

The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History

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her main breadth so far aft that the water thrown off by it does not unite till it passes the rudder which is left to the action of an eddy violent in proportion to the Ship's velocity—This opinion is strengthened by the circumstance of the motion ceasing when she goes less than four knots and becoming exceedingly violent when going ten which is the most we can get out of her—

For myself although I should prefer almost every other vessel yet I trust my sense of duty will always secure my exertions to make the best use of such means as may be placed in my power— I should feel disposed to expose the Ship and crew to greater hazard if I believed they would be able to perform greater service when at sea— As it is I certainly shall neglect no opportunity which offers a reasonable hope of eluding the vigilance of the Enemy

I have ever felt a confidence that you would favor my wishes when the interest of the service would allow you to do it with propriety, and in this confidence shall wait such opportunity, and am Sir with Esteem and respect your Obd. Servant

C: Morris.

ALS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 8, No. 120 (M125, Roll No. 33).

1. Morris, unhappy with *Adams's* seaworthiness, had asked Charles Stewart to relinquish the command of *Constitution* to him, leaving one of the new frigates being built for Stewart. The latter refused the proposition. Stewart's letter to Morris of 17 December 1813 was enclosed with Morris's letter to Jones.

Chapter Three

The Northern Lakes Theater: January–December 1813

The first campaign season of the War of 1812 demonstrated that successful military operations contiguous to the eastern Great Lakes and Lake Champlain required naval control of those lakes. Land transportation was laborious, slow, and expensive. Neither the United States nor Great Britain had made adequate preparations to use sea power effectively on the northern lakes. As military operations progressed, leaders on both sides realized that they must either exert themselves to establish competent naval forces on the lakes or risk military failure.

On the Canadian side of Lake Erie, the British Army Quartermaster General's Department controlled the Provincial Marine vessels Queen Charlotte, 16 guns, and General Hunter, 6 guns. The American army had purchased and armed the brig Adams on Lake Erie. General William Hull had used Adams to carry his personal possessions and papers in attacking Detroit but lost all with the vessel when he surrendered in August 1812. Adams, captured without a contest, was taken into the Provincial Marine and renamed Detroit. On Lake Ontario, the Provincial Marine corvette Royal George, 22, the sloop of war Earl of Moira, 14, and the schooner Duke of Gloucester faced the lone American naval vessel, the brig Oneida, 16, stationed at Sackets Harbor. With these sparse naval resources, the contestants had begun the war on and around the lakes.

During September 1812, Commodore Isaac Chauncey, newly appointed commander on Lakes Ontario and Erie, took charge of building a naval squadron on Lake Ontario, combining purchased schooners and the corvette Madison, built by shipwright Henry Eckford and a team of skilled ship carpenters from New York City. At the same time, Daniel Dobbins, a lake mariner from Presque Isle (Erie), Pennsylvania, visited Washington to report on British naval activity in that area. Secretary of the Navy Paul Hamilton sent him back to Erie as a sailing master with gunboat plans and orders to construct the vessels at that place under Commodore Chauncey's command.

Later that month, Navy Secretary Paul Hamilton gave Lieutenant Thomas Macdonough an independent command on Lake Champlain, a strategically vital link in the United States' line of defense. American control of this lake would give access to the St. Lawrence River via the Richelieu River that flows northward from the lake. If the British were to gain control of Champlain, they would have a way of striking at the heart of New York State and of severing the disaffected New England states from the rest of the country. At Macdonough's disposal were two decaying navy gunboats aground near Burlington, Vermont, to which would be

added four that had been purchased by the army. Macdonough arrived at Plattsburg by mid-October to confer with his counterpart, Major General Henry Dearborn. Afterwards, he crossed Lake Champlain to Burlington to commence work on his squadron. By December he had equipped and armed three sloops, *President*, *Growler*, and *Eagle* and two gunboats. He reported the enemy in possession of three armed sloops and a schooner being fitted out at Isle aux Noix. His pleas for additional ordnance and ship carpenters were heeded. In early May 1813, Macdonough's vessels were ready, yet he still lacked a sufficient number of ordinary seamen to commence operations. In the coming months, Macdonough's force encountered several setbacks. In June Lieutenant Sidney Smith was captured along with the two armed sloops under his command, *Eagle* and *Growler*. The British soon embarked with a joint force from Isle aux Noix and staged attacks at Plattsburg and Burlington, destroying warehouses, naval stores, and gunboats. Owing to this enemy activity, Macdonough was confined to the defensive and to preparing for a joint action with Major General Wade Hampton's army, which was intended for a thrust against Montreal.

By late November 1812, Chauncey had achieved dominance over the Provincial Marine's Lake Ontario force and had fortified his ice-locked vessels at Sackets Harbor for the winter. At Erie, Dobbins had still not received Chauncey's authorization to begin work, though he had obtained men and materials. Finally, in late December 1812, Chauncey made a tour of inspection to Buffalo, Black Rock, and Erie that demonstrated the urgency of commencing construction. From Newport, Rhode Island, Master Commandant Oliver Hazard Perry applied for duty on the lakes, fearing that he might be retained for coastal gunboat service instead of seeing action at sea. In January the newly appointed secretary of the navy, William Jones, approved and placed Perry under Chauncey's command. Meanwhile, the British government, recognizing that the weak and ineffective Provincial Marine would be no match for newly built American naval squadrons, decided to dispatch Royal Navy officers, men, and materiel to Upper Canada.

In Canada and the United States, preparations went ahead for the 1813 campaign that would commence as soon as the ice broke up on the lakes. Chauncey authorized Dobbins to construct two brigs and to arm several schooners at Erie. At Sackets Harbor, Eckford and his men labored to build a large sloop of war, a light dispatch schooner, and strengthen the armed schooners purchased the previous year. While this work went on, the Madison administration made plans for a spring military offensive aimed at Kingston, intending to sever Upper Canada from its administrative and logistical bases at Quebec and Montreal. During February it appeared that British reinforcements had begun to trickle into Upper Canada. Exaggerated intelligence reports suggested that a considerable force had passed up river to Kingston. Hearing this, Dearborn and Chauncey agreed that it would be best to shift their campaign objective further west to York and Fort George with Kingston as a final target. These operations commenced in late April with a joint attack against York under Chauncey, Dearborn, and Brigadier General Zebulon M. Pike. York was without a naval defense, and the small force posted there under Major General Sir Roger H. Sheaffe beat a hasty retreat. Although Pike lost his life

in the action, it was a successful raid, resulting in the destruction of British ordnance stores and naval supplies intended for the Lake Erie squadron at Amherstburg. From York the joint American force returned to Sackets Harbor, then sailed to Fort Niagara; after some weeks delay, Dearborn and Chauncey landed troops before Fort George and succeeded in pushing British troops out of the immediate area, including Fort Erie on the upper Niagara River. The victory was short lived because of the mishandling of American troops advancing westward toward Burlington. After the British captured two American generals and a number of their men, the Americans withdrew to the banks of the Niagara.

The British Admiralty in March sent naval reinforcements to the lakes in the troopship *Woolwich*. These reinforcements, under the command of Commodore Sir James L. Yeo, were officers and seamen destined for operations on Lakes Ontario, Erie, and Champlain. Yeo's Royal Navy contingent reached Kingston in May and replaced the Provincial Marine and took control of naval operations, with orders to remain on the defensive and to cooperate closely with Governor-General Sir George Prevost. Within weeks Yeo and Prevost had placed Chauncey on the defensive with an amphibious attack on his Sackets Harbor base. Chauncey, who had just completed the attack on Fort George, raced for Sackets Harbor and remained there until the General Pike was ready for sea. For several weeks in late summer, with the opposing armies stalemated at Niagara, the two squadrons maneuvered for position at the western end of Lake Ontario. Chauncey, who had an initial numerical advantage, lost four schooners in this skirmishing. *Hamilton* and *Scourge* capsized and sank during a severe squall; *Julia* and *Growler* were captured after Yeo's squadron cut them off from the rest of Chauncey's line of battle. After these events, the American commodore grew exceedingly cautious about venturing out of Sackets Harbor without knowing in advance the location of Yeo's squadron.

American plans for the rest of the military campaign had depended on the capture of Kingston after obtaining command of the lake and defeating the British forces on land at Niagara. Although the two preliminary steps were not accomplished, Secretary of War John Armstrong insisted on carrying out the plan. He replaced the ailing and aged Dearborn with the equally aged but mercurial Major General James Wilkinson and ordered him to prepare an attack on Kingston or Montreal. There was a great difference involved in considering the two objectives. At Kingston, Chauncey's naval squadron could give needed assistance, but if an attack were launched against Montreal, the navy could do little but blockade the head of the St. Lawrence.

On Lake Erie, the military outcome depended on the naval contest between Oliver H. Perry and Robert H. Barclay. Each was to cooperate with an army general needing naval superiority on the lake to move his army and supplies. Major General Henry Procter, who was running short of supplies for his troops, constantly urged Barclay to bring Perry to action. Major General William H. Harrison, commanding the American Northwest Army, likewise awaited a victory from Perry's squadron so that he could restore American control of Detroit and the upper Great Lakes. The battle was finally joined on 10 September 1813, when the

squadrons met near the Bass Islands in light, variable winds. Perry's bravery finally decided an uncertain battle, and he captured Barclay's entire squadron. American naval superiority on Lake Erie enabled General Harrison to transport his army by water in pursuit of Procter's retreating troops and Indians. Procter's defeat at Moraviantown on the Thames River completely altered the British defensive posture in Upper Canada. The remnants of Procter's forces retreated eastward to join Major General John Vincent's Army of the Centre at Burlington Heights.

During the summer, Secretary of War Armstrong traveled to Sackets Harbor to join Wilkinson and to participate directly in planning the forthcoming attack. The expedition required, as had the others, at least temporary American superiority on Lake Ontario. This much Commodore Chauncey accomplished. On 28 September, he discovered and engaged Yeo's squadron off York. The British withdrew to the west, fighting a stubborn rearguard action. Commodore Chauncey pursued Yeo's damaged squadron to Burlington Bay. Not willing to risk his squadron under the enemy's land batteries on a stormy lee shore, Chauncey withdrew and returned to Sackets Harbor. To his dismay he discovered that Armstrong and Wilkinson had decided that the British were too strong at Kingston to afford the Americans a reasonable chance of success. The American descent of the St. Lawrence in late October and early November is an example of a campaign hastily planned and poorly timed and executed. Chauncey positioned his squadron at the head of the St. Lawrence to protect the army transports as they went down river. Wilkinson's expeditionary troops were defeated at the Battle of Chrysler's Farm on 11 November. General Hampton's army, approaching Montreal from the south, ran into stiff resistance at the Battle of Chateauguay on 25 October. Hampton retreated and prepared to go into winter quarters rather than join Wilkinson's force for a renewal of the offensive.

Building the Fleet on Lake Erie

Commodore Isaac Chauncey found the naval establishment on Lake Erie in poor condition when he visited Black Rock and Erie during his tour of inspection in December 1812 and January 1813. He was displeased with the four gunboats then under construction at Presque Isle, and he knew that the four vessels grounded at Black Rock could not be freed until the Americans gained possession of Fort Erie across the Niagara River. Commodore Chauncey, however, pushed forward the construction of a new brig and the alteration of two of the four gunboats then building at Erie; he would continue to superintend the construction of the Lake Erie fleet from his headquarters at Sackets Harbor.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

Erie Pennsylvania, 1st Jan'y 1813

Sir/

I arrived here yesterday and found that Mr. Dobbins had commenced the building of four gun Boats two of the frames was already raised and the other

two nearly ready these boats are too small to cruise upon this lake and the two that are the most forward are in a state ~~not~~ I cannot alter them but the other two I have added ten feet to their length which will make them safe vessels

Mr. Dobbins has already expended three thousand dollars— he sent me a copy of his instructions in October last I then wrote to him not to commence building until he heard further from me upon the subject he however states that he never received that letter which was the reason that he commenced the boats without instructions

These boats will not be ready to Launch before the middle of april there is but few carpenters to be got here and most of these are house carpenters— I have however ordered three good Ship Carpenters from Sacketts Harbour to this place which will enable Mr. Dobbins to progress with the work pretty fast until the spring when I will furnish more workmen—

The Harbour of Presque Isle is large and capacious and would be a very fine rendezvous for our Vessels on this lake if there was ~~water~~ more water on the bar which unfortunately only admits vessels drawing from 4 to 5 feet yet in my opinion it is the best and indeed the only place that we can build at. The situation is healthy and good accommodations may be procured for the workmen and the place can be easily defended—

Before I leave here I shall inform myself of the resources of this part of the country in furnishing materials for building and equipping vessels for war my present impression is that it abounds with fine timber and Iron and cordage may be procured with facility from Pittsburgh— I have the honor to be Very Respectfully Sir your Obt. H. Servt

Isaac Chauncey

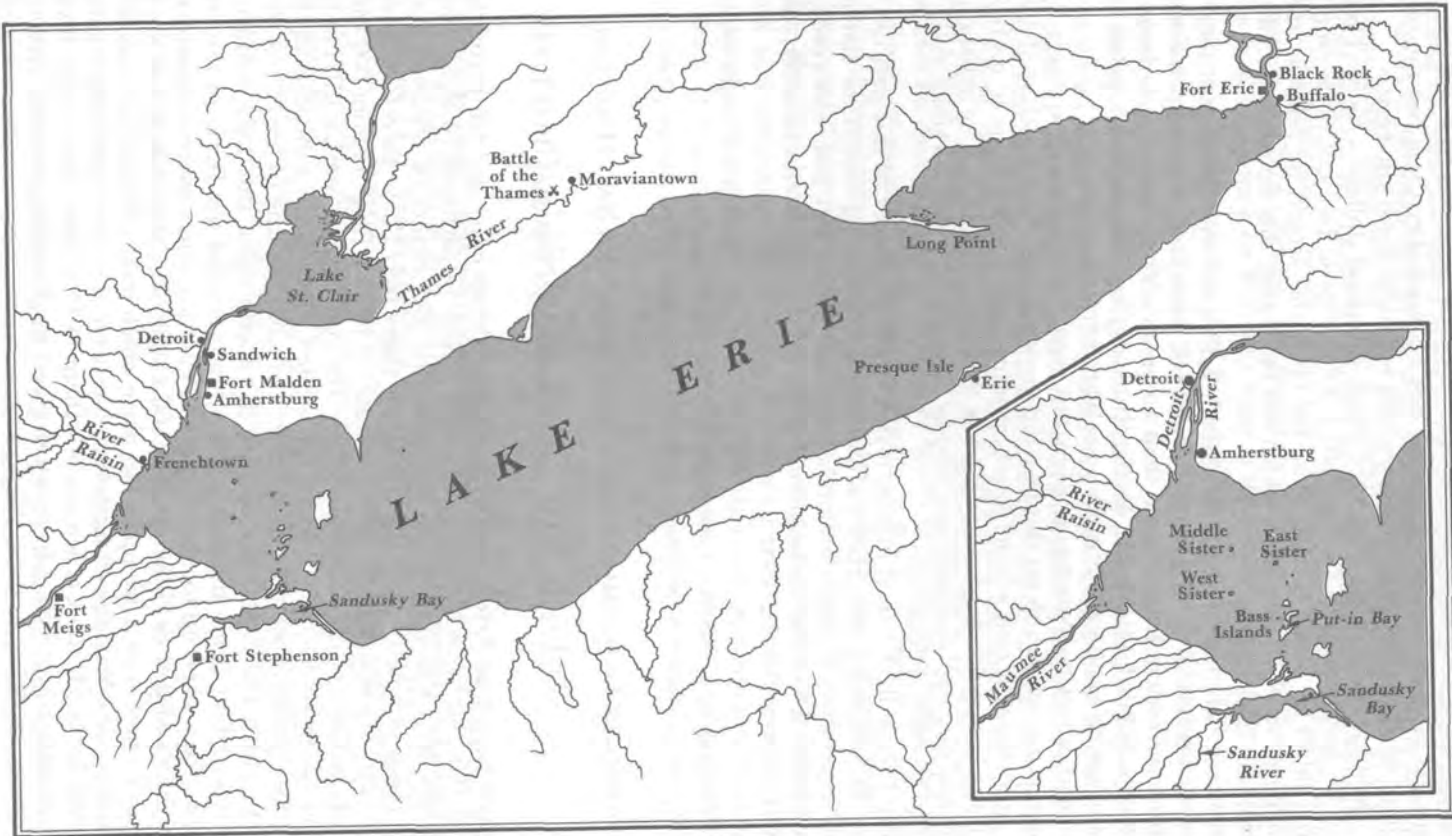
ALS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 1, No. 1 (M125, Roll No. 26).

