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THE UNITED STATES TORPEDO BOAT the O'BRIEN.

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The torpedo boat the O'Brien, for the United States navy, was launched at Lewis Nixon's "Crescent shipyard," Elizabethport, N. J., Sept. 24, 1900. She is named the O'Brien, to perpetuate the memory of the five O'Brien brothers,—Jeremiah, Gideon, William, John, and Joseph,—sons of Maurice O'Brien of Cork, Ireland, who had settled at Machias, Me. The boys are believed to have all been born in the latter place.

After the news of the battle of Lexington reached Machias, the townspeople erected a liberty pole, and the fact having been communicated to the British authorities, the sloop-of-war Margarettta, under the command of Lieutenant Moore of the English navy, was directed to proceed from Boston to Machias to investigate the matter.

The Margarettta went and was captured by the O'Briens, after a sharp fight, on May 11, 1775. Lieutenant Moore's sword was presented to Joseph O'Brien, he being the "baby" of the expedition. It has been handed down from father to son ever since. The sword was exhibited at the launching and attracted no little attention.

The young lady who "christened" the O'Brien, Miss Myra Lincoln O'Brien, is a descendant of Joseph O'Brien, the "baby" above mentioned. Her father, Albert H. O'Brien, is a lawyer in Philadelphia. He served in the Civil War, and subsequently in the United States marines, from which corps he resigned as a first lieutenant in 1875. Her grandfather was Dennis W. O'Brien of Philadelphia, who died in 1878 while filling the office of judge of the Orphans' court of Philadelphia county, and her great-grandfather was Dennis O'Brien, a merchant of Reading, Pa.

The day was a pleasant one for the launching, and despite the early hour set for the ceremony, Miss O'Brien, several of her relatives and friends, Lewis Nixon, Superintendent Ackerman, and the heads of the various departments were on hand. When the christening party was placed on the vessel the workmen released the huge hull and the O'Brien gracefully slid from the ways. The launching of the O'Brien marks another step in the consummation of the government plan of perpetuating the names of the more prominent figures in the American Revolution. The O'Briens were a family that possessed indomitable courage and spirit and played a conspicuous part in this country's battle for freedom.

It is stated that on the arrival of Margarettta off Machias, her commanding officer, Lieutenant Moore, notified the town officials that the Liberty pole must come down or the vessel would open fire on the town.

On Sunday morning, May 11, a lumber sloop commanded by Jeremiah O'Brien, with about fifty men armed with muskets and pitchforks, left the town and sailed down the bay in the direction of the *Margaretta*. There was a hand-to-hand fight on the decks, and though the English fought well with their small arms, the *Margaretta* was a prize within twenty minutes. Lieutenant Moore and ten of his men were killed and others severely wounded, the attacking party losing six men killed, while five were wounded.

This capture was the first naval engagement of the American Revolution, but Jeremiah O'Brien and his brothers, William and John, subsequently received provincial commissions and participated in other engagements as commanding officers.

The O'Brien is a magnificent boat and looks the fighter, every inch of her. She is 175 feet long on her water line, 17 feet beam, and of 14 feet, 6 inches draught. Her displacement is about 165 tons. Steel has been used whenever possible, and when the wood has been used it has been electrically treated so as to be fireproof. In every part, unnecessary weight has been eliminated. The piston rods, shafts, connecting rods, and working parts generally are of nickel steel.

There are four-cylinder, triple expansion engines, one high power cylinder, 18 inches in diameter, one intermediate power cylinder, 27 inches in diameter, and two low power cylinders, 27½ inches in diameter, each with an 18-inch stroke. The indicated horsepower is 3,500, which will give 350 revolutions to the screws per minute. There are twin screws instead of a single screw. The propelling engines are located in a water-tight compartment.

