

= USS Enterprise vs Flambeau =

The USS Enterprise vs Flambeau was a single ship action fought in October 1800 during the Quasi @-@ War . During the action the USS Enterprise defeated the French privateer brig Flambeau off the leeward side of the island of Dominica in the Caribbean Sea . Although Enterprise was outgunned by Flambeau , she was still able to take her as a prize after a short battle . The battle helped bring to fame Enterprise 's commanding officer , Lieutenant John Shaw , who added the capture of Flambeau to his already long list of French prizes .

= Background =

During the Quasi @-@ War American merchant ships often became the target of French privateers who seized them in large quantities . In an effort to stem these depredations against American shipping several United States Navy warships were dispatched to hunt down French privateers . One such vessel was USS Enterprise , an American naval schooner under the command of Lieutenant John Shaw . Enterprise had been sent out to the Caribbean Sea in March 1800 with orders to cruise against French shipping in the region . Enterprise had already previously engaged and defeated several French privateers when on the night of 24 October she sighted the privateer Flambeau off the leeward side of Dominica .

The French letter of marque Flambeau was a brig that was slightly more powerful than Enterprise , having twelve eight @-@ pound cannon as compared to the American schooner 's dozen six @-@ pounders . The French privateer also had more crew than the American vessel , 110 opposed to Enterprise 's 83 . With a broadside of 48 pounds to Enterprise 's 36 pounds and with a larger crew , Flambeau had an advantage over Enterprise . Nonetheless , Shaw decided to engage Flambeau . Enterprise could not catch up to Flambeau but when morning came Flambeau found herself becalmed . Her captain then used sweeps to close with Enterprise .

= Action =

Eventually a wind came and the two ships managed to maneuver towards each other until they were within musket range . After engaging with small arms for a while , Lieutenant Shaw eventually veered his schooner away and Flambeau opened up on the Americans with a broadside of roundshot . Enterprise replied with her own broadside and the two vessels engaged each other with cannon for twenty minutes . Flambeau was beginning to receive heavy damage when her captain decided to disengage and maneuvered away from Enterprise . However , Enterprise pursued the French brig and continued to engage her .

Flambeau 's foretopmast was in danger of being dismasted from damage it had received from Enterprise , so the French captain sent men aloft to try to repair it . However after a sudden gust of wind the mast flew off the ship carrying six French sailors with it . Enterprise ceased her attacks upon Flambeau and sent out a boat to rescue the French sailors adrift on the topmast . After rescuing the French topmen , Enterprise caught up with the French brig and came alongside . Before the action could continue the French captain struck her colours as Flambeau 's medicine chest had been destroyed and the hull compromised multiple times .

= Aftermath =

The entire action lasted about forty minutes . The French were much worse off than the Americans in terms of casualties , with 7 Frenchmen killed and 33 wounded compared to 3 Americans killed and 7 wounded . A prize crew from Enterprise was sent aboard Flambeau and sailed her to Saint Kitts where she was condemned . The proceeds from the sale of Flambeau were adjudicated to the crew of Enterprise .

The capture of Flambeau brought further acclaim to Shaw , who had already defeated several other French privateers and taken them as prizes . Enterprise continued her cruise , next chasing down

and capturing Pauline and later Guadeloupeenne . Shortly afterward , chronic illness forced Shaw to transfer command of the vessel to Lieutenant Andrew Sterett . Sterret continued to cruise the Caribbean , taking several more prizes before returning home . Upon Shaw 's return home the president and other public officials personally thanked him for his service . Shaw later continued his naval career , serving with distinction during the War of 1812 .