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

Black Rock 8th. Jany. 1812 [1813]

Sir

I arrived here from Erie yesterday and found things much as I left them, the vessels at this place purchased for acct. of the Navy Department (four in number, besides the *Caledonia*!) are in that state that they cannot be removed until we have possession of the opposite side of the ~~shore~~ river I have therefore determined to procure materials at Erie this winter to build a Brig of about 300 tons to mount the Guns of the *Oneida* upon her The cost of the materials will not be great and can be sold with little loss if not wanted, I shall be in a situation in the spring (if we get the vessels out of this river) to build the Brig in the course of a few weeks which will enable me to seek the enemy upon this Lake, unfortunately Lieut. Elliott (from the best motives however) had the Decks of the vessels at this place taken up for the purpose of entering into a more extensive alteration than I wished or contemplated, soon after the Carpenters got at work, the enemy commenced a fire upon this place which induced them to break off, and return to New York the consequence has been, that the vessels still remain in the state in which the Carpenters left them in Octr. last, that is with their Decks and sides all tore up. I have not deemed it adviseable under all circumstances to do any thing to them this winter, as the weather is unfavorable and



Map 3. Lake Erie



Map 4. Lake Ontario

the days are short, consequently the men would work under disadvantages, that will be removed in the Spring, moreover I do not wish to incur expense that may prove useless for unless we get possession of the other side these vessels can be of no use to us consequently, any repairs put upon them would be thrown away. I have however, contracted for all the stuff requisite to repair them to be delivered here this winter, and in the spring I shall be in a situation to complete their repairs and mount their Guns in a few weeks, if there should be a prospect of gaining the opposite shore if there was no other obstruction the Ice in this River would prevent our getting into the Lake before the first of June and as I shall be able to get out of Sackets Harbour about the first of April I contemplate bringing all the Carpenters from that station, to this by water which will give us an abundance of time to fit these vessels or build the Brig at Erie or both as circumstances may require—

The vessels here have been hauled into a small creek in rear of Squaw Island where they are safe from the Ice and the shot of the Enemy, and I am erecting a Block House to mount four Guns on the top, besides musquetry, near the vessels which will enable our men to protect them completely even if the enemy should attempt to cross over with an intent to burn them, both officers and men have suffered very much this fall and winter for the want of quarters. They have been living about in the woods in small huts, made of the leaves of trees, ever since they arrived on this station, and Lieuts. Elliott and Angus have not been able to procure quarters for them the consequence has been that we have lost many by sickness, and a number by desertion. I am only astonished that so many have remained true to their Country, under all the privations which they have suffered. I am in hopes to get both men and officers into comfortable quarters by the 15th. Inst. as the building for their accommodation is now under cover and will be ready I think by that time, to receive them when they all will be more happy and more healthy. The wounded officers and men are doing very well. Midshipman Graham has suffered an amputation of his leg—

I am making arrangements for collecting all our stores into one building which are now distributed in almost every direction for twenty miles round, owing to the great confusion which has prevailed upon this frontier ever since the war—

I have been induced (as I informed you by a former communication) in consequence of losing the services of so many officers, by death and wounds, together with the conduct of Lt. Angus to appoint Midsns. Dudley and Holdup to act as Lieutenants which I hope you will approve of—

I hope to be able to arrange my business on this station, so as to leave here for Sackets Harbor next week from which place I will write you the state of my command there— I Have the Honor to be very Respectfully Sir yr. obed. servt.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 1, No. 13 (M125, Roll No. 26). This letter was misdated 1812.

1. The sloop *Contractor* (later renamed *Trippe*), schooner *Amelia*, schooner *Catherine* (later renamed *Somers*), and the schooner *Ohio* were merchant vessels purchased for the navy in December 1812 and January 1813. The brig *Caledonia* was captured from the British off Fort Erie on 8 October 1812.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO LIEUTENANT JOHN PETTIGREW¹

Lieut. John Pettigrew,
U.S. Navy
present.

Black Rock
9 Jan'y 1813

The situation in which you are now placed you must be sensible is a very responsible one, but from your zeal for the service I have no doubt but that you will exert yourself to the utmost to discharge the various and important duties attached to your station with credit to yourself and benefit to your country. I wish however to call your early attention to the situation of the officers and men. There must be no time lost in getting them into their quarters as made as comfortable as the nature of the Service will admit of. Your next care will be to prevent desertions and whenever they do take place every exertion must be used to retake them. The men must not be suffered to ramble about the Village or even leave their quarters without a written pass. They must be frequently mustered and punished for selling their clothes, or frequent intoxication, or in fact for any other crime committed against "the rules for the Government of the Navy."—

The Block House must be completed with all possible expedition and 4 guns mounted on the top of it and every precaution used to guard against a surprize by the enemy. You will cause all the Stores of every description belonging to the navy department which are now scattered about this village and Buffaloe and vicinity to be collected and such as are liable to embezzlement you will have put into some good store under lock and key. You will also have an Inventory taken of the whole, and a copy transmitted to me as soon as an officer can be spared. You will send one to Genesee or further if necessary to ascertain where and what property belonging to the navy department has been left on the road and to get an account of the whole and to transmit it to me.

I request that you will have collected immediately and put into the upper story of the new Barracks all the rigging, sails, & other stores belonging to the *Contractor*, *Amelia*, *Catherine*, *Ohio*, and *Caledonia*. Have their spars, cables, anchors, &c. collected in one place. I also request that you will have the rigging and sails of these vessels overhauled, and put in good order ready to be used in the spring.

You will keep me informed of every occurrence of importance that takes place in my absence, and I trust that when I again visit the station I shall only find cause of praise not of censure. I have the honor &c.

Isaac Chauncey—

LB Copy, MiU-C, Isaac Chauncey Letter Book.

1. Lieutenant John Pettigrew was placed in charge at Black Rock, New York, following the arrest of Lieutenant Samuel Angus in December 1812.

ACTING LIEUTENANT THOMAS HOLDUP TO RALPH IZARD, JR.

Buffaloe Niagara County
State of New York Jany. 11th. 1813

My Dr. Father/¹

I was highly gratified yesterday by receiving your truly welcome Letter dated Philadelphia Decr. 14th. but the pleasure I enjoyed from the perusal of it was

partly destroyed when I observed the sorrowful manner in which you conclude your Epistle. The firmness which I know you are possessed of will bear you through the ills of this life better than any consolations which myself or your numerous Friends might be endued to give on the occasion I shall therefore dismiss this painful subject for the present & shall proceed according to your request to give "a detailed account" of the occurrences that have taken place since our leaving Albany— Lt. Pettigrew our then Commanding Officer received orders from Commodore Chauncey to proceed to Utica where other orders would be given him. We accordingly set off & after dashing through mud, hail, & rain we arrived at the above place— Upon opening his orders (instead of repairing to Sacketts Harbor which we all calculated upon) Lt. P. was directed to make the best of his way to this place, where worn out with fatigue & disappointment we arrived on the 16th. of October— Still anxious to render a service to our Country we immediately proceeded ~~in~~ to get the Guns from the *Detroit* (one of the Vessels cut out from under Fort Erie by the Gallant Lt Elliot & which owing to the ignorance or fear of the Pilot was run on shore & compelled Lt E. to burn her to prevent the Enemy from again obtaining possession of her.) After much trouble we succeeded in getting all the Guns from her hold amounting to 4 & stripping her of every particle of rigging & ca. We also procured about 600–12 lb. Shot & about 80 stand of Grape for the 4 Twele pounders— From that period 'till the 28th. of Novr. nothing particular occurred except our pursuing the *Queen Charlotte* in two open Boats; as what few vessels we have on this Lake amounting to Six Schooners & the Brig *Caledonia* taken by Lt. Elliot were all (except the Brig) hauled to pieces & our Ship Carpenters haven taken fright upon the English opening their Batteries on us they fled & have never since returned We however were not able to get sight of her Royal Highness & I think it fortunate we did not for I have no doubt but she would have given us a Queenly reception— I almost forgot to mention that a few days after we arrived here Lt. Angus (your old Shipmate) took command of this station—

Accordingly on the morning of the 27th. Novr in pursuance of Genl. Smyth's request Lt. Angus ordered ten Boats to be prepared & 80 Seaman directed to prepare themselves for an Expedition on the Canada Shore for the purpose of Spiking their Cannon & c— About 1 oClock on the morning of the 28th every thing was in order when we were joined by about 100 Soldiers under the command of Capt King

We immediately shoved off & rowed up shore a considerable Distance, when we hove too & Lt Angus directed the Officers to follow him as closely as possible— We then struck over & when within about a quarter of a mile of the Canada shore were discovered by the Enemy who opened a heavy & destructive fire of Grape Shot & from 2 Six pounders & musketry from about 250 Soldiers— We Out of the 10 Boats but 5 succeeded in landing—owing to which cause, I know not— Among the Boats that got ashore 4 mine was lucky enough to be one— We immediately charged upon the English & after a spirited ~~skirmish~~ engagement forced him to retire. They then retreated to a large Red House & opened a most dreadful fire from the Windows but our brave Sailors immediately burst open the Door & in a few minutes the House was in flames— After that the En[emy]² retreated as fast as possible— Capt. King [& a] few Soldiers & Sailors took peaceable pos[session] of the Batteries & spiked the Cannon. The [?] Pieces were also spiked— By some means [or] other the word Retreat was sounded & [?] men & the greater part of the Office[rs] returned to our Shore— Lt. Wragg, Dud[ley]

and] myself were left on the Canada Shore [with] about 20 men—when returning dow[n] towards the beach I met the brave Sai[ling Master] Watts lying wounded on the ground & [wan]ting to assist him I received a Ball in my right Hand; ~~but~~ which passing through from under the Thumb came out at the Ring finger I am now almost well but am still obliged to write with my left Hand—you will therefore make allowances— Wragg & Brailsford were also wounded but are doing well— We had 9 out of 12 naval officers Killed & wounded & 22 Sailors Killed & wounded The Doctor assures me I shall have the perfect use of my right hand— Lt Angus has despatched an Official Report to the Secty of the Navy which you will see in a few days³— Comdr. Chauncey has been with for about 2 Weeks & has been pleased to appoint your humble servant a Lieutenant & also our Countryman Dudley who from the Gallantry he displayed on the night of the 28 richly merited it— As respects myself I have no business to say any thing but I will say this that a clear conscience is the greatest blessing a man can feel— Farewell—my respects to your amiable Lady— Lt. Angus desires his respects—so does Dudley & Brailsford Write me soon as I am always rejoiced at hearing from my Dr Father. Yr affectionate

Tho^s. Holdup

ALS, DLC, Naval Historical Foundation Collection, Stevens Family Papers, Folder 1.

1. Thomas Holdup, orphaned in his youth, was befriended by former navy lieutenant Ralph Izard, Jr. Holdup used the term "father" as a sign of respect and affection for the older man. Holdup was adopted by Colonel Daniel Stevens and legally took the name Thomas Holdup Stevens in 1815.

2. The manuscript is torn at this point and a section along the right edge is missing; the bracketed words that follow have been supplied by conjecture.

3. For a copy of this report, see Dudley, *Naval War of 1812*, Vol. 1, pp. 355–59.

The Provincial Marine on Lake Ontario

A tour of inspection conducted by officers of the British army's quartermaster general staff revealed the inadequacies of British naval preparations as late as six months after the declaration of war. The British fleets on the northern lakes were under the command of the Provincial Marine, essentially a transport service for the British army, before naval affairs were taken over by officers and seamen from the Royal Navy in May 1813. The principal vessels were still in need of extensive repairs, while their crews from the Provincial Marine lacked adequate discipline and training. Defenses at Kingston, the primary port, and York (known as Toronto after 1834), an important secondary shipping center, needed to be strengthened through the construction of block houses to protect the fleets moored in those ports.

CAPTAIN ALEXANDER GRAY, BRITISH ARMY,¹ TO
LIEUTENANT COLONEL JOHN VINCENT, BRITISH ARMY²

Point Frederick 16 Jan'y 1813—

Sir

I beg leave to acquaint you that I have this day inspected the Two Ships of War laying in this Harbour, and have the honor of Reporting for your information, the State of those vessels—

I commenced my inspection with the *Royal George*, by first ordering the Crew to be turned up and mustered,—which consisted as follows

	No.
Ships Company, including Officers	80
Detatcht. of the Newfoundld. actg. as Marines	22
Total	102

off the above number there were 23 of the seamen [sick] reducing the total effective strength to 79.— The General appearance of the men bespeak the greatest want of attention to cleanliness, and good order— After the inspection of the ships company I directed them to be ordered to their quarters, and the shot drawn, and the Cartridges fired off, to scale the Guns, This operation occupied 50 minutes, such was the state of the Guns— The greater part of them missed fire repeatedly in consequence of the vents being choaked up, and would not go off till they were cleared out with the Pricking Needles and fresh primed.—

I next examined the State of the vessel, as to cleanliness and interior œconomy, and found her every where in the most filthy condition.—

I next proceeded to inspect the *Moir*, and found

	No.
her Ships Company, including officers	35
Detatcht. of the Newfoundld. actg. as Marines	16
Total	51

off the above number there were 6 sick, reducing the Total effective Strength to 45.—

The Men, Guns, and State of the vessel very much resembled the *Royal George*— Not quite so bad; or rather, the state of the *Moir* was bad, and that of the *Royal George* Worse—

As I have reason to believe that a Radical reform in the Provincial Marine will Soon take place, I do not conceive it necessary to recommend any partial changes as I have reason to believe no Material benefit would result to the Service from such a measure— This Statement will however shew the absolute necessity there is of making Suitable provision for the protection of these vessels, untill they are in a condition to defend themselves I have the honor to be Sir, Your Most Obedient Humble Servant

A Gray
actg. Dy. Q M Gl.

LS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 729, pp. 28–30.

