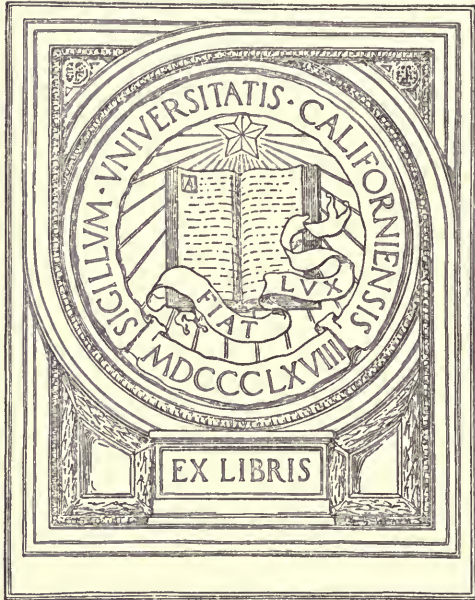


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COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY, ABOUT 1815



# The Battle of Lake Erie

A Collection of Documents, chiefly by Commo-  
dore PERRY: including the Court-martial  
of Commander BARCLAY & the Court  
of Enquiry on Captain ELLIOTT:  
edited, with Introduction, An-  
notations, Bibliography, &  
Analytical Index, by

CHARLES OSCAR PAULLIN

*With portraits, facsimiles, and map*



Cleveland: The ROWFANT Club  
October, 1918

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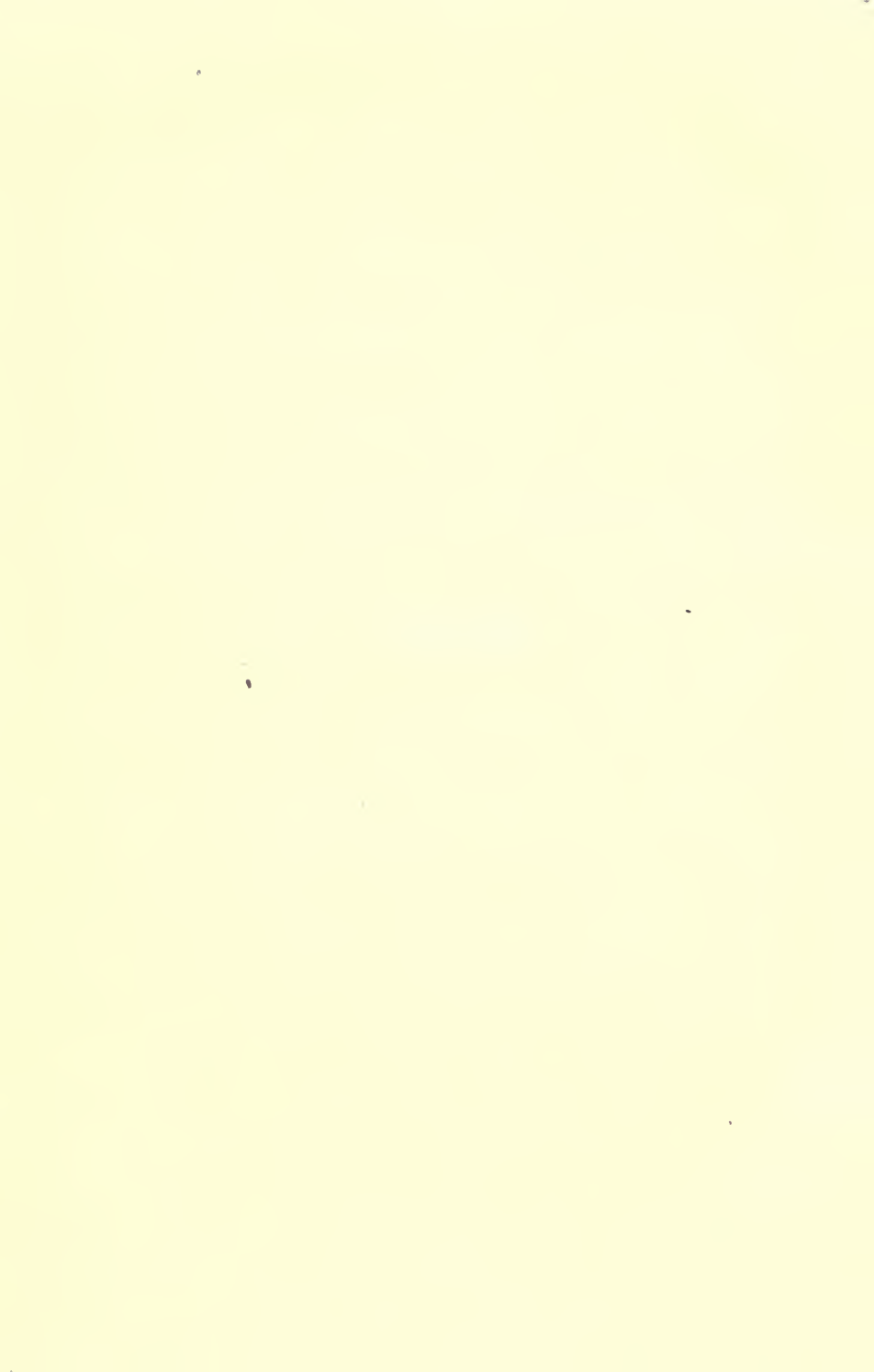
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## PREFACE





## PREFACE

The documents selected for publication in this volume are chiefly of an official character, and are those of greatest interest and probative value. There are other documents, to be sure, which the future historian of the battle will wish to read, such as the affidavits of Perry's officers and Perry's charges against Captain Elliott, but these are unofficial and are biased. Moreover, to have included them would have swelled the book beyond its prescribed limits. About one half of the documents here presented have not been previously published, and many of those that have been published are now issued in a more complete and precise form.

The editor wishes to thank the officials of the United States Navy Department and the Library of Congress in Washington and of the Public Record Office in London for the facilities afforded him in collecting materials for this volume. He is under special obligations to Mr. Charles West Stewart, superintendent of the Library and Naval War Records Office, to Captain Richard Thomas Mulligan, U.S.N., assistant to the Bureau of Navigation, and to Mr. Goodloe Earle Yancey, chief

clerk of that bureau; all of the United States Navy  
Department, Washington, D.C.

CHARLES OSCAR PAULLIN

Washington, D.C., March 25, 1918

## INTRODUCTION



## INTRODUCTION

The primary theater of war in our second conflict with Great Britain, 1812-1815, was the St. Lawrence water-system and the adjacent territory on each side of it. One of the two secondary theaters of war was the maritime frontier and Atlantic seaboard, stretching from Maine to Louisiana (with the exception of Florida); and the other, the deep sea, including the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans. The Battle of Lake Erie was fought in the western part of the primary theater of war, on September 10, 1813, midway in time between the commencement of the conflict in June, 1812, and its close in February, 1815.

This battle was the turning point of the war in the west. Previous to it, the American offensive campaign in that quarter had been uniformly unsuccessful. In the summer of 1812, General Isaac Hull, who had advanced into Canada and had besieged Malden, abandoned the siege, retreated to Detroit, and there surrendered that post and his army to the British. About the same time Fort Michilimackinac, near the junction of Lake Huron with Lake Michigan, fell into the hands of the enemy; and Fort Dearborn, on the present site of Chicago, was abandoned. The American military

boundary in the Northwest was pushed southward to the line of the Wabash and Maumee Rivers. Lake Erie was held by the enemy by reason of his naval superiority on that water.

Having obtained possession of a considerable part of the American Northwest, the British carried the war south and southwest of Lake Erie. In September, 1812, they sent an expedition against Fort Wayne, Indiana. In May, 1813, they besieged Fort Meigs on the Maumee River, and in August they attacked Fort Stephenson on the Sandusky River. Each of these movements failed.

Early in 1813, with a view to recovering the ground lost in the previous year, General William Henry Harrison, who had succeeded Hull as commander of the American army in the west, assumed the offensive. In January a division of his army reached the Raisin River in southern Michigan, and was there defeated and captured by the British. Harrison was compelled to abandon his plan of advancing into the enemy's territory by land, and to apply himself to the defense of his military frontier on the Maumee and Sandusky Rivers. Having successfully defended Forts Meigs and Stephenson, he made preparations to advance into Canada by way of Lake Erie. In the summer of 1813, he collected an army along the line of the Sandusky River and established his headquarters at Senecatown or Fort Seneca, ten miles up the Sandusky from Fort Stephenson, which was situated about ten miles from the mouth of the river

at Sandusky Bay. Some forty miles across the lake, on the Canada side of the Detroit River, near its mouth, was Amherstburg, where the British had a naval depot, and Fort Malden, which was occupied by British troops. These were Harrison's objectives. His passage across the lake, however, was blocked by the British fleet, which was in possession of that water. The outcome of his second plan for offensive operations for 1813 depended upon a trial at arms between the British and American naval forces on the lake. By August his preparations were nearing completion, and he anxiously awaited the coming of the American squadron, with whose commander he had been in correspondence for several months.

When the war began, the Americans had no naval force on Lake Erie. As the enemy soon assembled a small fleet there, he held undisputed sway over that great natural highway which formed a most important part of his line of communication between Lower and Upper Canada, and along which he transported troops and military supplies. On his possession of Lake Erie depended his ability to hold Upper Canada (west of the Niagara River), Michigan, and the Northwest. Early in the war the Americans had recognized the need of a naval force on Lake Erie, and on September 7, 1812, Commodore Isaac Chauncey, the commander-in-chief of the naval forces on the lakes, with headquarters at Sacketts Harbor, New York, sent Master-commandant Jesse Duncan

Elliott to Buffalo to select a site for building vessels. Here in the fall of that year a small fleet was assembled. On February 17 of the following year, Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry,<sup>1</sup> who had been stationed at Newport, Rhode Island, in command of a flotilla, was assigned to the command of the fleet intended for service on Lake Erie. On March 27, he arrived at Erie, Pennsylvania, not far from the eastern end of the lake, where he found under construction the two sister-ships Lawrence and Niagara. They were brig-rigged, and of four hundred eighty tons burden. In June he removed to Erie the five vessels that had been collected at Buffalo. To these he added three other small craft, making a fleet of ten vessels, all but one of which participated in the battle of September 10. Small as these vessels were, it was necessary to remove the guns from the larger ones before they would pass over Erie Bar, which lay outside Erie Harbor. The existence of this bar made it possible for the British fleet, which was blockading Erie, to pen up Perry's forces and render them use-

<sup>1</sup> Perry was born in South Kingston, Rhode Island, on August 23 [this date is also given August 20 and August 21], 1785. During the Revolutionary War his father, Captain Christopher Raymond Perry, served both on land and at sea, and from 1798 to 1801 in the navy of the United States. The son entered the navy as a midshipman on April 7, 1798, and became a lieutenant on January 15, 1807, and a master-commandant on August 28, 1812. He served in the naval war with France and in the Tripolitan War, and after the latter struggle he commanded several vessels detailed for duty on the Atlantic coast. Early in the War of 1812 he was placed in command of the Newport flotilla. When appointed commander of the squadron on Lake Erie, he was twenty-seven and a half years of age.



less. Fortunately, at an opportune moment, the British commander relaxed the blockade, and Perry was able to reach the open lake. At nine o'clock in the evening of August 4, the day on which he succeeded in this undertaking, Perry wrote to the secretary of the navy, dating his letter from his flag-ship, *Lawrence*, at anchor outside of Erie Bar:

I have great pleasure in informing you that I have succeeded after almost incredible labour and fatigue to the men, in getting all the vessels I have been able to man over the bar, viz. *Lawrence*, *Niagara*, *Caledonia*, *Ariel*, *Scorpion*, *Somers*, *Tigress*, and *Porcupine*. They are neither well officered or manned, but as the exigency of Genl. Harrison and the whole of the Western Country is such, I have determined to proceed on service. My government, should I be unsuccessful, I trust will justly appreciate the motives which have governed me in this determination.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after reaching the open lake, Perry visited Long Point, the enemy's naval station opposite Erie. Of this visit he wrote thus to the secretary on August 8:

I have the honor to inform you I have returned from Long Point without having seen the enemy; we are now busily employed in getting in ballast, provisions, and procuring volunteers from the militia. I propose sailing this evening in pursuit of the enemy.

Genl. Harrison writes me — the enemy launched their new ship on the 17th ult. If she is equipped, they will be considerably superior in guns to us. It is much to be re-

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<sup>2</sup> *Masters' Commandant Letters*, United States Navy Department Archives, 1813, no. 93.

gretted that our force could not have been got out before; nothing but the hope of meeting their fleet before the new ship<sup>3</sup> is ready could induce me to sail at this time, officered and manned as this squadron is.<sup>4</sup>

A few days later Perry was joined by Master-commandant Jesse Duncan Elliott, with one hundred officers and men, and on August 12 he proceeded westward, writing as follows to the secretary nine days thereafter, from off Sandusky Bay:

I have the honor to inform you I sailed from Erie on the 12th inst., and arrived off this place on the 16th, and immediately took steps for communicating with General Harrison; on the 19th I had the pleasure of receiving him on board. He is not yet ready to advance. I shall therefore sail for Malden immediately and offer the enemy battle. I chased on the 17th with the squadron one of the small vessels of war of the enemy. She escaped by night coming on and running among the small islands, when we were nearly up with her.<sup>5</sup>

Perry established his headquarters at Put-in-Bay, an indentation on the northern coast of South Bass Island, which lies some twenty miles northwest of the present city of Sandusky, Ohio. Here he was in excellent position to watch the movements of the British fleet, which had retired to its headquarters at Amherstburg, some thirty miles northwestward of Put-in-Bay. He was also convenient to Harrison, who was at Seneca-town, thirty-five miles to the southward. A notion of his movements during the last days of August and the

<sup>3</sup> The Detroit.

<sup>4</sup> *Masters' Commandant Letters*, 1813, no. 101.

<sup>5</sup> — *Ibid.*, no. 111.

first days of September may be obtained from a letter which he wrote to the secretary of the navy, off Sandusky Bay on September 2 :

I have the honour to inform you that I anchored this afternoon with the squadron at this place for the purpose of communicating with Genl. Harrison.

Since I last did myself the honour of writing you I have been twice off Malden—first on the 24th and 25th of last month and again yesterday. Owing to a severe indisposition which confined me to my berth I was under the necessity of anchoring the squadron off Bass Island, a situation which commanded the principal passage. The moment I was able to be on deck I again sailed for Malden and was yesterday all day off that place, close in. Their new ship is rigged, has top gallant yards athwart, and is anchored at the mouth of the harbour under the guns of a battery, together with other vessels—viz. the Queen Charlotte, Hunter, Lady Prevost, a sloop and schooner. Three other vessels are lying at the navy wharf.

The crews of the different vessels have suffered much from a complaint occasioned, it is supposed, by the water. Many are still sick.<sup>6</sup>

The moment that Perry reached the open lake from Erie, the naval superiority on Lake Erie shifted from the British to the Americans, and the former were compelled to act on the defensive. The British fleet was commanded by Commander Robert Heriot Barclay,<sup>7</sup> whose flag-ship, the De-

<sup>6</sup> *Masters' Commandant Letters*, 1813, no. 115.

<sup>7</sup> Barclay had fought as a lieutenant at Trafalgar under Nelson, where he lost an arm. "Our father with one arm," Tecumseh called him. He was made a commander in 1813 and a captain in 1824. He died at Edinburgh on May 8, 1837 at the age of fifty-two (L. Homfray Irving's *Officers of the British Forces in Canada*, 228). When the battle of Lake Erie was fought, he was almost precisely the same age as Perry.

troit, was his largest vessel. She was ship-rigged, and of four hundred ninety tons burden. When Perry sailed from Erie, she was at Amherstburg under construction. The addition of this vessel to the British naval forces, and their urgent need of supplies, caused their commander to reach the decision to leave his headquarters and contest with Perry the possession of the lake.

Barclay left Amherstburg on September 9, and at sunrise on the following day his fleet was sighted in the Northwest by the Americans in Put-in-Bay, who at once sailed out to meet their antagonist. The wind, however, was light, and it was almost noon before the two squadrons<sup>8</sup> were in range of each other's guns. At a quarter before twelve Barclay began the action by firing a few long guns, and several minutes later Perry returned the fire. The place of encounter was some ten miles about west-northwest of Put-in-Bay, off West Sister Island. The battle lasted a little more than three hours, that is until about three o'clock, when the

<sup>8</sup>The American squadron consisted of the following vessels: brigs—Lawrence (flag-ship), 20 guns, Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry; Niagara, 20, Master-commandant Jesse Duncan Elliott; Caledonia, 3, Lieutenant Daniel Turner; schooners—Ariel, 4, Lieutenant John Packet; Scorpion, 2, Sailing-master Stephen Champlin; Somers, 2, Sailing-master Thomas C. Almy; Trippe, 1, Lieutenant Thomas Holdup Stevens; Tigress, 1, Lieutenant A. H. M. Conckling; and Porcupine, 1, Sailing-master George Senat. The British squadron consisted of the following vessels: ships—Detroit (flag-ship), 19 guns, Commander Robert Heriot Barclay; Queen Charlotte, 17, Commander Robert A. Finnis; schooners—Lady Prevost, 13, Lieutenant Edward W. Buchan; Chippewa (or Chippeway), 1, Master's Mate J. Campbell; brig Hunter, 10, Lieutenant George Bignell; and sloop Little Belt, 3, Lieutenant Robert Irvine.





British surrendered. A dramatic event, which divides the battle into two well-defined parts, was Perry's transferring of his flag from the Lawrence to the Niagara, about half past two in the afternoon. Up to this time the Niagara had rendered her consorts comparatively little assistance. The reasons why she was not brought into closer action have long been a subject of controversy.<sup>9</sup> For the details of the battle, the account of Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, an authority on the naval history of the War of 1812, may be quoted:

Perry had nine vessels, the brigs Lawrence, Niagara, and Caledonia, the schooners Ariel, Scorpion, Somers, Porcupine, and Tigress, and the sloop Trippe. Their total tonnage was 1671, and their total crews amounted to 532 men; but sickness had been so prevalent that only about 416 were fit for duty. In his vessels fifty-four guns were mounted, fourteen of which were on pivots. In the action his broadside weight of metal was 896 pounds; 288 of which were thrown from long guns. The Lawrence and Niagara were large men-of-war brigs, armed in the usual manner with eighteen 32-pr. carronades, and two long 12's apiece. The smaller vessels, in addition to two or three light carronades, carried long 32's, 24's, and 12's. Barclay's squadron consisted of six vessels, the ships Detroit and Queen Charlotte, the brig Hunter, the

<sup>9</sup> For an account of this controversy see T. R. Lounsbury's *James Fenimore Cooper* (American Men of Letters series), 208-230; Justin Winsor's *Narrative and Critical History of America*, vol. vii, 432-433; and Nina Moore and Francis Tiffany's *Harm Jan Huidekoper*, 188-189. See also the "Bibliography" at the end of this volume. Rear-admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan (*Sea Power in its Relation to the War of 1812*, vol. ii, 76-99) replies to the arguments of Cooper, who was Elliott's ablest defender. Mahan gives a verdict in favor of Perry, which agrees, it would seem, with the expert naval opinion of the present time.

schooners *Lady Prevost*, and *Chippeway*, and the sloop *Little Belt*. The aggregate tonnage was 1460; the aggregate of the crews summed up to about 440 men. The total number of guns was sixty-three, five being on pivots. The total broadside weight was 459 pounds, of which 195 were from long guns; for many of Barclay's guns were of very small calibre, including long 2's, 4's, and 6's, and 12-pr. carronades.

The difference in number of men between the two squadrons was not very material. Both had scratch crews, made up of regular seamen, of lake seamen, of British regulars, and a few Indians in Barclay's squadron, and American militia and a few negroes in Perry's. In tonnage Perry was superior by just about what would be indicated by the possession of three extra schooners. The decisive difference was in the armament. In weight of broadside the superiority of the Americans in long-gun metal was nearly as three to two, and in carronade metal it was greater than two to one. The ship *Detroit* mounted chiefly long guns, and was on the whole probably rather superior to either of Perry's big brigs. The *Queen Charlotte* was greatly inferior to either. The small vessels lacked the long guns which made the small American vessels formidable. In smooth water and at a distance the long guns of Perry's smaller vessels gave his squadron a very marked advantage; in a brisk breeze his two big brigs should have been almost a match for the entire British squadron.

