *Naval Documents of the American Revolution Volume 10* (Washington, DC: Naval Historical Center, 1996), 292.
8. John André, 27 September 1777, in *Major John André's Journal* (Tarrytown, NY: William Abbatt, 1930), 53. The event is recounted in detail in Samuel Stelle Smith, *Fight for the Delaware 1777* (Monmouth Beach, NJ: Philip Freneau Press, 1970), 7.
9. Journals of HMS *Camilla* and HM Armed Ship *Vigilant*, 22 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 239. Admiral Howe explained both *Augusta* and *Merlin* grounded between the first and second lines of chevaux de frise: Vice Admiral Viscount Howe to Philip Stephens, 25 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 292. In the confused aftermath of the accidents, it was unclear to some, like Lt. Col. Francis Downman of the Royal Artillery, whether *Augusta* had been grounded or caught by the chevaux de frise: Francis Downman, 22–23 October 1777, in F. A. Whinyates, ed., *The Services of Lieut.-Colonel Francis Downman, R.A.* (Woolwich, UK: Printed at the Royal Artillery Institution, 1898), 44.
10. *Court-martial of Capt. Francis Reynolds, R.N.*, 26 November 1777, in

- Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 603. A detailed analysis of the Pennsylvania Navy and the events on the Delaware during this period is John W. Jackson, *The Pennsylvania Navy, 1775–1781* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1974).
11. The precise time of *Augusta*'s grounding was recorded as 1800 and 2000 in the logs of other ships: see logs of HM Armed Schooner *Viper*, HMS *Pearl*, and HM Armed Ship *Vigilant*, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 235, 240. It was certainly getting dark, as the Americans did not notice *Augusta*'s predicament until the following morning. Accounts that *Augusta* was only five hundred yards from Fort Mercer are likely exaggerated: see "Materials for an Account of the Taking of Fort Mifflin. From the 28th of September, to the 16th of November, 1777," *The United States Magazine* [Philadelphia] (May 1779). This article is unreliable; it misprinted the year of the event and confused the events at Forts Mercer and Mifflin. See also Jeremiah Greenman, 23 October 1777, in Robert C. Bray and Paul E. Bushnell, editors, *Diary of a Common Soldier in the American Revolution, 1775–1783, An Annotated Edition of the Journal of Jeremiah Greenman* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1978), 83.
  12. Journal of HMS *Pearl*, 22 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 240. Master's Journal of HMS *Roebuck*, 23 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 246.
  13. Court-martial of Capt. Francis Reynolds, R.N., 26 November 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 603.
  14. Vice Admiral Viscount Howe to Philip Stephens, 25 October 1777, and Court martial of Comdr. Samuel Reeve, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 292 and 608.
  15. Vice Admiral Viscount Howe to Philip Stephens, 25 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 292.
  16. "Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman, of board the sloop *Speedwell*, dated 11 November 1777," *The New-Jersey Gazette* (Burlington), 5 December 1777, 3. The same phrase (suggesting the author's identity) appears in William Bradford to Thomas Wharton, Jr., 26 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 305.
  17. Thomas Paine to Benjamin Franklin, 16 May 1778, in Philip S. Foner, editor, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine* (New York: The Citadel Press, 1945), 2: 1148.
  18. Jeremiah Greenman, 23 October 1777, in Bray and Bushnell, *Diary of a Common Soldier*, 82.
  19. John Smith, 23 October 1777, "'Thro Mud & Mire Into The Woods': The 1777 Continental Army Diary of Sergeant John Smith, First Rhode Island Regiment," Bob McDonald, transcriber, <http://revwar75.com/library/bob/smith.htm>, accessed 21 August 2013.
  20. Vice Admiral Viscount Howe to Philip Stephens, 25 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 292. Howe's letter was published and became the source for others, such as Charles Stedman, who served with the British and provided a similar account in *The History of the Origin, Progress, and Termination of the American War, Volume I* (London: Printed for the Author, 1794), 303–304. Thomas Sullivan, serving with the British Army in the 49th Foot, recorded a paraphrased version of Howe's report in his "journal,": Joseph Lee Boyle, *From Redcoat to Rebel: The Thomas Sullivan Journal* (Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 2004), 150–151.