1. Captain Alexander Gray, 24th Infantry, Acting Deputy Quartermaster General.
2. Lieutenant Colonel John Vincent, 49th Regiment of Foot, was commander of the British army forces in Kingston; he was promoted to the rank of brigadier general in February 1813 and transferred to the command of the British forces on the Niagara frontier.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL RALPH HENRY BRUYERES, BRITISH ARMY,¹ TO
GOVERNOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE PREVOST

Kingston 19th January 1813

Dear Sir

I left Prescott on Friday last after having given the necessary directions to Lieut. de Gaugreben to proceed with the Survey of that Post, and to erect without delay

a Block House on a small commanding spot in the rear of the present Battery which it will completely protect; it is also intended to improve, and close this Battery as soon as it is possible to break ground.— I slept that night at Brockville, twelve Miles from Prescott which is the most improved Village on the communication; it has some very handsome Houses with a Church, and Court House, and is situated on an elevated, & commanding spot of ground. there is a small Troop of Cavalry, with a Volunteer Rifle Company and some Militia stationed here; they are however very inefficient, a large proportion of them being absent, and returned to their own homes.— The only position that is occupied from hence to Kingston is at the River Canonoqui about 36 Miles from Brockville. this is a good Post with a Company of Militia stationed under the command of Col: Stone; they are Building a Block House on a strong point of ground near the River; the lower story is nearly raised, and the whole will be completed in about six Weeks.

I arrived late on Saturday Evening at Kingston about 24 Miles from the River Canonoqui.— I have been fully occupied since that time in minutely examining this important place, and communicating with Colonel Vincent on the measures necessary to be adopted for the security of the Post; and the Marine establishment so as to retain our ascendancy on the Lake.— The latter is a very serious, and difficult task which must require the greatest exertion, and assistance from the Lower Province, in order to Arm the new Ship that is now Building; for unless this Vessel is completely armed, and well Manned it will not be possible to effect a junction with the Ships at York.— The following statement will explain to your Excellency the Shipping, and resources in this Port which I trust will be equal to meet that of the Enemy, and to effect their passage to York Harbor, which if once accomplished you will then have the decided superiority on the Lake which may be easily maintain'd.

<i>Royal George</i>	{ 20 32 Pdrs. Carronades
	{ 2 9 Pdrs. long Guns
<i>Moir</i>	{ 10 18 Pdrs. Carronades
	{ 4 9 Pdrs. long Guns
New Ship ²	{ 20 12 Pdrs. long Guns temporary armament.
Total	56

there are besides four Merchant Vessels in the Port that may be Manned, and Armed equal to oppose the smaller Vessels of the Enemy.—

To oppose this Force the Enemy have

One Ship of.	18 Guns
One ditto	24 ditto.

with seven or eight well armed Schooners.—

Taking advantage of a fair Wind there is every reasonable expectation to hope you may force your passage to York.

In order to put the Naval force at present here in a state to venture on the Lake it is indispensably necessary to send up without loss of time twenty 12 Pdrs. Guns with Ship Carriage complete to arm the new Vessel in a temporary manner untill the armament required from England shall arrive here. these long Guns may then be most usefully employed, and are required to Arm the different positions on the communication from hence down the St. Lawrence.

It will be further necessary to lower and alter the *Maira* (as proposed) as that Ship is now totally inefficient. The Merchants I have no doubt will very willingly permit their Vessels to be made use of for one Voyage. They must all be well armed, and altered to contain the Guns. It will be also be requisite to send Officers, and Sailors for the whole of this Flotilla; that each Vessel may be well Manned and have good Officers for those at present employed, are totally incapable for any hasardous undertaking. Captain Gray has most positively assured me that the new Ship will be ready in time; the progress hitherto made is not equal to realize that expectation, and many have their doubts on the subject. The Keel is at present only laid, but many of the Timbers are prepared for raising, and the Work once in fair train the progress will be more expeditious.

It is much to be regretted under present circumstances that the whole of the Naval establishment had not been concentrated at this Post. it would have saved much time, and expence in Transport,—united all the Workmen under one Head,—and insured the armament of your Ships.— It would then have been only necessary to secure this Post against attack untill your Fleet was fully prepared, and equipped to proceed on the Lake.

The evil is now without remedy, and the best must be done to concentrate, and unite as soon as possible, but by no means to venture from hence till your Vessels are rendered fully efficient with Men, and Arms.—

I have consulted with Colonel Vincent on the practicability of an expedition to destroy the American Ships in Sackett's Harbor. It is now so long since any information has been obtained from that Post (being previous to the closing of the Navigation) that it is indispensably necessary first to procure a correct knowledge of the force at present there, and whether they have Fortified and strengthened their position with the Ship Guns, for it is ascertained they have nearly 100 pieces of Artillery in that Harbor for Naval purposes,—much will therefore depend to what use they have applied these Guns during the Winter.— Col: Vincent intends to take advantage of a circumstance that has lately occurred at Prescott in consequence of an attempt to form a predatory attack on the Post to serve as a plea to send an intelligent Officer as a Flag of Truce to the Commanding Officer at Sacket Harbor, besides which he will endeavor to procure a confidential Man that will undertake to examine the Post, so that I am in hopes that on my return from Fort George we shall be enabled to give your Excellency correct information on this subject for could this expedition be undertaken with any hope of success all our difficulties would be immediately obviated.—

It is expected that the first effort of Commodore Chauncey will be to endeavor to destroy York previous to the Ice being dispersed in the narrow part of the Lake towards this place, and then to proceed here; but I hope we shall be well prepared to resist him. I have directed the Block House on Point Henry to be raised and improved; also to erect another Block House on Point Frederick which will effectually protect the Dock Yard. The Batteries can only be repaired, and enclosed as soon as the first thaw takes place. It is indispensable to erect a new Powder Magazine at this Post; the present one is an old Wind Mill converted to this purpose very insecure, and improperly situated surrounded with Wooden Buildings in the Barrack Yard. The present Building may be very usefully applied as a place of defense by placing a Gun on the top of the Arch when the Powder is removed. I very earnestly beg leave to impress upon your Excellency the necessity of keeping this Post as strong as possible in point of Garrison untill our Naval force shall be prepared to quit the Harbor for it is rea-

sonable to expect that every possible effort will be made to destroy it. This is a very defendable position but owing to the extent of the Posts (which cannot possibly be contracted) it will require at least 800 effective Men not including the Militia of the Country with more of the Roysl. Artillery to defend the position with more certainty of success.— Col: Vincent is fully of this opinion, and has approved of all the measures herein suggested.

I shall depart from hence for York tomorrow morning, and shall arrive there on Saturday next.— I have the honor to remain with the greatest Respect Your Excellency's Most obedient, and most faithful Servant

R H Bruyeres.—

ALS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 387, pp. 10–14.

1. Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Henry Bruyeres was the commanding British military engineer in the Canadas. He had conducted a survey of defenses in Upper Canada in 1802 and was familiar with the frontier defenses of that province. Bruyeres was made acting colonel 1 March 1813, and died the following year.

2. *Sir George Prevost*, built at Kingston and launched 28 April 1813, was renamed *Wolfe* after launching.

American Strategy on the Lakes

American control of the Northwest depended on a successful naval campaign in 1813. The surrender of the American outposts at Mackinac and Detroit in July and August 1812 and the humiliating defeat of Major General Stephen Van Rensselaer's army at Queenston in October 1812 had opened up the entire northwest frontier to enemy attack.

In order for the American forces to regain their position in the Northwest, control of Lakes Ontario and Erie had to be assured. This could be accomplished only through the combined effort of the American army and navy working in close cooperation. While both military and naval leaders realized that Kingston was the key to controlling the Saint Lawrence River, the Great Lakes, and Montreal, the apparent strength of that city's fortifications proved daunting.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

Sackets Harbour
January 20. 1813.

Sir

I arrived here yesterday and found every thing much as I left it— There has no reinforcement of troops arrived, nor are the Block houses completed; they are however progressing and I presume will be finished by the first of next month, after which I presume we should be able to give the Enemy a warm reception if he should pay us a visit this Winter.

Four deserters that left the *Royal George* on Sunday night last arrived here to day, they are two Sailors and two Soldiers; they corroborate the information previously received from various sources, and which may be relied on, to wit, that the Enemy's regular force at Kingston is about one thousand men; that they are building a ship at Kingston which they think is to rate 36 guns. She is

120 feet keel and 36 feet beam, and is to be launched early in April: they are also building two other vessels at York; their size they do not know, but think one of them is to be a frigate—the cables, anchors, and rigging which were taken up in the *Royal George* last summer to York they think are about the size of the Cables and rigging of that ship—

One hundred and thirty ship carpenters and fifty sailors arrived at Kingston about the middle of December; seventy of the carpenters were sent off for York: I obtained the same information at Utica from a man whose sleigh had been pressed to convey them— Every deserter that comes over, (and there are many) gives the same account, and say that it is the opinion of the officers and inhabitants generally that if they do not make a desperate effort to regain the command of the Lake that Canada must fall: it is therefore their determination to build a sufficient force this Winter to insure them the command of the Lakes next Summer—

With this information I have deemed it my duty to provide materials to build another ship here—the roads are now good, the materials can be got with facility and brought in for little expense, and, if not wanted, sold for little loss—

If the President should determine to authorise another ship to be built here it will be proper for me to receive your instructions as early as possible in order that I may prepare her armament &c to be ready to meet the Enemy upon equal terms next Spring. I have the honor to be, Very respectfully, Sir, your obdt. servt.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 1, No. 25 (M125, Roll No. 26).

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

Confidential

Sackett's Harbor 21st Jan'y 1813

Sir/

The information detailed in my letter of yesterday respecting the exertions of the Enemy to create a force this winter superior to ours, is unquestionably correct. It will therefore require correspondent exertions on our part to defeat their plans and destroy their hopes— I have therefore determined (provided it meets with your approbation) to attempt the destruction of their fleet the next spring before they have an opportunity of forming a Junction.

My plan is this, to prepare all my force this winter and in the spring as soon as the Ice breaks up to take onboard 1,000 picked troops and proceed to Kingston land them about three miles to the westward of the town in a bay which I have marked on the chart herewith enclosed leave two Vessels to cover their retreat (if such a measure should be found necessary) proceed with the remainder of the squadron to the Harbor of Kingston and attack the Forts and Ships at the same time the troops would attack in the rear with this force I have no doubt but that we should succeed in taking or destroying their ships and Forts and of course preserve our ascendancy upon this Lake

With a view of making some arrangements with Major General Dearborn for the Troops that will be required for this enterprize as well as to forme some plan of co-operation with the Army generally next Summer it will be necessary for me to visit that officer this winter

It is my intention to leave here about the first of next month for Albany and return immediately after making my arrangements with the general but if you should determine to build another ship here it would be proper for me to visit New York for a few days to make the necessary arrangements— I therefore take the liberty to ask you to send a duplicate of the order to Albany which would save me a long journey

I beg you to be assured that every exertion in my power shall be used to preserve the ascendancy that we have obtained upon this lake I have the honor to be Very respectfully Sir your obt. H. St.

Isaac Chauncey

ALS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 1, No. 29 (M125, Roll No. 26). A sketch of Kingston Harbor, with "Proposed place of landing troops" marked to the west of the city, is on file with this letter.

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES TO COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY

Comre. Chauncey
Sacketts harbor NY.

Navy Dep't
27. Jany. 1813

Having just entered upon the duties of the Department, I have not yet had a convenient opportunity of perusing with due attention, the whole of your correspondence during the period of your important command. It is impossible to attach too much importance to our naval operations on the Lakes—the success of the ensuing campaign will depend absolutely upon our superiority on all the lakes—& every effort, & resource, must be directed to that object. It is to me, exceedingly gratifying, that a trust, so honorable & momentous, is committed to the direction of an officer, who has given such commanding evidence of capacity, energy & judgement. Persevere then Sir, in accomplishing what you have so judiciously arranged—the preparations you have made for completing the vessels at black rock are well adapted to the emergency; but lest obstacles should continue to oppose their passage into Lake Erie, it will be proper to construct a force at Erie, sufficient to ensure our ascendancy, on the whole of the upper Lakes, independent of the force at black rock; for this purpose, you are authorized to prepare, the materials for building & equipping a Brig, of such size as you may deem expedient, in addition to the gunboats & the Brig, which you have already made arrangements to build & equip. Iron, cordage, & shot, can be procured at Pittsburg & I will immediately contract here, for as many caronades 32 pdrs. as will arm the two Brigs at Erie—all the Armament & stores, necessary to be procured here, & at Pittsburg, can be transported from thence, up the Allegheny and French creek, in due time, to reach Erie, before the Lake is navigable: This force would facilitate beyond calculation the operations of Genl. Harisons Army,¹ & in the event of the fall of Malden & Detroit, would enable you to detach a part of your force to Lake Huron, to take post at the mouth of French River on the N.E. side of Lake Huron, where you will intercept the supplies for the western Indians, which are sent up Grand river to this post, as soon as the waters of those Rivers are navigable, & from them distributed through the waters of Huron & Michigan to the tribes, even beyond the Mississippi. It is this commanding position, which gives to the Enemy the absolute controul of the Indians. This

force would also enable you to take Michelmacinack & command the waters of Lake Michigan. Whatever force the Enemy may create, we must surpass; & with this view, it will require all your vigilance, to penetrate their designs. The command of Lake Ontario is no less important, & to secure this object, you are authorized to build at Sackets harbor, another corvette of such dimensions, as you may deem proper; Indeed you are to consider the absolute superiority on all the Lakes, as the only limit to your authority. Immediately on receipt of this letter, you will report to me, your plans, & forward your requisitions of stores of every kind, with your opinion of the places most convenient to procure the supplies, & from whence they may be transported with the greatest facility economy & despatch—also the number & description of mechanics, & of officers & men, & the time at which they should reach their destination; Forty or fifty good carpenters can be sent from Philada. as early as you please; If you wish any particular officers, name them, & they shall join you. I understand, from persons resident on the shore of the Lake, that the navigation at Buffaloe & black rock is not open until the 15th. May, although it is open at & above Erie about the 15. April; not a moments time, is therefore to be lost, in the accomplishment of our object. You will communicate freely & generally, all such information as may enable me to furnish you in due season, with the best means of carrying into execution the object of the Government & ensuring to yourself, the imperishable fame which achievements so important & brilliant, cannot fail to produce. For your information, I enclose an extract from genl. Harrisons letter, dated 1812, which will enable you to form some idea of the contemplated military operations & of your means of co-operation—

W Jones.

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, SNL, Vol. 10, pp. 231–32 (M149, Roll No. 10).

1. William Henry Harrison, governor of the Indiana Territory from 1800 to 1813, was appointed a brigadier general on 22 August 1812 and made commander of the Northwest army; he was promoted to major general on 2 March 1813.

Chauncey Requests Perry's Service on the Lakes

Commodore Isaac Chauncey intervened to hasten the appointment of Master Commandant Oliver Hazard Perry to the lakes. Perry had served in the navy for 14 of his 28 years, but lacked experience in battle. He had superintended the gunboat flotilla at Newport, Rhode Island, for two years and was anxious for a more active assignment.¹

Perry had a reputation as an ambitious, intelligent officer willing to take chances. He had also offered to bring with him one hundred experienced seamen from Rhode Island—an offer that no doubt appealed to Commodore Chauncey who was faced with the difficult task of recruiting sailors in a wilderness.