When, at daylight on September 10th, Perry discovered Barclay's squadron he was at anchor at Put-In-Bay. As soon as the ships were made out, Perry got under way and bore down toward them, having the weather gage. Barclay lay to in close column, the *Chippeway* ahead, followed by the *Detroit*, the *Hunter*, the *Queen Charlotte*, the *Lady Prevost*, and the *Little Belt*. Perry went down with the wind off his port beam, and made the attack in column ahead obliquely. The *Ariel* and *Scorpion* led the



line a little ahead, and on the weather bow, of Perry's ship the *Lawrence*. Next came the *Caledonia*, and after her the *Lawrence's* twin sister, the *Niagara*, under Captain Jesse D. Elliott, whom Perry had superseded, and who showed by his actions that he felt no particular zeal in helping Perry to gain glory. The *Niagara* was followed by the *Somers*, the *Porcupine*, the *Tigress*, and the *Trippe* in that order.

The winds were light and baffling, and, as the American ships came down, they formed a straggling and irregular line which approached at an angle of about fifteen degrees to the line of Barclay's squadron, which was in much better and more compact order. At a quarter to twelve the *Detroit* opened the action with her long 24's. Her first shot fell short; her second crashed through the *Lawrence*; whereupon the *Scorpion* replied with her long 32. Ten minutes after the *Detroit* had first fired, the *Lawrence*, which had shifted her port bow-chaser into the place of one of the carronades on her starboard side, opened with both her long 12's. At noon she tried her carronades, but the shot fell short. Shortly afterwards the action became general on both sides, though the rearmost American vessels were still so far away that they were themselves not exposed to danger at all, and only the longest guns occasionally reached. The *Lawrence* was steadily nearing Barclay's line, Perry making every effort to close; but it was half an hour after the *Detroit* had opened before the *Lawrence* got to the close quarters necessary for the effective use of her carronades.<sup>5</sup> Throughout this half hour Barclay's leading ships had concentrated their fire on Perry's vessel, and so the *Lawrence* had suffered a good deal; though the schooners *Scorpion* and *Ariel* had been pounding away with their long guns to help her.

For some time, therefore, the action at the head of the line was in favour of the British. The sides of the *Detroit* were dotted with marks of shot that did not penetrate,

partly because of the long range, partly because the Americans in this action seemed to show a tendency to overload their carronades. There was a carronade in the Scorpion which upset down the hatchway as soon as it got hot; and one of the long guns of the Ariel burst. On the other side, the Detroit had her own difficulties. There were no locks for her guns, thanks to the hurry with which she had been prepared, and they had to be discharged by flashing pistols at the touch-holes. Nevertheless, Barclay fought her to perfection, and the trained artillerists among his seamen and soldiers aimed the guns so well that Perry had his hands full. The Caledonia came down beside the Lawrence, helping to divert the attention of the Hunter and the Queen Charlotte from her. But Elliott handled the Niagara poorly. He did not follow Perry to close quarters, but engaged the Queen Charlotte at a distance which rendered the carronades of both vessels useless. In fact, the only effective fighting at the rear of the lines was that done by the four American gun-vessels astern of the Niagara. Each of these had a long 32 or 24, of which, on such smooth seas, she could make good use against the Lady Prevost, Queen Charlotte, and Hunter; the latter having an absurd armament of little guns which threw a broadside of thirty pounds all told. Both Commander Finnis, of the Queen Charlotte, and his first lieutenant, Thomas Stokoe, were killed early in the action. Her next in command, the Canadian Lieutenant Irvine, finding that he could make no effective answer to the long guns of the schooners, drew forward and joined in the attack on the Lawrence at close quarters. The Niagara was left practically without any antagonist, and, at the end of the line, the fight became one at long range between the Somers, Tigris, Porcupine, and Trippe on the one side, and the Lady Prevost, and Little Belt on the other. The Lady Prevost's armament consisted chiefly of 12-pr. carronades.

She made a noble fight, but such an armament at long range in smooth water was utterly useless against the heavy guns of the schooners. Her commander, Lieutenant Buchan, and her first lieutenant, Francis Rolette, were both seriously wounded, and she was greatly cut up and began to fall to leeward.

The fight at the head of the line was waged with bloody obstinacy between the *Scorpion*, *Ariel*, *Lawrence*, and *Chesapeake* [*Caledonia*?] on the one hand, and the *Caledonia* [*Chippeway*?], *Detroit*, *Queen Charlotte*, and *Chippeway* [*Hunter*?] on the other. Instead of pairing in couples, the ships on each side seemed to choose the largest opponents as special targets. The Americans concentrated their fire on the *Queen Charlotte*, and *Detroit*; while the British devoted their attention mainly to the *Lawrence*, which had already suffered severely while working down to get within range of her carronades. The *Queen Charlotte* was soon almost disabled. The *Detroit* was also pounded practically to a standstill, suffering especially from the raking fire of the gunboats. Barclay was fighting her himself with the utmost gallantry; but he was so badly wounded that he was at last obliged to quit the deck. His first lieutenant, John Garland, was also wounded mortally; but Lieutenant George Inglis, to whom the command was turned over; continued the fight as gamely as ever.

Meanwhile the *Lawrence* was knocked to pieces by the combined fires of her adversaries. Of the one hundred and three men who had been fit for duty when she began the action, eighty-three were killed or wounded. As the vessel was so shallow, the ward-room, which was used as the cockpit into which the wounded were taken, was mainly above water, and the shots came through it continually. Many of the wounded were killed or maimed while under the hands of the surgeons. The first lieutenant, Yarnall, was hit three times, but refused to leave

the deck, and fought the ship to the last. The only other lieutenant on board, Brooks, of the marines, was mortally wounded. Every brace and bowline was shot away, and the hull was so riddled that it looked like a sieve. One by one the guns on the engaged side were dismantled, while the men were shot down until they could not man even the guns that were left. However, the slaughter of four-fifths of his crew before his eyes did not daunt Perry in the least. When there were no men left to serve the last three or four guns, he called down through the skylight for one of the surgeon's assistants. The call was repeated and obeyed, until all those officers had been used up. Then he shouted down, "Can any of the wounded pull a rope?" and three or four of them hobbled up on deck to help him lay the last guns. Finally, Perry himself was left with only the purser and chaplain, and by their aid he fired a final shot, and immediately afterwards, the gun which he had used, the only one left, was disabled.

Meanwhile Mr. Turner in the *Caledonia*, having put his helm up, had passed the *Lawrence* and run into the British line, where he engaged at half pistol-shot distance, though his little brig was absolutely without quarters.

Perry's vessel lay an unmanageable hulk on the water, while the shot ripped through her sides, and there was not a gun that could be fired in return; but Perry had not the slightest intention of giving up the fight. He had gone into the battle flying on his flag *Lawrence's* dying words, "Don't give up the ship"; and he intended to live up to the text. The *Niagara* was at that time a quarter of a mile to windward of the *Lawrence* on her port-beam. She was steering for the head of *Barclay's* line, and was almost uninjured, having taken very little part in the combat, and never having been within a distance that rendered her carronades of any use. Perry instantly decided to shift his broad pennant to her. Leaping into a boat with his

brother and four seamen, he rowed to the fresh brig, having literally been hammered out of the Lawrence by the pounding which he had received for two hours and a half. As soon as he reached the Niagara, he sent Elliott astern to hurry up the three rearmost schooners; for the sloop Trippe, on her own account, had steered straight for the British line, and was very near the Caledonia. The Lawrence, having but fourteen sound men left, struck her colours; but the action began again before possession could be taken of her, and she drifted astern out of the fight. At a quarter to three the schooners had closed, and Perry bore up to break Barclay's line, the powerful brig to which he had shifted his broad pennant being practically unharmed, as indeed were his rearmost gun-vessels.

The British ships had fought until they could fight no longer. The two smallest, the Chippeway and Little Belt, were not much damaged; but the other four were too disabled either to fight or manœuvre effectively so as to oppose fresh antagonists. However they answered as best they could, with great guns and musketry, as the Niagara stood down and broke the British line, firing her port battery into the Chippeway, Little Belt, and Lady Prevost, and her starboard battery into the Detroit, Queen Charlotte, and Hunter, raking on both sides. The Detroit and Charlotte had been so cut up aloft, almost every brace and stay being shot away, that they could not tack, and tried to wear; but they fell foul of one another, and the Niagara luffed athwart their bows, firing uninterruptedly, while, under their sterns, the Caledonia and the schooners stationed themselves so close that some of their grape-shot, passing over the British vessels, rattled through Perry's spars. The Lady Prevost had sagged to leeward, an unmanageable wreck. Barclay had done everything in the power of man to do. The first and second in command of every one of his six vessels had been either killed or wounded; and at three o'clock his flag was struck.

The Chippeway and Little Belt tried to escape, but were overtaken and brought to by the Trippe and the Scorpion, the commander of the latter, Mr. Stephen Champlin, firing the last shot of the battle, as he had likewise fired the first on the American side.

None of the American ships had suffered severely, excepting the Lawrence, to whose share over two-thirds of the total loss had fallen. In breaking the line, however, the Niagara had suffered somewhat; and the Caledonia, Ariel, Scorpion, and Trippe had come in for some of the pounding. All told, twenty-seven men had been killed and ninety-six wounded, three mortally. The British loss amounted to forty-one killed and ninety-four wounded, chiefly in the Detroit and Queen Charlotte.<sup>10</sup>

The effects of this decisive victory were many and far-reaching. The Americans were left in complete control of Lake Erie, which they maintained until the end of the war. Harrison was able at once to take the offensive. Before the end of September Perry had transported the American army across the lake, and the British had evacuated Malden, Amherstburg, and Detroit, had abandoned Michigan and the Northwest (with the exception of Michilimackinac), and were fleeing eastward through Upper Canada. Harrison pursued the enemy, overtook him, and on October 5 defeated him and captured his army in the Battle of the Thames.<sup>11</sup> All the western part of Upper Canada fell into the hands of the Americans. The

<sup>10</sup> From Col. Theodore Roosevelt's chapter "The War with the United States, 1812-15," in William Laird Clowes's *The Royal Navy*, vol. vi, 120-126.

<sup>11</sup> Perry took part in the battle as an aide-de-camp of Harrison.

results of Perry's victory were not alone of a military character. They were felt at Ghent in 1814 when the treaty of peace was being negotiated. They greatly strengthened the American negotiators and correspondingly weakened the British, who attempted but failed to limit the sovereignty of the United States over a part of the Northwest.

Perry<sup>12</sup> remained in command of the squadron until October 25, when he was succeeded by Elliott. On his return home he was everywhere received with great honor. Already the president had promoted him to a captaincy,<sup>13</sup> the highest rank in the navy known to the law.<sup>14</sup> Several cities voted him swords, Boston gave him a service of plate, and

<sup>12</sup> Perry lived less than six years after his great victory. On July 17, 1814, he was ordered to proceed from Newport to Baltimore and take charge of the frigate *Java*, then under construction at the latter city. Six weeks later he was employed in harassing a British squadron, which was retreating down the Potomac, by means of some batteries which he erected at Indian Head, Maryland. In 1816-1817, he was in command of the frigate *Java*, in the Mediterranean, where we were having trouble with the Algerines. It was during this tour of duty that differences arose between him and his captain of marines that culminated in a duel. In 1818, his controversy with Captain Elliott threatened to lead to a duel with that officer. In the summer of 1819, Perry was sent on an important mission to South America, with several war-ships. Soon after reaching his destination, he fell ill with the yellow fever, and on August 23 he died at Port of Spain, Island of Trinidad. The governor of the island, Sir Ralph Woodford, showed him every possible honor and accorded him a military funeral (*Niles' Register*, vol. xvii, 71-72). In 1826 his body was brought to his native land by the United States sloop-of-war *Lexington*, and was re-interred with much ceremony at Newport, Rhode Island.

<sup>13</sup> See Document 16.

<sup>14</sup> The rank of commodore was not specifically created by statute until 1862.

Newport presented him with a similar token of regard.<sup>15</sup> He was dined and toasted at Baltimore, Washington, and Boston, and the legislatures of Pennsylvania and Georgia thanked him for his great victory. On April 18, 1814, Congress authorized the president to purchase the vessels captured by Perry for two hundred fifty-five thousand dollars, and divide that sum among the captors as prize money; and it gave Perry an additional sum of five thousand dollars.<sup>16</sup> On January 6, it passed the following resolution:

That the thanks of Congress be, and the same are hereby presented to Captain Oliver Hazard Perry, and through him to the officers, seamen, marines, and infantry serving as such, attached to the squadron under his command, for the decisive and glorious victory gained on Lake Erie, on the tenth of September, in the year one thousand, eight hundred and thirteen, over a British squadron of superior force.

<sup>15</sup> The inhabitants of Quebec presented Barclay with a superb piece of plate, on which the following inscription was engraved: "Presented to Captain Robert Heriot Barclay, of his Majesty's royal navy, by the inhabitants of Quebec, in testimony of the sense they justly entertain of the exalted courage and heroic valour displayed by him, and by the officers, seamen, soldiers, and marines of the flotilla under his command, in an action with a greatly superior fleet of the enemy upon Lake Erie, on the 10th day of September, 1813; when the presence of a few additional seamen was only wanting to have effected the total discomfiture of the hostile squadron. Of Captain Barclay it may most truly be said, that although he could not command victory, he did more—he nobly deserved it." Barclay received also a piece of plate from the Canada merchants residing in London (*Naval Chronicle*, vol. xxxv, 378-379). At a public dinner in his honor, given at Terrebonne, Canada, in 1814, Barclay gave the following volunteer toast: "Commodore Perry, the gallant and generous enemy" (*Niles' Register*, vol. vi, 175).

<sup>16</sup> United States *Statutes at Large*, vol. iii, 130.



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That the President of the United States be requested to cause gold medals to be struck, emblematical of the action between the two squadrons, and to present them to Captain Perry and Captain Jesse D. Elliott, in such manner as will be most honorable to them; and that the President be further requested to present a silver medal with suitable emblems and devices to each of the commissioned officers, either of the navy or army, serving on board, and a sword to each of the midshipmen and sailing-masters who so nobly distinguished themselves on that memorable day.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> United States *Statutes at Large*, vol. iii, 141.



## DOCUMENTS



I  
DISPATCH OF COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
TO  
MAJOR-GENERAL WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON

From a copy (probably of the original) formerly in the possession of Mr. William Keeney Bixby, of St. Louis, Missouri. It is not known whether the original dispatch is still in existence. Mr. Benson John Lossing in his *Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812*, page 530, publishes a "Facsimile of Perry's Dispatch," without the date and address. Lossing says that Perry's two dispatches of September 10 were carried to their destination by Lieutenant Dulaney Forrest, who took with him to Washington the captured British flags. Forrest carried the flags but not the dispatches. See Document 10.



I. COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
TO MAJOR-GENERAL WILLIAM  
HENRY HARRISON

U.S. BRIG NIAGARA, off the Western Sisters,<sup>18</sup> Head  
of Lake Erie Sept. 10, 1813—4 p.m.

DEAR GENL: We have met the enemy, and they  
are ours—two ships, two brigs, one schooner and  
one sloop.<sup>19</sup>

Yours with great respect and esteem

O. H. PERRY

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<sup>18</sup> An island near the western end of Lake Erie, about thirty miles northwest of Sandusky, Ohio, and ten miles southwest of Middle Sister and East Sister Islands.

<sup>19</sup> The captured fleet consisted of two ships, two schooners, one brig and one sloop. Perry gives the list correctly in his official letter (see Document 7).





II  
LETTER OF COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
TO  
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY WILLIAM JONES

From the original in the United States Navy Department Archives, Washington, *Captains' Letters*, 1813, vol. vi, no. 33. This has been published many times. It appeared in *Niles' Register* (Baltimore), vol. v, 60, and in the *National Intelligencer* (Washington), September 22, 1813. Lossing's statement (*Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812*, 531) that it was carried to Washington, together with the captured flags, by Lieutenant Dulaney Forrest, is erroneous. The dispatch reached Washington on September 21 (see Document 13), and Forrest with the flags on October 10 (see Document 10 and the *National Intelligencer*, October 15, 1813).

[Identically the same letter, even to the hour, 4 p. m., was written by Commodore Perry to Commodore Isaac Chauncey, commanding United States Naval forces on the lakes, the original of which is preserved in the archives of the New York Historical Society, having been presented to it May 2, 1854, by the reverend Peter S. Chauncey, son of Commodore Chauncey.]

William Jones was secretary of the navy from January 12, 1813, to December 1, 1814. After serving in the Revolutionary marine, he entered the merchant service. In 1801-1803 he was a member of Congress, from Pennsylvania. After his term as secretary of the navy he was president of the United States Bank and collector of the port of Philadelphia.





U. S. Brig. Niagara off the Western  
Point Head of Lake Erie, Sept. 10<sup>th</sup> 1814  
4. p. M.

Sir

I have pleased the Almighty to give to the arms  
of the United States a signal victory over their enemies  
on this Lake - The British Squadron consisting of  
two Ships. two Brigs. one Schooner & one Sloop  
have this moment surrendered to the force under  
my command, after a sharp conflict.

Have the honor to be

Sir  
Very Respectfully,  
Yours Obedt. Servt  
O. H. Perry

The Hon<sup>ble</sup> William Jones

Secretary of the Navy

REDUCED FACSIMILE OF THE DISPATCH OF COMMODORE PERRY TO  
SECRETARY JONES, SEPTEMBER 10, 1813

From the original manuscript in the United States Navy Department  
Archives, Washington, D.C.

2. COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
WILLIAM JONES

U.S. BRIG NIAGARA off the Western Sister, Head  
of Lake Erie                      Sepr 10, 1813-4 p.m.

SIR: I[t] has pleased the Almighty to give to  
the arms of the United States a signal victory over  
their enemies on this lake—the British Squadron  
consisting of two ships, two brigs, one schooner and  
one sloop have this moment surrendered to the  
force under my command, after a sharp conflict.

I have the honor to be, Sir

very respectfully your obdt. servt.

O. H. PERRY



III  
LETTER OF LIEUTENANT GEORGE INGLIS  
TO  
COMMANDER ROBERT HERIOT BARCLAY

From the original in the Public Record Office, London. This document is printed in *Niles' Register* (Baltimore), volume vi, 182, and in the *Naval Chronicle* (London), volume xxxi, 252.





3. LIEUTENANT GEORGE INGLIS<sup>20</sup> TO  
COMMANDER ROBERT HERIOT BARCLAY

HIS MAJESTY'S LATE SHIP DETROIT  
10th Sept., 1813

SIR, I have the honor to transmit to you an account of the termination of the late unfortunate action with the enemy's squadron.

On coming on the quarter-deck, after your being wounded, the enemy's second brig,<sup>21</sup> at that time on our weather beam, shortly afterwards took a position on our weather bow, to rake us, to prevent which in attempting to wear to get our starboard broadside to bear upon her, a number of the guns of the larboard broadside being at this time disabled, fell on board the Queen Charlotte, at this time running up to leeward of us, in this situation the two ships remained for some time, as soon as we got clear of her, I ordered the Queen Charlotte to shoot ahead of us if possible, and attempted to back our fore topsail to get astern, but the ship laying completely unmanageable, every brace cut

<sup>20</sup> Inglis was second in rank on board the Detroit. When Barclay, on being wounded, went below, about 2:30 p.m., Inglis succeeded to the command. He gives an account of the battle from this time until its close.

<sup>21</sup> The Niagara.

away, the mizen topmast and gaff down, all the other masts badly wounded, not a stay left forward, hull shattered very much, a number of the guns disabled, and the enemy's squadron raking both ships, ahead and astern, none of our own in a situation to support us, I was under the painful necessity of answering the enemy to say we had struck, the Queen Charlotte having previously done so.

I have the honor to be, etc.      GEORGE INGLIS.