  21. For two secondary examples of this claim, see I. P. Strittmatter, *The Importance of the Campaign on the Delaware During the Revolutionary War* (Philadelphia: The Medical Club of Philadelphia, 1932), 12, and John F. Reed, *Campaign to Valley Forge July 1, 1777–December 19, 1777* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965), 302. For contemporary American accounts that recorded the fire was caused or possibly caused by a heated shot or fire raft, see those published in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, including "Extract of a Letter . . ." (264), and the correspondence of Hartley (261), Hazelwood (308), Reed (233), and Fleury (334). Sgt. John Smith of the First Rhode Island Regiment recorded on 23 October 1777 "the Gallies & floating batries Kept a Continul fire & by a hot shot from one of them they set a 64 Gun ship on fire which burnt up & a 20 Gun Ship was Set on fire who was a Ground lest she should fall in[to] our hands," in "Thro Mud & Mire," <http://revwar75.com/library/bob/smith.htm>, accessed 21 August 2013. Smith's fellow Rhode Islander, Jeremiah Greenman, wrote "either by chance or good luck one of these shots set [afire] *Augusta*," 23 October 1777, in Bray and Bushnell, *Diary of a Common Soldier*, 83. Other Americans believed it was an accident, like Henry Lee, who said *Augusta* "took fire from her own carronading," Henry Lee to George Washington, 3 November 1777, in Worthington Chauncey Ford, editor, *The Defences of Philadelphia* (1897; reprint, De Capo Press, New York: 1971), 80. In Lancaster, Christopher Marshall heard that it was a result of American fire rafts, 25 October 1777, in William Duane, editor, *Extracts from the Diary of Christopher Marshall, 1774–1781* (1877; reprint: No Location: Arno Press, Inc., 1969), 139. An apocryphal but notable version appeared in J. Fennimore Cooper, *History of the Navy of the United States of America* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1847), 81, attributing the fire to "pressed hay, which had been secured on the quarter . . . to render her shot-proof."
  22. Vice Admiral Viscount Howe to Philip Stephens, 25 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 292. Francis Reynolds' court martial transcript recorded an essentially prerehearsed series of interrogations, where every witness agreed the fire began at eleven and did not speculate as to its cause. The one exception was Midn. John Reid, whom Reynolds had sent to investigate the crackling noise and who speculated that it might have been caused "by her Wads,": Court martial of Captain Francis Reynolds, November 26, 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 605. Hessian Maj. Carl Baurmeister believed the fire began due "to the careless handling of ammunition," Baurmeister to von Jungkenn, 26 October 1777, in Bernhard A. Uhlendorf and Edna Vosper, eds., *Letters from Major Baurmeister to Colonel von Jungkenn Written During the Philadelphia Campaign 1777–1778* (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1937), 30. Baurmeister mistakenly believed the *Pearl* was the other ship destroyed. John André also believed the fire was accidental: 23 October 1777, in *André's Journal*, 60.
  23. Court martial of Capt. Francis Reynolds, 26 November 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 604.
  24. Journal of HM Armed Ship *Vigilant*, 23 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 251.
  25. Ambrose Serle, 22–23 October 1777, in *The American Journal of Ambrose Serle, Secretary to Lord Howe, 1776–1778*, Edward H. Tatum, Jr., ed., (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1940), 261. Hammocks were typically stored in netting along the ship rails on the upper deck: Nicolas Blake, *Steering to Glory: A Day in the Life of a Ship of the Line* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2005), 71.
  26. Court Martial of Capt. Francis Reynolds, 26 November 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 605. Ed Hertfelder made a variety of factual errors in his effort to prove *Augusta* was ignited by her own wads in "Correcting History and the Record on the Loss of H.M.S. *Augusta*," *The Artilleryman* 25, no. 1 (Winter 2003): [http://artillerymanmagazine.com/Archives/2003/augusta\\_w03.html](http://artillerymanmagazine.com/Archives/2003/augusta_w03.html), accessed 8 May 2012.
  27. Court Martial of Capt. Francis Reynolds, 26 November 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 603. Contemporary statements regarding the precise timing of *Augusta*'s explosion vary from as early as 1100 to as late as 1400, but most agree that the fire began shortly after 1000 and the explosion occurred near 1200. For examples, see the following sources, cited elsewhere: André, 60; Montrésor, (6:1(1882)), 53; Drinker, 248; Muhlenberg, 92; "Extract of a Letter . . ." *The New-Jersey Gazette* (Burlington), 5 December 1777, 3; Journal of Captain Henry Duncan (Royal Navy), 23 October 1777, in John Knox Laughton, ed., *The Naval Miscellany, Volume I* (Published for the Naval Record Society, 1902), 154; and the documents published in Crawford, *Naval Documents*: the correspondence of Blewer (249), Bradford (305), and Hazelwood (308), the court martial of Francis Reynolds (603–607), and the logs of the *Roebuck* (248), *Camilla* (250), *Pearl* (251), *Vigilant* (251), and *Somerset* (254).
