

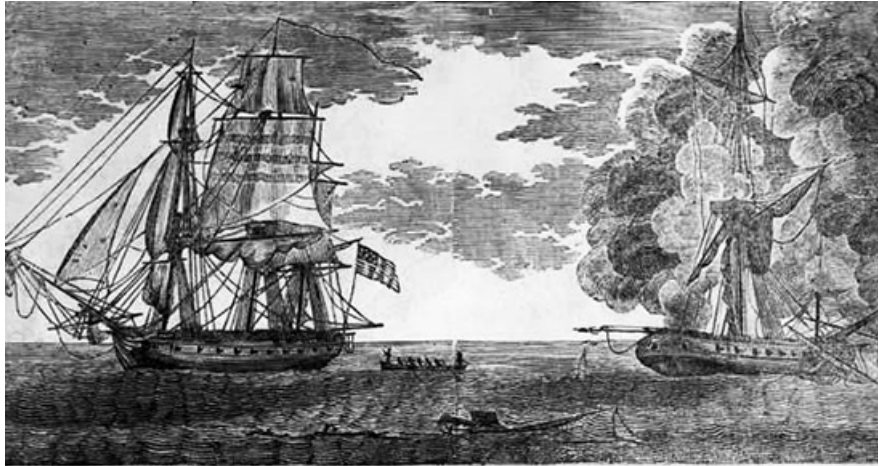
Wasp ^[1]

Wasp

by Jerry L. Cross, 2006

See also: [Blakeley Silver Service](#) ^[2].

The *Wasp* was a [privateer](#) ^[3] commanded by Capt. [Johnston Blakeley](#) ^[4] during the

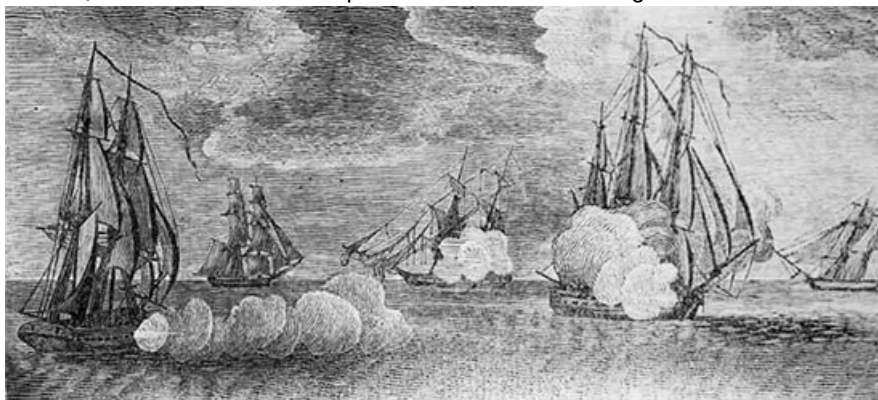


THE WASP AND REINDEER.

An engraving of the *Wasp* and the *Reindeer*. Image from the North Carolina Museum of History.

^[5][War of 1812](#) ^[6]. The sloop was still under construction at Newburyport, Mass., when Blakeley received his appointment on 13 Aug. 1813. He hired a crew of 173 and supervised the completion of the ship, which carried 20 carronades and 2 long 12-pounder guns. The *Wasp* sailed on 1 May 1814 with orders to inflict damage on British shipping on the coast of western Europe and then to conduct a naval campaign against English allies along the Spanish coast, afterward returning to New Orleans. Blakeley's orders were to destroy any captured prizes rather than reduce his crew by returning them to American ports and under no circumstances to engage a British naval fighting ship.

From 1 May to 6 July the *Wasp* destroyed six commercial vessels. One, the [Reindeer](#) ^[7], put up a spirited fight and severely damaged the foremast, rigging, and sail of the *Wasp*. Blakeley limped his wounded ship to the port at L'Orient, France, to rest his men and repair his vessel. On 27 August the



THE WASP AND AVON

An engraving of the *Wasp* and the *Avon*. Image from the North Carolina Museum of History.

^[5]*Wasp* departed for the Spanish coast on the second leg of its mission. Soon Blakeley spotted a convoy of ten merchant ships under the protection of a British 74-gun frigate. With expert seamanship he cut one, the *Mary*, from the line, took his prize, and burned the vessel before the frigate could maneuver into attack position. Blakeley withdrew the *Wasp* to safer waters, but later that afternoon, another brig in the convoy fell well behind the main line. Blakeley engaged the [Avon](#) ^[8] in a 47-minute battle and secured its surrender. But several members of the convoy returned before his crew could board, and the *Wasp* retreated under cover of advancing darkness.

Three weeks later Blakeley and the *Wasp* captured three more prizes: the *Three Brothers*, the *Bacchus*, and the *Atalanta*. As neither a flag nor official papers clearly established the *Atalanta*'s nationality and the captain had no wish to destroy a non-British allied vessel, he sent the brig, commanded by a prize crew of his own men, to Savannah, Ga., where it arrived

on 14 Nov. 1814. Last seen by the Swedish vessel *Adonis* on 9 Oct. 1814, the *Wasp*, with captain and crew, mysteriously disappeared.

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