IV  
EXTRACT FROM THE DIARY  
OF  
DR. USHER PARSONS

This document is reprinted from the Rhode Island Historical Society Publications, new series, volume vii, 245-246. It is printed in part in Tristram Burges's *Battle of Lake Erie*, 84-85. Its phraseology is that of a ship's log and of a seaman and not that of a diary and of a surgeon. Burges says that it is an extract from the log of the Lawrence, that the entry in the log was made by Sailing-master W. V. Taylor within twenty-four hours after the action, and that the entry was copied in the diary on the day after the battle. None of the logs of Perry's ships are in the Navy Department at Washington. Lossing in compiling his account of the battle used the log of the Lawrence (*Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812*, 533).



#### 4. EXTRACT FROM THE DIARY OF DR. USHER PARSONS

Friday, September 10th, Put-in Bay

At 5 o'clock a.m. discovered the enemy's squadron bearing N.W. Wind S.W. At 7 could see all of the vessels viz. 2 ships, 2 brigs, 1 schooner, and 1 sloop. At 10 called all hands to quarters. At  $\frac{1}{4}$  before Meridn. the enemy commenced the action at 1 mile distance. In  $\frac{1}{2}$  an hour we came within musket shot of the enemy's new ship Detroit. At this time they opened a most destructive fire on the Lawrence from their whole squadron. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past one so entirely disabled we could work the brig no longer. At 2 p.m. most of the guns were dismounted breachings gone or carriages knocked to pieces. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 2 when not another gun could be worked or fired from the Lawrence, Capt. Perry hauled down the fighting flag<sup>22</sup> which bore this motto *Dont give up the ship* and repaired on board the Niagara, and there raised it again. In ten minutes after we struck to the enemy. Cap't Perry made all sail with the Niagara which hitherto had

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<sup>22</sup> This flag was made at Erie, Pennsylvania (Lossing, *Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812*, 533). It is now at the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.

kept out of the action and in 15 minutes passed in among the B. squadron, having the Detroit, Queen Charlotte and Lady Prevot on the starboard side and the Hunter on the larboard side and silenced them all and 10 minutes before 3 they hauled down their colours. Two small vessels attempted to escape but being overhauled struck a few minutes after three. Killed on board the Lawrence, Lieut. John Brook,<sup>23</sup> Midn. Henry Laub, James W. Allen, Jos. Kennedy, John C. Kelly, John Smith, Wm. Cranson, Andrew Michael, John Hoffman, Charles Pohig, Nelson Peters, James Jones, John Rose, James Carty, Thos. Butler, Wilson Mays, Christian Mayo, Charles Johnes, Eatheldras Sykes, and three others.

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<sup>23</sup> Lieutenant John Brooks of the marine corps. He was a son of General John Brooks, governor of Massachusetts from 1816 to 1823. A cannon-ball severed his leg from the body at the hip, and he died two hours later. A letter of Perry, dated September 12, 1813, to the father announcing the death of the son will be found in the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, vol. xix, 194.

V  
LETTER OF COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
TO  
MAJOR-GENERAL WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON

From a copy (probably of the original) formerly in the possession of Mr. William Keeney Bixby, of St. Louis. It has been published in part in *Niles' Register*, volume v, 61 (September 25, 1813).





5. COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
TO MAJOR-GENERAL WILLIAM  
HENRY HARRISON

11. Sept., 1813

DR. SIR: I am this moment informed by Capt Horton<sup>24</sup> that you have commenced your march—I have taken the liberty of requesting your officer, who was bound to Fort Meigs, to return with my despatches to you, and the government—and have promised to take the responsibility of his deviating from his orders, on myself—I hope my anxiety to communicate to you, intelligence of so much importance will be my excuse—We have a great number of prisoners, which I wish to land—will you be so good, as to order a guard to receive them? and inform me of the place?—Considerable numbers have been killed and wounded on both sides—from the best information, we have more prisoners, than we have men on board our vessels.<sup>25</sup>

In great haste, yours very respectfully

O. H. PERRY

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<sup>24</sup> The records of the United States War Department show that Benjamin Horton and Benjamin Horton, Jr., of New York; James Horton, of Maryland; and William Horton, of Georgia, served as captains in the War of 1812.

<sup>25</sup> According to Mr. Neeser's statistics of the battle (*Statistical and*

Many of the prisoners are of opinion, that Genl. Proctor<sup>26</sup> has commenced his retreat march—and that the Indians, after committing great excesses, have withdrawn.

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*Chronological History of the United States Navy*, vol. ii, 50-51), the men on board the prizes numbered 323, and on board the American squadron 485. There is however some variation in the figures given by different authorities. One hundred and twenty-three of Perry's men were unfit for duty (see Document 7).

<sup>26</sup>Major-general Henry Procter, commander of the British army on the Detroit line.



WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON, 1815



VI  
LETTER OF COMMANDER ROBERT HERIOT BARCLAY  
TO  
SIR JAMES YEO

From the original in the British Public Record office, London. This letter has been frequently published, in whole or in part (See *Niles' Register*, volume vi, 181-182; the *Naval Chronicle*, volume xxxi, 250-253; and H. B. Dawson's *Battles of the United States*, volume ii, 289-290). Yeo was in command of the British naval forces on the lakes.



6. COMMANDER ROBERT HERIOT BARCLAY  
TO COMMODORE SIR JAMES YEO

HIS MAJESTY'S LATE SHIP DETROIT, Put-in Bay,  
Lake Erie 12th September, 1813

SIR: The last letter I had the honor of writing to you, dated the 6th instant, I informed you that unless certain intimation was received of more seamen being on their way to Amherstburg, I should be obliged to sail with the squadron deplorably manned as it was, to fight the enemy (who blockaded the port ) to enable us to get supplies of provisions and stores of every description, so perfectly destitute of provisions was the post that there was not a day's flour in store, and the crews of the squadron under my command were on half allowance of many things, and when that was done there was no more; such were the motives which induced Major-general Proctor (whom, by your instructions I was directed to consult, and whose wishes, I was enjoined to execute as far as relates to the good of the country) to concur in the necessity of a battle being risked under the many disadvantages which I laboured, and it now remains for me, the most melancholy task to relate to you the unfortunate issue of that battle as well as the many untoward circumstances that led to that event.

No intelligence of seamen having arrived I sailed, on the 9th instant fully expecting to meet the enemy next morning, as they had been seen among the islands—nor was I mistaken, soon after day light they were seen in motion in Put-in-Bay; the wind then at south west, and light, giving us the weather gage; I bore up for them in hopes of bringing them to action among the islands, but that intention was soon frustrated by the wind suddenly shifting to the south east, which brought the enemy directly to windward.

The line was formed according to a given plan, so that each ship might be supported against the superior force of the two brigs opposed to them; about ten the enemy had cleared the islands and immediately bore up, under easy sail, in a line abreast, each brig being also supported by the small vessels; at a quarter before twelve I commenced the action by firing a few long guns, about a quarter past the American commodore, also supported by two schooners, one carrying four long 12 pounders—the other a long thirty-two, and twenty-four pounder, came to close action with the Detroit—the other brig of the enemy apparently destined to engage the Queen Charlotte, supported in like manner by two schooners, kept so far to windward as to render the Queen Charlotte's 24 pounder carronades useless, while she was, with the Lady Prevost, exposed to the heavy and destructive fire of the Caledonia and four other schooners, armed with long and heavy guns, like those I have already described.



Too soon, alas, was I deprived of the services of the noble and intrepid Captain Finnis,<sup>27</sup> who soon after the commencement of the action fell, and with him fell my greatest support. Soon after Lieutenant Stokoe of the Queen Charlotte was struck senseless by a splinter which deprived the country of his services at this very critical period. As I perceived the Detroit had enough to contend with, without the prospect of a fresh brig; Provincial Lieutenant Irvine<sup>28</sup> who then had charge of the Queen Charlotte behaved with great courage, but his experience was much too limited, to supply the place of such an officer as Captain Finnis, hence she proved of far less assistance than I expected.

The action continued with great fury until half past two, when I perceived my opponent drop astern, and a boat passing from him to the Niagara (which vessel was at this time perfectly fresh), the American commodore seeing that as yet the day was against him (his vessel having struck soon after he left her), and also the very defenceless state of the Detroit, which ship was now a perfect wreck principally from the raking fire of the gun boats, and also that the Queen Charlotte was in such a situation that I could receive very little assistance from her, and the Lady Prevost being at this time too far to leeward, from her rudder being injured,

<sup>27</sup> For the full names of the officers killed and wounded, see Barclay's list at the end of this document.

<sup>28</sup> Second Lieutenant Robert Irvine, of the Canadian provincial marine.

made a noble and, alas too successful an effort to regain it, for he bore up and supported by his small vessels, passed within pistol shot, and took a raking position on our bow, nor could I prevent it, as the unfortunate situation of the Queen Charlotte prevented us from wearing, in attempting it we fell on board her. My gallant first Lieutenant Garland was now mortally wounded, and myself so severely that I was obliged to quit the deck.

Manned as the squadron was with not more than fifty British seamen, the rest a mixed crew of Canadians and soldiers, and who were totally unacquainted with such service rendered the loss of officers more sensibly felt and never in any action was the loss more severe, every officer commanding vessels, and their seconds, was either killed, or wounded so severely as to be unable to keep the deck.

Lieutenant Buchan in the Lady Prevost behaved most nobly, and did everything that a brave and experienced officer could do, in a vessel armed with 12 pounder carronades, against vessels carrying long guns—I regret to state that he was very severely wounded. Lieutenant Bignal (of the Dover),<sup>29</sup> commanding the Hunter displayed the greatest intrepidity, but his guns being small 2, 4, and 6 pounders, he could be of much less service than he wished.

Every officer in the Detroit behaved in the most exemplary manner. Lieutenant Inglis, shewed such calm intrepidity that I was fully convinced

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<sup>29</sup> His Majesty's troop-ship Dover. Bignell was detached from her at Quebec.

that on leaving the deck I left the ship in excellent hands, and for an account of the battle after that, I refer you to his letter which he wrote me, for your information.

Mr. Hoffmeister, purser of the *Detroit*, nobly volunteered his services on deck, and behaved in a manner that reflects the highest honor on him, I regret to add that, he is very severely wounded in the knee.

Provincial Lieutenant Purvis<sup>30</sup> and the Military Officer Lieutenant Garden,<sup>31</sup> of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and O'Keefe<sup>32</sup> of the 41st Regiment, behaved in a manner which excited my warmest admiration: the few British seamen, I had, behaved with their usual intrepidity, and as long as I was on the deck the troops behaved with a calmness and courage, worthy of a more fortunate issue to their exertions.

The weather gage gave the enemy a prodigious advantage as it enabled them, not only to choose their position, but their distance also, which they did in such a manner as to prevent the carronades of the *Queen Charlotte*, and *Lady Prevost*, from having much effect, while their long guns did great execution particularly against the *Queen Charlotte*.

Captain Parry has behaved in a most humane and attentive manner, not only to myself and officers, but to all the wounded.

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<sup>30</sup> First Lieutenant Francis Purvis of the Canadian provincial marine.

<sup>31</sup> John Campbell Garden.

<sup>32</sup> Arthur O'Keefe.

I trust that, although unsuccessful, you will approve of the motives that induced me to sail under so many disadvantages, and that it may be hereafter proved, that under such circumstances the honor of His Majesty's flag has not been tarnished.

I enclose the list of killed and wounded. And have the honor to be, Sir, your most obedient humble servant

R. H. BARCLAY, *Commander*, late Sen. Officer.



A STATEMENT OF THE FORCE OF HIS MAJESTY'S SQUADRON ON LAKE ERIE AND THAT  
OF THE UNITED STATES <sup>33</sup>

BRITISH SQUADRON				UNITED STATES SQUADRON				
VESSELS NAMES	No. of		REMARKS	VESSELS NAMES	No. of		REMARKS	
	LONG GUNS	CALIBRE CAR-RONADES			LONG GUNS	CALIBRE CAR-RONADES		
Detroit	2	24		Lawrence	2	12	18	32
	1	18		Niagara	2	12	18	32
	6	12		Caledonia	2	24	1	32
	8	9		Ariel	4	12		
Queen Charlotte	3	12	14	Summers	1	24	1	32
Lady Prevost	3	9	10	Porcupine	1	32		
Hunter	2	6		Tigress	1	32		} all on Pivot
	4	4		2	12			
Little Belt	2	2		Scorpion	1	32		
	1	9		Trip	1	24		
Chippeway	2	6			1	24		
	1	9						

R. H. BARCLAY, *Commander.*

<sup>33</sup> These lists agree with Perry's as respects the number of guns. They give the calibre of the guns, a detail omitted by Perry (see Document 7).

A LIST OF THE KILLED AND WOUNDED IN HIS MAJESTY'S SHIPS AND VESSELS IN  
AN ACTION WITH THE AMERICAN SQUADRON ON LAKE ERIE, 10 SEPT. 1813

	KILLED	WOUNDED	NAMES OF OFFICERS KILLED	NAMES OF OFFICERS WOUNDED	
Officers	3	9	Capt. Robt. Finnis Queen Charlotte	Capt. R. H. Barclay, Detroit, dangerously J. M. Hoffmeister, Purser do. — do. — Jas. Stokkoe, 1st Lieut., Q. Charlotte,	severely
Men	38	85	Jno. Garland 1st Lieut. — Detroit	Jas. Foster, Midshipman, do., Lt. Edwd. Buchan,	slightly
Total	41	94	Jas. Garden Lieut. Royl. Newfdland. Regt.	Commanding Lady Prevost, dangerously F. Rolette — 1st Lieut., Do., severely Lieut. Geo. Bignell, Commandr. — the Hunter, severely Henry Gateshill, Masters Mate, do. — slightly Jno. Campbell, Masters Mate, Commandg. the Chippeway — slightly.	

R. H. BARCLAY, *Commander and late Senior Officer.*





VII  
LETTER OF COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
TO  
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY WILLIAM JONES

From American State Papers, *Naval Affairs*, volume i, 295-297. The original of this letter is not in the United States Navy Department Archives, Washington. The letter has been frequently published (see, for instance, *Niles' Register*, volume v, 61-62; James's *Naval Occurrences*, appendix, pages xc-xcii; and H. B. Dawson's *Battles of the United States*, volume ii, 287-288).



7. COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
WILLIAM JONES

U.S. SCHOONER ARIEL,<sup>34</sup> Put-in-Bay  
September 13th, 1813

SIR: In my last<sup>35</sup> I informed you that we had captured the enemy's fleet on this lake. I have now the honor to give you the most important particulars of the action.

On the morning of the 10th instant, at sunrise, they were discovered from Put-in-Bay, where I lay at anchor with the squadron under my command. We got under way, the wind light at S.W., and stood for them. At ten a.m. the wind hauled to S.E. and brought us to windward; formed the line, and bore up. At fifteen minutes before twelve, the enemy commenced firing; at five minutes before twelve, the action commenced on our part. Finding their fire very destructive, owing to their long guns, and its being mostly directed at the Lawrence, I made sail, and directed the other vessels to

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<sup>34</sup> Perry transferred his flag to the Ariel, on the morning of September 11. Both squadrons remained at anchor near the place of battle until about nine a.m. of that day, when they sailed for Put-in-Bay, where they arrived about noon (W. W. Dobbins's *History of the Battle of Lake Erie*, 60).

<sup>35</sup> See Document 2.

follow, for the purpose of closing with the enemy. Every brace and bowline being soon shot away, she became unmanageable, notwithstanding the great exertions of the sailing master. In this situation, she sustained the action upwards of two hours, within canister distance, until every gun was rendered useless, and the greater part of her crew either killed or wounded. Finding she could no longer annoy the enemy, I left her in charge of Lieutenant Yarnall,<sup>36</sup> who, I was convinced, from the bravery already displayed by him, would do what would comport with the honor of the flag. At half past two, the wind springing up, Captain Elliott was enabled to bring his vessel, the Niagara, gallantly into close action. I immediately went on board of her, when he anticipated my wishes, by volunteering to bring the schooners, which had been kept astern by the lightness of the wind, into closer action. It was with unspeakable pain that I saw, soon after I got on board the Niagara, the flag of the Lawrence come down; although I was perfectly sensible that she had been defended to the last, and that, to have continued to make a show of resistance would have been a wanton sac-

<sup>36</sup> The names and titles of the officers mentioned by Perry in this letter are as follows: Lieutenant John J. Yarnall, Master-commandant Jesse Duncan Elliott, Acting Lieutenant Dulaney Forrest, Sailing-master William V. Taylor, Lieutenant (of marines) John Brooks, Midshipman Henry Laub, Midshipman John Clark, Purser Samuel Hambleton, Midshipman Thomas Claxton, Midshipman Augustus Swartout, Lieutenant Joseph E. Smith, Lieutenant John J. Edwards, Midshipman Nelson Webster, Captain Henry B. Brevoort (of the army), Lieutenant Daniel Turner, Lieutenant John Packet, Sailing-master Stephen Champ- lin, and Purser Humphrey Magrath.

rifice of the remains of her brave crew. But the enemy was not able to take possession of her, and circumstances soon permitted her flag again to be hoisted. At forty-five minutes past two the signal was made for "closer action." The Niagara being very little injured, I determined to pass through the enemy's line; bore up, and passed ahead of their two ships and a brig, giving a raking fire to them, from the starboard guns, and to a large schooner and sloop from the larboard side, at half pistol shot distance. The smaller vessels, at this time, having got within grape and canister distance, under the direction of Captain Elliott, and keeping up a well directed fire, the two ships, a brig, and schooner, surrendered, a schooner and sloop making a vain attempt to escape.

Those officers and men who were immediately under my observation, evinced the greatest gallantry; and I have no doubt that all others conducted themselves as became American officers and seamen.

Lieutenant Yarnell, first of the Lawrence, although several times wounded, refused to quit the deck.

Midshipman Forrest (doing duty as lieutenant) and Sailing Master Taylor, were of great assistance to me.

I have great pain in stating to you the death of Lieutenant Brooks of the marines, and Midshipman Laub, both of the Lawrence, and Midshipman John Clark, of the Scorpion; they were valuable and promising officers.

Mr. Hambleton, purser, who volunteered his services on deck, was severely wounded, late in the action; Midshipmen Claxton and Swartwout, of the Lawrence, were severely wounded.

On board the Niagara, Lieutenants Smith and Edwards, and Midshipman Webster, (doing duty as sailing master) behaved in a very handsome manner.

Captain Brevoort, of the army, who acted as a volunteer, in the capacity of a marine officer, on board that vessel, is an excellent and brave officer, and with his musketry did great execution.

Lieutenant Turner, commanding the Caledonia, brought that vessel into action in the most able manner, and is an officer that, in all situations, may be relied on.

The Ariel, Lieutenant Packet, and Scorpion, Sailing Master Champlin, were enabled to get early into action, and were of great service.

Captain Elliott speaks in the highest terms of Mr. Magrath, purser, who had been despatched in a boat on service, previous to my getting on board the Niagara; and being a seaman, since the action has rendered essential service in taking charge of one of the prizes.

Of Captain Elliott, already so well known to the government, it would almost be superfluous to speak. In this action he evinced his characteristic bravery and judgment; and, since the close of the action, has given me the most able and essential assistance.

I have the honor to enclose you a return of the killed and wounded, together with a statement of the relative force of the squadrons. The captain and first lieutenant of the Queen Charlotte, and first lieutenant to the Detroit, were killed; Captain Barclay, senior officer, and the commander of the Lady Prevost, severely wounded. The commanders of the Hunter and Chippeway, slightly wounded.

Their loss in killed and wounded<sup>37</sup> I have not yet been able to ascertain; it must, however, have been very great.

Very respectfully, I have the honor to be, sir,  
your most obedient servant,

O. H. PERRY

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<sup>37</sup> See Document 6, enclosure 2.