  28. Master's Log of HMS *Somerset*, 23 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 254.
  29. Twenty-six of *Augusta*'s crew, for instance, were taken aboard the *Camilla*: Journal of HMS *Camilla*, 23 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 250.
  30. "Many of the seamen jumped overboard apprehending it [the explosion], some were picked up by our ships boats": John Montrésor, 23

- October 1777, in Scull, ed., "Journal," *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, 6, no.1 (1882): 53.
31. "Autobiography of Sir Andrew S. Hamond," in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 1189.
  32. William Bradford to Thomas Wharton, Jr., 26 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 305.
  33. The print of the painting illustrated here was credited to "a French officer": Justin Winsor, *Narrative and Critical History of America* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1887), 388. The original painting is now in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of History at the Atwater Kent. According to two catalogues of Peale's collection, *Catalogue of the National Portrait and Historical Gallery* (Cincinnati: Gazette Company Print., 1852), 24, and *M. Thomas & Sons, Auctioneers, Peale's Museum Gallery of Oil Paintings* (Philadelphia: Wm. Y. Own, Printer, 1854), 14, the painting was executed by Gasgil, described in both catalogs in relation to another painting he executed as "an artist of merit, and a Naval officer," (25, 15). Nicholas B. Wainwright, ed., *Paintings and Miniatures at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1974), 308, adds that "According to James Peale, Jr., it was painted by an English naval officer who was for a time a guest of James Peale." I have been unable to identify Gasgil in any dictionary of contemporary artists or other records.
  34. Jeremiah Greenman, 23 October 1777, in Bray and Bushnell, *Diary of a Common Soldier*, 83.
  35. Joseph Plumb Martin, *Private Yankee Doodle* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1962), 87–88. Martin confused some aspects of the actions near Forts Mercer and Mifflin, including remembering the air as calm on 23 October. Jackson suggests Martin may not have arrived until some days after the *Augusta* explosion (The Pennsylvania Navy, 453), in which case his account was probably based on conversations with others.
  36. "Prodigious noise": Sarah Logan Fisher, 23 October 1777, in Nicholas B. Wainwright and Sarah Logan Fisher, "'A Diary of Trifling Occurrences' Philadelphia, 1777–1778," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 82, no. 4 (Oct. 1958), 453; "It appear'd...": Elizabeth Drinker, 23 October 1777, in Elaine Forman Crane, ed., *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker, Volume I* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 248. An aging Joseph Parker Norris also compared the blast to an earthquake: John F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia, Being a Collection of Memoirs, Anecdotes, and Incidents of the City and Its Inhabitants From the Days of the Pilgrim Founders* (Philadelphia: E. L. Carey & A. Hart / New York: G. & C. & H. Carvill, 1830), 686. Quaker minister John Hunt recorded the "great shock" felt in Morristown, NJ, in his diary (now in the collection of Swarthmore College), quoted in Wallace McGeorge, "The Frigate *Augusta*," *Gloucester County Democrat* (New Jersey), 20 July 1905, clipping in "'Augusta' (History)" file, Gloucester County Historical Society, Woodbury, NJ.
  37. Henry Muhlenberg, 23, 24, and 25 October 1777, in Theodor G. Tappert and John W. Doberstein, trans., *The Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg* (Philadelphia: The Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States and The Muhlenberg Press, 1963), 3: 90–92. Muhlenberg also felt a concussion from the *Merlin's* explosion around 1500. John Fanning Watson's aging correspondents reported hearing the blast in Pottsgrove, PA, and Little Egg Harbor, NJ, both around fifty miles from the site: Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia*, 723.
  38. Christopher Marshall, 23 October 1777, in Duane, *Extracts from the Diary*, 138.
  39. Thomas Paine to Benjamin Franklin, Yorktown, VA, 16 May 1778, in Foner, *Writings of Thomas Paine*, 2: 1148. Note two sources, Reed, *Campaign to Valley Forge*, 303, and Strittmatter, *Importance of the Campaign*, 12, incorrectly extended Paine's quotation with two lines ("The region for leagues around rocked as if riven by an earthquake; windows miles away were broken.") that originally appeared alongside but not within the quotation in John William Wallace, *An Old Philadelphian, Colonel William Bradford, The Patriot Printer of 1776* (Philadelphia: Sherman & Co., Printers, 1884), 187.