1. On Perry's earlier career and his requests for a transfer to another station, see Dudley, *Naval War of 1812*, Vol. 1, pp. 126–27, 354, 563–65.



Captain Oliver H. Perry

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO MASTER COMMANDANT OLIVER H. PERRY

Capt. O. H. Perry,
commg. naval officer
Newport, R I

Sackets' Harbor
20 Jany. 1813.

I arrived here yesterday from Buffaloe and found your favor of the 1st. inst. Independent of the pleasure of hearing from an old acquaintance, nothing could be more agreeable to me than your offer of service. I accept of them with great pleasure provided the Secretary agrees to it. You are the very person I want for a particular service where you may gain honor for yourself & reputation for your Country.—

I shall write to the Secretary this day requesting that you may be ordered to join me with your men. If you should receive such an order I wish that you would lose no time in coming on. There will be a fine field here ~~next~~ this Summer. The enemy are building 2 frigates. With great regard I am dear Sir Your friend &c.

Isaac Chauncey

LB Copy, MiU-C, Isaac Chauncey Letter Book.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

Sacket's Harbour
January 21st. 1813.

Sir

Captain O. H. Perry having offered his services, I request, (if not interfering with your other arrangements) that you will be pleased to order that officer to this station.

He can be employed to great advantage, particularly upon Lake Erie where I shall not be able to go myself so early as I expected owing to the encreasing force of the Enemy upon this Lake. We are also in want of men and he tells me that he has upwards of a hundred at Newport who are anxious to join me: if these men could be ordered also it would save much time in recruiting. I have the honor to be Very respectfully Sir, your obdt. servt.

Isaac Chauncey

ALS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 1, No. 28 (M125, Roll No. 26).

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO MASTER COMMANDANT OLIVER H. PERRY

Captain O. H. Perry—
U.S. Navy
present.—

Sackets' harbor
15th. March 1813—

You will proceed immediately to Presqu'Isle upon lake Erie and assume the command at that place. I have contracted with a Mr. Noah Brown to build for account of the Navy Department 2 Brigs to mount 20 guns each, and compleat 4 gun boats that are partly finished. These vessels are to be completed as far as re-

spects the carpenters, Joiners, Blockmakers, and Smith's work by Mr. Brown in the best manner and in the shortest time possible. I have engaged a Mr. Sacket¹ a Sailmaker at New York to [make the Sails]² take a gang of men with him to Erie to make the sails. You will therefore be pleased to cause a suitable loft to be prepared for him to work in. I have also engaged a rigger to fit the rigging &c.— you will take with you from this place such officers and men as you may want in fitting these vessels. There are a number of guns and stores at Black Rock; you will select such as may be wanted to fit and equip the vessels at Erie and order them sent up to that place. You are at liberty also to order any of the officers and men now at Black-Rock to accompany you at Erie. I have ordered all the light canvas for the sails to be sent from Philadelphia, presuming that we could procure the heavy duck at Pittsburgh. You will however ascertain that fact as soon as you get there and if it is not to be got you will write to George Harrison esqr. navy Agent at Phila. to send it to you immediately. The rigging you can get made at Pittsburgh, & I should advise you to contract for it immediately. ascertain whether you can get the Anchors made at Pittsburgh and let me know. You will find the guns already at Erie when you arrive there, but whether the slides &c belonging to them have been sent with them I do not know. The shot I presume you will be obliged to procure at Pittsburgh. Let me know whether cabooses can be got there.—

Being so far separated from you I must necessarily leave much to your own judgement and discretion both of which I have the fullest confidence in. I will barely remind you that it is an object of the very first importance to have these vessels built & fit for service as soon as possible. You will therefore take care that every thing is prepared and ready to go on board as soon as the vessels are in the water. After taking into view the stores at Erie and those to be got at Buffaloe and this place you will supply the deficiencies in the best way you can either from Pittsburgh or Phila. I shall write the agent at the latter place to furnish upon your requisitions. You will keep me informed of your progress and your wants and whenever you deem it advisable you will send a copy of your communication to me to the Dept.— I hope to be able to join you with the greater part of my officers and men by the first of June, therefore hope to find you completely ready by that time. Provisions for 500 men for 6 months have been ordered to be got ready and one half of it deposited at Erie subject to the order of the commanding officer there. You will cause it to be well taken care of.—

I have again to request that you will not suffer any obstacles to prevent your getting the vessels at Erie ready for service by the 1st. of June at which time I hope to join you with such a force as will ensure us success against the enemy which will at the same time ensure us the applause and gratitude of our Countrymen. I have the honor to be with great respect and esteem Sir yr. obt. H St.

Isaac Chauncey

P.S. For your information I enclose you copy of a letter from The Secretary of the Navy to me dated 27th. ulto., and an extract of a letter from Genl. Harrison to the Secy. of the Navy dated 20th. ulto.—

LB Copy, MiU-C, Isaac Chauncey Letter Book.

1. James L. Sackett, a sailmaker from New York, was sent to Erie by Isaac Chauncey on 24 February 1813.

2. The square brackets appeared in the letter book copy, possibly denoting the incorrect copying of this line.

Preparing the Fleets on the Northern Lakes

The winter of 1812-13 saw the construction of three separate fleets on Lakes Erie, Ontario, and Champlain. This building program presented tremendous obstacles in procuring men, materials, and supplies. The American bases at Erie, Pennsylvania, and at Sackets Harbor and Plattsburg, New York, had few local industries to tap for shipbuilding supplies and were remote from other industrial centers.

Although timber was plentiful along the shores of the lakes, all other materials had to be transported hundreds of miles along shallow rivers and unimproved roads. New York City supplied the ship carpenters, workmen, sailors, guns, and naval stores for Lakes Ontario and Champlain; Philadelphia and Pittsburgh provided men and supplies for the Lake Erie fleet.

LIEUTENANT THOMAS MACDONOUGH TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

Shelburn January 22d. 1813

Sir,

I have the honor to submit a few observations in relation to the U. States Naval force on Lake Champlain and hope you will concur in the arrangement proposed— The sloops which were fitted as well as time and circumstances would permit could be made with a little expence much more effective by taking off their long and high Quarter decks on which no guns can with safety be mounted, and were it removed, four, in addition to what now is, could be mounted on each sloop; say twenty four or Eighteen pound cannonades— These quarter decks extend one third forward so that the guns are only on the Main deck—and three of a side on board each vessel, where as they could with ease and safety carry five on a side making on board each sloop ten guns besides the one on a circle forward—and without any additional force to work them— It is generally understood that the British intend to have the superior Naval force on this Lake next summer, which will be the case unless, the alteration takes place in our sloops which I have mentioned— I suppose the comg. genl. is aware of this circumstance, as he is not here I have not his opinion on the Subject— I saw a Man a few days since whose information may be relied on, that he says the British were making preparations for considerable Naval operations, and it is well known that they have three sloops, fitted in the manner that I wish ours, besides, other small vessels like gallies, and that they are to be well manned— To insure our superiority on the water, these sloops should, sir, be fitted to the best advantage and manned with at least Thirty 0. Seamen, I consider the twenty men, that I now have, as seamen enough for all the Vessels, there are no men to be got here and Soldiers are Miserable creatures on shipboard, and I very much fear ~~unless~~ that unless I get the above 0. Seamen, and not Soldiers, there will be a dark spot in our Navy— The carpenters could be sent on from New York, twelve or fifteen of them and have all repairs, finished by the last of March, by which time the Ice will clear away— Men also might be sent from New York with the twelve guns to be Mounted of twenty four or Eighteen (calibre) cannonades— I have all equipments but swords which we are intirely deficient of, which might also be forwarded to me from N. York—

The carpenters could also repair one of the Gun Boats which went on shore in a blow, and received some injury in her bottom. I have her now in a situation to be haul'd up, for the carpenters— I have the honor to be Sir your most obt. servt.

T. Macdonough

ALS, DNA, RG45, BC, 1813, Vol. 1, No. 16 (M148, Roll No. 11). Notation on reverse of letter reads, "I agree to the alterations he proposes in the Sloops— Instruct the N. Agent at New York to send on 15 carpenters instantly— to mount 12. 18 pd Carronades and forward them with the swords as soon as possible. The [?] will also send the Seamen he requires in due time—"

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

Sackets' harbor
5 feb 1813—

Sir,

I shall leave here this day for Albany for the purpose of consulting with Major Genl. Dearborn respecting our operations in the spring. Brigd. Genl. Dodge resigned his command at this post on the 30th. ulto.: the command of the troops here has devolved upon Col. Van Alston of the Militia, a very plain man. I shall urge General Dearborn to find an officer of the regular Army to command at this post, as I deem it of great importance that we should have an officer of experience to command the troops here.—

I have 22 guns mounted upon the *Madison* and have got her well manned. We keep the ice cut from around her and have every thing in a state of preparation to repel an attack at a moments' notice either night or day. All the other vessels are so arranged that they are calculated to protect each other, and as no Officer or man is permitted to leave his vessel after 8 o'clock, I think that we can protect ~~each other~~ our fleet against any force that will be brought against us by the Enemy, provided the Army will keep the Forts and prevent the assailants from turning our own guns upon the vessels.—

Two Block-houses are nearly completed and I have 8 guns prepared, with all their ammunition, ready to mount upon them the moment they are ready. These houses will add much to the means of protecting the Fleet and Forts against any sudden attack.

The Marines which I required in my letter of the 1st. of December last I hope will be ordered to join me as early as possible.—

I hope Sir that you will not order any more Sailing Masters to my command. I have now a number of that Grade of officer which I have not employment for. I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir yr. obt. Servt.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 1, No. 50 1/2 (M125, Roll No. 26).

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

New York 16th. Feby. 1813

Sir/

I arrived here on Saturday last from Albany Sunday having intervned prevented my doing much before yesterday. I have now made my arrangements

with the carpenters and a part of them will leave here this week for Sacketts Harbor and Erie but I shall depend chiefly upon Philadelphia to furnish mechanics and stores for the station at Erie for which purpose I have the honor of inclosing a list of Carpenters and stores which I wish to be sent forward immediately— I have enclosed a copy of the list to George Harrison Esqr. in order that he might be prepared to comply immediately ~~upon the~~ with your order upon the subject— before I left Erie I contracted for the frame of a Brig of 360 tons I have wrote from this place to Mr. Dobbins to procure timber for another vessel of the same dimentions—the Master builder with a few picked men will leave here on friday and will arrive at Erie about the last of this month the Carpenters which are to be sent from Philadelphia I should recommend to be placed in charge of a trusty man of their own class who will answer for a foreman in the yard at Erie. Captain Perry will be required at Erie as soon as he can get there I therefore think that it would promote the publick service to order him to proceed direct from this place. The 37–32 pd. carronades which you have ordered from Washington will arme the two Brigs we however shall require four long 32 pounders for the gun Boats as there may be a difficulty in getting those guns up from Buffaloe all the Iron and Cordage can be procured at Pittsburgh. It will be necessary to inshure a suply of provissions for our men upon Erie will you make that arrangement or shall I? I will complete the Indents for the force at Erie as soon as possible and will forward them to you. With respect to Ontario before I left Sacketts Harbor I made arrangements for procuring the Materiels for building a Ship of the size of the *Madison* therefor there will be no detention upon that Lake except from the armament, and I presume that can be sent forward in time— I should wish if not attended with too much expense that 42 pdr. carronades might be sent for the New Ship at Sacketts Harbor but least that may be attended with some difficulty I shall make arrangements for long 12 pds. being sent from this place as there is no caronades to be got here

There is some excellent men onboard of the *John Adams* and *Alert* who would Volunteer for the Lake service May they be permitted? I have the honor to be Very Respectfully Sir your Obt H Servt

Isaac Chauncey

ALS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 1, No. 78 (M125, Roll No. 26).

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO NOAH BROWN¹

Mr. Noah Brown
New york

New york
18 feb. 1813.

I wish you to proceed with all possible despatch for Erie upon Lake Erie in the State of Pennsylvania, and there build in the shortest time possible 2 Brigs capable of mounting 18–32 pounders carronades & 2 long 9s. These vessels must be so constructed that they can be made to draw not exceeding 6 1/2 or 7 feet water, and at the same time possess the qualities of sailing fast and bearing their guns with ease. Their frame &c. will be left entirely to yourself. You will procure the materials and workmen on the best terms possible. I have ordered about 40 Ship Carpenters from Philadelphia which I presume will join you early

in March. You must bear in mind that I do not limit you as to the number and kind of workmen to be employed by you upon this business. My object is to have the vessels built in the shortest time possible. You will find at Erie 4 Gun Boats in a considerable state of forwardness. I shall expect that you will take charge of them also and have them finished as soon as possible. When you require funds you will make out your bills against the navy department and send them to me at Sacketts' Harbor for my examination and approval.—

Be pleased to keep me informed from time to time of your progress, and at what time you will be able to launch these vessels. I have the honor &c.—

Isaac Chauncey.—

LB Copy, MiU–C, Isaac Chauncey Letter Book.

1. Noah Brown, a New York shipbuilder, was selected by Chauncey to complete the vessels under construction at Presque Isle. He later built vessels on Lake Champlain and on Lake Ontario.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

New York 22d. Feb'y 1813

Sir/

On friday last Mr. Noah Brown (a very respectable ship carpenter) with 15 prime men left here for Erie where I hope they will be joined by the men from Philadelphia as soon as possible— Mr. Eckford has already despatched about 30 men for Sacketts Harbor and will leave here himself with about the same number on Wednesday next I shall complete my arrangements with a rigger and sail makers to proceed this day ~~to proceed~~ to Erie about the 15th of March, and I shall send an officer to Pittsburgh to contract for the cordage and canvass so that there will be no detention when those people arrive at Erie— I shall select a gang of sailors from the men at Black Rock to go to Erie for the purpose of assisting in fitting the riggin &c. the remainder I shall take onboard of the fleet upon Lake Ontario and am in hopes to finish our business upon that Lake before Erie is Navigable so that we shall be able to transfer the men from one lake to the other as we may want them—at any rate the men intended for Lake Erie had better be sent in the first place to Sacketts Harbor from which place we can transport them by water to Niagara and from thence in boats along shore to Erie—

Having completed my arrangements as far as practicable at this place I shall leave here tomorrow for Sacketts Harbor from which place I will write you the state and condition of the fleet— I have the honor to be Very Respectfully Sir your obt. H. St.

I Chauncey

ALS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 1, No. 106 (M125, Roll No. 26).

Sailors for the Lakes

A critical shortage of experienced and disciplined seamen would trouble the navy throughout the War of 1812. Recruiting for the northern lakes proved especially difficult because the countryside was sparsely settled and few local men had experience as sailors. A few ambi-

tious young officers, like Midshipman William W. Edwards, recognized the opportunities that would be available for personal glory and prize money once the season opened on the lakes in 1813 and requested to be transferred. Most seasoned officers and seamen, however, preferred service on a seagoing frigate to that on a smaller vessel confined to inland waters.

In order to find sufficient men for the vessels building on Lakes Ontario and Erie, the navy took to drafting crews from vessels which were either undergoing extensive repairs or were blockaded in the ports on the East Coast. Much to the consternation of their commanding officers, seamen from *Argus*, *John Adams*, *Alert*, and *Constitution* were transferred to serve on the northern lakes.