[ENCLOSURE <sup>38</sup>] LIST OF KILLED AND WOUNDED ON  
BOARD THE UNITED STATES' SQUADRON, UN-  
DER COMMAND OF O. H. PERRY, ESQ. IN THE  
ACTION OF 10TH SEPTEMBER, 1813, VIZ:

*On board the Lawrence, killed*

John Brooks, lieutenant marines	Joseph Kennedy, ditto
Henry Laub, midshipman	Charles Pohig, seaman
Christopher Mayhew, quarter master	John Smith, seaman
James W. Allen, seaman	William Cranston, ordinary sea- man
John C. Kelly, private in the reg- iment	Andrew Michael, seaman
Nelson Peters, seaman	John Hoffman, ordinary seaman
James Jones, ditto	James Brown, seaman
John Rose, ditto	Ethelred Sykes, landsman
James Carty, sailmaker's mate	Philip Sharbley, corporal of ma- rines
Thomas Butler, seaman	Jesse Harland, private
Wilson Mays, carpenter's mate	Abner Williams, ditto

*On board the Lawrence, wounded*

John J. Yarnall, 1st lieutenant, slightly	William Dawson, seaman, severely
Dulaney Forrest, 2d ditto, slightly	Westerly Johnson, ordinary sea- man, severely
William V. Taylor, sailing mas- ter, slightly	Samuel Spywood, ditto, severely
Samuel Hambleton, purser, se- verely	Robert Hill, seaman, slightly
	Francis Cummings, ordinary sea- man, severely

<sup>38</sup> These lists, it would seem, were enclosed with the letter.



Thomas Claxton, midshipman, severely	John E. Brown, quarter gunner, severely
Augustus Swartwout, midshipman, severely	William Johnson, boatswain's mate, severely
Jonas Stone, carpenter, slightly	James Helan, ditto, slightly
William C. Keen, master at arms, slightly	George Cornell, carpenter's mate, slightly
Francis Mason, quarter master, severely	Thomas Hammond, armorer, slightly
John Newen, ditto, severely	John Burnham, ditto, severely
Joseph Lewis, ditto, severely	John Burdeen, ditto, severely
Ezekiel Fowler, ditto, slightly	Andrew Mattison, ditto, severely
Henry Schroeder, ordinary seaman, severely	Jeremiah Easterbrook, ordinary seaman, severely
Benoni Price, seaman, severely	Thomas Reed, ditto, severely
Thomas Robinson, ditto, severely	Charles Vandyke, ordinary seaman, severely
Peter Kinsley, ditto, severely	William Simpson, ditto, severely
Nathan Chapman, ditto, severely	Jesse Williams, ditto, slightly
Thomas Hill, ordinary seaman, severely	James Hadley, ditto, slightly
Barney M'Cain, ditto, severely	James Bird, marine, severely
William Thompson, seaman, severely	William Burnett, ditto, severely
George Varnum, ditto, severely	William Baggs, ditto, severely
James Moses, ditto, severely	David Christie, ditto, severely
William Roe, ditto, severely	Henry Vanpoole, ditto, severely
Joseph Denning, ditto, severely	Thomas Tuff, landsman, severely
William Daring, ditto, severely	Elijah Barlin, ditto, severely
John Clay, ditto, severely	John Adams, ditto, slightly
Stephen Fairfield, ditto, severely	Charles Harrington, ditto, slightly
George Williams, ditto, severely	William B. Perkins, ditto, slightly
Lannon Huse, ditto, severely	Nathaniel Wade, boy, severely
James Waddington, ditto, severely	Newport Hazard, ditto, slightly

On the morning of the action, the sick list of the Lawrence contained thirty-one unfit for duty.

*On board the Niagara, killed*

Peter Morell, seaman	Isaac Hardy, ordinary seaman
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*On board the Niagara, wounded*

John J. Edwards, lieutenant	Henry Davidson, seaman
John L. Cummings, midshipman	John M. Strebeck, ordinary sea-
Edward Martin, seaman (since dead)	man John Freeman, ditto
Charles Davidson, seaman	James Sansford, seaman
Daniel Bennet, ditto	Thomas Wilson, ditto
John Felton, boatswain's mate	Sergeant Mason, marine
William Davis, ordinary seaman (since dead)	Corporal Scott, ditto Thomas Miller, ditto
Joshua Trapnel, marine (since dead)	John Rumas, ditto George McManomy, ditto
Ronvell Hall, ordinary seaman	George Scoffield, ditto
George Platt, seaman	Samuel Cochran, ditto
Elias Wiley, ordinary seaman	

On the morning of the action, the sick list of the Niagara contained twenty-eight unfit for duty.

*On board the Caledonia, wounded*

James Artus, slightly	Isaac Perkins, slightly
James Philips, slightly	

*On board the Somers, wounded*

Charles Ordun	Godfrey Bowman
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*On board the Ariel, killed*

John White, boatswain's mate

*Wounded*

William Sloss, ordinary seaman, slightly	John Lucas, landsman, slightly Robert Wilson, seaman, slightly
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[ENCLOSURE 2] STATEMENT OF THE FORCE OF THE  
BRITISH SQUADRON

Detroit, ship	19 guns, one on pivot, and two howitzers
Queen Charlotte, ship	17 do. do.
Lady Prevost, schooner	13 do. do.
Hunter, brig	10 do.
Little Belt, sloop	3 do.
Chippewa, schooner	1 do. and two swivels
	<hr/> 63 guns

Note—The Detroit is a new ship, very strongly built, and mounts long twenty-fours, eighteens, and twelves.

*Statement of the Force of the United States Squadron*

Lawrence, brig	20 guns.
Niagara, brig	20 do.
Caledonia, brig	3 do.
Ariel, schooner	4 do. (one burst early in action)
Scorpion, schooner	2 do.
Somers, schooner	2 do.
Trippe, sloop	1 do.
Tigress, schooner	1 do.
Porcupine, schooner	1 do.
	<hr/> 54 guns

The exact number of the enemy's force has not been ascertained, but I have good reason to believe that it exceeded ours by nearly one hundred men.

VIII  
LETTER OF COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
TO  
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY WILLIAM JONES

From the United States Navy Department Archives, *Captains' Letters*, 1813, volume vi, number 41.



8. COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
WILLIAM JONES

U.S. SCHR. ARIEL, Put in Bay, 13th Septr., 1813.

Sir: I have caused the prisoners taken on the 10th inst. to be landed at Sandusky, and have requested Genl. Harrison to have them marched to Chilicothy,<sup>39</sup> and there wait until your pleasure shall be known respecting them.

The Lawrence has been so entirely cut up, it is absolutely necessary, she should go into a safe harbor. I have therefore directed Lt. Yarnall to proceed to Erie in her, with the wounded of the fleet, and dismantle and get her over the bar, as soon as possible. It will probably be impossible to repair her this season in time to be of any service. I have to ask your directions as respects the disposal of the prizes, the two ships in a heavy sea this day, at anchor lost their masts, being much injured in the action. I shall haul them into the inner bay, at this place, and moor them for the present. The four other prizes, I shall fit out for the expedition against Malden, and for transporting Genl. Har-

<sup>39</sup> Chillicothe, Ohio, then capital of the state, situated about one hundred miles east by north of Cincinnati.

rierson's troops. The Detroit is a remarkably fine ship, sails well and is very strongly built. The Queen Charlotte is a much superior vessel to what has been represented. The Lady Prevost, is a large fine schooner.

I also beg your instructions respecting the wounded. I am satisfied, Sir, that whatever steps, I might take governed by humanity, would meet your approbation, under this impression, I have taken upon myself to promise Capt. Barclay who is very dangerously wounded that he shall be landed as near Lake Ontario as possible, and I had no doubt you would allow me to parole<sup>40</sup> him, he is under the impression that nothing but leaving this part of the country, will save his life. There is also a number of Canadians among the prisoners, many who have families.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

very respectfully your obd. serv.

O. H. PERRY

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<sup>40</sup> See Documents 14 and 16.



IX  
LETTER OF COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
TO  
MAJOR-GENERAL WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON

From *Niles' Register*, volume v, 263.



9. COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
TO MAJOR-GENERAL WILLIAM  
HENRY HARRISON

U.S. SCHR. ARIEL, Sept. 15, 1813

Sir: The very great assistance, in the action of the 10th inst. derived from those men you were pleased to send on board the squadron, render it a duty to return you my sincere thanks for so timely a reinforcement.<sup>41</sup> In fact, sir, I may say, without those men the victory could not have been achieved; and equally to assure you, that those officers and men behaved as became good soldiers and seamen. Those who were under my immediate observation, evinced great ardor and bravery. Captain Brevoort,<sup>42</sup> of the second regiment of infantry, serving on board the Niagara, I beg leave to recommend particularly to your notice: he is a brave and gallant officer, and as far as I am capable of judging an excellent one. I am convinced you will present the merit of this officer to the view of the honorable secretary of war, as I shall to the honorable secretary of the navy.

Very respectfully, I am, sir, your obedient servant,  
OLIVER H. PERRY

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<sup>41</sup> The names of the officers and men serving with Perry will be found in the American State Papers, *Naval Affairs*, vol. i, 566-572.

<sup>42</sup> Captain Henry B. Brevoort.



X  
LETTER OF COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
TO  
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY WILLIAM JONES

From the United States Navy Department Archives, *Captains' Letters*, 1813, volume vi, number 65.



10. COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
WILLIAM JONES

U.S. SCHOOR. ARIEL, Put in Bay, Sepr. 17th, 1813

Sir: I send by Mr. Forrest<sup>43</sup> the flags taken in  
the action of the 10th inst. on Lake Erie.

I have the honor to be, sir, your Obd. Servt.

O. H. PERRY

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<sup>43</sup> Acting Lieutenant Dulaney Forrest. See page 45.





XI  
LETTER OF COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
TO  
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY WILLIAM JONES

From the United States Navy Department Archives, *Captains' Letters*, 1813, volume vi, number 66.



11. COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
WILLIAM JONES

U.S. SCHOONER ARIEL, At anchor off Portage  
River<sup>44</sup> 18th Septr., 1813

Sir: Among the officers taken are a number who have large family's in Canada.<sup>45</sup> I have directed that they be left near the lake, until your orders may be had respecting them. They are extremely anxious to return home.

Very respectfully, I have the honor to be, sir,  
your obd. sert. O. H. PERRY

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<sup>44</sup> The Portage River empties into Lake Erie a few miles to the westward of Sandusky Bay.

<sup>45</sup> For officers of the Canadian provincial marine, see L. Homfray Irving's *Officers of the British Forces in Canada*, 202-207.



XII  
LETTER OF COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
TO  
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY WILLIAM JONES

From the United States Navy Department Archives, *Captains' Letters*, 1813, volume vi, number 73.





U.S. Schooner *Porcupine* Sept. 20<sup>th</sup> 1813

off Portage River

Sir

Still wishing to return to Rhode Island the moment my services can be spared from this Lake I hope I may be honored with your prescription to that effect.

I beg leave Sir to call your attention again to the case of Capt. Barclay. I have taken upon myself to promise him his parole. In fact Sir, in his situation I could not have refused him any thing - although I am sensible I ought to have waited for your orders - I trust Sir you will estimate the motives which have governed me in this affair.

With great Respect

I am Sir

The Hon<sup>ble</sup> <sup>Genl</sup> William Jones  
Secretary of the Navy

Your Obedt. Servt  
Q. A. Perry

REDUCED FACSIMILE OF THE LETTER OF COMMODORE PERRY TO  
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY WILLIAM JONES, SEPTEMBER 20, 1813  
From the original manuscript in the United States Navy Department  
Archives, Washington, D.C.



12. COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
WILLIAM JONES

U. S. SCHOOR. ARIEL, Sepr. 20th, 1813  
off Portage River

Sir: Still wishing to return to Rhode Island the moment my services can be spared from this lake I hope I may be honored with your permission to that effect.<sup>46</sup>

I beg leave, Sir, to call your attention again to the case of Capt. Barclay. I have taken upon myself to promise him, his parole. In fact, Sir, in his situation I could not have refused him any thing—although I am sensible I ought to have waited for your orders—I trust, Sir, you will estimate the motives which have governed me in this affair.<sup>47</sup>

With great respect, I am, Sir, your obd. sert.

O. H. PERRY

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<sup>46</sup> See Documents 16 and 17.

<sup>47</sup> See Documents 8, 14, and 16.



XIII  
LETTER OF SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
WILLIAM JONES  
TO  
COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY

From the United States Navy Department Archives, *Letters to Officers of Ships of War*, volume xi, 93.



13. SECRETARY OF THE NAVY WILLIAM  
JONES TO COMMODORE OLIVER  
HAZARD PERRY

Naval Department [Washington, D. C.]  
Sept. 21st, 1813

Sir: Rumour<sup>48</sup> had preceded and prepared the public mind for the enthusiastic reception of the glorious tidings, confirmed by your letter of the 10th received and published in handbills this day.

Every demonstration of joy and admiration, that a victory so transcendently brilliant, decisive, and important in its consequences, could excite, was exhibited as far and as fast as the roar of cannon and the splendour of illumination could travel.

In the absence of the President I have no hesitation in anticipating his warmest admiration and thanks, in behalf of our country, for this splendid achievement, which must ever continue among the brightest honours of the nation. You will please accept, for yourself, an ample share, and communicate to the gallant officers, seamen, and others, under your command, the full measure of those sentiments and feelings, which it is my duty to express, and my delight to cherish.

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<sup>48</sup> The first news of the battle reached Washington on September 18.

Tomorrow, I trust, will bring the interesting details, for which so many hearts are palpitating between the laurel and the cypress.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. JONES

# GLORIOUS NEWS.

HERALD—EXTRA.

CARLISLE, SEPTEMBER 24, 1813.

## THE BRITISH FLEET ON LAKE ERIE TAKEN.

GRANDCOURT, 10th, 14.

By the arrival of the express mail on Monday evening, we have received the important and satisfying intelligence of the capture of the whole British fleet on Lake Erie by the U. S. squadron under the command of commodore PERRY. The particulars of the engagement have not yet been received; but it appears that the British had embarked their fleet with an exact proportion of men, as if they were prepared for boarding. On the receipt of the above information the town was illuminated and every demonstration of joy expressed. Previous to the engagement General Harrison had removed the army from Sandusky to the vicinity of the lake preparatory to their embarkation which was now completed immediately to take place.

U. S. Brig Niagara, off the Western Shore, head of Lake Erie, Sept. 10th, 1813, 4 P. M.

DEAR GENERAL,

We have met the enemy; and they are ours! Two ships, two brigs, one schooner and one sloop.

Yours with great respect and esteem.

O. H. PERRY.

Maj. Gen. Harrison.

September 10th.

Dear Sir—We have a great number of prisoners, which I wish to land; Will you be so good as to order a guard to receive them; and inform me the place? Considerable numbers have been killed and wounded on both sides.—From the best information, we have more prisoners than we have men on board our vessels. In great haste, yours very truly,

O. H. PERRY.

Gen. Harrison.

Copy of a letter to the editor of the Greenburgh Gazette, by last night's Express Post, from Pittsburgh, Sunday, 9 o'clock, 10th September,

"A letter has just been received by the mail from Cleveland, dated "Lower Seneca, Sept. 12, which says, "We have just received an express from commodore PERRY, stating his having taken

The whole British Fleet, more prisoners than he had men on board, and Two Brigadier Generals."

The letter further states—"We shall embark for Malden to-morrow."

FACSIMILE OF A BROADSIDE ANNOUNCING THE VICTORY  
From the original in the collection of the New York Historical  
Society





XIV  
LETTER OF SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
WILLIAM JONES  
TO  
COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY

From the United States Navy Department Archives, *Letters to Officers of Ships of War*, volume xi, 94-95.



14. SECRETARY OF THE NAVY WILLIAM  
JONES TO COMMODORE OLIVER  
HAZARD PERRY

NAVY DEPARTMENT, [Washington, D. C.]  
Sept. 22nd, 1813

Sir: Referring to my letter of yesterday, in answer to yours of the 10th, I have now to acknowledge the receipt, this instant, of your two letters of the 13th inst.,<sup>49</sup> containing the details of the action, which terminated in the glorious victory of the 10th—which, though sanguinary and destructive, I am happy to find, has been less so, among our valuable officers, than I had apprehended.

The commissary general of prisoners,<sup>50</sup> who has the entire direction of that department, will immediately direct what is proper to be done in that respect, and I will venture to anticipate his approbation of your promise to admit Captain Barclay to his parole, and to extend, not only to him, but to the other wounded prisoners, all the humanity, which a generous enemy can bestow, and a benevolent people approve.

In respect to the disposition of the prizes, I can,

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<sup>49</sup> See Documents 2, 7, 8, and 13.

<sup>50</sup> General John Mason. See *Niles' Register*, vol. v, 52-53.

at present, only observe, that you will employ such as may be in condition, in such way as the public service may require, on the contemplated military expedition; and place the remainder in safety, until future measures be adopted for their final disposition.

They will, of course, be regularly libelled and adjudicated, in some of one of the courts of the United States.

The two ships, I presume, are too heavy to be got over the Bar of Erie; and I know not, if the inner Bay of Sandusky affords shelter sufficient, until another more secure and convenient can be found. Should the success of our arms place Malden and Detroit River in our possession, this object would be obtained.

I hope the military expedition may not detain the whole of your force so long as to defeat the intention of sending a part into Lake Huron, should we be so fortunate as to command the passes.

Upon all these subjects, and in everything relating to your command, you will communicate with, and receive the instructions of Commodore Chauncey, communicating to this department direct (in order to save time), as well as to Commodore Chauncey, whatever may appear to you of sufficient importance to the government.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. JONES

XV  
LETTER OF DR. USHER PARSONS  
TO  
WILLIAM PARSONS

From the Rhode Island Historical Society *Publications*, new series, volume vii, 245-246. Parsons was a naval surgeon on board the flag-ship Lawrence. In 1852 he delivered a discourse before the Rhode Island Historical Society in which he made a complete statement of his recollections of the Battle of Lake Erie (Providence, 1853, 36 pages). The same views that he then expressed respecting Elliott he held a few days after the battle as may be seen from the letter here published.



15. DR. USHER PARSONS TO WILLIAM  
PARSONS

OFF LOWER SANDUSKY, near Put-In Bay, and near  
the head of Lake Erie on board Brig Lawrence  
Sept. 22d, 1813

DEAR PARENTS: Before the arrival of this, an account of our victorious engagement with the British squadron on this lake will reach you. I can only add a few particulars. Most of the action was supported by this vessel as you will be led to suppose when informed that out of one hundred fifty men (our ships crew), thirty-one of whom were sick previous to the action we had rising eighty<sup>51</sup> killed and wounded, among whom were nearly all our officers save the intrepid commander. On board all the others were about thirty killed and wounded. This vessel supported a destructive fire from the enemy's two ships on one side and a brig astern raking us for two hours, all within musket shot, during which we so disabled the ships that when the commodore left this vessel to bring another into her assistance he succeeded in fifteen minutes in making all three strike. It may seem<sup>1</sup> mysterious to one how some of the other vessels

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<sup>51</sup> According to Perry's list, eighty-three (see Document 7).

could see us slaughtered in such a manner, but it is equally so to us. Nor can the commanders of some of them offer satisfactory reasons, for remaining behind. Unfortunately for the wounded, the two surgeons had been confined for some days with fever and could render them but little assistance. It, however, has operated in my favour, as I have had all the amputating to perform and it affords me the greatest pleasure to reflect that in no case have I failed of the best success, this has impressed the commodore with so favourable an opinion toward me that I have not the least doubt of his rendering me assistance to a better situation. He is the first warm friend I have met with in the service, capable of assisting me. I am now on my way in the *Lawrence* for Erie, having all the sick and wounded on board and shall continue with them in the hospital 'til the most of them recover, and then intend to shape my course for Cape Home. Gen. Harrison was on board the *Lawrence* this morning, and his army was on an island within half a mile of the vessel, consisting of about seven thousand. Tomorrow they cross to Malden<sup>52</sup> a distance of about eighteen miles. Since the loss of the British fleet the Indians have deserted Detroit after burning the place and (as is reported) massacring the inhabitants. I had some narrow escapes for my life; during the action five cannon balls passed through the room in which I was attending to the wounded. Two

<sup>52</sup> The movement of the army that culminated in the Battle of the Thames on October 5, 1813.



that I had dressed and laid aside were afterwards killed during the action. The enemy's squadron mounted more guns than ours and carried at least one fourth more men. In the course of a year I hope to obtain a little prize money. I have enjoyed very bad health during this cruise and am reduced to a skeleton, and will never cross this or any other lake again.

I have lately received a letter from Dr. A. Hall Jr and one from Charlotte Parsons, dated August 28th.

Remember me to enquiring friends. Your affectionate son

USHER PARSONS

Saml. is steady and well.