  40. Col. Thomas Hartley to Thomas Wharton, Jr., 24 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 261. Hugh Smyth, 25 October 1777, in *Pennsylvania Archives* (Philadelphia: Joseph Severns & Co, 1853), 5: 703–704 (Smyth incorrectly called the ship the *Experiment*).
  41. Joseph Reed to Thomas Wharton, Jr., 27 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 322. Years later, the aging American commander of Fort Mifflin embellished the story: "The men were saved in the boats, except one negro, who dropped from the bowsprit into one of our boats, which had been sent to their assistance. When *Augusta* blew up, a piece from her fell on the negro, and killed him. No other person was hurt—a strange fatality": "The Papers of General Samuel Smith," *The Historical Magazine*, Second Series 7, no. 2 (February 1870): 89.
  42. "Extract of a Letter . . .," *The New-Jersey Gazette* (Burlington), 5 December 1777, 3. American Jeremiah Greenman heard that an officer and several men were wounded by falling timbers, 23 October 1777, in Bray and Bushnell, *Diary of a Common Soldier*; 83.
  43. "Extract of a Letter . . .," *The New-Jersey Gazette* (Burlington), 5 December 1777, 3.
  44. "The Following Account . . .," *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* (Philadelphia), 30 October 1777, 523. A 1911 article mentioned a document in the archives of the treasury department that described the sinking of *Augusta* that I have been unable to locate: "Interesting Papers That Shed Light on Our History," *The Daily Herald* (Biloxi), 12 December 1911, 7.
  45. Capt. John Montrésor heard "the Chaplain, one Lieutenant and 60 men perished in the water.": 23 October 1777. Scull, ed., "Journal," *The Pennsylvania Magazine* 6, no. 1 (1882), 53. Henry Lee told Washington that "1 Lt, chaplain & forty privates perished in the explosion": Henry Lee to George Washington, 3 November 1777, in Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., *The Defences of Philadelphia* (1897; reprint, De Capo Press, New York: 1971), 80. Admiral Howe provided the name of the lieutenant and the fact the gunner also died in Vice Admiral Viscount Howe to Philip Stephens, 25 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 292. The *Camilla* recorded "the Greatest Part of them were Saved Except some sick & Wounded,": Journal of HMS *Camilla*, 23 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 250. British Eng. Archibald Robertson also heard "the Crew [was] saved except some sick and Wounded,," 22 October 1777, in Henry Miller Lydenberg, ed., *Archibald Robertson, Lieutenant-General Royal Engineers, His Diaries and Sketches in America, 1762–1780* (New York: The New York Public Library, 1930), 153. Admiral Howe's secretary Ambrose Serle recorded "a Lieutenant and 40 sick & wounded Seamen perished in the Flames,": 22–23 October 1777, Tatum, *The American Journal*, 261. British Lt. John Stirke, 10th Foot, heard the fire was accidental and that most of the crew was saved: manuscript diary, Morristown National Historical Park Museum & Library blog, <http://morristownnhplibrary.blogspot.com/2012/03/featured-manuscript-stirke-diary.html>, accessed 17 August 2012. *Augusta's* crew was divided among the remaining ships of the British fleet, and a court martial held aboard the *Somerset* acquitted Capt. Francis Reynolds: Capt. Roger Curtis to Capt. William Cornwallis, 27 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 324; Court martial of Capt. Francis Reynolds, 26 November 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 603. He departed for England with dispatches from Vice Admiral Howe and Howe's personal endorsement for service conducted "with peculiar Spirit and propriety": Vice Admiral Viscount Howe to Philip Stephens, 6 December 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 676.
  46. Pennsylvania State Navy Board/Joseph Blewer to Thomas Wharton, Jr., 30 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 359. Congress presented Hazelwood with a sword in honor of his involvement in the battle: Josiah Granville Leach, "Commodore John Hazlewood, Commander of the Pennsylvania Navy in the Revolution," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 26, no. 1 (1902): 4. One letter mistakenly recorded the capture of twenty-seven cannon: George Washington to Daniel Clymer, Deputy Commissary General, 27 October 1777, in *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources 1745–1799*, John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., (Washington: United States GPO, 1933), 9: 448.
  47. George Washington to Brig. Gen. James Varnum, 31 October 1777, in Fitzpatrick, *Writings of George Washington*, Volume 9, 472–473.
