

Joshua Barney and *Rossie* 6

“I am only sorry my Cruise began so late, or I might have done more injury to the enemy.”



On July 12, 1812, just 23 days after war was declared Joshua Barney put to sea in *Rossie*, with Letter of Marque #1, the first privateer commission issued during the war.

At age 53, Barney was no novice. Born near Baltimore in 1759, he went to sea at age 11 on a Chesapeake pilot boat, and took command of his first ship at 16. He later earned fame as a naval officer and a privateer during the Revolutionary War.

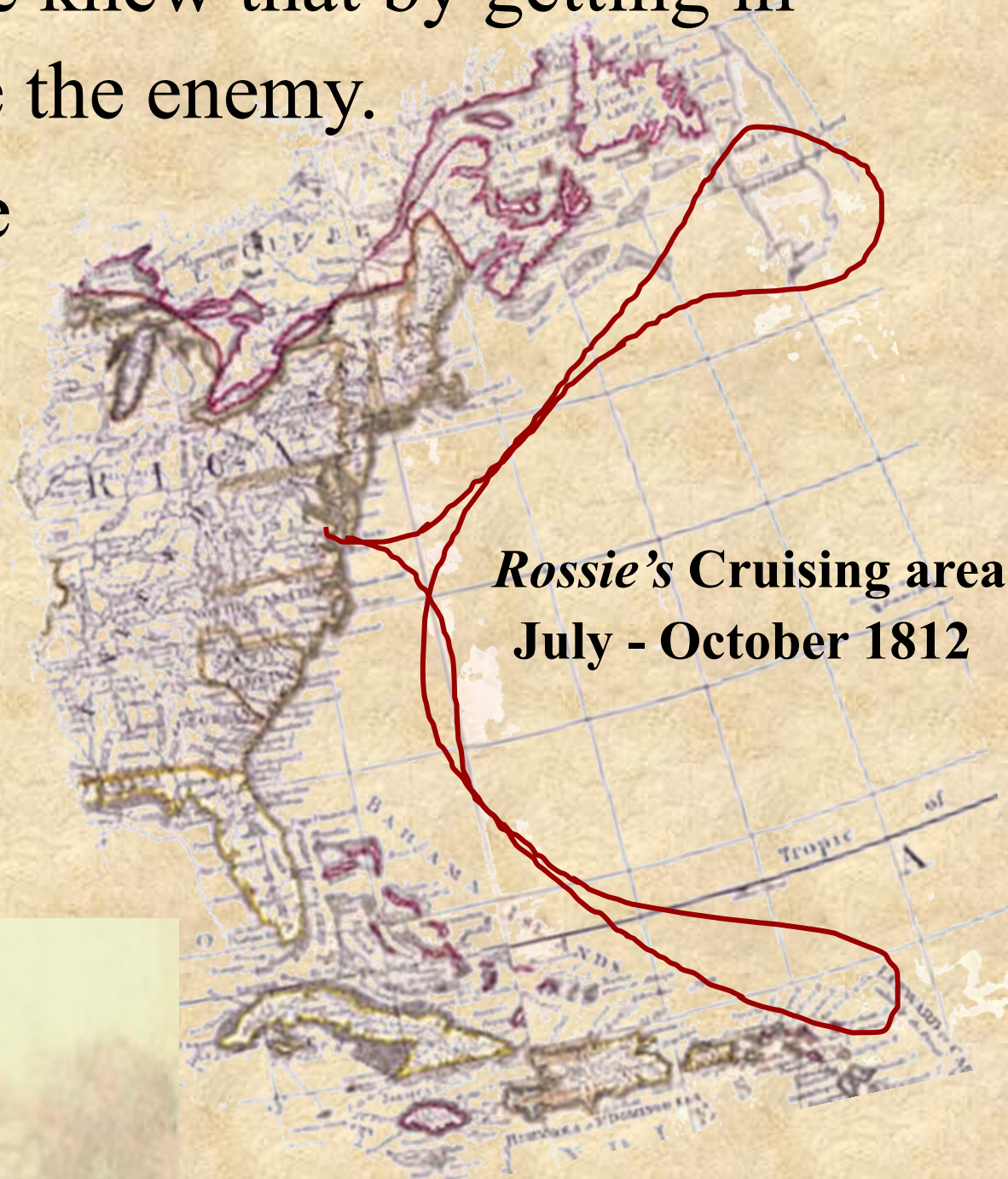


Pilot schooners in Baltimore

Rossie, built in 1807 by Thomas Kemp of Fell's Point was selected by a group of investors and fitted out as a privateer. At 98' long and 206 tons, she was typical of the swift Baltimore pilot schooners that

became popular during and after the Revolution. Being familiar with the type, Barney knew she would be able to outrun any ship she couldn't defeat. Armed with eleven 12 pounder carronades, one "long 9 pounder" and a crew of 100, Barney set out for a three-month cruise. He knew that by getting in on the hunt early, he could surprise the enemy.

Cruising off Newfoundland and the New England coast, by September Barney had taken 15 vessels with an estimated value of \$1,280,000. Nine ships were destroyed; the rest were sent to American ports for Admiralty Court proceedings.



Rossie's Cruising area
July - October 1812



Rossie and *Princess Amelia*, September 16, 1812.

Deciding to shift to a fresh operating area, Barney took *Rossie* south, heading for the West Indies. His luck continued, eluding British cruisers and snapping up a few more prizes. Along way, *Rossie* fought her hardest encounter:

“Sept. 16. Took His Majesty's packet ship Princess Amelia after a severe action of nearly an hour at pistol-shot distance. . . the ship and her boats were cut to pieces, all her rigging gone and sails torn from the yards.”

Rossie took two more prizes before returning to Baltimore on October 22, 1812. In 90 days at sea, Barney cruised from the Grand Banks to the Leeward Islands, and seized or burned 20 vessels and cargoes valued at \$1,500,000. After deducting Admiralty Court fees, shares paid to the crew and other costs, the owners proceeds totaled \$68,174. Barney's shares realized about \$18,195 profit.

Due to the damage from the action with *Princess Amelia* and her age, *Rossie* was in such poor condition that Barney refused a second cruise, feeling she was 'too old and worn out'. She was sold at auction to new owners and sailed as a letter of marque trader until she was captured off the coast of France in January of 1813.

Barney would return to naval service in the spring of 1813, as commander of U.S. Chesapeake Flotilla.

Next: Fast Ships out of Baltimore