XVI  
LETTER OF SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
WILLIAM JONES  
TO  
COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY

From the United States Navy Department Archives, *Letters to Officers of Ships of War*, volume xi, 102-103.



16. SECRETARY OF THE NAVY WILLIAM  
JONES TO COMMODORE OLIVER  
HAZARD PERRY

NAVY DEPARTMENT [Washington, D.C.]  
Sept. 29th, 1813.

SIR: The President has confirmed the sentiments, which I anticipated, in my letter to you of the 21st inst.<sup>53</sup> in a manner the most ample and expressive.

I have, by his direction, executed a commission<sup>54</sup> promoting you to the rank of a captain in the navy of the United States, which I will forward to whatever place you shall please to direct.

I am, this morning, favoured with yours of the 20th<sup>55</sup> and, although there is much of importance yet to be done upon the Upper Lakes, which I should like you to bring to maturity, yet, if you think the service will not suffer by your absence, you are at liberty, as soon as the public interest shall admit of your departure, to proceed to Rhode Island and resume your command there, until a ship, suitable to your rank, shall be at the disposal of the department.

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<sup>53</sup> See Document 13.

<sup>54</sup> Perry's commission was dated September 10, 1813.

<sup>55</sup> See Document 12.

In the event of your resigning the command of the Erie squadron, it will, of course, devolve on Captain Elliott, who will communicate with, and receive the instructions of Commodore Chauncey,<sup>56</sup> the commander-in-chief, who will be furnished with a copy of this letter.

Capt. Elliott will communicate direct to this department (in order to save time), whatever may be of importance to be speedily known.

The commissary general of prisoners has given the necessary directions, in relation to those captured by you, and you will not parole any person, except Captain Barclay, without his special authority.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,  
W. JONES

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<sup>56</sup> Commodore Isaac Chauncey, commander-in-chief of the American naval forces on the lakes.

XVII  
LETTER OF COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
TO  
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY WILLIAM JONES

From the United States Navy Department Archives, *Captains' Letters*, 1813, volume vii, number 3.





17. COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
WILLIAM JONES

U.S. SCHOONER ARIEL, Detroit, 16th October, 1813

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your several letters of the 21st and 22nd ult.<sup>57</sup> I beg you, Sir, to accept my thanks for the very flattering manner you are pleased to speak of the conduct of the officers and men belonging to the squadron under my command, in the action of the 10th September. To possess the good opinion of the government is what we are all ambitious of, and I hope, and trust, the future exertions of all will be such as to merit, a continuance of that favor which has been so liberally bestowed in this instance.

I should feel a delicacy in accepting the post captain's<sup>58</sup> commission, which it has pleased the President to order to be sent me, if I did not consider the precedent long since established, by the appointment of Capt. Decatur over the heads of others.<sup>59</sup> Should I be wrong in this opinion, I re-

<sup>57</sup> See Documents 13 and 14.

<sup>58</sup> A term used interchangeably with "captain."

<sup>59</sup> A reference to the promotion of Decatur, in 1804, over several officers senior to him in rank, as a reward for the destruction of the Philadelphia, in the harbor of Tripoli.

quest, Sir, that the commission may be kept back until my right shall entitle me to that honor without passing over Capt. Leonard.<sup>60</sup>

As long, Sir, as I can be of service here, I shall remain, with pleasure.

Very respectfully, I have the honor to be, Sir,  
your obd. sert.

O. H. PERRY

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<sup>60</sup> Master-commandant James T. Leonard stood next above Perry at the head of the list of masters-commandant. In promoting Perry to be captain it was necessary to pass over Leonard.

XVIII  
COURT-MARTIAL OF COMMANDER ROBERT  
HERIOT BARCLAY, SEPTEMBER, 1814

From a manuscript copy in the United States  
Navy Department Library, Washington. This was  
obtained for Rear-admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan,  
U.S.N., in 1903 or 1904.



18. COURT-MARTIAL OF COMMANDER  
ROBERT HERIOT BARCLAY, SEP-  
TEMBER, 1814

At a Court Martial assembled on board His Majesty's ship *Gladiator* in Portsmouth Harbour on the ninth day of September, 1814, Present:

Edward James Foote, Esquire, rear admiral of the White and second officer in the command of His Majesty's ships and vessels at Spithead and in Portsmouth Harbour – President

Captain Benjamin Willm.	Captain Sir James Athol
Page	Wood, Knt.
George Fowke	David Lloyd
Adam Drummond	Edward Brace
Zachariah Mudge	Richard Byron <sup>62</sup>
Arthur Farquhar	John Quilliam
James Richard Dacres <sup>61</sup>	George Francis Seymour

Pursuant to an order from the Right Honorable Lords Commiss[ioners] of the Admiralty dated the eighth day of September, 1814, and directed to the President setting forth that Commodore Sir James Lucas Yeo, <sup>63</sup> had transmitted to their Lord-

<sup>61</sup> Dacres was commander of the British frigate "*Guerrière*" when she was captured by the United States frigate "*Constitution*" in August, 1812.

<sup>62</sup> Byron was commander of the British frigate "*Belvidera*," when she made her escape from the squadron of Commodore John Rodgers in June, 1812.

<sup>63</sup> Commander-in-chief of the British naval forces on the lakes.

ships the copy of a letter which he had received from Robert Heriot Barclay, Esquire, commander of His Majesty's late ship Detroit and senior officer commanding a squadron of His Majesty's ships and vessels in Lake Erie dated the 12th of September, 1813, detailing the particular circumstances of the capture of the said squadron on Lake Erie by a squadron of ships and vessels of the United States of America on the 10th of the same month. The court proceeded to enquire into the cause and circumstances of the capture of His Majesty's late squadron and to try the said Captain Robert Heriot Barclay, his surviving officers and seamen late belonging thereto, for their conduct on that occasion, and having heard the evidence produced and completed the enquiry, and having maturely and deliberately weighed and considered the whole, the court is of opinion that the capture of His Majesty's late squadron was caused by the very defective means Captain Barclay possessed to equip them on Lake Erie, the want of a sufficient number of able seamen whom he had repeatedly and earnestly requested to be sent to him, the very great superiority of the force of the enemy to the British squadron and the unfortunate early fall of the superior officers in the action. That it appears that the greatest exertions had been made by Captain Barclay in equipping and getting into order, the vessels under his command. That he was fully justified under the existing circumstances in bringing the enemy to action. That the judgment and gallantry of Captain Barclay in taking his squadron into action

and during the contest were highly conspicuous and entitled him to the highest praise and that the whole of the other officers and men of His Majesty's late squadron conducted themselves in the most gallant manner and doth adjudge the said Captain Robert Heriot Barclay, his surviving officers and men to be most fully and most honourably acquitted and they are hereby most fully and most honourably acquitted accordingly.

EDWD. JAS. FOOTE	J. A. WOOD
B. W. PAGE	DAVID LLOYD
GEORGE FOWKE	E. BRACE
ADAM DRUMMOND	R. BYRON
ZACHARY MUDGE	J. QUILLIAM
ARTHUR FARQUHAR	G. F. SEYMOUR

JAS. R. DACRES

MR. GREETHAM, *Dy. Judge*  
*Advocate of the Fleet.*

Minutes taken at a Court Martial assembled on board His Majesty's ship *Gladiator* in Portsmouth Harbour on the ninth day of September, 1814. Present:

Edward James Foote, Esquire, rear admiral of the White and second officer in the command of His Majesty's ships and vessels at Spithead and in Portsmouth Harbour – President.

Captains Benjm. Wm. Page	Captains Sir Jas. Athol
George Fowke	Wood, Knt <sup>c</sup>
Adam Drummond	Edward Brace
Zachariah Mudge	Richd. Byron
Arthur Farquhar	John Quilliam
Jas. Richd. Dacres	Geoe. Fras. Seymour
David Lloyd	

Captain Robert Heriot Barclay,<sup>64</sup> commander of His Majesty's late ship, *Detroit*, his surviving officers and seamen, were brought in and audience admitted.

The order from the Right Honorable Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, dated the eighth day of September, 1814 and directed to the President, setting forth, that Commodore Sir James Lucas Yeo had transmitted to their Lordships the copy of a letter which he had received from Robert Heriot Barclay, Esquire, commander of His Majesty's late ship, *Detroit*, and senior officer commanding a squadron of His Majesty's ships and vessel [*sic*] on Lake Erie, dated the 12th of September, 1813, detailing the particular circumstances of the capture of the said squadron on Lake Erie by a squadron of ships and vessels of the United States of America on the 10th of the same month, and to enquire into the cause and circumstances of the capture of His Majesty's late squadron, and to try the said Captain Robert Heriot Barclay, his surviving officers and seamen late belonging thereto, for their conduct on that occasion, was read.

<sup>64</sup> Barclay's appearance at his trial has been thus described by an eye witness: "It was not possible to see this brave officer before the court, and not be agitated with mingled feelings of regret and admiration, with one arm amputated, the other so dangerously wounded as to be suspended in bandages in a most particular position; a part of his thigh cut away by a cannon shot; and, with five other wounds, he presented, while the sentence was passing, an honourable instance of suffering heroism, and mental sensibility for he was affected at the testimony borne by the court to his conduct, almost to the shedding of tears."—*Naval Chronicle*, vol. xxxii, 243.



The President reported to the court, that Captains Peter Heywood and James Black<sup>65</sup> were absent on Admiralty leave.

The members of the court, and the judge advocate then in open court, and before they proceeded to trial respectively took the several oaths enjoined and directed in and by an Act of Parliament made and passed in the twenty-second year of the reign of His late Majesty, King George the second, entitled, "An Act for amending, explaining, and reducing into one Act of Parliament the Laws relating to the Government of His Majesty's Ships, Vessels, and Forces by Sea."

Then the said letter from the said Commodore Sir James Lucas Yeo and the copy of the letter from the said Captain Robert Heriot Barclay were read, and are hereto annexed.<sup>66</sup>

To Captain Barclay:

*Q.* Have you any further narrative to produce of the transactions respecting the loss of His Majesty's squadron on Lake Erie?

Captain Barclay produced a narrative<sup>67</sup> [*sic*], which was read, and is hereto annexed.

Captain Barclay being sworn, declared that the contents of the narrative that had been read to the court were correct and true to the best of his knowledge and belief.

*Q.* Have you any complaint to make against

<sup>65</sup> Members of the court who did not attend its sittings.

<sup>66</sup> For the letter of Yeo, see *Niles' Register*, vol. vi, 181; for the letter of Barclay, see Document 6.

<sup>67</sup> See the latter part of this document, pages 152-165.

any of the officers or crews of the squadron lately under your command on Lake Erie?

*A.* None.

To the Officers:

*Q.* Have either of you any complaint to make against Captain Barclay respecting his conduct on the occasion?

*A.* None whatever.

Lieutenant Thomas Stokoe sworn.

*Q.* Are the contents of the narrative of Captain Barclay more particularly as to the scarcity of provisions at Lake Erie and the want of seamen on board the squadron correct and true as far as came within your knowledge and to the best of your belief?

*A.* They are, we were particularly short of seamen.

*Q.* How many men had you on board the Queen Charlotte that you could call experienced seamen?

*A.* Not more than ten with the petty officer. We had on board between one hundred and twenty and one hundred and thirty men, officers, and all together.

*Q.* How many men had you on board that had been accustomed to work the great guns with a ship in motion?

*A.* Only the men that came up from the *Dover*<sup>68</sup> three days before we sailed, we had sixteen of

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<sup>68</sup> His Majesty's troop-ship at Quebec.

them, boys included, from the Dover, the rest we learnt ourselves since our arrival on the Lake.

*Q.* Do you know whether the other vessels that composed the squadron of Captain Barclay were equally deficient in seamen?

*A.* All the other vessels were equally deficient in point of seamen, except the Detroit might have had a few more on account of being a larger vessel.

*Q.* Were you a prisoner on board the American vessels?

*A.* No, I remained on board our own vessel six weeks after we were captured, I never was on board any of the enemy's vessels.

*Q.* How many of those seamen of the British squadron were killed and wounded?

*A.* One killed and four wounded of the able seamen on board the Queen Charlotte.

*Q.* At half an allowance how many days provisions had you on board the Queen Charlotte when you went out?

*A.* We might have had a weeks at half allowance of provisions, but not of spirits. They were preserved for the action, and all consumed on that day, we had none served out for several days before.

*Q.* Can you recollect the state of the Queen Charlotte just before you were wounded?

*A.* Several shots had struck the vessel many of the ropes were cut away, but the vessel was then manageable, this was about an hour and a quarter

after the commencement of the action. Captain Finnis<sup>69</sup> and Lieutenant Garden of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment were killed immediately on the commencement of the action, before a man was hurt. There were then one provincial lieutenant, one masters mate that had been in the navy, and two provincial midshipmen, quite youngsters, and two warrant officers, a boatswain and gunner left, this was after I was wounded.

*Q.* At what distance did the Niagara engage the Queen Charlotte in the beginning of the action?

*A.* She engaged us on the quarter out of carronade distance, with what long guns she had.

*Q.* Was your principal injury received from her?

*A.* No, from the Caledonia, who laid on our beam with two long twenty-four pounders on pivets, also out of carronade shot distance.

Captain Barclay asked:

*Q.* Had provincial Lieutenant Irvine experience sufficient to such service, as to conduct the Queen Charlotte in action after the death of Captain Finnis, and your own wound?

*A.* He was a very brave young man, a perfect seaman, but not experienced as an officer.

Provincial Lieutenant Francis Purvis, late of His Majesty's ship Detroit, called in and sworn.

*Q.* Are the contents of the narrative of Captain Barclay more particularly as to the scarcity of provisions at Lake Erie and the want of seamen on

<sup>69</sup> For the full names of the officers here mentioned, see Document 6.

board the squadron correct and true as far as came within your knowledge and to the best of your belief?

*A.* Yes, they are.

*Q.* How many experienced seamen had you on board the Detroit when the action commenced?

*A.* To the best of my knowledge not more than ten, petty officers included.

*Q.* How long had the Detroit been in action when Captain Barclay unfortunately received his wound?

*A.* About two hours and a half to the best of my recollection.

*Q.* Was every exertion made to defend the ship after Captain Barclay was wounded?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Was she at that time in a very disabled and unmanageable state?

*A.* Very much so indeed.

*Q.* Can you recollect how many of those ten seamen were killed and wounded?

*A.* To the best of my recollection seven or eight were killed or wounded.

*Q.* How near were the enemy to you during the early part of the engagement?

*A.* I should suppose in the early part of the engagement the Detroit in engaging the Lawrence was within a musquet shot and within pistol shot of the Niagara, the latter came down after the Lawrence had struck.

*Q.* Did you observe any of the shots of the en-

emy's ship to reach the British squadron when the latter's guns did not reach them?

*A.* I cannot say exactly that I did, being employed at my gun.

*Q.* Why did you not take possession of the *Lawrence* when she struck?

*A.* We had only one boat and that was cut to pieces and the *Niagara*, another large brig, being to windward, came down too quickly upon us.

*Q.* What do you attribute the loss of the action principally to?

*A.* To the loss of Captain Finnis and the *Queen's* running up under our lee and the *Detroit's* falling on board of them which permitted the enemy's squadron to lay and rake us and the men consequently got into confusion.

*Q.* Did the enemy's gun boats do you much damage?

*A.* More than any of their vessels, they had long two and thirties.

*Q.* Did you understand that the enemy's vessels were well manned?

*A.* Yes, they were remarkably well manned,<sup>70</sup> I believe from the information I received from the American officers that the *Lawrence* had more able seamen on board than we had in our whole squadron, I was on board the *Lawrence* about a quarter of an hour and on board the *Niagara* two or three

<sup>70</sup> An exaggeration. The British officers were naturally disposed to make out as good a case as possible for their commander.

days, she appeared to be very well manned. They chiefly manned the prizes from her.

*Q.* Was the Queen Charlotte in a manageable state immediately before she got on board the Detroit?

*A.* She did not appear so, they did not back any of their sails to avoid her.

*Q.* What was the force of the American brig?

*A.* The Lawrence and Niagara had each eighteen thirty-two pound carronades, and two long twelves. The Caledonia two long twenty-four and one thirty-two or twenty-four pound carronades, the Tigress one long thirty-two. I was not on board the Ariel, Summers, Porcupine, Scorpion or Trip, but I understood they had all long thirty-two pound and one or two had carronades, I believe.

*Q.* Did they appear to be manned equal to the larger brigs?

*A.* Yes they did in equal Proportions.

	lb.	
The Detroit had	2-24	} long guns
	1-18	
	6-12	
	8-9	
	1-24	carronade
	1-18	do.
The Queen Charlotte	3-12	long guns
	14-24	carronade
The Lady Prevost	3-9	long guns
	10-12	carronade

The Hunter	2- 6	} long guns
	4- 4	
	2- 2	
	2-12	carronade
The Little Belt	1- 9	long guns
	1- 6	
The Chippeway	1- 9	long gun <sup>71</sup>

Captain Barclay asked:

*Q.* Did I cause the men to be exercised at their guns not only in my own ship but in the rest of the squadron to train them as much as possible to the use of the guns?

*A.* Twice a day from the time he arrived when weather permitted from an hour and a half to two hours each time and Captain Barclay came forward and saw that they were properly exercised.

*Q.* Were they exercised with powder?

*A.* Yes, they were occasionally.

*Q.* Were they exercised with powder as often as the reduced state of the ammunition at Amherstburg the only place from whence I could get a supply would allow?

*A.* Yes, they were, but not to occasion a waste of powder.

*Q.* Did I exert every means in my power not only to render the Detroit an effective ship in every way as well as that of the other vessels?

*A.* He did every thing that a brave and experienced officer possibly could do not only in fitting

<sup>71</sup> These figures agree with those of Barclay in his official letter, except in the case of the Little Belt. See Document 6.





ROBERT HERIOT BARCLAY, R.N.



out the ships, but in speaking to and encouraging the men when we came into action which appeared to me to give the men the greatest confidence.

*Q.* Was I obliged to take from the equipments of the Queen Charlotte sails and other articles to render the Detroit at all fit to take the lake?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* When I first saw the enemy clear of the islands did I bear up and make as much sail as enabled the rest of the squadron to keep up with me that I might speedily bring them into action?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Did I in the disabled state of the Detroit when assailed by a fresh force display an undiminished courage and give every encouragement to the crew?

*A.* You did everything that an officer possibly could do.

*Q.* Were the matches and tubes so bad that were supplied to me from Amherstburg that I was obliged to prime without the latter and fire pistols at the guns to set them off?

*A.* Yes, we fired pistols at the guns to set them off during the whole of the action.

Lieutenant Stokoe called in again.

Captain Barclay asked:

*Q.* Did I cause the men to be exercised at their guns not only in my own ship but in the rest of the squadron to train them as much as possible to the use of the guns?

*A.* Yes, he did, he gave a general order out that

they should be exercised twice a day, an hour each time, to the best of my recollection—sometimes they were exercised with powder, but it was not often they could be exercised with powder, as there was not sufficient to do it.

*Q.* Was I obliged to take from the Queen Charlotte stores of various descriptions even to sails, cables and anchors as well as a proportion of pistols to fire the guns off with, before I could make the Detroit at all fit for the lake?

*A.* Yes, you were.

Mr. George Peter Martin Young, surgeon of His Majesty's late ship, Detroit, called in and sworn.

The court asked:

*Q.* Are the contents of the narrative of Captain Barclay more particularly as to the scarcity of provisions at Lake Erie and the want of seamen on board the squadron correct and true as far as came within your knowledge and to the best of your belief?

*A.* They are.

*Q.* Were the killed and wounded composed in a great measure of the better seamen?

*A.* There were a great proportion of the seamen in the list in comparison with the other men.

*Q.* Were many of the men you had from the Dover among them?

*A.* I cannot recollect.

*Q.* Do you think the ships were defended to the last?