  48. Montrésor, 11 November 1777, Scull, ed., "Journal," *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, 6, no. 1 (1882): 57.
  49. William Bradford to Thomas Wharton, Jr., 26 October 1777, in Crawford,

- Naval Documents*, 305.
50. George Washington to Brig. Gen. David Forman, 31 October 1777, in Fitzpatrick, *Writings of George Washington*, 9: 474.
  51. Wallace McGeorge, "The Frigate *Augusta*," Gloucester County Democrat, New Jersey, July 20, 1905, clipping in "'Augusta' (History)" file, Gloucester County Historical Society, Woodbury, NJ. McGeorge examined and quoted Blewer's account book, which also included notes about the sale of garments, and which was then in the collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The Society has no record of this document, and according to Jackson, it was "lost" sometime around the turn of the century. *The Pennsylvania Navy*, 202–203.
  52. "Extract of a Letter...." *The New-Jersey Gazette* (Burlington), 5 December 1777, 3. "The Rebels here had many men upon the wrecks this Evening but from the Size of their Boats, I do not apprehend, they have got any thing of Consequence out of them": Capt. William Cornwallis to Vice Admiral Viscount Howe, 25 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 286. The logs of *Pearl* and *Zebra* recorded firing on galley crews attempting to salvage the wreck on the morning of 25 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 287. As late as 9 November, galleys *Isis* and *Cornwallis* were defending the wreck from an American boat crew: Journal of HM Sloop *Zebra*, 9 November 1777, in Crawford, 449. Admiral Howe mentioned the "Booms of *Augusta*" then on Tincicum Island "may be Employ'd in the meantime as a fence before the advanced Ship, but they should ultimately be preserved for farther Use.": Vice Admiral Viscount Howe to Capt. William Cornwallis, 23 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 255. Cornwallis replied that *Augusta*'s "booms are I believe perfectly secure as they are upon the [Tincicum] Island nearly abreast of the *Camilla*": Capt. William Cornwallis to Vice Admiral Viscount Howe, 24 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 265. This correspondence refers to the wooden poles used to defend against fire ships: William Burney, ed., *Falconer's New Universal Dictionary of the Marine* (1815, repr; Chatham Press, London, UK: 2006), 51. I am grateful to Matthew Brenckle, Charles Fithian, and James Kochan for their insights into this use of the term.
  53. Maj. Francois de Fleury, serving with the Americans, suspected in early November the British were attempting to salvage the ship or "the Cannon which the Galleys had neglected throwing into the water, or taking possession of.": Fleury Journal, 3 November 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 385.
  54. Capt. John Linzee to Capt. William Cornwallis and Cornwallis to Linzee, 1 November 1777 (370); Journal of HMS *Pearl*, 3 November 1777 (386); and Journal of HMS *Liverpool*, 3 December 1777 (659); in Crawford, *Naval Documents*. *Merlin* may have been encountered during river dredging in 1941, although this was never confirmed (and the rumors of millions of dollars in gold proved equally fallacious). See newspaper clippings, "Ships (Misc.)" and "Shipwrecks" files, Gloucester County Historical Society Library, Woodbury, NJ.
  55. No mention of such activity is recorded in British sources. Fleury thought the battery was evident on the morning of 3 November: Fleury Journal, 3 November 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 385. The same day, Samuel Smith wrote to Washington notifying the general of this development: Lt. Col. Samuel Smith to George Washington, 3 November 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 385.
  56. Lt. Col. Samuel Smith to George Washington, 4 November 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 396.
  57. Winfield, *British Warships*, 98.
  58. General Howe told Lord George Germaine, "I do not hear there was any lives lost" in "Copy of a Letter from General Sir William Howe, to Lord George Germaine, dated Philadelphia, 25th October, 1777," *The Royal Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia), 3 March 1778: 4. Vice-Admiral Howe believed it was "a very small number.": Vice Admiral Viscount Howe to Philip Stephens, 25 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 292. A week after *Augusta*'s loss, a loyalist newspaper in Philadelphia reported that "by some unlucky accident, she took fire, and finding every effort to extinguish it in vain, all on board left her, and a little while after she blew up.": "The Following Account...." *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* (Philadelphia), 30 October 1777, 522.
  59. Adam Hubley to \_\_\_\_\_, 24 October 1777, Samuel Hazard, ed., *Pennsylvania Archives* (Philadelphia: Joseph Severns & Co., 1853), 5: 698.