On board, there is every appliance known to modern naval engineering. The two condensers each have a cooling surface of 1,500 feet. A distilling plant for distilling salt water into fresh water is also supplied in the boat, as well as an air compressing and an electric lighting plant. Three boilers of the Mosher water-tube design give the needed power. They are powerfully constructed and will give a working pressure of 250 pounds to the square inch, with a heating surface of 8,325 square feet. Each boiler is to be supplied with a smoke-pipe standing about ten feet above the deck.

The O'Brien is low in the water and exceedingly hard to locate at night, even by the use of searchlights. She is a type of advanced fighting machine, and her entire appearance denotes the fighter. Her armament is as follows: Three torpedo tubes, two forward, one aft, and three three-pound rapid-fire guns, located as are the torpedo tubes. When in commission she will carry a Whitehead torpedo in each tube and additional ones on the racks near the tubes. The boat will carry sixty officers and men.

Speaking of the capture of the *Margaretta*, Capt. Edward O'Meagher Condon, a member of the American-Irish Historical Society, says in his excellent work:[59] "This was the first naval fight of the Revolution, and Jeremiah O'Brien was the victorious commander. Two British cruisers, the

Diligence, and Tapnaguish were at once despatched to lay Machias in ashes, but they also were met and captured by O'Brien, his brothers, and comrades. The young hero immediately sailed, with his prizes and prisoners, for Watertown, Mass., where the Provincial Congress was in session, and received the thanks of that body and a captain's commission. But the British were not yet satisfied. They sent from Halifax a squadron, including a frigate, a twenty-gun corvette, a brig of sixteen guns, and several armed schooners, to crush the weak American fleet; but O'Brien, aided by Colonel Foster, was once more triumphant, and beat them off after a hard struggle.

"They then sent a strong body of land forces against Machias, but after the second day's march from Passamaquoddy, the British troops returned to Halifax, despairing of effecting a passage through the woods, or, perhaps, hopeless of accomplishing their purpose when confronted by those who had already conquered their fellow-mercenaries three times at sea. We are told that Maurice O'Brien, 144old as he was, could hardly be restrained from joining his gallant sons in their daring enterprise against the British.

"Three of the O'Briens, Jeremiah, John, and William, continued in the naval service of the republic until the close of the war. Jeremiah was appointed to the command of The Liberty, and his brother William served under him as a lieutenant. 'For two years this vessel and another did good service on the northern coast, affording protection to American navigation, after which they were laid up.' Jeremiah, with others, then fitted out a twenty-gun letter-of-marque, called the Hannibal, manned by one hundred and thirty men.

"She took several prizes; but at length falling in with two British frigates, she was overhauled after a chase of forty-eight hours and captured. O'Brien was first confined in the Jersey prison ship, otherwise known as the Hell, at the Wallabout, where the Brooklyn navy yard now is. At the end of about six months, he was sent to Mill Prison, England, whence he succeeded in effecting his escape about a year later. He retired after the war to Brunswick, Me., where, at the age of over fourscore, he furnished the details of his brave achievements to a generation that had shamefully forgotten him and them.

"John O'Brien was more fortunate than his gallant brother. From a journal kept by him the following extracts are taken: On June 9, 1779, he sailed in the armed schooner Hibernia. On June 21, he took an English brig and sent her in. On June 25, he had an engagement with a ship of seventeen guns, from three till five o'clock p. m., when a frigate came up and the Hibernia was compelled to leave her anticipated prize and was pursued by the frigate till midnight. O'Brien had three men killed and several wounded in this fight. On July 7 he took a schooner and sent her to Newburyport. On the day following, in company with Captain Leach of Salem, he took a ship carrying thirteen four-pounders; a few hours after, a brig; and then a schooner laden with molasses. On July 11, he took a brig in ballast, and then chased and captured another. He adds that if he and Captain Leach had not parted in a fog they could have taken the

whole fleet. Capt. John O'Brien was never captured by the enemy. No trace is found after the capture of the Hannibal, of Lieut. William O'Brien. He was most probably among the 11,000 victims of British cruelty, whose corpses were buried, or flung on the shores of the Wallabout."