A. As far as I am able to judge they were.

Captain Barclay asked:

Q. Did I on my being brought below from my first wound remain longer than until I could crawl up again?

A. Certainly not—the first wound was in the thigh.

Q. How long was it between my returning to the deck and my being brought below the second time totally disabled?

A. About an hour, or an hour and a half.

The court was cleared, and agreed, that the capture of His Majesty's late squadron was caused by the very defective means Captain Barclay possessed to equip them on Lake Erie, the want of a sufficient number of able seamen, whom he had repeatedly and earnestly requested to be sent to him, the very great superiority<sup>72</sup> of the force of the enemy to the British squadron, and the unfortunate early fall of the superior officers in the action. That it appeared that the greatest exertions had been made by Captain Barclay in equipping and getting into order the vessels under his command. That he was fully justified under the existing circumstances in bringing the enemy to action. That the judgment and gallantry of Captain Barclay, in

<sup>72</sup> Respecting the superiority of Perry's fleet, see Alfred Thayer Mahan's *Sea Power in Relation to the War of 1812*, vol. ii, 77-78. Mahan says: "It is evident if Perry's plan was carried out, opposing vessel to vessel, the Americans would have a superiority of fifty per cent." Perry's plan, however, was not carried out, and the British flag-ship was much superior in long guns to the American.

taking his squadron into action and during the contest were highly conspicuous and entitled him to the highest praise, and that the whole of the other officers and men of His Majesty's late squadron conducted themselves in the most gallant manner. And did adjudge the said Captain Robert Heriot Barclay his surviving officers and men to be most fully and most honourably acquitted.

The court was again opened. Captain Barclay and his surviving officers brought in, audience admitted and sentence passed accordingly.

MR. GREETHAM, *Depy. Judge*  
*Advocate of the Fleet.*

NARRATIVE OF THE PROCEEDINGS DURING  
THE COMMAND OF CAPTAIN BARCLAY  
OF HIS MAJESTY'S SQUADRON  
ON LAKE ERIE

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN OF THE COURT:

On my arrival at Bermuda in Feby., 1813, Sir John Borlaise [*sic*] Warren<sup>73</sup> received an application from Sir George Prevost<sup>74</sup> to send some captains, lieutenants and seamen to man three corvettes on Lake Ontario.

I was sent with Captains Finnis and Pring,<sup>75</sup> six lieutenants, and gunners to Halifax for the purpose of proceeding with as much expedition as possible to Quebec and from thence to the Lake Ontario.

On my arrival at Kingston on the lake<sup>76</sup> I took command of the corvette No. 1, then called the Wolfe, by appointment from Sir John B. Warren, about three weeks after my taking the command I was superseded by the arrival of Sir James Lucas Yeo, with a large detachment of officers and seamen from England, and appointed by that officer

<sup>73</sup> Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren, commander-in-chief of the British naval forces on the North Atlantic station.

<sup>74</sup> Governor-general of Canada and commander-in-chief of the British army.

<sup>75</sup> Commander Daniel Pring. He commanded the brig Linnet at the Battle of Lake Champlain, September 11, 1814.

<sup>76</sup> Lake Ontario.

to the superintendence of the gun boats for the time being. Soon after my appointment to the gun boats it was judged necessary to send a naval establishment to Lake Erie to render the squadron on that lake effective, which it was not considered to be under the provincial marine.

This command was offered to Captain Mulcaster<sup>77</sup> the next in command to Sir James Yeo, who to my personal knowledge, declined it in consequence of its ineffective state and Sir James Yeo refusing to send seamen.

On Captain Mulcaster's declining, I was ordered to proceed to that lake with three lieutenants, one surgeon, and purser, a master's mate, and nineteen men, twelve of these were Canadians, who had been discharged from his own squadron on Lake Ontario. The others were the most worthless characters that came from England with him, which can be proved by the evidence present, and were sent on board a small coasting sloop, armed, only with a few muskets to proceed to York<sup>78</sup> on our way to Lake Erie. On our arrival at that place from the bad state of health of the master's mate (which had been reported by me to Sir James Yeo), I was obliged on a representation of the surgeon to send him back in the sloop. From York I proceeded with about two hundred soldiers in *Batteaux's* to join General Vincent<sup>79</sup> at Fort George<sup>80</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Commander Sir William Howe Mulcaster.

<sup>78</sup> Near the western end of Lake Ontario, and on the northern shore.

<sup>79</sup> Brigadier-general John Vincent, commander of the British army on the Niagara line.

<sup>80</sup> In Ontario, Canada, near the mouth of the Niagara River.



which was the nearest road to Amherstberg<sup>81</sup> where I was to take command of the naval force on Lake Erie. While proceeding to join General Vincent I heard he was driven from Fort George and I met him on his retreat.<sup>82</sup> From the general I learned he had sent the Queen Charlotte to Amherstberg to prevent her falling into the enemy's hands at Fort Erie. No alternative was now left but to proceed to Amherstberg by land from which we were then three hundred miles.

On my way to that place I learned that two vessels were at Long Point,<sup>83</sup> I immediately proceeded there with the naval detachment I had brought with me from Lake Ontario, having left the two hundred soldiers with General Vincent. On arriving at Long Point, I found the Lady Prevost and Chippewa schooners. In the former I embarked the men to proceed to Amherstberg, leaving the other to convoy a transport with flour to that place, for even then the garrison of Amherstberg was obliged to be supplied with provisions from that depot. At Long Point I addressed a letter to Sir James Yeo, detailing my proceedings since I left him and stating to him what I found to be the state of the two schooners at Long Point and what I understood to be the state of the remaining force.

I proceeded in the Lady Prevost intending to

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<sup>81</sup> British naval station on the Detroit River.

<sup>82</sup> Retreat, on May 27-29, 1813, of General Vincent's army from Fort George.

<sup>83</sup> A naval station on the Canadian coast of Lake Erie, opposite Erie, Pennsylvania.

reconnoitre the enemies force in Presque Isle<sup>84</sup> which I could not accomplish from variable winds; and being anxious to join the naval force at Amherstberg I lost no time in going to that place. I found on my arrival there that the information I had received relative to the state of the naval establishment placed under my orders was but too true and I wrote immediately to Sir James Yeo requesting a reënforcement of seamen without loss of time and stated to him in that letter the qualities and condition of the squadron.

As soon as I could prepare for sea, I sailed in the Queen Charlotte to reconnoitre Presque Isle with the additional reason, of information having been just received that reënforcements for the enemies army under General Harrison were coming from that port by the lake. This information proved to be unfounded and I proceeded according to my first intention of looking into that port and found the enemies force far advanced, for the particulars I refer the court to letter, no. 7—in which they will find I not only proposed a combined attack on that place but still urged the necessity of being immediately reënforced by seamen to prevent the enemy having the superiority on the lake. The court will find also by that letter that Sir James Yeo sent me a captain<sup>85</sup> with his servant no one else. And I beg leave to state to the court that this letter called forth a reprimand from the

<sup>84</sup> Erie, Pennsylvania.

<sup>85</sup> Commander Robert A. Finnis.

commodore which he stated as being much too peremptory from a junior to an officer so much higher in rank. To give time for the arrival of seamen and troops for the above desirable purpose, I cruised between Black Rock<sup>86</sup> and Presque Isle to intercept the brig and schooners which were coming from that place to join the enemies force at Presque Isle; but I was unfortunate and missed them in a fog, being obliged to return to Long Point for provisions and to receive such answers to the communications as I had made to Sir James Yeo and General Vincent. After I had waited in vain for seamen or even any letter subsequent to the arrival of Captain Finnis except one from Lieut. Col. Harvey,<sup>87</sup> I thought it more prudent to fill His Majestys vessels with provisions as well as a transport schooner that I had brought for that purpose and return to Amherstberg to prepare the boats of various kinds for our intended expedition and to relieve the wants of the army in flour, which I did, and found the Detroit still in a very backward state, not near ready for launching, the materials for building nearly exhausted and without one gleam of hope that the prospect could brighten, except by an assurance from General Vincent that a force would be sent to coöperate with me on our intended attack on Presque Isle, and even then we had to wait the arrival of the small vessels from Lake Huron to transport the necessary

<sup>86</sup> Near Buffalo, New York.

<sup>87</sup> Lieutenant-colonel John Harvey.

artillery and troops. When these vessels did arrive, still under the impression that aid would be afforded to enable Major General Proctor<sup>88</sup> and myself to make the joint attack, every thing was prepared even the artillery embarked when I was shewn a letter from the deputy adjutant general, which stated that no assistance could be sent from the army under Major General De Rottenberg<sup>89</sup> (who had superceeded General Vincent) which entirely put and [*sic*] end to our hopes in that way. I therefore represented the case to Commodore Sir James Yeo; equipped my squadron as well as I could and sailed not only to prevent the enemies squadron from coming over the bar but to be nearer Lake Ontario from whence I still fondly looked for reënforcements. On my arrival at Long Point and the failure of getting men from both parties I thought my situation as well as that of the country so critical that I wrote to His Excellency Sir George Prevost (lest Sir James Yeo should be in the Lake) to point out the great necessity of taking this Lake into his serious consideration as on it depended the very existance of the army under the command of General Proctor, to which letter I beg leave to refer the court. Disappointed as I was not only by the non arrival of the seamen but by the generals declining to send troops to destroy

<sup>88</sup> Major-general Henry Procter, commander of the British army on the Detroit line.

<sup>89</sup> Major-general Francis Baron de Rottenburg, president, administering the government of Upper Canada. In July, 1813, he succeeded Vincent as commander of the British army on the Niagara line.

Presque Isle—I sailed again to reconnoitre that place, determined to attack any part of the enemies force that might be over the bar—the particulars of which I again refer the court (to the Letter Book no. 10) which was sent by an officer, when it will appear that I again urged the absolute necessity of being reënforced as I feared the event would prove fatal. To this important letter I only received a verbal answer from Sir James Yeo that he could not send me any seamen. This I state in refutation of the charge against me in which he says that I only allowed him three days to send men three hundred miles. I cruized there still hoping that I should at length be reënforced, blockadeing the Port of Presque Isle as closely as I could untill I, one morning, saw the whole of the enemies force over the bar and in a most formidable state of preparation.<sup>90</sup> I wrote immediately to Sir James Yeo, letter no. 15 and made an appearance to the enemy of returning to Long Point, but soon after losing sight of them I bore up for Amherstberg. I was happy to find on my arrival that General Proctor had returned from the expedition against Sanddusky and my whole attention was now turned on the equipment of the Detroit being fully aware of the speedy approach of the enemys squadron and the necessity of at least making a shew to prevent their taking advantage of their superiority and assailing us by land and lake together. It will appear by

<sup>90</sup> Barclay does not enter into details at this point. He was at fault in failing to maintain a close blockade of Perry's fleet at Erie.

letter no. 21 to Sir James Yeo that my fears were realized as the enemies force had chased my look-out vessel and by letter 25 that they had made their appearance off Amherstberg.

On my arrival at Amherstberg I sent a small schooner to cruize to the eastward of the islands to apprise me of the approach of the enemys squadron and was soon satisfied that my apprehensions of their following me up were but too well founded as the court will see by referring to my letter to the commodore on the subject. They did not appear off this port untill the 24th and I apprized him of it again by my letter, no. 25, bearing date the 25th August. By this time our necessities were becoming very urgent and our supplies by the lake entirely cut off. No possibility of obtaining an adequate supply by land for the numerous people we had to feed. Every attention was turned to the naval force which the country now looked up to, as the only defence. I now understood that about fifty seamen with two lieutts. and one midshipman were on their way from Kingston, not from Commodore Sir James Yeo, but from Sir George Prevost through General Proctor, to whom I had previously applied, finding all applications to Sir James Yeo useless. Anxiously indeed did all look forward for their arrival, few as they were, at length on the 5th of September, they did arrive but instead of fifty far short of three hundred the number I hoped to receive, they counted only thirty-six with two lieutts., one masters mate and two

gunners being the first division that left H.M. troopship *Dover* at Quebec.

When that division left Quebec there was no idea of any more coming and the letter I received, by Lieut. Bignal<sup>91</sup> (Lieut. of the above troopship) told me that when Sir James Yeo understood that the remainder had come to Kingston he would forward the like number from the squadron. Sir James in this communication seems to have entirely disbelieved the many representations of our approaching necessities, when he writes so coolly about sending men by the mode he proposes. The remainder of the *Dovers* seamen did not arrive at Kingston a distance inland from Amherstberg of six hundred miles until after the action. The enemy were in superior force between him and Kingston so as to preclude the possibility of a water communication and it must have taken at least six days to communicate with him by land—twelve more must have elapsed before men could reach Amherstberg and at most it was but a faint hope that they would come at all.

The court will now allow me to revert to our actual state at this time. There were above fourteen thousand Indians to victual who had come from distant countries, accustomed to every indulgence, and prone to quarrel and turn their arms against their friends as well as foes if their wants were not supplied and liberally too. To this number was to be added the whole population of that

<sup>91</sup> Lieutenant George Bignell.

part of the country and the regular force attached to General Proctor. To the want of provisions must be added the other privation, of every kind of military and naval stores, therefore, it was to be considered that each succeeding day added to our difficulties, and I must beg the courts attention to this circumstance. They were not difficulties that could be surmounted as will appear by a reference to a letter from Deputy Comy. General Gilmour<sup>92</sup> dated 5th Sepr., 1813 to Depy. Comy. Genl. Couche<sup>93</sup> and also by his letter to me dated Montreal, 7 June, 1814 (no. 21). I felt the necessity of this document and therefore applied to him for it, having lost all my official communications on the subject. One more trial was made to remain until seamen might arrive; at least until we might have a certainty of their being on the way, that failing, only two alternatives remained either to join in the retreat of the army after ingloriously burning my vessels, or risk and [*sic*] action notwithstanding the deplorable manner in which the squadron was manned and if the country was to fall it should not be without an effort on my part to prevent it. Under such circumstances what officer could hesitate a moment which measure he should adopt. I therefore instantly decided on that which appeared the most honorable and determined to risk everything rather than abandon my post without a struggle,

<sup>92</sup> There was an assistant commissary in Canada named Richard Gilmore.

<sup>93</sup> Edward Couche.



and I was confirmed in this resolution by General Proctor's concurrence as express'd in his letter of the 8th Sept. here produced, and the court will perceive by extracts from letters from Sir George Prevost that in risking an action at this critical period, I only anticipated the express orders of His Excellency who in a letter to General Proctor, dated the 18th Sept., said "that the squadron on Lake Erie being inevitably involved in the common fate of the military portion on Lake Erie is to be devoted to their preservation and if necessary sacrificed to the last atom sooner than a vestage be left to swell the pride of an arrogant foe."

Having in my statement endeavoured to point out the numerous and accumulating difficulties that I laboured under in conjunction with the army under Major General Proctor, I trust I have demonstrated the necessity of the squadrons departure from Amherstberg. It is unnecessary for me to make any observations on the result of the action as my official letter to Sir James Yeo on the subject is now before the court, but I trust I may be permitted to make a few remarks on Sir James Yeo's letter and first on that paragraph wherein he seems to doubt the existance of any scarcity that could justify my risking an action. In answer to which I submit that if the deputy comy. general of an army with such ample means as he had at his disposal was unable to procure anything like an adequate supply for the troops, can any one doubt the actual scarcity? That it did exist in an insurmount-

able degree is evident from the commissarys letters before referred to. I must next beg leave to point out the striking difference between Sir James Yeo's first letter to Sir J. Warren and his second, written after receiving my official account of the action, a copy of which letter I beg leave to produce no.

[sic] which if I may judge from that circumstance he must have felt conscious that he had neglected to send me reënforcements untill it was too late. My repeated requests to him for this assistance may have irritated him and to save himself from censure he has endeavoured to through obliquay [sic] on me. His observation "that I appeared to have sailed under the conviction that I had everything to gain and but little to lose" altho most true in the first part in one sense is evidently meant from the general tenor of the letter to bear another construction. I certainly had much to gain, no less than rescuing the squadron under my orders from impending distructions, saving General Proctors division of the army and preventing the fall of a country of immense extent and consequence to His Majesty's dominions in North America, and these were the only considerations that influenced my conduct. That I had little to lose I never can admit as I had not only my own character as an officer to support but also to uphold the honor of the British navy which on this occasion I felt was committed to my charge and had I not risked and [sic] action the whole disgrace of the retreat of the army would have attached to me, and I should

have been justly involved in the shocking imputation of cowardice. And what did Sir James Yeo give me to enable me to gain so great an object? In the first place nineteen of the worst men of his squadron which I took with me on assuming the command, subsequently allowing thirty-six men with two lieuts., one masters mate and two gunners whom I had procured by urgent solicitation to Sir Geo. Prevost to pass him to join me at so late a period that even this trivial reënforcement only reached me three days previous to the action.

The letters before the court wherein I so repeatedly urged the necessity of a body [of] seamen even from the moment of my assuming the command will I trust sufficiently refute the insinuation of Sir James Yeo that I only allowed three days for their arrival. I now beg leave to refer the court to a letter from General Proctor, no. 20, wherein he states the absolute necessity of my sailing and likewise to the general orders of the commander of the forces in America dated the 24 Novr., 1813, wherein His Excellency is pleased to say that Captain Barclay and his brave crew have by their gallant daring and self devotion to their country's cause preserved its honor and their own even in defeat. Situated as I now am and however unwilling I should be under less imperious circumstances to obtrude my former services on this court, I feel it a duty incumbent on me on this occasion to state that I have been sixteen years actually employed in His Majesty's service, have

been very frequently engaged with the enemy, and have been wounded eight times. I have thus endeavoured to state to the court the whole of the leading circumstances connected with this case and in the unavoidable absence of living witnesses, I have been compelled to have resource to authenticated documents of official correspondence which I trust will be sufficient to shew that necessity alone forced me to seek so unequal a combat. And although unsuccessful, I indulge the hope that the decision of this court will rescue my character from the imputation of rashness, and will be honorable to myself, and to the brave officers and crew under my command.

R[OBERT] H[ERIOD] BARCLAY

XIX  
COURT OF ENQUIRY ON CAPTAIN  
JESSE DUNCAN ELLIOTT

From the original manuscript in the office of the judge advocate general, United States Navy Department, Washington. In copying this document it has not always been possible to distinguish between periods, commas, and dashes.



19. COURT OF ENQUIRY ON CAPTAIN  
JESSE DUNCAN ELLIOTT, APRIL, 1815

U.S. SLOOP ONTARIO<sup>94</sup>  
New York, 16th April, 1815

SIR: In a conversation with some of the officers of the service I am informed that in consequence of an opinion formed by a court of inquiry on the loss of the British fleet on Lake Erie on the 10th Septr., 1813, my vessel, the Niagara, is reflected on by some who are inimical to our service. I wish it understood that early after the action I applied to the Navy Dept. for an investigation into the facts of the action. It was not granted. Justice to myself, friends, and the service I have the honor to belong to, compels me to ask that the court at present inquiring into the losses of President, Frolic, and Rattlesnake,<sup>95</sup> may be instructed to inform the country of the part I bore in action of the 10th Septr., 1813, and whether or not did the Niagara attempt to make her escape from the enemy (as is stated by the British Court).<sup>96</sup> A large number of

<sup>94</sup>The Ontario was commanded by Elliott and belonged to a squadron under Commodore Stephen Decatur, which was at New York preparing to sail for the Mediterranean.

<sup>95</sup>Three American ships of war which had been captured by the enemy, and whose loss was being investigated by a naval court.

<sup>96</sup>In a summary of the evidence given before the Barclay court-martial, published in the *Naval Chronicle* (London), vol. xxxii, 242,

the officers that were on board the fleet are at present in this squadron, the investigation will require but a day or two, and I presume will not delay the sailing of the squadron.

With great respect, I have the honor to be

your obt. servt.

Signed: J[ESSE] D[UNCAN] ELLIOTT  
The Honorable B. W. Crowninshield.<sup>97</sup>

I certify this to be a true copy of the original.

WM. H. CAMPBELL

NAVY DEPARTMENT [Washington, D.C.],

April 20, 1815.

SIR: The court of enquiry, now setting at New York, is ordered to proceed, immediately, to the investigation requested by your letter of the 16th instant.

I am, very respectfully, your ob. servt.

B. W. CROWNINSHIELD

Capt. Jesse D. Elliott, Sloop Ontario, New York.

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the statement is made that Perry was obliged to leave his flag-ship and hoist his flag on board another vessel, "which had not been engaged, and was making away." The minutes of the court, however, did not thus reflect on the conduct of the Niagara. See Document 18. The Elliott court seems to have confined itself to the disproving of the assertion made by the British periodical. It examined seven junior officers, two of the Lawrence and five of the Niagara. The commanders of these vessels did not testify.