MIDSHIPMAN WILLIAM W. EDWARDS¹ TO SENATOR JAMES TURNER²

U.S.F. U.S. February 1. 1813.
Harbour of New-York

Sir

When I entered the service of my country, it was with a view to excel in my profession, and to gain "a name in arms." It was my choice to sail with Commodore Decatur, because I entertain'd the highest opinion of his skill and valor: in this I have been confirmed by experience.— But however desirable my situation on board this ship may appear I am desirous to change it: because I can see no chance of speedy promotion there being a large proportion of Midshipmen on board who are older in service than myself, and whose expectations must of course be fulfilled before I can reasonably hope for promotion.

Under these circumstances I am desirous of being sent to the Lakes, as I think the ensuing spring will open a wide field for young men of enterprize in that quarter.

If you Sir, would be so good as to request the Secretary of the Navy to order me to that station it would be conferring a particular obligation on me, and it might probably be of the utmost benefit to my future prosperity. I have the honor to be With the highest respect Your most obd. servt.

W: W: Edwards

Honble. James Turner
Washington City

ALS, DNA, RG45, MLR, 1813, Vol. 1, No. 161 (M124, Roll No. 53).

1. There is no record of any official response to Midshipman Edwards's request for a transfer to the lakes. He was assigned to the brig *Argus* on 24 March 1813 and received a promotion to lieutenant four months later. Edwards was killed 14 August 1813 when *Argus* encountered the brig *Pelican* off the Irish coast.

2. James Turner, a Republican, served as U.S. Senator from North Carolina from 1811 to 1816.

COMMODORE STEPHEN DECATUR TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

U.S.F. United States
New york Feby 18th 1813

Sir,

The men order'd from the *Argus*, for the Lakes, have been selected, and are now at the disposal of Lt. Chauncey—¹ As it is probable that there will be time to hear again from the department, before the men will leave this, I have taken the

liberty to address you upon this subject, begging that my zeal for the good of the service may plead my excuse for so doing— The *Argus* is now nearly ready for sea— She may in the course of two weeks meet the enemy, and with her old crew, which were well disciplin'd, I shou'd not fear the result of a contest with an equal force— She will not be near as efficient with a new crew until time shall be afforded to discipline them— Fifty volunteers might have been obtain'd from the *Jno. Adams* the *Alert* and the Gun boats— Those men are not liable to be drafted for service other than the defence of the harbour of New York, having been enter'd expressly for that purpose— These men are equally good with those of the *Argus*, and will not require more reorganization than those of the *Argus* wou'd when turn'd over to other vessels— If Sir this view of the subject shou'd induce you to alter your former determination, there may be yet time to countermand your first order— very respectfully I have the honor to be your obt. svt.

Stephen Decatur

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 1, No. 89 (M125, Roll No. 26).

1. Lieutenant Wolcott Chauncey, younger brother of Commodore Isaac Chauncey, was ordered to the lakes in February 1813.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

Sackets' Harbor
18th. March 1813.—

Sir,

I had the honor of informing you from Newyork that the crews of the *John Adams* and *Alert* were anxious to join me upon the Lakes. Not having heard from you upon the subject I am apprehensive that letter may have miscarried. As we shall require 500 more men by the first of June I shall esteem it a favor if you will permit the whole or any part of the crews of those ships to join me, which will save much time and expence in recruiting.—

To guard however against a disappointment in the supply of men I have requested Capt. Hull to cause a rendezvous to be opened at Boston and to recruit as many men for the Lakes as he can until I hear further from the Department upon the subject. I should have ordered another rendezvous opened at Newyork but as they are recruiting there for 2 large Frigates already I thought a third rendezvous might interfere.—

These arrangements I hope will meet your approbation. I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir Yr. Ob. St.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 2, No. 59 (M125, Roll No. 27).

COMMODORE WILLIAM BAINBRIDGE TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

Navy Yard Charlestown, Mass.
27th. April 1813

Sir

I have the honor to inform you, that I have this day transferred fifty more of the Frigate *Constitution's* Crew and forwarded them to Sacket Harbor to serve

under the command of Capn. Isaac Chauncey—which number makes one hundred & fifty (150) of the Crew of the *Constitution* sent to the Lakes—the urgent manner in which Captain Chauncey pressed the necessity of having an additional number of Seamen for our successful operations on those waters, induced me, from motives of the public good, to make the said transfers, and trust they will meet with your approbation—I respectfully recommend the giving immediate orders to the Captain of the *Constitution* (presuming that one is already appointed) to open Rendezvouses for recruiting his Crew as the repairs of said Ship are rapidly progressing and would have been much more forward then they are, if I had not been detained for the Beams—

In pursuance to your Instructions relative to hastening the necessary repairs of the Frigate *Chesapeake*—I have the pleasure to inform you, that they are already in great forwardness and that they will not be expensive. I have the honor Sir, to be with the greatest respect yr. ob. st.

W^m. Bainbridge

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 3, No. 60 (M125, Roll No. 27).

A Change in Strategy on Lake Ontario

There was much apprehension among the American military commanders at Sackets Harbor in the early months of 1813. A British force from Prescott had crossed the St. Lawrence River on 23 February and gained control of that vital waterway by capturing the American post at Ogdensburg, New York. Commodore Isaac Chauncey and Major General Henry Dearborn, commanding at Sackets Harbor, fearing that their post would be the next target, readied the town for a British attack from across the frozen lake.

Although the attack never materialized, a sense of unease prevailed at Sackets Harbor. Sir George Prevost had recently arrived at Kingston with additional army troops. In the mistaken belief that Kingston was strongly fortified, Chauncey and Dearborn concluded by mid-March that an attack on the British headquarters in the spring would be unwise. Chauncey, in his letter to the secretary of the navy of 18 March, recommended that York be the first object, followed by an assault on the forts on the Niagara frontier. Dearborn, writing to the secretary of war, proposed much the same plan for the campaign of 1813.¹

1. Hitsman, "Alarm on Lake Ontario"; Skeen, John Armstrong, pp. 145-49.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

Sackets' Harbor
18 March 1813.—

Sir,

In my letter to you of the 21st. Jany. last I had the honor of submitting for your consideration my ideas of a plan to attack the Enemy this Spring which you were pleased to approve. Since that period, the complection of things has

changed considerably and the objections to that plan as a first object are these.— The Enemy possessing the means of obtaining the most accurate information from this side will be informed of the force collected and collecting at this place together with the preparations making evidently for an attack upon Kingston; he will unquestionably prepare himself for such an event and will oppose all the force in his power to the accomplishment of our object. I have no kind of doubt as to the final result, but as the opposing force would be considerable, it would protract the general operations of the campaign to a later period than I think would be advisable, particularly when we take into view the probability that large re-inforcements will arrive at Quebec in the course of 2 months. My idea is, that we should continue to keep up the appearance that an attack upon Kingston was intended to be made as soon as the Lake was navigable, and the preparations now making will give currency to such an opinion. This will oblige the Enemy to concentrate his force at Kingston and have the effect of preventing re-inforcements from being sent to the upper part of the province, and eventually facilitate our main object.—

I would propose in lieu of my first plan that we should make every preparation for an attack upon Kingston and when, completely prepared (which we ought to be, as soon as the Lake is navigable) I would take on board 1,000 or 1,500 picked Troops under the command of a judicious officer and 4 or 6 pieces of light Field-Artillery and proceed directly to York (where the Enemy has but a small force) land the Troops under cover of the Fleet, & then proceed with the small vessels into the Harbor and take possession of the Town and vessels. This I think can be accomplished without loss on our part and will have the effect of giving us the complete command of this Lake. The Enemy's naval force at York consists of the *prince Regent* of 18 guns, the *Duke of Gloucester* of 16 guns, and 2 brigs building calculated to carry 18 guns each. By possessing ourselves of these vessels and taking or destroying all the public stores and munitions of war at York, will give us a decided advantage in the commencement of the campaign.— I would propose in the next place to keep possession of York long enough to induce the Enemy to detach a force from Fort George to dislodge us. of his movements we could be informed by means of our small vessels. When the Enemy has approached sufficiently near York as to prevent his immediate return to Fort George I would re-imbark the Troops and proceed immediately to the neighbourhood of that Fort, land the Troops and Sailors a few miles north of it at 4 mile creek, and then in conjunction with the Troops at Lewistown and Black-Rock (with which previous arrangements must necessarily be made in order that our operations may be simultaneous) I would make a general attack upon Fort George and the Niagara Frontier which I am persuaded we could carry, and the advantages resulting from a successful attack of this kind, to the service, (even if we were not able to hold it but for a few days) would be immense, for it would immediately release five vessels which are now lying useless in the Niagara river and must continue so long as the Enemy has possession of that frontier. With that addition to the force preparing at Erie it would give us, a decided superiority upon the upper Lakes. If this Enterprize should prove successful (which I see no reason to doubt) I would leave a force sufficient upon this Lake to watch and blockade the Enemys' force at Kingston, and proceed myself with all the officers and men that could be spared direct to Erie—and as soon as possible get the whole Force into operation upon that Lake, destroy their naval power there as soon as possible, attack and take

Malden and Detroit, & proceed into Lake Huron and attack & carry Michilimackinac at all hazards. This would give us such a decided advantage in the upper province and such an influence over the Indians that I think the Enemy would abandon the upper country altogether and concentrate his forces about Kingston and Montreal. In that event it would leave us at liberty to bring nearly the whole of our force (naval as well as military) to act upon any one point.—

You, Sir, may conceive that I am sanguine as to the results of this Enterprize. I have thought much upon the subject and after making every Deduction for every possible contingency, I am persuaded in my own mind that we should succeed.—

I have communicated my ideas to but two persons and to these in confidence—to wit—Genl. Dearborn and Col Macomb. They both approved of my plan and thought that it would succeed.— I will observe, however, if it is to be adopted that the most scrupulous silence ought to be observed with respect to the real object of our operations, and no one made acquainted with our destination except the commanding General and the officer who is to accompany me, for we have daily evidence that our officers cannot keep a Secret. The officer commanding at Niagara and Black Rock should be instructed to co-operate with me whenever I should make him acquainted with my object.—

There will be many details attending the operations (the outlines of which I have the honor of herewith submitting for your consideration) which I have not noticed, as in a service of this nature much must always be left to the discretion of the Officer Commanding. I however beg to assure you that I shall so time the operations as to give us all the advantages of a proper selection.—

There is one subject, Sir, which I feel a reluctance to agitate, but the conviction upon my mind of the importance of a Decision has induced me to submit it for your consideration.—

It is this.— From the very nature of my command it will frequently become necessary for me to act on shore with the Army or parts thereof and that with a large Body of men under my immediate orders. Now Sir, although I have an order from the Department to consider my rank as that of a Brigadier General, yet some of the officers of the Army may be disposed to dispute the legality of such an order and refuse to recognize me as holding any military rank whatever, and as the field of Battle is not the proper place to settle that point, I should wish, Sir, that some order may be taken upon the subject. My idea is that the President may give some Brevet rank that the officers of the Army would recognize while I was acting on shore. I beg, however, to be clearly understood as disclaiming all idea or wish of obtaining permanent military rank; my only object is, to place my relative rank with officers of the Army (when acting together) upon that footing, that neither they or myself shall be led into error by entertaining erroneous opinions whereby the publick service may suffer—

I am authorized to state that Col Macomb coincides with me in opinion as respects the relative rank of officers in the two services and that he has no objection to serve under me whenever the public service may require me to act on shore.—

I have to apologize to you Sir for the length of this communication, but the motives which have prompted it, will, I trust be a sufficient excuse for occupying so much of your time.— I have the honor to be with great respect Sir your most ob. and very Hble. sevt.

Isaac Chauncey

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES TO COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY

(No. 13)

Commodore Isaac Chauncey,
Commanding U.S. Naval Forces,
Sacket's Harbour, NY.

Navy Dep'tm't
April 8th. 1813.—

Sir,

On the 6th. instant, I received your letter of the 18th. ulto. comprising your plan of operations for the ensuing season on the Lakes.

The subject has received all the attention and deliberation which ought to precede the adoption of measures upon which, not only the fate of the campaign in that quarter, but the character and duration of the war, and the final object of that war, an honorable and secure peace may depend.

The President has been pleased to express his approbation of the general outline, and his particular satisfaction with the judicious and zealous execution of the preparatory arrangements under your direction. But, as the campaign combines extensive military and Naval operations, it is of primary importance to reconcile and harmonize the designs and movements of the combined forces, so that the most perfect understanding and efficient concert may result from their mutual co-operation.

The plan of operations for the army of the United States, in that quarter, contemplates a movement, with all the troops and train that can be transported in the fleet under your command, and in the Boats constructed by order of the War department, to attack and carry the Town of York; and after the capture and destruction of the shipping and stores there, proceed directly to Fort George, and carry it by assault; while the army at Niagara makes a simultaneous movement upon Forts Erie and Chipaway; with a view to subdue and retain the whole of those posts. This would, at once, release the Naval force at Black Rock, and enable you, without loss of time, to commence your operations on Lake Erie.— The importance of the effects which must flow from the successful issue of your enterprize on this Lake, is even greater than that of the lower Lake; because, it at once erects a Naval barrier between our civilised and savage Enemies from Niagara to Michigan. In the whole of your operations there is nothing so precious as time. A rapid movement from Niagara to Malden, taking such part of the force at Erie as may be even in a partial state of preparation, with as many chosen troops as can be transported, would, at once, annihilate the Naval force and the hopes of the Enemy; and leave you a free passage to Michilimackinac and the mouth of French River; where all the Indian supplies are deposited, and furs collected in return.

With a prospect so auspicious, and a result so glorious and decisive, to animate our gallant forces, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of anticipating the fame which, I am sure, you will deserve, and trust you will achieve.— The delay you contemplate at York, after its subjugation, it is conceived, would be a loss of time upon a very uncertain contingency.

I am aware that under unfavorable circumstances of winds and weather, the Boats of the Army may embarrass, or retard your movements: indeed, your squadron may reach its destination whilst the boats cannot move at all. It must, therefore, depend upon the degree of force to be encountered, whether it will

be prudent to proceed with the force you contemplate, on board the Squadron, or await a more favorable state of things, and move with the whole force contemplated by the War Department, which I understand to be 2500 men; 1000 of whom, I presume, can be conveniently transported in the vessels of the Squadron, and the residue in 15 Boats, which you can take in tow. This can only be determined by the mutual concert of the military and naval commanders with the knowledge of existing circumstances, and reference to the instructions under which they act.—

There is no difficulty in settling the subject of relative Rank between Naval and military commanders; but that of command is a subject of great delicacy and can be approached but with great caution. The British Government which has more experience on this subject than any other, and cannot be accused of indisposition to cherish the pretensions and feelings of its Naval officers, has been obliged to confine itself to a prohibitory regulation, which absolutely excludes her Naval officers from commanding on shore, under any pretence, and her military commanders from commanding, under any pretence, the Ships and vessels of the Navy.— The Secretaries of War and of the Navy of the United States, have adopted a regulation which, it is hoped, will meet any case that can possibly arise of that nature, between officers whose intelligence and patriotism will cherish harmony, rather than punctilio. I enclose the Regulation for your information and Government.