  60. Commo. John Hazelwood to Thomas Wharton, Jr., 29 October 1777, in Crawford, *Naval Documents*, 344.
  61. Washington mentioned the event in a number of his correspondences, including a letter to New York Governor George Clinton on 25 October 1777, in which he confused the fates of the two ships, attributing *Augusta*'s destruction to intentional scuttling and the *Merlin*'s to accident. Fitzpatrick, *Writings of George Washington*, 9: 430.
  62. Ambrose Serle, 24–25 October 1777, Tatum, *The American Journal*, 261.
  63. "On Tuesday last...." *The Gazette of the United States* (Philadelphia), 19 December 1793: 3.
  64. "Changes in the River Delaware," *The Pennsylvania Register* (Philadelphia), 26 April 1828: 258. In 1884, fifteen years after *Augusta* was raised, three iron cannons were recovered for scrap: "Recovered after 100 years," *Gloucester Co. Democrat* (New Jersey), 12 June 1884, clipping in "'Augusta' (History)" file, Gloucester County Historical Society, Woodbury, NJ.
  65. "Changes in the River Delaware," *The Pennsylvania Register* (Philadelphia), 26 April 1828.
  66. Frank H. Stewart, *History of the Battle of Red Bank*, microfilm copy, University of Delaware Library (Woodbury, NJ: Board of Chosen Freeholders of Gloucester County, 1927), 16.
  67. Frank H. Taylor, "The New Cycling Track," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 March 1896.
  68. "Inn Torn Down," *The Macon Daily Telegraph* (New Jersey), 27 January 1918.
  69. The editor of the *Boston Daily Advertiser* explained the "42 gun frigate" was "acting as a store ship and was bringing supplies and money to the British soldiers"; "New England News," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 3 February 1870, 2. According to a Colorado newspaper, *Augusta* was "sunk in the Red Bank River ... by an American schooner.": "Bitter Struggle for Control of D.A.R. in Prospect at Convention Which Opens in National Capital Today," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 17 April 1911.
  70. C. Henry Kain, *The Military and Naval Operations on the Delaware in 1777* (Philadelphia: Printed for the City History Society of Philadelphia, 1910), 188.
  71. "A Relic of the Revolution Raised from the Bed of the Delaware," *Daily State Gazette* (Trenton), 15 November 1869. Several later accounts mentioned the "American Dredging Company," but I have located no contemporary record which documents this company's involvement. See Wallace McGeorge, *The Battle of Red Bank* (Camden: Sinnickson Chew & Sons Co., 1909), 11; and Ellen Matlock to Mrs. Ebert, 19 October 1916, copy of letter, "'Augusta' (History)" file, Gloucester County Historical Society Library, Woodbury, NJ.
  72. "Raising of the British Frigate 'Augusta'—A Visit to the Wreck," *Weekly Patriot* (Harrisburg), 18 November 1869.
  73. "A Relic of the Revolution Raised from the Bed of the Delaware," *Daily State Gazette* (Trenton), 15 November 1869.
  74. "Raising of the British Frigate 'Augusta'—A Visit to the Wreck."
  75. "Revolutionary Reminiscence," *New York Times*, 15 November 1869.
  76. "Raising of the British Frigate 'Augusta'—A Visit to the Wreck."
  77. This area requires further research, but examples of historic ships raised as curiosities include following: the *Sparrow-Hawk* (wrecked in 1626 off Cape Cod, recovered in 1863): *The Ancient Wreck, Loss of the Sparrow-hawk in 1626* (Boston: Alfred Mudge & Son, 1865); the 1812 warships USS *Lawrence* (scuttled in Lake Erie, raised in 1875): NYPL Digital Gallery image, [http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?g91f320\\_017f](http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?g91f320_017f), accessed 31 August 2013, and USS *Niagara* (scuttled in Lake Erie, raised in 1913): George D. Emerson, *The Perry's Victory Centenary* (Albany: J. B. Lyon Company, 1916), 8–9 and W. W. Dobbins, *History of the Battle of Lake Erie* (Erie, PA: Ashby Printing Company, 1913), 152–155; and the Continental gondola *Philadelphia* and several other similar Revolutionary War wrecks in Lake Champlain (raised 1934–1952): John R. Bratten, *The Gondola Philadelphia & the Battle of Lake Champlain* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 74–86. Examples of hulls raised more-or-less intact in recent decades include the *Wasa* (raised in 1961), *Mary Rose* (raised in 1982), H.M. Sloop *DeBraak* (raised in 1986), and various other smaller and more fragmentary wrecks.

