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“LEST WE FORGET”

OLIVER HAZARD PERRY

The War of 1812

The Battle of Lake Erie

THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

By Annette P. Word



CLEVELAND

1912

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IN EXCHANGE

Western Reserve Historical Society

AUG 4



WESTERN RESERVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM, SHOWING PLASTER CAST OF OLIVER HAZARD PERRY

“ *LEST WE FORGET* ”

The War of 1812 is a subject with which every thinking man and woman, boy and girl, in Cleveland will wish to be familiar during this year of Centennial celebration.

Much has been written on the various battles, and the men who took part in them. Many of the engagements were on land, but the most important were fought at sea; and the one in which we of Ohio are most interested is the Battle of Lake Erie, and the famous victory of Oliver Hazard Perry.

Every school boy and girl knows that many men and officers were killed in that engagement; that the enlisted men were buried at sea (in Lake Erie) at night; and that the bodies of the officers, both English and American, were taken to Put-in-Bay Island and buried in a spot near the lake shore.

At the Western Reserve Historical Society is a large oil painting, executed by an artist who lived in Cleveland many years ago, Mr. Chevalier. This painting depicts the burial of the officers. The two fleets are drawn up in the background, while in the foreground is the scene of the last sad rites.

It is a realistic and an interesting picture; the fierce conflict of the previous day is over; the ships ride at

anchor on a lake that is calm and placid; one can almost hear the lapping of the waves upon the shore. But the triumph of victory is hushed in the presence of death. The brave of both armies had given their lives for their countries; and now, here, far from home and loved ones, their bodies were to be laid to rest to "sleep the sleep that knows not breaking, morn of toil nor night of waking."

For one hundred years these graves have remained unmarked by a suitable monument. At last the people of the adjacent states together with the Congress of the United States have decided to honor the memory of Perry and his brave men by a monument that shall speak eloquently of their appreciation and love.

Every citizen of Cleveland, every boy and girl, will surely wish to do his or her part in the celebration which is to commence next July and continue to October. Cleveland must not lag behind her sister cities and towns in the celebration which is to lead up to the laying of the cornerstone of the great monument.

Let every one begin at once to read up on the War of 1812.

One of the most thrilling and graphic accounts of the Battle of Lake Erie is that by George Bancroft, the historian. This may be found in a work published by the City of Cleveland in 1860, which gives the

proceedings of the inauguration of the Perry Statue which now stands in Wade Park not far from Euclid Avenue.

And, by the way, the reading of these proceedings reveals the fact that the fire of patriotism burned strong in the hearts of the people in 1860. The statue was then placed at the Public Square, and the occasion of the unveiling was one of the greatest events in the history of Cleveland.

The Governor of Rhode Island and his staff were present; the officers of the state of Rhode Island; the members of the Rhode Island legislature, and the famous Providence Light Artillery. Also Governor Dennison of Ohio, and his staff were present. And many relatives and descendants of Commodore Perry, and many surviving soldiers of the War of 1812, were the guests of the city of Cleveland for the auspicious occasion. There were two or three who had been with Perry in his engagement. One of these was Dr. Usher Parsons, the surgeon of the flagship. He made an address to the assembled multitude, describing the scenes on board the Lawrence during and after the fierce conflict.

To this inauguration of the Perry statue the people flocked from every nearby town and hamlet. They came in every conceivable kind of conveyance. In 1860 the population of Cleveland was only 43,417.

And for this celebration there were 100,000 visitors in Cleveland!

The account reads like a fairytale. "For two or three days previous the railroads had been bringing in large trains loaded down with people to attend the great celebration * * * The crowds poured in at such a rate that it seemed as if there would be no room left for the crowds that were to arrive on Monday. On Monday morning the trains came in loaded down, inside and outside, and on the top. Never before did cars come into Cleveland so densely packed with people. The masses of humanity clinging to them, wherever foothold or handgrip could be obtained, could be likened to nothing but a swarm of bees on a bush * * * Steamboats from Buffalo, Detroit and Sandusky * * * Teams came pouring in, in endless procession, and undoubtedly brought more than all the railroads added together * * * Thousands * * * came in on foot."