I have no doubt, from the character of Captain Perry, and the urgent instructions you have given him, that our affairs will progress rapidly at Erie.—

I have felt some solicitude about the four 32 pdr. cannons you required for the Gun boats at Erie; it has been, and will be, impossible to transport them in waggons, until the Roads are perfectly good. Indeed, they are so heavy that I doubt whether they can be carried by waggons at any time.—

I have heard of a 24 pounder, on a Ship carriage, at Pittsburg, belonging to the War Department, which I shall order to Erie; and, there is, at that place, a long 18 pounder which can be had.—

The success of the campaign absolutely depends upon the judicious movements and vigorous direction of the Naval force under your command; and, as nautical skill and experience can alone determine the time, circumstances and manner of employing that force, in cooperation with the military, of these you will be the exclusive judge. Relying upon your cordial and Zealous exertions to give full effect to the joint operations of the land and naval forces, and with much confidence in the result of those exertions, I am, very respectfully, your ob. servant

W: Jones

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, CLS, 1813, pp. 5-9.

AGREEMENT GOVERNING JOINT OPERATIONS

Regulations of the War & Navy Departments for the government of their respective commanders when acting in concert:—

1st. No Officer of the Army of the United States shall on any pretence command any of the Ships or Vessels of the Navy of the United States—nor shall any Officer of the said Navy command, under any pretence, any Troops of the Army of the United States.—

2nd. When the services of the Naval forces or any part thereof may be necessary on Land, in cooperation with the Military, the said naval forces shall have a distinct & independent service assigned to them under their own commander, by agreement between the Military & Naval commanders.—

War Department
April 8th 1813.—

LB Copy, DNA, RG107, Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs, 1813, p. 355 (M6, Roll No. 6).

Sir James Lucas Yeo's Instructions

Sir James Lucas Yeo, appointed Commodore and Commander of His Majesty's Forces on the Lakes of Canada, earned his rank and reputation with daring and initiative. Yeo had joined the Royal Navy as a boy at the age of eleven, attaining the rank of post-captain by the time he was twenty-five. He was awarded a knighthood by the Portuguese for a daring assault on a garrison in French Guiana in 1809 that resulted in the expulsion of the French from South America.

Yeo's natural daring was to be tempered by his instructions from the Admiralty. He was to place himself under both Governor-General Sir George Prevost, Commander in Chief of the Canadas, and Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren, Commander of the North American and West Indian Stations. Moreover, he was directed to take a defensive position on the lakes, and was expected to cooperate and coordinate his movements with the British army forces in Canada.¹

1. See also Drake, "Yeo and Prevost."

LORDS COMMISSIONERS OF THE ADMIRALTY TO
COMMODORE SIR JAMES LUCAS YEO, R.N.

Copy

By the Commissioners &c

Whereas the Earl Bathurst, one of His Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, hath signified to us the Pleasure of His Royal Highness The Prince Regent that We should take under our direction and control His Majesty's Ships and Vessels employed on the Lakes of Canada; We having the greatest confidence in your gallantry, Judgement and zeal for His Majesty's Service, have thought fit to select you for the command of the said Naval Force; and We do hereby require and direct you to proceed to the said Lakes of Canada, and there take the command of the several Ships and Vessels belonging to His Majesty on those Lakes, appointing and distributing amongst them the Officers and Men under your orders, according to the Instructions which we have directed our Secretary to transmit herewith for your guidance.

The first and paramount object for which this Naval Force is maintained being the defence of His Majesty's Provinces of North America; We do hereby require and direct you in the Employment thereof to cooperate most cordially with His

Excellency the Captain General and Governor in Chief of the said Provinces, not undertaking any operations without the full concurrence and approbation of him or of the Commanders of the Forces employed under him; and on all occasions conforming yourself and employing the Force under your command according to the Requisitions which you may from time to time receive to this Effect, from the said Governor or Commander of the Forces.

During the continuance of your command you are hereby authorized to hoist a distinguishing Pendant as Commodore on Board such one of His Majesty's Ships as you may select—

You are further required and directed to pay particular attention and obedience to the Instructions herewith transmitted, & to all other Instructions or directions which you may hereafter receive from us or from Our Secretary by Our Command.—

Given under Our hands 19th March, 1813—

Signed Melville
W Domett
J S Yorke
J Osborn

By Command of their Lordships
Signed J. W. Croker

Copy, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 729, pp. 132-34. This duplicate copy and enclosure were sent to Sir George Prevost under a cover letter of 20 March 1813.

[Enclosure]

Admiralty office
19th. March 1813—

Sir/

Referring you in the first instance to the order of my Lords Comm'ers of the Admiralty of this day's date which you will receive herewith, I have their Lordship's commands to acquaint you that arrangements have been made for conveying you and the officers & men under your command to Quebec in His Majesty's Troop Frigate the *Woolwich*—

On board this Ship the commissioned warrant and petty officers and Seamen stated in the enclosed list have received directions to embark, and to follow your orders for their further proceedings

On your arrival in the river St. Lawrence you are to take the earliest opportunity of communicating your Instructions to Lieut. General Sir Geo. Prevost, Captain General and Governor in Chief of His Majesty's Provinces in North America of explaining the amount of the Force under your Orders, of learning from him all the details of the Ships and Vessels employed on the Lakes, and of consulting and arranging with him with regard to all the various particulars of the important Services to which your joint efforts are to be directed.

You will on your arrival at the Lakes (the means of conveyance to which for the officers men and stores from Quebec you are to request the Governor to supply) distribute the officers men and stores amongst the ships and vessels in such manner as you shall think best for His Majesty's Service, giving the Commanders Lieutenants and other Officers according to their respective ranks, acting orders or warrants for the different vessels to which you may appoint them—

The ships and vessels now on the Lakes have been hitherto entirely, manned provisioned and stored under the direction of the Governor in Chief; with regard to the manning it is obvious that the number of seamen under your orders will not more than enable you to distribute a due proportion of able seamen among the different vessels, and that you will not be able to dispense with the services of the Persons now employed in those vessels, most, if not all of whom, must still continue in them and you will arrange with His Ex'cy. Sir George Prevost, a scheme for manning the ships as nearly as may be according to the system established in the Navy, of able seamen, ordinary landsmen and marines; the latter to be supplied as their Lordships understand from the Newfoundland Fencibles or some other Military Corps which may be at the Governor's disposal: on this subject however of proportioning the classes of Men, you are at liberty to make such deviation from the ordinary practice as local circumstances may seem to require. . . .¹

It can scarcely be necessary to recommend to your particular attention all subjects connected with the health comfort and good discipline of the officers and men under your orders in the latter point especially their Lordships feel that the trust committed to you is in the peculiar circumstance of the Service in which you are employed, one of great delicacy, they however are satisfied that as on the one hand by any too great relaxation which might impair the good order that must ever be maintained in His Majesty's Ships of all Classes and descriptions, as on the other, you will endeavour by a judicious attention and by all reasonable indulgence to the Men under your orders, to obviate the risks and temptations t/w a new and very peculiar service might expose them—

I am not to conceal from you that their Lordships feel some anxiety on this subject, occasioned as well by the proximity of the scene of your operations to the Enemy's Territory, as by the efforts which the Americans have made on as many occasions to seduce His Majesty's Subjects from their duty and allegiance—

You will not fail by every opportunity to transmit to me for their Lordships information, a detailed report of all your proceedings, and you will collect and send as soon as possible a detailed and accurate account of the number, force and state of Equipment of the ships and vessels of War on the Lakes, as well those belonging to the Enemy as to His Majesty, and you will consider and report what you may under all circumstances conceive the best mode of putting and maintaining His Majesty's squadron in the most effective state, and of furnishing its future supplies of stores, should it be found necessary or advisable to alter the present system.

I am further to acquaint you by the act of the 29th. of Geo: 2d. Chap. 27 the Provisions of act of the 22d. Geo: 2d. Chapter 33 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 are extended to the Lakes of Canada: as however you are not likely even to have officers sufficient to compose a Court Martial, you are to send any offenders for trial to Halifax by such opportunity as may offer—I am &c

(signed) J. W. Croker—

Copy, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 729, pp. 135-45.

1. Beginning at this point, seven paragraphs that relate to pay, the keeping of muster books, and expenditures for provisions have been omitted from this transcription.

The Chauncey-Angus Feud Resolved

A protracted feud between Commodore Isaac Chauncey and Lieutenant Samuel Angus followed the junior officer's arrest on 26 December 1812 under charges of disobedience of orders and unofficerlike conduct.¹ The two men's quarrel was fueled by a broader disagreement over military discipline and personal honor: Chauncey demanded subordination from his junior officers, but Angus refused to show deference to Chauncey as a matter of personal honor. Only upon receiving an apology from Angus would the Commodore withdraw the charges and allow Angus to be transferred to another station.² Angus reluctantly offered his apology in his letter of 8 April, over three months after his arrest.

1. See Dudley, *Naval War of 1812*, Vol. 1, pp. 371-74.

2. For the entire exchange of correspondence between Chauncey and Angus, see Chauncey to Jones, 2 April 1813 and its enclosures, in DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 2, Nos. 121-22 (M125, Roll No. 27).

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO LIEUTENANT SAMUEL ANGUS

Lieut Saml Angus,
U.S. Navy
Buffaloe
St. Newyork,

Sackets' Harbor
Mar 27th 1813.—

I have received your letter of the 18th. by Mr Holdup together with a copy of one from the honorable the Secretary of the navy of the 3d. to you, upon the subject of your arrest.—¹

I must confess that I had anticipated a different letter from you particularly when I take into view the length of time which has elapsed since the affair alluded to, took place. You must certainly be sensible that you forced upon me the alternative which I adopted. Contrary to my wishes and most earnest endeavours to save you from disgrace, you not only put me and my authority at defiance, but boasted that no Court Martial could break you. And now, Sir, what is the reparation you tender for the Indignity offered to me as your commanding officer and the injury done to the service by your insubordination? Why it is merely this, that as the honorable the Secretary of the navy has declined interfering in your case without my consent, "you are sensible from the purport of his letter that you have acted incorrectly in refusing to do your duty"; but there does not appear to be any conviction upon your own mind that you have acted "incorrectly" towards me, or even that you have acted incorrectly at all. You only appear to be sensible that as the Secretary does not approve of your conduct that from that circumstance alone you think that you may have done wrong.

Now sir if you are really & sincerely convinced in your own mind that you have committed an error, there would be no disgrace in acknowledging it fully & offering such reparation as the nature of the case would require; but on the contrary if there is no such conviction upon your mind, you ought not to make any apology whatever, but abide the decision of a Court martial.

After having given the subject all the consideration that its' importance requires your own judgment and experience in Service will point out to you the proper course to be pursued. I most sincerely hope that it may be such as to in-

duce me to intercede with the Honorable the Secretary of the Navy to withdraw your arrest and suffer you to return to your duty. I have the honor to be respectfully Sir yr. obt. Svt.

Isaac Chauncey

LB Copy, MiU-C, Isaac Chauncey Letter Book.

1. Angus to Chauncey, 18 March 1813, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 2, No. 122, enclosure (M125, Roll No. 27); Jones to Angus, 3 March 1813, DNA, RG45, SNL, Vol. 10, p. 289 (M149, Roll No. 10).

LIEUTENANT SAMUEL ANGUS TO COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY

(Copy)

Buffaloe April 8th. 1813—

Sir,

"I was in hopes that my last Letter to you by Lt. Holdup would have done away all impression on your mind relative to the circumstances that occasioned the arrest and that the meaning I would have wished to convey was to that amount— I have been lead away since the commencement of the affair with an idea that under particular circumstances an Officer had a right to refuse duty when he conceived himself insulted by his commanding Officer— I am now fully convinced that under no circumstances whatever an Officer has a right to refuse the orders of his commanding Officer.— I therefore sincerely acknowledge that I have treated you with indignity in refusing your order but be assured at the same time that it was under mistaken impressions, for never intentionally would I have offered You an indignity for I have always thought it more honorable to acknowledge than persist in an error— under this view of the circumstances that led to my arrest—and my full conviction—of having acted incorrectly—and your personal knowledge of me for many years—I hope will induce you to intercede with the Honble. Secretary of the Navy in having my arrest withdrawn so that I may return to duty— In full confidence that you can have no personal animosity to me and assuring you it is my warmest wishes that the affair may be adjusted to Your perfect Satisfaction from a view of my Statement. I have the honor to Subscribe myself with high respect." Yr. Obt. Servt.

(Signed) Sam^l Angus

Copy, DNA, RG45, BC, 1813, Vol. 1, No. 177 (M148, Roll No. 11). This copy was sent to the secretary of the navy.

Supplies for the Lake Erie Fleet

The spring of 1813 saw considerable progress in the construction of the fleet on Lake Erie. Sailing Master Daniel Dobbins pushed forward the construction of four gunboats and two brigs according to Commodore Isaac Chauncey's instructions. Noah Brown, the New York shipbuilder selected by Chauncey to be the master shipbuilder on the lake, arrived at Erie with some of his workmen about 2 March and lost no time in beginning work. Master Commandant Oliver H. Perry arrived at Erie on 27 March, when the ship-

building was already well advanced. While construction progressed rapidly, all essential supplies—canvas, rigging, iron fittings, guns, and shot—had to be manufactured and sent from Pittsburgh or Philadelphia.¹

J. Rosenberg, Building Perry's Fleet, pp. 21–28.

SAILING MASTER DANIEL DOBBINS TO COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY

Sir

I Recevd a line a few days since from you handed by Mr. Noah Brown who appears to be the man that we want at this Place in order to drive the business and I shall make it a point to do all that is in my Power to facillitate the business— Mr Brown has been here but a few days and has but a small gang (as not one of the Phila. Carpenters have arived yet and no word of them) he has gone on very fast the keels of the two brigs are laid or Ready to lay ~~the~~ and a number of the frames Made and a house built to live in (but not finished) the gun boats two of them are geting the Clamps in for the beams in the bottoms Ready for Caulking.

but notwithstanding all these Prospects a Cloud hangs over all having no Guard the boats might be burnt without any discovery I have been Proposing to get volunteers to keep watch till I hear from you which I may perhaps effect My fears arise from some of the People amongst us more than those at a distance I am very Respectfully yours,

Daniel Dobbins

Since writing the within I find that I cannot Rais volunteers to stand guard but can hire the workmen to stand which Method I mean to addopt untill I hear from you Mr Brown joins with me in opinion both with respect to the danger and and the Mode to pursue

Daniel Dobbins

Evn the 14th March 1813

Copy, NBuHi, Daniel Dobbins Papers. Endorsed: "Copy of a letter to Commodore Chauncey Sacketts Harbor."

