

SAVING ROYAL SAVAGE

SAVING AN IMPORTANT WARSHIP FROM THE EARLIEST DAYS OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY

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IMAGES COURTESY NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

In the murky depths of Lake Champlain, the skeletal remains of the Continental Navy schooner *Royal Savage* rested for over 150 years, a silent witness to the birth of the American Navy.

However, after recovery in 1934 to turbulent years of improper storage, possibly being sold off to the highest bidder, and a governmental act that rescued *Royal Savage's* artifacts, countless hours of preservation, 3D-scans of original timbers, and 1:12 scale models, visitors to the National Museum of the US Navy can see history reimagined.

FLAGSHIP FORGED IN CONFLICT

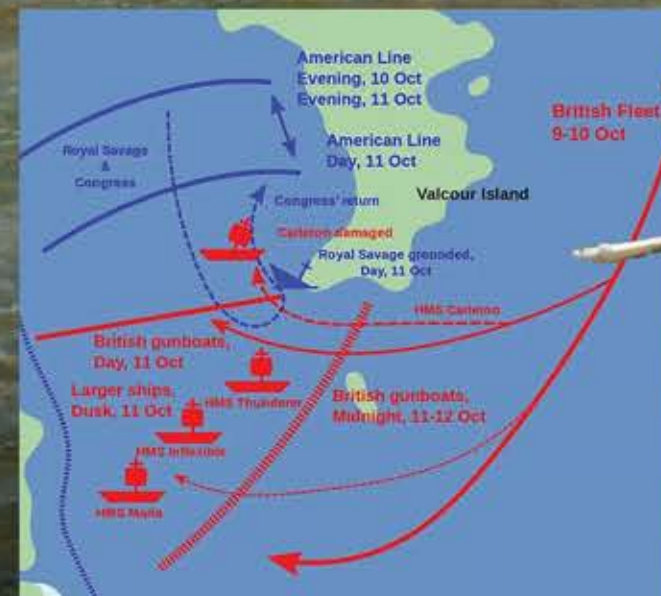
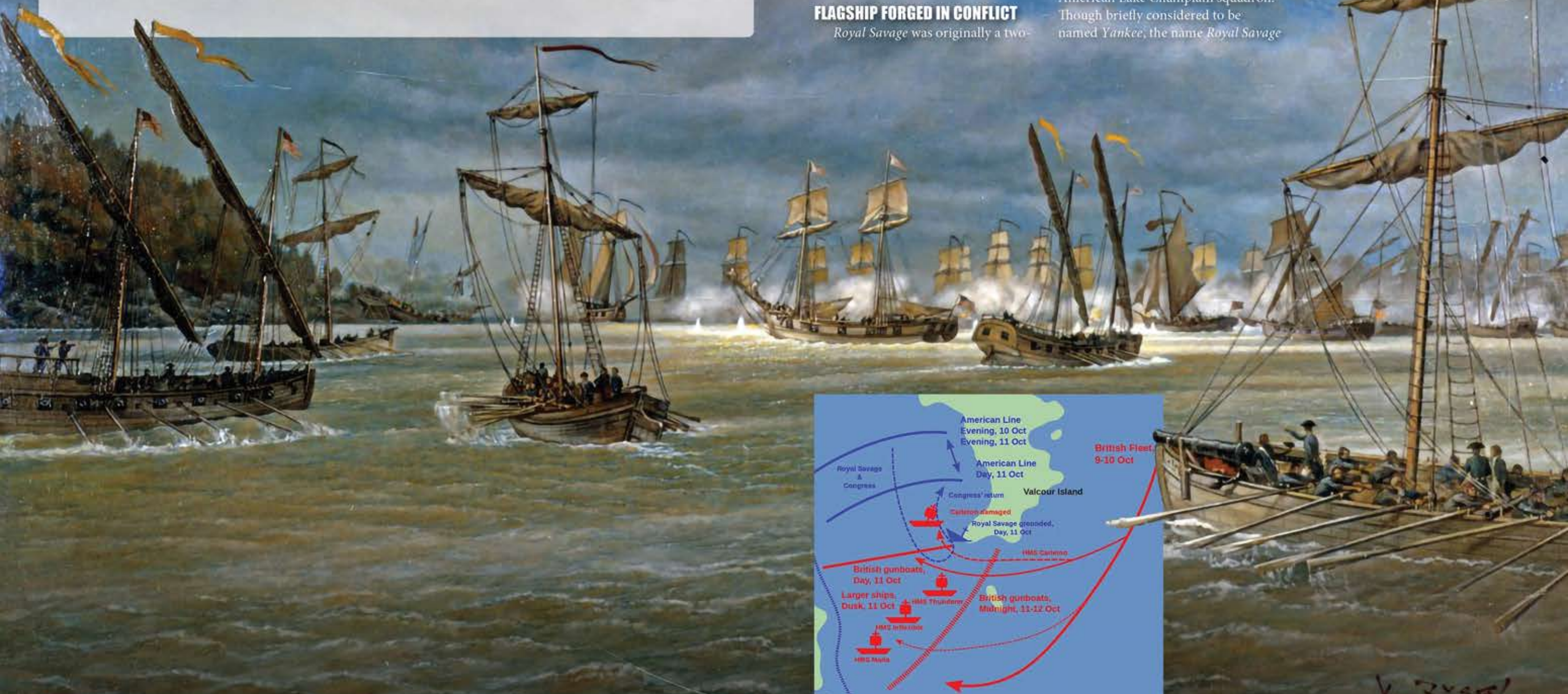
Royal Savage was originally a two-

masted schooner built by the British in 1775 at Fort St. Jean to dominate and maintain control over Lake Champlain. Described as an elegantly built vessel of approximately 70 tons, she was roughly 50 feet long with a beam of 15 feet and armed with a complement of eight 4-pound and four 6-pound cannons.

In the fall of 1775, during invasion of Canada by Continental forces under Richard Montgomery, the schooner was sunk at its dock during the siege of St. Johns. When the fort fell to the rebels, American troops raised and repaired the vessel, commissioning it into service as the flagship of the American Lake Champlain squadron. Though briefly considered to be named *Yankee*, the name *Royal Savage*

endured — a title the rebels found fittingly ironic given the British tendency to incite tribal forces against them.

By July 1776, under the command of Benedict Arnold, *Royal Savage* became the focal point of a desperate shipbuilding program at Skenesborough and Ticonderoga. The goal was simple but daunting: Create a fleet capable of delaying a massive British force until the following spring.



Royal Savage and the American fleet (foreground) engage with the British at the Battle of Valcour Island.

Modern Interpretation of the Battle of Valcour Island.