And at that gathering stories were told, by those who were living at the time of the victory,—forty years previous—of how the news was carried, and how it was received by the people. Quoting again from this fascinating account—"Captain Johnson says that on the morning of the memorable 10th, (1813) he and a gang of men were just putting the finishing touches to the first court house and jail, which stood

right in front of the present First Presbyterian Church. They thought they heard thunder, but looking out of the windows saw no clouds, and concluded it was the roar of cannon. They were expecting to hear news, knowing that Perry's fleet had passed up the lake. They all went to the bank of the lake * * * All the villagers assembled there, numbering perhaps thirty. They could distinguish between the reports of the larger and smaller guns. They staid on the bank until the reports ceased, and the last four or five reports being from heavy guns, and it being known that the Americans had the heaviest ordnance, they concluded that the victory was ours, and then on the spot they gave cheers for Perry."

A letter written from Buffalo, dated September 19th, 1813, reads as follows: "You can easily imagine the effect of this news upon our villagers, and the soldiers stationed in this vicinity. I cannot describe it to you. Be assured we all breathe easier, for we believe that a blow has been struck by our noble tars that will be felt throughout our whole frontier * * * This evening every tenement of the village, that has a window, is to be brilliantly illuminated."

Probably this "brilliant illumination" was by means of candles.

How many citizens of Cleveland have seen the Perry statue which was erected in Cleveland in 1860?

How many know who was the sculptor of the statue, and how the money for it was raised by gifts of the people?

How many have seen the oil portrait of Oliver Hazard Perry which hangs in the Council Chamber, at the City Hall? How many know that this portrait was presented to the city of Cleveland by the son of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry as a token of appreciation of the honor shown his father's memory by the people of Cleveland? How many know that this portrait is a copy made by a Mr. Lawson of Lowell, Massachusetts, from the celebrated original painting by Gilbert Stuart?

How many know that there is another copy of the Stuart portrait of Perry hanging on the walls of the Western Reserve Historical Society?

Oh, Citizens of Cleveland, pause for a brief space in the mad rush of life! Turn your thoughts backward to 1812; gather about the firesides of your homes the members of your families, old and young, and read aloud—and discuss—the thrilling accounts of the War of 1812; the events which led up to the Battle of Lake Erie, and those which followed; instill into the minds of your sons and daughters the meaning of that war, its causes, and its far-reaching results. Study the maps, and realize what a different tale might have been told had not the dauntless Perry

opened the way to the later victories that resulted in the present boundary line between Canada and the United States.

Then you will need no urging to respond to the call to add your mite to help ^{make} the coming Cleveland celebration a brilliant success; one which shall be recorded on the pages of Cleveland's history as having been as stirring and as wonderful for the year 1913 as was the one attending the inauguration of the Perry statue in 1860!

The Western Reserve Historical Society possesses many rare publications on the War of 1812. It has also published a series of Tracts on the subject. These are now very scarce and out of print.

In addition to the painting already mentioned as being on the walls of the Society's building, the Museum contains the original plaster cast of the Perry statue; and the plaster relievio which depicts the Commodore as he passes in a rowboat from the Lawrence to the Niagara.

The Museum also contains the sextant taken by Commodore Perry from Commodore Barclay in the engagement on Lake Erie, as well as a piece of wood from the hulk of the Lawrence, and a few pieces of

cannon balls. The frame on the oil painting of the burial scene is said to be made from a heavy oak timber of the same ship.

The Society's collection of books on the War of 1812 will be open to adult readers, for reference only, daily, excepting Sundays, from nine a. m. to five p. m. The customary fee, of ten cents, for consulting the historical library, will not be charged for the use of this special collection during the coming year, by courtesy of the Western Reserve Historical Society.

ANNETTE P. WARD,

Librarian, Western Reserve Historical Society.



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JAN 1989

Grantville, PA