MASTER COMMANDANT OLIVER H. PERRY TO COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY

Copy

Erie 10th. April 1813

Sir

I have the honor to inform you, I have just now returned from Pittsburg— most of the articles, we shall want can be procured there, such as anchors, rigging &c and cambooses by sending to Phila. for a pattern to cast by, Mr. Ormsby¹ appears to be very zealous, but to insure greater dispatch I shall send Mr. Taylor² (actg. Sailing Master) to Pittsburg to drive every thing on with all possible celerity— The canvass must come from Phila. I have written Mr. Harrison on that subject and for such other things as cannot be had at Pittsburg—

Most of the carpenters have at length arrived without their tools, which will probably be here in ten days. The two blacksmiths from Philadelphia have arrived. Mr. Brown does not expect much from them, as one of them is almost a boy, and the other is merely a striker to him—the number of Carpenters, short of what was ordered from Phila. is 8, and blacksmiths 3— Many are the difficulties we have to encounter but we will surmount them all—

Not a single article has yet arrived from any direction for the Vessels, and will be ten days before any of the 32 pdrs. Carronades get here. Mr. Dobbins I expect in 4 or 5 days with One 12 pr. muskets &c. &c from Buffaloe—

I wrote you on my arrival here on the subject of the defenceless situation of this Place—I of course know not whether the Enemy will make an attempt to destroy the vessels we are building, but from the importance (to them) of so doing it may confidently be expected they will, I should feel seriously alarmed if I was not sensible the government must know how we are situated here, as well as I do myself, and that troops must now be on their march for the defence—although I cannot here of any—I have commenced clearing the hill in the rear of the Brigs where we shall erect a temporary Block house, two gun boats will be launched in about a week which will be anchored with the 12 pr. on one of them off the Brigs— with the 20 officers and men, now here, and the forty I expect, and about 70 artificers, who will assist us, they will not be given up lightly, every Officer and man feels the importance of the duty in which they are now engaged, and whether it is in the exertions of preparing those vessels for immediate service, or for their defence, their country will have no cause to blush for them— With sentiments of Respect I have the honor to be Your Obd. Servt.

Signed O. H. Perry

The Ice is broken up and in a week the navigation will be open, between this and West end of the Lake—

Copy, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 46, enclosure (M147, Roll No. 5). This copy was sent to Secretary of the Navy Jones with a cover letter dated 11 April 1813 in which Perry added, "The frames of the two Brigs have been up several days."

1. Oliver Ormsby, a Pittsburgh merchant, was appointed navy agent for that city in February 1813.
2. William V. Taylor, acting sailing master, served in the gunboat flotilla in Rhode Island and transferred with Oliver H. Perry to the lakes in 1813.

Arrest of Master Commandant James T. Leonard

The arrest of Master Commandant James T. Leonard offers a rare glimpse into the private life and morals of a naval officer in the years of the early republic. Leonard was an experienced and capable officer but also something of a maverick. He had been in naval service for fourteen years and had served under Commodore Thomas Truxtun in the Quasi-War with France, participating in Constellation's night action against La Vengeance in 1800. Leonard subsequently served on the New Orleans Station and commanded the gunboat flotilla in New York.

When Leonard was ordered to Sackets Harbor in December 1812, he was accompanied by a woman from New York who was his mistress. He introduced her as his wife, and she mingled freely in the polite society of officers' wives in the village of Sackets Harbor. When it was discovered they were not married, the woman was ostracized. Commodore Isaac Chauncey ordered Leonard to send the woman away, but Leonard brazenly disregarded Chauncey's demand. Chauncey had Leonard arrested on charges of disobedience of orders, neglect of duty, and dissolute and immoral practices.

Leonard repeatedly asked the secretary of the navy to intervene on his behalf, claiming that Chauncey was trying to persecute him, delaying a trial as a way to draw out his punishment.¹ While awaiting court-martial, Leonard was not allowed to serve on active duty, leave the vicinity of Sackets Harbor, or transfer to another station. Although the secretary urged Chauncey to convene a court, the commodore postponed the trial; it would be almost eight months before Leonard's case was heard. Chauncey firmly held that the reputation of the navy was tarnished by Leonard's private conduct.

1. There are numerous letters from Leonard to the secretary of the navy about his case; for the most important, see Leonard to Jones, 23 April, 3 June, 7 July, 26 July, and 5 August 1813, all in DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, Nos. 51, 69, 82, 89, and 94 (M147, Roll No. 5); and his court-martial of 1 December 1813 in DNA, RG125, CM, Vol. 4, No. 152 (M273, Roll No. 4).

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO MASTER COMMANDANT JAMES T. LEONARD

James T. Leonard Esq.
acg. Master Commn.
in the Navy of U. States

Sacketts Harbor 13 April 1813

Sir—

You will hereby consider yourself arrested upon the following charges and specifications, to wit

Charge first—Disobedience of orders—Specification—contrary to my general orders of the 4th. of December 1812 and my Letter of instructions to you of the 1st. of February 1813—you have Slept on shore frequently between the 30th. March and this date, particularly on the Night of the 12th. April inst.—

Charge Second—Neglect of duty—Specification— first for not using your best exertions, in preparing the U.S. Ship *Madison* under your command for service— Second for leaving the Same Ship in the ice, and in an unprepared State outside the Harbor on the Night of the 12th. of April in a gale of Wind, when there was every prospect of the Ice breaking up, and which did actually break up some time during the same night and the ship drifted out in the Bay, and was only saved from total loss by extraordinary exertions of Officers and Men Third—for not visiting your Ship untill after 10 oClock on the Morning of the 13th. April, when she had been for many hours in a very exposed & dangerous situation Fourth—for not having the Sheet Cable bent and the Ship otherwise prepared to meet any contingency of Wind or Weather— fifth—for leaving the Ship in the afternoon of the 13th. of April, inst. after the Court martial adjourned, of which you was a Member, before She was either Secured or in a place of Safety.

Charge third—Dissolute and immoral practices—Specification—For introducing some time in December last, your Mistress, to the family of Major Samuel Brown¹ and Suffering her afterwards to pass as your Wife and in violation of

your promise to me, you are now living with the same Woman in the most public manner, whereby you neglect your duty to your Country and to your Ship, and Set a bad example to the officers generally, and the young Midshipmen in particular one of which lives in the House with you and your Mistress.

Upon the receipt of this arrest, you will deliver to Captain Smith your Sword and confine yourself to a district of four Miles Square in or about this Village untill the decision of a Court Martial can be had upon your conduct— I have the honor to be Respectfully Sir Yr Mo Ob S

Isaac Chauncey

LB Copy, MiU-C, Isaac Chauncey Letter Book.

1. Major Samuel Brown, U.S.A., deputy quartermaster general of Military District No. 9.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

(No. 3)

Sackett's Harbor 16th. April 1813.

Sir—

I have been under the painful necessity of arresting Captain James T. Leonard upon various charges a copy of which are enclosed— I have been led to this painful alternative at this time from a conviction upon my own mind that such a step was absolutely necessary.— It will perhaps be proper for me at this time to state to you generally the circumstances which has led to the arrest of Captain Leonard.— This gentleman arrived here some time in December last, while I was absent on my tour to the Westward— he brought with him from New York a woman of the Town which passed for his Wife— on my return to this place in January, as I passed through Utica several gentlemen of respectability waited upon me, and stated that Captain Leonard's conduct in this particular was doing the officers and service an injury— upon my arrival here I stated to Captain Leonard the impropriety of his conduct— he promised to send his Mistress back to New York which he did a few days after, but in the latter part of March she returned to this place and he now lives with her as publickly as if she was his wife— however criminal this conduct may be in itself by putting publick opinion so much at defiance—I should not have noticed it at this time if it had not led to a criminal neglect of his duty, not only by disobeying my possitive order but by leaving the Ship outside the bar in the Ice in so unprepared a state that nothing saved her from total loss but my anxiety in consequence of the severity of the gale induced me to go on board at day light and by extraordinary exertions I got the Ship in a place of safety— this is not the only neglect of Captain Leonards— I found upon a closer examination that he had neglected to station the Men or prepare the Ship in many other respects for the approaching Campaign.— An officer at this time who could be so regardless of his own reputation and that of his Country, as to neglect his duty in so important a particular as might lead to the defeat of the whole campaign is not worthy of so important a command— altho' my duties will be very much increased by Captain Leonard's conduct, yet my reputation will be preserved, for I shall now see myself that every thing is prepared and not trust to any one that might deceive me.—

I hope Sir, that you will consider that I have acted correctly in this business— and that you will replace Capn. Leonard by an officer of the same grade as soon

as it can be done with convenience to the department I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir Yr. Mo. Ob. St.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 3, No. 2 (M125, Roll No. 28).

A British Midshipman on Lake Ontario

John Johnston, a young midshipman in the Royal Navy, sailed with Sir James Yeo when the British commodore left England to take command of the naval forces on the Great Lakes. Johnston's extant letters to his mother document the point of view of a junior naval officer in Canada.¹

Johnston was from a well-placed British family; his grandfather was the Earl De La Warr, and his uncle Lord Frederick Campbell. With promises of promotion from Lord Melville, First Lord of the Admiralty, he had signed on for service in North America. He would soon learn not only that family connections meant little in the provinces of Canada, but also that life on the Lake Ontario station could be rigorous.

1. Ritchie and Ritchie, "Laker's Log."

MIDSHIPMAN JOHN JOHNSTON, R.N., TO JANE JOHNSTON

H M S. Woolwich April 28th. 1813—
At Sea

My dear Mother

As we are now within a few days sail of Quebeck, I shall begin and give you an account of our voyage since our departure from Plymouth, which I am sorry to say has been one of the most uncomfortable I ever heard of or can imagine. To begin with Sir Jas. who talked so smoothly in London quite altered his tone in Blue Water, particularly with the Mids, who he looks upon as a poor set of wretches sent out to be butchered for their Commissions and not worthy the name of Officers; We are not only obliged to attend particularly to our own men, but to keep our Watch as if we belong'd to her, the Ship is so lumbered we cannot by any chance get to our Chests under 3 Hours so that when we get wet on our Watch we cannot Shift ourselves by which means half of us are in the Doctors list; and I have gone into it today; for this Week we have been Sailing through immense Islands of Ice, so you may guess how intolerably cold the weather is. Sir Jas. was very angry when he heard I mess'd in the wardroom and hinted which I suspect will be the case that I should be the last Promoted, he has already made one so I am sure of not being the first as he promised Lady S. Smith, if it was not that we are going purposely to fight therefore would appear Cowardly I certainly wou'd leave him at Quebeck & return home never to go to Sea more. I am afraid my Letter will not be very consolatory, but it makes me easy to unburthen my Griefs. The scene around me is not very apt to infuse fresh Spirits in me; Ice as far as the Eye can see every thing looking Cold Bleak and Dreary. At Quebeck we shall disembark and I believe proceed to the Lakes immediately; so that for the first Month we shall almost be Froze by the cold as I

believe we have 500 miles to go from Quebeck to the Lakes. I hope if you can you wou'd try & get a commission sent out to me, as perhaps now I am on a Foreign Station Lord Melville might do it. I do not write with pleasure as I know how seldom Letters go safe from a Foreign Station, but I hope you will learn the best way to direct to me, they will most likely be able to tell you at the Admiralty, though I almost fear we shall get few letters there. I forgot to tell you that I was obliged to take my things out of the Wardroom and to sleep in such a horrid place so crowded & Jam'd up in such manner that I frequently feel suffocated; the passage home from India was completely Paradise compared to it—

Quebec May 5th. We are just arrived here this morning. Everything is in the utmost confusion, the Americans have burnt some of our Ships in the Lakes; Sir Jas. is very vex'd and I believe we all march away today without Baggage or any thing but our Arms. The beginning of my Letter was written in a dull moment, but it is a true account of our Passage The Idea of so soon being alongside the Yankees has dispel'd those gloomy Ideas; and I am now on the *qui vive* I now more than ever feel the Want of my Sword. As we are all packing & busy I must make a finish. I now take my leave, and may Heaven bless you all my dearest Mother my very kindest & most Affectionate Love to Grandmama & Fredk. and all my good Relations so adieu And Believe me Ever Your Dutiful & Affectionate Son

John Johnston

ALS, Hertfordshire County Archives, #16292. Addressed to Mrs. Johnston, Hampton Court Palace, Kingston on Thames, Middlesex.

MIDSHIPMAN JOHN JOHNSTON, R.N., TO JANE JOHNSTON

Kingston June 23d. 1813—

My dear Mother

I have now set down with the intention of writing you an account of our Adventures since our departure from Quebec; which from our continual bustle & being at Sea I have not had time before to do. I wrote you about half a dozen Lines the other day just to let you Know I was in the Land of the Living, and one from Quebec which I hope & suppose you have recd. before now. We all left Quebec the same day we arrived there & made the best of our way to Montreal (200 Miles) which was very pleasant the weather being very fine & both sides of the River Cultivated & Villages every 4 or 5 Miles. From Montreal we had a very Fatiguing Journey to Kingston (200 Miles) sometimes going by Land & sometimes by Boats frequently having to track them over Tremendous Rapids; at last we arrived at Kingston where we were encamped, and began fitting out the Ships we found lying here; our Force consists of Two 20 Gun Ships a Brig & 2 Schooners, we keep at Sea or rather on the Lake in General and anoy the American Coast as much as possible, the American Naval Force is stronger than ours, and they are only waiting for one of the Ships which is not quite ready, to Engage us, as they Know as well as ourselves that Fate of upper Cannada depends on our being the Conquerors or the Conquered, Both Fleets are anxiously waiting the event. The American Fleet lay in Sackets Harbour about 45 Miles from Kingston, which place we attacked 3 Weeks ago, the reason was this, their Fleet went away

with Soldiers to take Fort George at the Head of Lake, we immediately Embarked 900 Soldiers and attacked Sackets intending to burn the Ship which was on the Stocks and all the Publick Stores, but they were too Strong for us. We landed at day Break under a most destructive fire of Cannon & Musquetry, the Country being very woody their Riflemen picked us off without being Hurt or perceived, the Action lasted 4 Hours and I suppose a Hotter never was for the time it lasted, We burnt their Stores but not the Ship, I commanded a Gun Boat, but my boat being soon filled with Killed & Wounded and I myself wounded in the leg the Boat being no longer able to act I landed with & fought with the Soldiers and luckily escaped any further damage. My wound is now almost well and I can walk quite well. If you get a Map of Cannada you will then be better able to understand my Letters and to judge of the Situation of the different places. There is no promotion going on as Sir John Warren sent officers, who arrived here before us, to fill up the vacancies. I am heartily tired of this Lake cruising and am very much afraid I shall not be able to get Home before next summer as in the Winter all the places are Froze up, and then it will be very difficult as the next Campaign will begin. Promotion is quite out of the case.¹ Adieu and believe me ever Your Dutiful & Affectionate Son

John Johnston

I shall come home if Possible immediately after the Action I hope you are all well Give my Duty & Love to Grandmama and to Fredk. when you write. I am on board one of the 20 Gun Ships Commanded by Capt. Mulcaster, who I like very much & I believe he does me. We Labor under every disadvantage things excessively dear and a great loss upon Bills. I have spent a great deal coming up from Quebec, so that I shall have to draw soon & be a looser by my Bills—