<sup>97</sup> Crowninshield was secretary of the navy from December 19, 1814, until September 30, 1818. He was a member of the distinguished Massachusetts family of that name, and represented the Salem district in Congress from 1823 to 1831.



Minutes of a Court of Enquiry held on board the United States sloop of war Ontario in the harbour of New York in pursuance of the following orders:

NAVY DEPARTMENT [Washington, D.C.],  
April 20th, 1815.

SIR: It has been stated to this department, that, by the proceedings of a court of enquiry in Great Britain, ordered to investigate the causes of the loss of the British fleet on Lake Erie, on the 10th of September, 1813, the conduct of Captain Jesse D. Elliott, of the U.S. navy, who commanded the brig Niagara on that day, is misrepresented. Justice to the reputation of Capt. Elliott and to the navy of the U. States requires that a true statement of the facts in relation to his conduct, on that occasion, be exhibited to the world. The court, therefore, of which you are president, will immediately proceed to enquire into the same, to ascertain the part he sustained in the action of that day, and report its opinion thereon to this department.

I am, respectfully, yr. obt. servant,

B. W. CROWNINSHIELD

Com. Alexander Murray,<sup>98</sup> New York.

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<sup>98</sup> Murray was the senior officer of the navy, and was president of the court.

APRIL 24TH, 1815.

The Court met. Present—

Com. Murray, *President*

Captain Evans,<sup>99</sup> Lieut Comt. Rodgers,<sup>100</sup> *Members.*

Henry Wheaton,<sup>101</sup> Esquire, *Judge Advocate.*

The court being duly sworn (together with the judge advocate) proceeded to enquire into the facts relative to the conduct of Captain Elliott in the action of the 10th September, 1813, on Lake Erie.

The annexed papers marked A. and B. were read.<sup>102</sup>

Lt. Nelson Webster, late sailing master of the Niagara, was sworn.

*Q. by the Court.* Having seen and read Capt. Perry's official account of the action of the 10th September, 1813, on Lake Erie, please to state whether it contains a correct statement of facts?

*A.* I believe it does.

*Q. by the judge advocate.* What further do you know respecting the subject matter of this enquiry?

*A.* Just at daylight, on the 10th of Sept., 1813,

<sup>99</sup> Captain Samuel Evans.

<sup>100</sup> Lieutenant George Washington Rodgers, a brother of Commodore John Rodgers.

<sup>101</sup> Wheaton, who is now remembered as a diplomat and a writer of legal books, was at this time a New York lawyer and the editor of the *National Advocate*, an administration organ.

<sup>102</sup> "A" is an extract from a "London Paper," the same as that published in the *British Naval Chronicle*, vol. xxxii, 242. See note 115. "B" is a copy of Perry's official letter describing the battle. See Document 7.

we were in Put-in Bay, and discovered the enemy's fleet. A signal was made by Capt. Perry, and we immediately got under way, and beat out of the bay—the wind ahead. After we got out, the wind being light, it shifted, which gave us the weather gage. We made sail in pursuit, and a signal was made for each vessel to take its station. The Lawrence led the van, the Caledonia next, and then the Niagara, in close order. The smaller vessels were astern. The enemy commenced his fire upon the headmost vessel at fifteen minutes before noon, which the Lawrence returned at about noon, at the distance of one mile and a half from the enemy. Capt. Elliott directed me to commence from my division with a long 12. Soon after, we fired one or two broadsides from the carronades. Capt. Elliott directed us to cease firing the carronades, as the shot fell short, and to continue firing the long guns. The enemy were principally directing their fire, at this moment, against the Lawrence. We were using every exertion to get down. The wind was light. It was at half past twelve that we commenced firing our carronades at long gun shot distance, and we, being to windward, were continually nearing the enemy. We continued the action, with light winds, continually bearing down in our station, until about two o'clock, when the Lawrence was disabled. Previous to that, Captain Elliott directed the Caledonia to bear up and give him room to close with the Lawrence. The Caledonia dropped to leeward of us, and the Lawrence

dropped out of the line, nearly at one and the same time. The wind sprung up, and Capt. Elliott made sail to close with their headmost ship. After we got into close action, I was knocked down, and carried below. When I came on deck again, found Capt. Perry on board. Capt. Elliott was in the gun boats, and the action still continuing. In about twenty-five minutes afterwards the enemy struck.

*Q. by the court.* What was the force of our squadron, as to size of vessels, description, number of guns and men.

*A.* It consisted of the brig Lawrence of 20 guns, eighteen 32 pound carronades and two long 12's, the brig Niagara of 20 guns of the same description and about 150 men, of which not more than 120 were fit for duty. She was not well manned, as she had 25 militiamen and about 30 soldiers, and a great number of blacks, only one of whom was a seaman. The brig Caledonia of 3 guns, long 12s or 18s. The schooner Sommers of 2 guns, schooner Ariel of 3 guns, one of which burst in the action. I do not remember the Scorpion's force. The schooner Tygress of one gun, a long 32 pounder. The Porcupine and Tripp, same. I did not consider the vessels so well manned as our vessels generally are on the ocean.

*Q.* What was the enemy's force?

*A.* In close action, they were not superior to us in my opinion, but from the lightness of the wind,

the situation of the fleets, and the enemy having long guns, I considered them superior.

*Q.* Did the enemy's vessels appear to be as badly manned as represented to the British court martial before whom Capt. Barclay was tried?

*A.* The statement given before that court I consider to be false. I infer it from the appearance of the *Detroit* after the action. I saw sixty wounded men on board her which I believe to have been seamen. I believe the enemy had more than the number of British seamen stated.

*Q.* What command had Captain Elliott in the action?

*A.* He had command of the *Niagara*.

*Q.* Did he do all in his power to gain a nearer position? and when Capt. Perry went on board of the *Niagara*, did you see any thing in Capt. Elliott's conduct that indicated an intention on his part to make sail from the enemy?

*A.* He did all in his power to gain a nearer position. I never observed any intention on his part to make sail from the enemy, on the contrary, I noted in him a disposition to get into as close action as possible.

*Q.* Do you believe that Capt. Elliott did every thing that a brave and meritorious officer should have done, in the action?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Have you heard any officer make any remarks derogatory to his character or conduct on the 10th of September.

*A.* No.

*Q. by Captain Elliott.* Did the Niagara at any time, during the action, attempt to make off from the British fleet?

*A.* No.

*Q.* What was the distance from the Lawrence to the Niagara when the firing commenced from the enemy?

*A.* There was the intervening space of the Caledonia, the three vessels being in close order.

*Q.* What was the situation of both fleets when the action commenced on our part? at what time did I order the Caledonia out of the line? and how soon after did I place my vessel ahead of the Lawrence? and what appeared to be the situation of the British fleet?

*A.* We were in line ahead, endeavouring to get down upon the enemy as fast as possible, abaft the enemy's beam with the wind nearly abeam. It was a little after the middle of the action that the Caledonia was ordered out of the line. The Lawrence was dropping astern, and we shooting ahead. We had got into pretty close action before I went below. The British fleet was in close order, and I think had no spars shot away.

*Q.* Was not my helm up, and the Niagara standing direct for the enemy's fleet when Capt. Perry came on board?

*A.* I was below, and cannot say.

*Q.* What was the situation of the gun boats when I left the Niagara, and how were they dis-

posed of when I reached the head of the enemy's line with them?

*A.* Just before I went below, they were a long way astern. When I came on deck, I observed the gun boat Capt. Elliott was in had got nearly to the head of the enemy's line, and he was in very close action directing the fire of the boats at the enemy's ships.

*Q.* How did the Lawrence bear of the Niagara when Capt. Perry came on board, and what distance was she from the Niagara?

*A.* I was not on deck, and before I went below, the Lawrence was rather on our leeward quarter.

Lieut. Yarnell,<sup>103</sup> late 1st Lt. of the Lawrence was sworn.

*Q.* Does Capt. Perry's official account of the action of the 10th September contain a correct statement of facts?

*A.* I think generally as to what I could see it is correct—except as to the statement in page 2d, line 12th [page 80, line 15], of the Niagara being brought into close action. I believe the Niagara was three quarters of a mile astern of the Lawrence, and when she passed us to windward, at the time Com. Perry took possession of her, she was half a mile off on our weather bow. This was about two hours and forty-eight minutes after the action commenced. I expressed my surprize to Capt. Perry on observing the Niagara in that sit-

<sup>103</sup> Lieutenant John J. Yarnall, who was lost on board the Epervier in 1815.

uation, and after the Lawrence was disabled he left her in my possession and went on board the Niagara.

*Q.* What further do you know relative to the subject of this enquiry?

*A.* In the morning of the 10th Sept., we discovered the enemy's squadron and got under way—stood out past the islands. The wind veered, and became favourable soon after we passed one of the islands. Within about three miles of the enemy, Capt. Elliott in the Niagara bore down and spoke Capt. Perry. Capt. Elliott fell into line next to the Caledonia. The Detroit commenced the action by firing a long 24 pounder. Capt. Perry directed me to hail the Scorpion, for the purpose of engaging the enemy, and at the same time to commence our fire with a 12 pounder on the forecastle. A few minutes afterwards, we commenced a fire with the carronades. It having been enquired of me whether they told or not, and I answering in the negative, Capt. Perry ordered the helm to be put up and bore down upon the enemy. The Caledonia and Scorpion engaged. We run down and came within about half musket shot, exposed to the whole of the enemy's fire at first and afterwards to that of four of his vessels, the Chippewa, Detroit, Hunter, and Queen Charlotte. We lay opposite the Hunter, and the Queen Charlotte was astern of the Hunter. Our first division was fought against the Detroit, the second against the Queen Charlotte, and occasionally guns at the Hunter. At several periods during



the contest, I expressed my surprise that the Niagara was not brought into close action. The crew also expressed their surprise, but were encouraged by the officers to fight on till she should come down and take a part with us. I observed the Niagara firing a distant fire (I suppose three quarters of a mile off) at the enemy's smaller vessels, the Lady Prevost and others. It was two hours and forty-eight minutes after the action commenced that Com. Perry said to me, "I leave you to surrender the vessel to the enemy." At this time we could not fight a single gun. He left us. After he got in the boat, he observed that he would leave it discretionary with me, either to surrender or receive the enemy's fire. I called on Mr. Taylor<sup>104</sup> and Mr Forrest,<sup>105</sup> who were on deck, to know their opinion. They told me it was useless to sacrifice any more men, as we were unable to sustain the action any longer. The colours were consequently struck. Immediately on Capt. Perry's arrival on board the Niagara, he made sail and bore down—broke the enemy's line, and the action was decided in about fifteen or twenty minutes, except as to two of the enemy's vessels, which attempted to escape, but were pursued.

*Q.* What was the force of our squadron?

*A.* The Lawrence and Niagara of 20 guns each, eighteen 32 pd carronades, and two long 12's.

<sup>104</sup> Sailing-master William V. Taylor. He became a captain in 1841.

<sup>105</sup> Acting Lieutenant Dulaney Forrest. He died a lieutenant in 1825.

The Caledonia had two or three guns on circles. The Ariel had 3, the Scorpion 2 guns—one a 12, and the other an 18 or 24 pounder. The rest one gun each. The Lawrence had 131 men and boys, of every description, of which 103 were fit for duty. The squadron had but few seamen. We had about 30 marines and some militia men.

*Q.* What command had Capt. Elliott in the action?

*A.* He commanded the Niagara.

*Q.* How near was he to the enemy when the action commenced?

*A.* About a mile and a half, or two miles.

*Q.* Do you believe Capt. Elliott did every thing a brave and meritorious officer should have done, in the action?

*A.* I am under the belief that the Niagara could have been brought into closer action. The same wind which would bring the Lawrence into action would likewise bring the Niagara into action. The main top sail of the Lawrence was laying to the mast, foresail hauled up, and top gallant sail furled. I think the Niagara had her main top sail also to the mast—that is, while she was astern.

*Q. by Captain Elliott.* Did the Niagara at any time during the action attempt to make off from the British fleet?

*A.* No.

*Q.* What was the distance from the Lawrence to the Niagara, when the firing commenced from the enemy?

*A.* A quarter of a mile.

*Q.* What was the situation of the gun boats when I left the Niagara, and how were they disposed of when I reached the head of the enemy's line with them?

*A.* The gun boats, generally were astern and to windward. I saw Capt. Elliott on board one of them, and they were coming into action. They were very much scattered, but all bearing down into action.

*Q.* What was the established order of battle, and is the sketch,<sup>106</sup> now shewn you, a correct one?

*A.* The sketch is correct.

*Q.* What were the observations of Lieuts. Turner<sup>107</sup> and Holdup,<sup>108</sup> when speaking to you of the action?

*A.* They expressed their disapprobation and surprise that the Niagara was not brought into action.

*Q.* When I was passing the Lawrence in the boat, did you not come to the gangway, and ask me to bring the boat along side, as you were sinking?

*A.* No!

*Q.* Did you not, on the return of the fleet to Erie, discovering that there was an altercation between Captains Perry and Elliott, meet Midshipman Page<sup>109</sup> on the beach, and say to him that there

<sup>106</sup> A copy of this sketch will be found in R. Jarvis's *Biographical Notice of Com. Jesse Duncan Elliott*, 446.

<sup>107</sup> Lieutenant Daniel Turner, commander of the *Caledonia*. He became a captain in 1835.

<sup>108</sup> Lieutenant Thomas Holdup (Stevens), commander of the *Trippe*. He was promoted to a captaincy in 1836.

<sup>109</sup> Midshipman Hugh N. Page, of the *Tigress*. He became a captain in 1850.

was the deuce to pay about the action, but that as to your part, you had always given each of those officers an equal share of credit?

*A.* No—I do not recollect having any conversation with the young gentleman alluded to.

*Q.* How was the wind from the beginning to the end of the action?

*A.* I do not precisely recollect. I suppose a vessel might go two knots.

*Q. by the court.* In the general surprize which you state was expressed that the Niagara did not close faster into action, did you make any allowance for the lightness of the wind?

*A.* In my former answers I have made allowances for the wind and the existing state of things.

*Q.* Was there any difference in the force of the wind from the commencement of the action until the time when Captain Perry came on board the Niagara?

*A.* The wind freshened. About the time he left the Lawrence there was more wind than there had been.

The court adjourned to to-morrow morning at half past nine o'clock.

APRIL 25TH, 1815.

The court met pursuant to adjournment. Present:

Commodore Murray, *President*;

Captain Evans, Lieut. Comt. Rodgers, *Members*;

The Judge Advocate.

Lieut. Webster was reëxamined.

*Q. by the judge advocate.* When was it that Capt. Elliott bore down to speak Capt. Perry? and what passed?

*A.* At about ten o'clock in the morning, Capt. Elliott called all hands aft, and requested Com. Perry to shew his boys his flag, when Com. Perry hoisted a flag with the motto on it of *Don't give up the ship*. Capt. Elliott told his crew to read it, and explained to them what was on the flag, and told them to swear within themselves that this flag should never come down, observing that these were the dying words of Lawrence.

*Q.* What was the established order of battle?

*A.* The original order of sailing was for the Niagara to lead the van. I afterwards learned that, in consequence of the enemy's forming differently from what was expected, we changed our order of battle, which brought us into the situation I stated yesterday.

*Q.* When was this change made, and how?

*A.* The signal which I saw was made after the commodore's flag (above mentioned) was hoisted, I think. This was the first forming of the line.

*Q.* Is the sketch now shewn you a correct view of the manner in which the line was formed?

*A.* It is.

*Q. by Capt. Elliott.* How far was the Caledonia from the Niagara, from the commencement of the enemy's fire until I ordered her out of the line?

*A.* She was as close as she could be with safety,

and I recollect once backing the topsail to prevent running into her.

*Q. by the court.* How long time elapsed between the Lawrence commencing the action and the Niagara's engaging?

*A.* I should say ten minutes.

*Q. by Capt. Elliott.* What was the distance from the Lawrence to the Niagara from the commencement of the action until I ordered the Caledonia out of the line? and did not the enemy's shot take effect in a few minutes after the firing began, upon the Niagara's spars and rigging.

*A.* At no time during that period were they more than two hundred yards apart. The enemy's shot took effect very soon, and shot away one of the fore top mast back stays.

*Q.* Did not the enemy's fire appear to be directed at the Niagara's spars and rigging?

*A.* I think it was.

*Q.* What distance was I from the Lawrence when I passed her gaining the head of the line?

*A.* It did not, in my opinion, exceed thirty yards.

*Q.* Just before you were wounded what was the relative position of the Lawrence and the Niagara?

*A.* The Lawrence was a little on our larboard or weather quarter. This placed us nearer the enemy than the Lawrence.

*Q.* What damage did the Niagara sustain in the action?

*A.* Our main stay, fore top mast back stays, a great deal of running rigging, and two shrouds of our fore rigging, were shot away. Some of our spars were wounded. There were two men killed from my division, before I went below, and a number of men wounded on board.

*Q.* Was the Niagara, at any time during the action, from half to three quarters of a mile on the weather bow of the Lawrence after I ordered the Caledonia out of the line?

*A.* She was not. I wish, also to correct my evidence of yesterday (page 3 [i.e. page 180]) by adding that the Ariel and the Scorpion were on the weather bow of the Lawrence.

*Q.* Did you observe the enemy's ship Queen Charlotte bear up and run away from the Niagara? and if so, when?

*A.* She did bear up from the Niagara's fire, in about half an hour after the Niagara commenced firing.

Mr. Montgomery,<sup>110</sup> midshipman late of the Niagara was sworn.

*Q.* Where was your station on board?

*A.* In the first division, commanded by Lieut. Edwards.<sup>111</sup>

*Q.* Does Captain Perry's official letter contain a correct statement of facts as you know or believe?

*A.* Yes.

<sup>110</sup> Midshipman John B. Montgomery. He was promoted to be captain in 1853.

<sup>111</sup> Lieutenant John J. Edwards. He died of fever, at Erie in January, 1814.

Q. State what you know relative to the matter of this enquiry?

A. In the commencement of the action the Niagara took a position astern of the Caledonia in close line, agreeably to a signal made by Com. Perry. Capt. Elliott, observing that the enemy fired principally at the Lawrence, ordered Mr. Turner to keep away, so as to enable us to support the commodore by taking a position astern of the Lawrence. The Caledonia took her station astern of the Niagara, and continued there during the action. The lightness of the wind prevented our getting as close to the Lawrence as it was supposed, we intended. Capt. Elliott, observing that the carronade shot fell short, ordered them to fire from the long gun only. When the Lawrence was disabled, a breeze sprung up; we passed her in company with the Caledonia, to windward, at about twenty-five yards distance. The Caledonia was then astern of us. We took a position which brought the Lawrence nearly astern of us on the lee quarter. Captain Elliott ordered us to make sail, and we had boarded the fore tack and were in the act of setting top gallant sails, before Capt. Perry came on board. I observed him come over the weather gangway of the Lawrence, get into a boat, and pass under the Niagara's stern. I went aft, and reported it to Capt. Elliott who was then standing on the taffel. Capt. Elliott met Com. Perry at the weather gangway, and shook hands with him. Some conversation passed which I did



not hear. Capt. Elliott soon disappeared, and I did not see him afterwards till the end of the action. When Com. Perry came on board, we were firing all our starboard guns. We bore down in company with the Caledonia, and directed our fire principally at the Detroit. The enemy's line was compact after the Lawrence struck. In about fifteen minutes after Com. Perry came on board, the Detroit struck, and the Queen Charlotte a few minutes after. The Lady Prevost was then about forty or fifty yards from the Niagara's lee bow. The marines were ordered to discharge their muskets from our forecastle at the Lady Prevost. After the second discharge of musketry, she struck. I think the Hunter struck before Capt. Elliott left the brig.

*Q. by the court.* Did Capt. Elliott do all in his power to gain a nearer position?

*A.* Yes. We were bearing down on the enemy before Com. Perry came on board. We had kept up an incessant fire from our carronades some time before Com. Perry came on board.

*Q.* Do you believe Capt. Elliott did every thing he ought in duty to do in the action, as a brave and meritorious officer?

*A.* Yes! and I heard him express to the crew his intention of bringing us into as close action as possible.

*Q. by Capt. Elliott.* Did the Niagara at any time during the action attempt to make her escape from the British fleet?

*A.* No.

