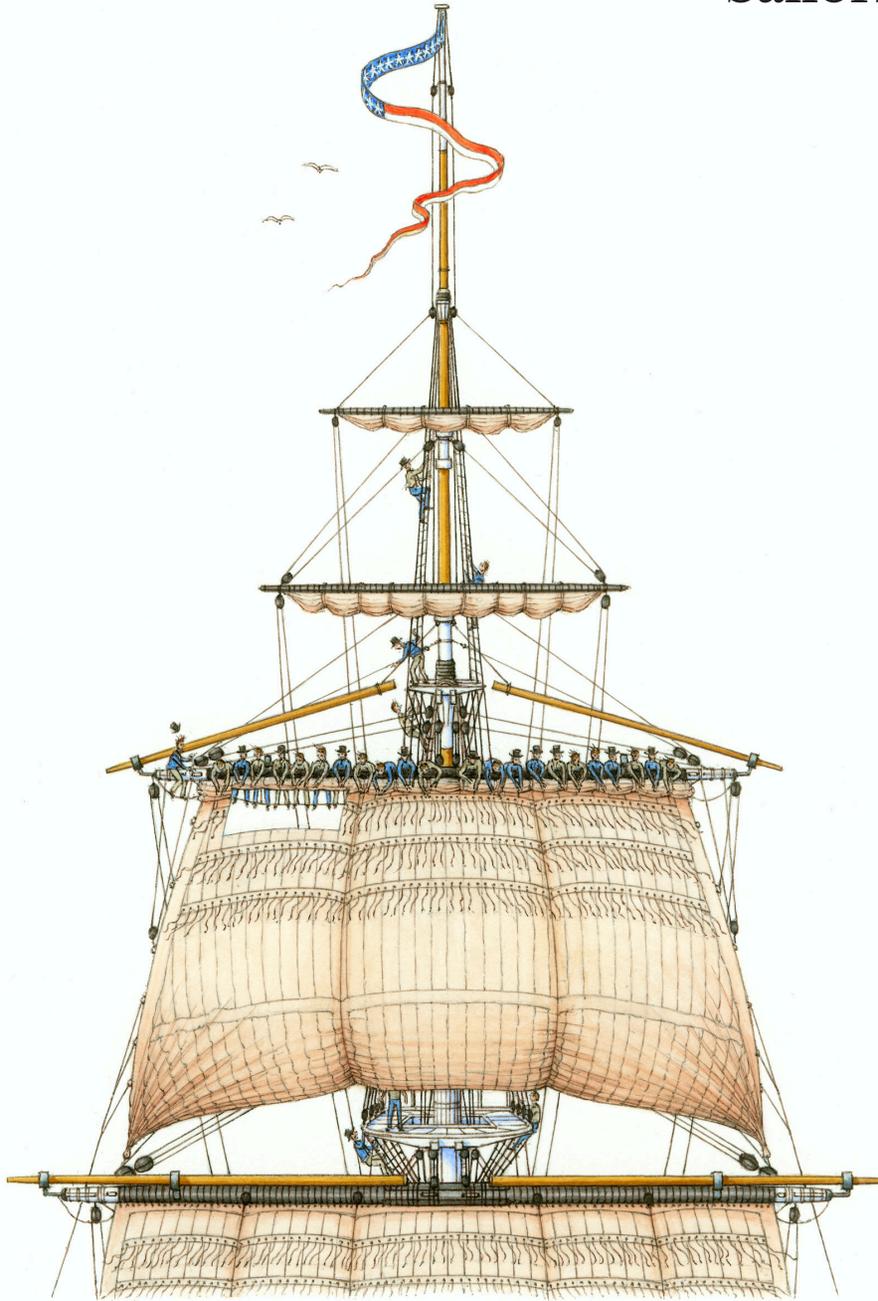


# Sailors Aloft



The “engines” that drove *Constitution* forward were her sails: massive canvas sheets, some as big as a basketball court. Controlling them was the job of the topmen. Their work demanded strength, skill, and a head for heights. They climbed the rigging in all weathers, often in darkness, and as high as 175 feet above the deck. The sails they set (spread out) or reefed and furled (pulled in) could weigh half a ton even when dry, and twice that when soaked with rain.