

# CAPTURE OF A FRENCH PRIVATEER

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Yesterday Capt. Decatur, of the United States Sloop DELAWARE arrived at the Navy Office. He informs, that the Delaware sailed on Friday, last, and on Saturday evening [7 July 1798] captured a French privateer schooner of 12 guns and 70 men, close in with Egg Harbour, and last evening the prize was brought to Fort Mifflin. Capt. Decatur left his ship at New-Castle and brought this intelligence to town. Capt. Decatur after he had got to sea on Saturday morning, met with the ship ALEXANDER HAMILTON from New York to Baltimore, the captain of which informed him that he had been plundered by a French privateer, and gave him directions what course he had steered. Capt. Decatur immediately went in search of her, and soon got in sight of four schooners; but not knowing which was the armed schooner that he had received information of, he thought it best to stand off as if he were a merchantman, and alarmed at what might be armed vessels.

The maneuver had the intended effect, for the armed schooner gave her chase, until she discovered the DELAWARE to be a vessel of force, when she attempted to sheer off and get in land (where she supposed she could be safe, taking the DELAWARE for an English vessel of war) but she was obliged to surrender after a pretty long chase to the DELAWARE, and several shots being fired at her. This privateer is a new vessel, said to have been built at Baltimore. She sailed from Cape Francois on the 19<sup>th</sup> June, and has been on our coast only two days, during which time she has captured the ship LIBERTY, Captain Verdenberg, which sailed a few days since from this port for Liverpool; the vessel was sent to the West Indies, and the captain and crew of the LIBERTY were put on board a vessel bound for Boston, the privateer had also taken an English brig.

*Columbian Centinel* (Boston), 8 August 1798

The captain of the French privateer, taken a few days ago, seemed astonished when he went on board of Captain Decatur's sloop of war, at his being taken by an American vessel, and said he knew of no war between the two republics. Decatur observed that the French had been making war upon us for a long time, and it was now necessary for us to take care of ourselves. The Frenchman seemed to be vastly mortified at seeing his colors hauled down, and wished he had been sunk. Decatur told him he should have been gratified if he had stood on board his vessel and fought her!

Office of Naval Records. *Naval Documents Related to the Quasi-War Between the United States and France. Naval Operations from February 1797 to October 1798.* (Washington, DC: 1935), pp. 175–176.