*Q.* What was the distance from the Lawrence to the Niagara when the enemy's fire commenced? and what distance were the Lawrence, Caledonia, and Niagara from the enemy's fleet?

*A.* We were as close to the Caledonia as we could form the line. The distance between the Caledonia and the Lawrence I cannot state. The three vessels were not within carronade distance of the enemy, but at long gun shot, when the enemy's fire commenced.

*Q.* What was the distance from the Lawrence to the Niagara when we commenced our fire? and what distance was each of those vessels from the enemy's fleet?

*A.* The distance was at that time from one hundred fifty to two hundred yards. The two vessels were at long gun shot. The second or third shot fired from the enemy cut away two starboard fore top mast back stays and fell about thirty yards to windward of us.

*Q.* What was the distance from the Lawrence to the Caledonia and from the Caledonia to the Niagara? and what distance was each of those vessels from the enemy's fleet when I ordered the Caledonia to bear up and let me pass her?

*A.* The Lawrence was at that time eighty or ninety yards from the Caledonia; and the flying gib boom of the Niagara was nearly over the taffel of the Caledonia. The three brigs were still at long gun shot from the enemy.

*Q.* When I ordered the Caledonia to bear up where did I place the Niagara? and where was she when Capt Perry came on board?

*A.* Capt. Elliott placed his vessel astern of the Lawrence, and when Capt. Perry came on board, the Niagara was ahead of the Lawrence standing down on the enemy. The Caledonia was ordered out of the line about ten minutes after the commencement of the action, and we passed the Lawrence at half past two o'clock.

*Q.* When Capt. Perry came on board the Niagara did he not find her helm up, and that vessel standing direct for the enemy's ship Detroit?

*A.* We were standing for the enemy, whose line was in compact order.

*Q.* What was the situation of the gun boats when I left the Niagara? and how were they disposed of when brought to the head of the enemy's line?

*A.* When Capt. Elliott left the Niagara, they were all astern of us. We had passed the Scorpion and Ariel. When Capt. Perry came on board they were all astern, except that I do not recollect whether the Scorpion and Ariel were to windward or astern.

*Q.* When I hailed the gun boats, did I not order them to make sail and keep close under my stern?

*A.* I heard Capt. Elliott hail the Porcupine and order her to take a position close under our stern, at the commencement of the action. The

Scorpion was ahead and the Ariel on the weather bow of the Lawrence.

*Q.* What was the established order of battle, and is the sketch now shewn you a correct view of the situation of both fleets at the times stated?

*A.* In the commencement of the action, the Scorpion was the headmost vessel, the Lawrence next, and the Ariel on the weather bow of the Lawrence, the Niagara astern of the Caledonia. The two lines are correctly stated in the sketch, excepting that the enemy's schooner Chippewa took her position ahead of the Detroit after the commencement of the action—I presume, in order to support the British Commodore and to engage the small vessels at the head of our line.

*Q.* When Capt. Perry came on board the Niagara, was she half a mile on the weather bow of the Lawrence?

*A.* No! She was nearly ahead of the Lawrence, a little on her weather bow, perhaps one hundred yards.

*Q.* Did the Lawrence and Caledonia at any time in the action bear up, and leave the Niagara with her main top sail aback, or leave her on a wind?

*A.* Until the Caledonia changed her position, the Niagara was in close order with her. The Lawrence and Caledonia did not bear up and leave the Niagara, as interrogated.

*Q. by the court.* At what stage of the action did the Niagara get within musket shot of the enemy?

*A.* After the Lawrence was disabled.

*Q. by Capt. Elliott.* Did Capt. Elliott or Capt. Perry bring the Niagara into close action?

*A.* The Niagara had closed with the enemy some time before Capt. Perry came on board.

*Q.* Did not the wind die away almost to a calm when the action was pretty well on?

*A.* In a very short time after the commencement of the action it died away, and it continued nearly calm until about the time the Lawrence was disabled.

*Q.* Did the enemy's ship Queen Charlotte bear up to avoid the Niagara's fire, and if so, at what time?

*A.* Yes! before the Lawrence was disabled, she bore up and ran foul of the Detroit on that ship's lee quarter.

*Q. by the court.* Did the Niagara bear down and speak Com. Perry before the action? and if so, what passed?

*A.* Capt. Elliott spoke Capt. Perry while we were passing to leeward. Capt. Elliott mentioned to his crew that it was the commodore's intention to bring the enemy to close action immediately. He told them it was probable we should receive one or two raking fires from the enemy, and advised them to receive it with coolness—not to be alarmed. He observed that we should not commence firing until within musket shot distance—and then, if every man did his duty, we should flog

them in ten minutes. He then ordered them to their quarters.

Mr. Adams,<sup>112</sup> late midshipman of the Niagara, was sworn.

*Q.* Do you believe Capt. Perry's official account to be correct?

*A.* I think it is.

*Q.* Did the Niagara at any time during the action attempt to make off from the British fleet?

*A.* No!

*Q.* What was the distance from the Lawrence to the Niagara when the enemy's fire commenced? and what distance were the Lawrence, Caledonia, and Niagara from the enemy?

*A.* I should say the distance was thirty or forty yards between the Lawrence and Niagara. The three vessels were about half or three quarters of a mile from the enemy.

*Q.* What was the distance from the Lawrence to the Caledonia, and from the Caledonia to the Niagara? and what distance were those vessels from the enemy, when I ordered the Caledonia to bear up and let me pass her?

*A.* The distance was not then more than twenty yards from the Lawrence to the Caledonia, and our gib boom was over the Caledonia's taffel. All were nearing the enemy, and something less than half a mile off.

*Q.* When Capt. Perry came on board the Ni-

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<sup>112</sup> Midshipman Samuel W. Adams. He was dropped from the navy in 1815.

agara, did he not find her helm up, and that vessel standing direct for the enemy's ship Detroit.

*A.* The helm was up, and we were bearing down upon the enemy. The foresail was set for that purpose.

*Q. by the court.* Did Capt. Elliott do all in his power to close in with the Lawrence when she was overpowered by the enemy's vessels firing into her?

*A.* I believe he did.

*Q.* Did he get up in time to afford her relief?

*A.* She was nearly disabled, but still firing when he got up.

*Q.* Was Capt. Elliott's conduct, during the action, that of a good officer, in your judgment?

*A.* It was.

*Q.* Did you observe any indication of an intention on his part to withdraw from the enemy at the time the Lawrence was disabled?

*A.* No! he appeared to be anxious to close in.

*Q. by Capt. Elliott.* Did the Lawrence and Caledonia, at any time during the action, run down within musket shot of the enemy, and leave the Niagara firing at the enemy's smaller vessels at a distance?

*A.* No! we were close to the Caledonia during the whole action, till she was ordered out of the way in order to let us pass to the assistance of the Commodore.

Mr. Tatem,<sup>113</sup> master's mate on board the Niagara was sworn.

<sup>113</sup> Master's Mate Robert S. Tatem.

*Q. by the Judge Advocate.* Did Capt. Elliott do all in his power to close in with the Lawrence when she was overpowered by the enemy's vessels firing into her?

*A.* He did.

*Q.* Did he get up in time to afford her relief?

*A.* We were never much out of the way. We were immediately under the Caledonia's stern, and the Lawrence was about the length of the Caledonia ahead of the latter. The three brigs were in compact line.

*Q.* Was Capt. Elliott's conduct during the action such as merited approbation?

*A.* I thought at the time that no man could display more zeal, gallantry, and conduct than he did.

*Q.* Did you observe any appearance of an intention on his part to withdraw from the enemy, when the Lawrence was disabled?

*A.* No! far from it.

*Q.* Did the Niagara at any time during the action make off from the British fleet?

*A.* No!

*Q.* Did the Lawrence and Caledonia at any time bear up and place themselves within musket shot distance of the enemy, leaving the Niagara three quarters of a mile off, firing at the enemy's smaller vessels?

*A.* No! Until we passed the Caledonia we were immediately under her stern.

*Q. by Capt. Elliott.* What conversation passed between me and Capt. Perry when I returned on board the Niagara?



*A.* I saw Capt. Perry shake hands with Capt. Elliott, and heard him express his high satisfaction at Capt. Elliott's conduct, and attributed to him a large share of the glory of the day.

*Q.* How near was Capt. Elliott to the Lawrence in passing her?

*A.* He took very little more than room enough to pass to windward.

*Q.* Was the Niagara three-fourths of a mile on the bow of the Lawrence when Capt. Perry came on board?

*A.* No! I should suppose not more than sixty or seventy yards, if that.

*Q.* Was not the helm up and the Niagara bearing down on the enemy when Capt. Perry came on board?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Had you been an officer on board the Lawrence, would you have supposed there was any deficiency in the conduct of Capt. Elliott in coming to the relief of the Lawrence?

*A.* No one, seeing what was going on, could suppose so. For my own part, I should not.

The Court adjourned to to-morrow morning at half past 9 o'clock.

APRIL, 26TH, 1815. The court met pursuant to adjournment. Present:

Commodore Murray, *President*;

Captain Evans, Lieut. Comt. Rodgers, *Members*;

The Judge Advocate.

Mr. Cummings,<sup>114</sup> acting midshipman on board the Niagara, was sworn.

*Q. by the court.* Did Capt. Elliott do all in his power to gain a near position to the enemy?

*A.* Yes—in my opinion, every thing he could do.

*Q.* Do you believe that Capt. Elliott did every thing he ought to have done in the action?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Did the Niagara attempt to make off from the enemy's fleet during the action?

*A.* No!

*Q.* Did the enemy's ship Queen Charlotte attempt to make off from the Niagara?

*A.* Yes—the Queen Charlotte attempted to get away from us, and in so doing run foul of the Detroit. This was before Capt. Elliott left the Niagara to go on board the gun boats.

*Q.* Where was the Niagara when Capt. Perry came on board of her? and was the Lawrence, at that time, three-fourths of a mile nearer to the enemy than the Niagara?

*A.* The Niagara was laying along side the enemy's ships Queen Charlotte and Detroit. I think she was not more than two cables length from them. I think we were nearer the enemy than the Lawrence.

*Q.* When we passed the Lawrence how near were we to her?

*A.* I was not looking at her—but the first time I saw her, after we passed her, she was not more than a quarter of a mile off.

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<sup>114</sup>Midshipman John L. Cummings. He died a lieutenant in 1824.

Q. Did the Lawrence and Caledonia, at any time during the action, bear up for the enemy, leaving the Niagara standing on to windward?

A. No—not that I saw.

Q. Did Capt. Elliott order the Caledonia out of the line at any period of the action?

A. Yes! an hour before Capt. Perry came on board.

Lieut. Forrest, acting lieutenant on board the Lawrence, was sworn.

Q. Where were you stationed?

A. In the second division.

Q. Have you read Capt. Perry's official letter, and does it contain a correct statement of facts?

A. I have just read it, and it is correct.

Q. *by the judge advocate.* What else do you know of this enquiry?

A. When we got within three miles of the enemy on the 10th of September, Capt. Elliott hailed us concerning the flag that was to be hoisted on board the Commodore. A flag with the motto, *Don't give up the Ship*, was hoisted. Com. Perry hailed Capt. Elliott, and told him that he (Com. P.) intended to engage the Detroit, and wished the Niagara to drop just astern of him. We went into action in that order. Signals were made from the Lawrence for each vessel to engage its opponent.

Q. Did the Niagara attempt to make off from the British fleet at any time during the action?

A. No!

Q. Do you know whether Capt. Elliott did all in his power to gain a position nearer to the enemy?

*A.* It is my opinion there might have been more sail set on the Niagara.

*Q.* Did he do every thing becoming a brave and meritorious officer, in the action?

*A.* So far as I saw, I believe he did.

*Q.* Where was the Niagara when Com. Perry went on board?

*A.* She was to windward of us. I suppose she was about half a mile off, but I cannot be positive.

*Q.* Did you, during the action, express your surprize that the Niagara did not close with the enemy?

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* How far was the Niagara from the enemy at that time?

*A.* I do not know. I suppose from three-fourths to one-half a mile.

*Q.* Was the Niagara then engaged?

*A.* She was firing.

*Q.* How near was the Lawrence to the enemy at the same time?

*A.* At point blank shot distance with a carronade.

*Q.* Did the Caledonia and Lawrence at any time during the action bear up and run down on the enemy, leaving the Niagara standing on?

*A.* After the action commenced the Niagara was standing directly after us.

*Q.* Are Lieuts. Edwards and Smith,<sup>115</sup> and Mr. Macgraw,<sup>116</sup> late of the Niagara, dead?

<sup>115</sup> Lieutenant Joseph E. Smith. He died in Virginia in December, 1813.

<sup>116</sup> Purser Humphrey Magrath. He killed himself in 1814.

*A.* Yes.

*Q.* Is there any thing further relating to this enquiry that you wish to state to the court?

*A.* No.

The Court being cleared and the whole of the proceedings read over to the court by the judge advocate, the following opinion was pronounced.

#### OPINION

The Court of Enquiry convened at the request of Captain Jesse D. Elliott, having deliberately examined all the evidence produced before them for the purpose of investigating his conduct in the glorious battle of Lake Erie, on the 10th of September, 1813, in which he bore so conspicuous a part, sincerely regret that there should have been any diversity of opinion respecting the events of that day, and imperious duty compels the court to promulgate testimony that appears materially to vary in some of its important points: the court, however, feel convinced that the attempts to wrest from Captain Elliott the laurels he gained in that splendid victory, as second in command, under that gallant and highly meritorious officer Captain Perry, ought in no wise to lessen him in the opinion of his fellow citizens, as a brave and skillful officer, and that the charge made in the proceedings of the British Court Martial by which Captain Barclay was tried, of his attempting to withdraw from the battle, is malicious and unfounded in fact. On the contrary, it has been proved to the satisfaction of

this court that the enemy's ship Queen Charlotte bore off from the fire of the Niagara, commanded by Captain Elliott.

A. MURRAY, *Prest.*

HENRY WHEATON, *Judge Advocate*

Approved, B. W. CROWNINSHIELD

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF  
THE BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE

Accounts of the battle are almost innumerable.  
Only the more important ones are here listed.





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of Monday, February 16, 1852 (Providence, 1853), 36 pages.

A second edition of this book was issued in 1854.

PARSONS, USHER. Brief Sketches of the Officers who were in the Battle of Lake Erie (Albany, 1862), 13 pages.

This is also printed in the New England *Historical and Genealogical Register*, vol. xvii, 17-29.

— Speech of Dr. Usher Parsons at Put-in-Bay, September 10, 1858, the Celebration of the 45th Anniversary of the Battle of Lake Erie [Providence?, 1858], 4 pages.

This is published in the New England *Historical and Genealogical Register*, vol. xiii, 171-174.

[PERRY, MATTHEW CALBRAITH]. Documents in relation to the Differences between the late Commodore O. H. Perry and Captain J. D. Elliott (Washington, 1821; Boston, 1834), 38 pages.

This pamphlet contains O. H. Perry's letter to the Secretary of the Navy G. W. Crowninshield of August 8, 1818, preferring charges against Elliott, a copy of the charges, correspondence between Elliott and Perry and others in 1818 which threatened to lead to a duel, and affidavits of officers favorable to Perry.

PERRY, OLIVER HAZARD. Life of Commodore Perry, in the *Portfolio*, 1814, vol. i, 210-217.

PERRY-ELLIOTT CONTROVERSY. Review of a Pamphlet purporting to be Documents in relation to the Differences which subsisted between the late Commodore Oliver H. Perry, and Captain Jesse D. Elliott, by a Citizen of Massachusetts (Boston, 1834), 55 pages.

This is a defense of Elliott. Many important documents relating to his controversy with Perry are printed.

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PERRY STATUE. Inauguration of the Perry Statue at Cleveland, on the Tenth of September, 1860, including the Addresses and other Proceedings, with a Sketch of William Walcutt, the Sculptor, published by Direction of the City Council (Cleveland, 1861), 128 pages.

This contains many interesting documents relating to the battle. Among others, a letter of Lewis Cass, giving an account of the reception of Perry's famous dispatch at Seneca (pp. 21-22), brief accounts of the battle by a gunner and a sailor who participated in it (pp. 82-86), and accounts of the reception at various places of the news of Perry's victory (pp. 91-97).

PERRY STATUE. Inauguration of the Perry Statue, with the Addresses of William P. Sheffield, and the Remarks in receiving the Statue by Governor Wetmore and Mayor Franklin, etc. (Newport, 1885), 60 pages.

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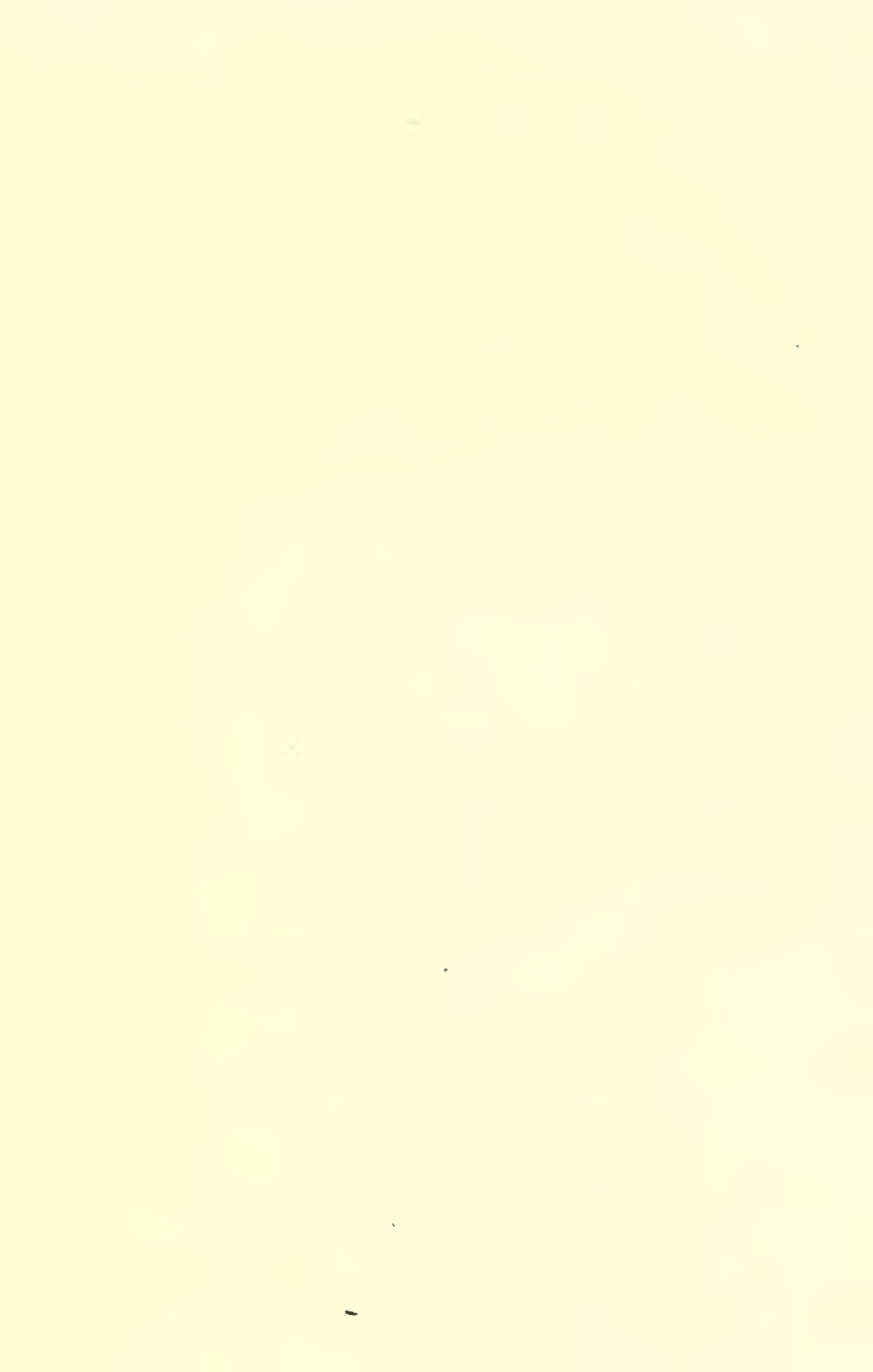
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