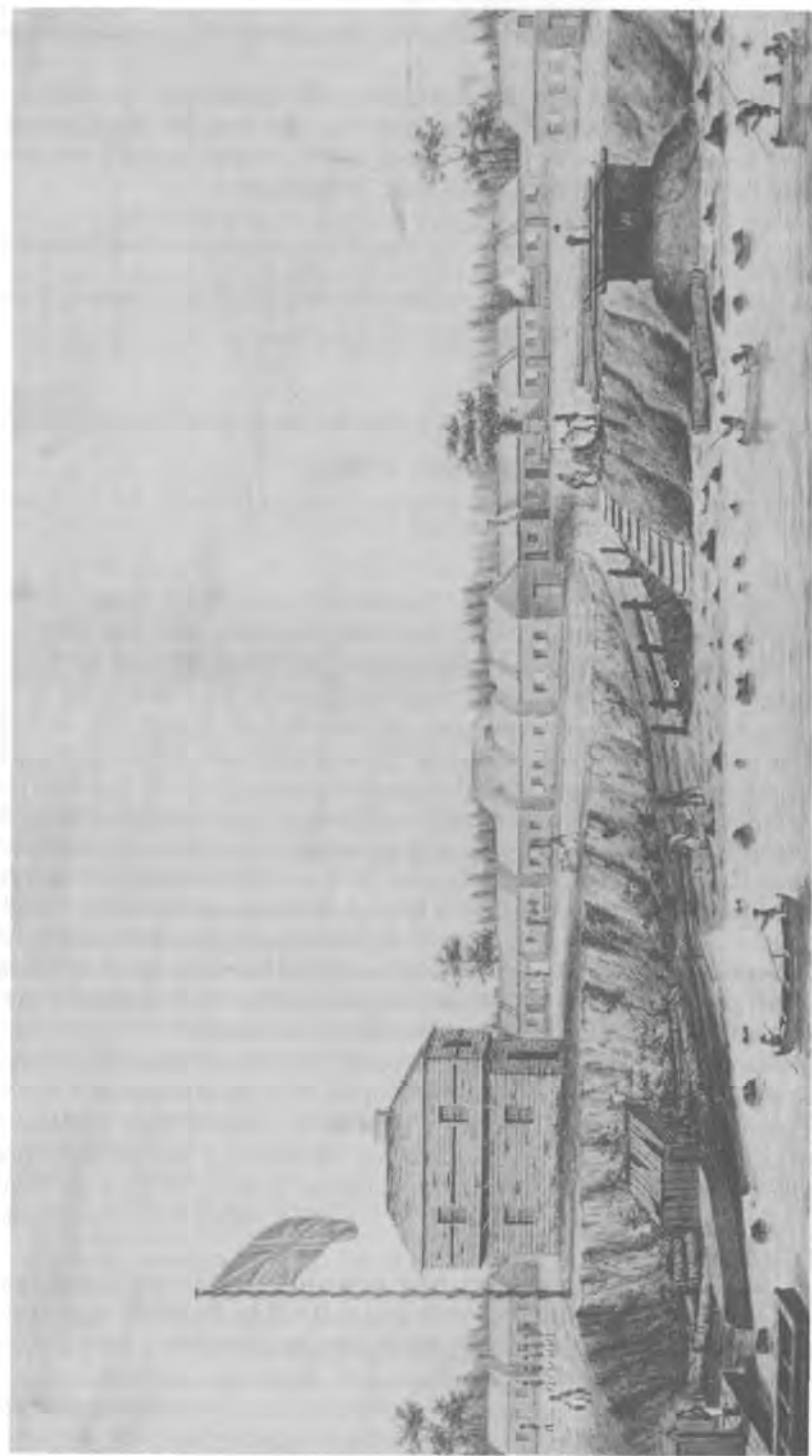
ALS, Hertfordshire County Archives, #16294. Addressed to "Mrs. Johnston, Hampton Court Palace, Kingston upon Thames, Middx."

1. Johnston was in fact promoted to the rank of acting lieutenant on 12 July 1813 in recognition of his "conspicuous valor" in the attack on Sackets Harbor. See Yeo to Johnston, 12 July 1813, Hertfordshire County Archives, #16373. He was later mortally wounded in the British expedition against Algiers under Admiral Lord Viscount Exmouth on 27 August 1816 and died on 3 October 1816.

First Attack on York, Upper Canada, 27 April 1813

The ice that confined the American ships to their winter stations on Lake Ontario finally broke up on the night of 18 April, giving the American commanders the opportunity to make their first move against the British fleet. Their target was York, the provincial capital of Upper Canada. Several British vessels were undergoing repairs there, and the town was less well guarded than was Kingston.

Commodore Isaac Chauncey's fleet, consisting of fourteen sail, first attempted the assault on 23 April, but a gale forced them back to port. A few days later, this naval contingent, with a force of 1,700 army troops under the command of Major General Henry



York Barracks, Lake Ontario

Dearborn and led by Brigadier General Zebulon Montgomery Pike,¹ succeeded in capturing the town.

The Americans seized or destroyed valuable stores and supplies, part of which were intended for the British fleet then building on Lake Erie. The town was looted and several government buildings burned by the Americans, acts that would be recalled in August 1814 when the British burned Washington, D.C., in retaliation.²

1. Zebulon Montgomery Pike, 15th Regiment U.S. Infantry, was commissioned brigadier general on 12 March 1813.

2. On the Battle of York, see Dudley, "Chauncey and Joint Operations," pp. 142-43; Humphries, "Capture of York"; and Hickey, War of 1812, pp. 129-30.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 11— U.S. Ship *Madison*, Sacketts Harbor 24 April 1813

Sir

At the urgent request of Major Genl. Dearborn, (but contrary to my own judgement) I got under way yesterday with the whole Squadron, with the intention of proceeding upon our contemplated enterprize— The Wind was from the S.S.E and the appearance of a Storm— we stretched out towards the Lake as far as Stony point— at about 2 P.M.—it blew heavy in Squalls with heavy rain and thick weather— not more than one half of the Troops could get below at one time— those in the Small vessels particularly were very uncomfortable and the Vessels themselves (being very deep) were not in a Situation to encounter a gale of Wind upon the open Lake which there was every appearance of— these circumstances together with having Sprung my Main Top Sail Yard and the *Hamilton* having lost her fore gaft induced me to bear up for this Harbor where we arrived about Sun down and it was fortunate we did so, for it blew very heavy last night attended with rain. I am convinced that if we had kept the lake we should have lost some of our small vessels, with perhaps their Crews, at any rate the fleet would have been seperated which might have been attended with disastrous consequences.—

I am now completely ready and will proceed as soon as I think the wind and weather is such as I ought to risk this Fleet upon the Lake situated as it is.—

I am particularly anxious to get the Troops to the place of their destination as soon as possible for crowded as they are now on board of the different vessels, they as well as my own Men, will very Soon become Sickly— We have on board of the *Madison* about 600 Souls and many of the small vessels even more crowded than ourselves.—

I shall use every exertion to carry your instructions into complete execution and shall co-operate with the Army with zeal— It will be my pride so to conduct the Naval part of the expedition as to merit your approbation. I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir yr. mo. ob. st.

Isaac Chauncey

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

(Dupt.) U.S. Ship *Madison* at Anchor
No. 12 off York. 8 o'clock P.M. 27 April 1813

Sir

I have the satisfaction to inform you that the American Flag is flying upon the Fort at York.

The Town capitulated this afternoon at 4 O'Clock.

Br. Gen. Pike was killed.—

I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir Yr. Mo. Ob. St.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 3, No. 56 (M125, Roll No. 28).

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

(No. 13) U.S. Ship *Madison*
at Anchor off York 28 April 1813

Sir/

Agreeably to your instructions and ~~previous~~ arrangements made with Major General Dearborn—I took on board of the Squadron under my command the General and Suite and about 1700 Troops and left Sacketts Harbor on the 25th. inst. for this place— we arrived here yesterday Morning and took a position about one Mile to the South and Westward of the Enemy's principal Fort and as near the Shore as we could with Safety to the Vessels— the place fixed upon by the Major General and myself for landing the Troops was the scite of the old French Fort Taranto—

The debarkation commenced about 8 o'clock A.M. and was completed about 10— the Wind blowing heavy from the Eastward the boats fell to leeward of the position fixed upon and were in consequence exposed to a galling fire from the Enemy, who had taken a position in a thick wood near where the first Troops landed—however the cool intrepidity of the Officers and Men overcame every obstacle— their attack upon the Enemy was so vigorous that he fled in every direction leaving a great many of his killed and wounded upon the field— as soon as the Troops were landed I directed the Schooners to take a position near the Forts in order that the attack upon them by the Army and Navy might be simultaneous— the Schooners were obliged to beat up to their position which they did in very handsome order under a very heavy fire from the Enemy's Batteries and took a position within about Six hundred yards of their principal fort and opened a heavy cannonade upon the Enemy which did great execution and very much contributed to their final destruction. The Troops as soon as landed was formed under the immediate orders of Br. Genl. Pike who led in a most gallant manner the attack upon the Forts and after having carried two redoubts in their approach to the principal work (the enemy having previously laid a train) blew up his Magazine which in its effects upon our Troops was dreadful having killed and wounded a great many and amongst the former the ever to be lamented Brigadier General Pike who fell at the head of his column by a contusion re-

ceived by a heavy Stone from the Magazine— his death at this time is much to be regretted, as he had the perfect confidence of the Major General—and his known activity zeal and experience makes his loss a national one.—

In consequence of the fall of General Pike, the command of the Troops devolved for a time upon Col. Pierce¹ who soon after took possession of the Town—at about 2 P.M. the American Flag was Substituted for the British and at about 4 our Troops were in quiet possession of the Town—as soon as General Dearborn learn'd of the situation of General Pike he landed and assumed the command. I have the honor of inclosing a copy of the capitulation which was entered into, and approved by General Dearborn and myself ~~by the next opportunity~~

The Enemy set fire to some of his principal Stores, containing large quantities of Naval and Military Stores, as well as a large Ship upon the Stocks,² nearly finished—the only vessel found here is the *Duke of Gloucester* undergoing repairs—the *Prince Regent* left here on the 24th. for Kingston.— We have not yet had a return made of the Naval and Military Stores, consequently can form no correct idea of the quantity, but have made arrangements to have all taken on board that we can receive the rest will be destroyed.—

I have to regret the death of Midshipmen Thompson and Hatfield³ and several Seamen killed—the exact number I do not know as the returns from the different vessels have not yet been received.

From the judicious arrangements made by General Dearborn I presume that the Public Stores will be disposed of, so that the Troops will be ready to re-embark tomorrow and proceed to execute other objects of the expedition the first fair Wind. I cannot speak in too much praise of the cool intrepidity of the officers and Men generally under my command, and I feel myself particularly indebted to the Officers Commanding Vessels for their zeal in seconding all my views. I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir yr. ob. st.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 3, No. 63 (M125, Roll No. 28).

1. Colonel Cromwell Pearce, 16th U.S. Infantry.

2. *Sir Isaac Brock* was built at York for the Provincial Marine and destroyed 27 April 1813.

3. Benjamin Thompson, warranted midshipman 1 December 1804; John Hatfield, warranted midshipman 18 June 1812.

MAJOR GENERAL HENRY DEARBORN, U.S.A., TO
SECRETARY OF WAR JOHN ARMSTRONG

Honorable John Armstrong
Secretary of War

Head quarters—York—Upper
Canada—April 28th. 1813.

Sir,

After a detention of some days by adverse winds we arrived here yesterday morning and at 8 o'clock commenced landing our troops about three miles westward of the Town and one and an half from the Enemy's works; the wind was high and in an unfavorable direction for our boats, which prevented the Troops landing at a clear field (the ancient site of the french fort Terento) The unfavorable wind prevented as many of the armed vessels from taking such positions as would as effectually cover our landing as they otherwise would have

done; but every thing that could be done was effected. Our Riflemen under Major Forsyth first landed under a heavy fire from Indians & other troops.— General Sheaffe¹ commanded in person; he had collected his whole force in the woods near where the wind obliged our troops to Land, consisting of about 700 regulars & militia and one hundred Indians. Majr. Forsyth was supported as promptly as possible with other troops; but the contest was sharp and severe for near half an hour:— the Enemy were repulsed by a far less number than their own, and as soon as General Pike landed with seven or eight hundred men, and the remainder of the troops were pushing for the shore the Enemy retreated to their works, and as soon as the whole of the Troops had landed and formed on the clear ground intended for the first landing, they advanced thro' a thick wood to the open ground near the Enemy's works, and after carrying one battery by assault, were moving on in collumns towards the main works, when the head of the collumns was within about sixty rods of the Enemy a tremendous explosion occurred from a large magazine prepared for the purpose, which discharged such immense quantities of stone as to produce a most unfortunate effect on our troops;— I have not yet been able to collect the returns of our killed and wounded, but our loss by the explosion must I fear exceed one hundred—and among them I have to lament the loss of the brave and excellent Officer Brigr. Genl. Pike, who received such a contusion from a large stone, as terminated his valuable life within a few hours:—his loss will be severely felt. Previous to the explosion the Enemy had retired into the Town, excepting a party of regular troops which did not retire, early enough to avoid the shock; it is said that upwards of forty of them were destroyed. General Sheaffe moved off with the regular troops and left directions with the commanding officer of the Militia to make the best terms he could; in the mean time all further resistance on the part of the Enemy ceased, and the outlines of a capitulation were agreed on. As soon as I was informed of Genl. Pike being wounded, I went on shore. I had been induced to confide the immediate command of the Troops in action to Genl. Pike, from a conviction that he fully expected it, and would be much mortified at being deprived of the honour, which he highly appreciated.— Every movement was under my view—our Troops behaved with great firmness, and deserve much applause, especially those who were first engaged, under circumstances that would have tried the firmness of veterans.— Our loss in the action in the morning and in carrying the first battery, was not great, probably about fifty Killed and wounded, among them were a full proportion of officers and altho' the Enemy had a decided advantage in point of numbers and position, at the commencement, their loss was greater than ours, particularly in officers.—

It was with the greatest exertion that the small vessels of the fleet could work into the harbour against a gale of wind directly ahead;—but as soon as they got in contact with the batteries a tremendous cannonade commenced from 24 & 32 pounders and was kept up without intermission under a heavy fire from two batteries until the Enemy's batteries were carried, or blown up by the explosion, which undoubtedly had a powerfull effect on the Enemy.— I am under the greatest obligations to Commodore Chauncey for his able and indefatigable exertions in every possible manner that could give facility and effect to the expedition— he is equally estimable for deliberate sound judgement, bravery and industry.— The Government could not have made a more fortunate selection for the important trust he holds.— unfortunately the Enemy's armed ship the "*Prince Regent*" left this place for Kingston four days before we arrived.— A large ship on the stocks

and nearly planked up, with a large store of naval stores, were set on fire by the Enemy soon after the explosion of the magazine.— there are no vessels fit for use in the harbour, a considerable quantity of Military stores and provisions remained.— We shall not possess the means of transporting the prisoners from this place and must of course leave them on parole.— I hope we shall so far complete the necessary measures at this place in the course of this day as to be able to sail to morrow for Niagara—by which route I send this by a small vessel with notice to Genl. Lewis² of our approach. I am Sir your Obedt. Servt.

H. Dearborn

ALS, DNA, RG107, Letters Received by the Secretary of War, Registered Series, D-125(7) (M221, Roll No. 52).

1. Major General Sir Roger Hale Sheaffe, British Army, commander in chief and administrator of Upper Canada.

2. Morgan Lewis, commander of U.S. troops on the Niagara frontier; he was appointed major general 2 March 1813.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 15.

U.S. Ship *Madison*
at Anchor off York. 7th May, 1813

Sir,

When I had the honor of addressing you on the 28th. Ulto, I expected to have dated my next letter in an other part of the Enemy's Territory—but the Winds and Weather have been against us— We made arrangements for reembarking the Troops as soon as the public stores found here could be got off or destroyed and on Saturday the 1st. inst. the whole of the Troops were reembarked in good order with an intention of sailing the next morning, for the purpose of executing the remaining part of your instructions.— The wind which had been moderate, from the Eastward, increased to a gale, accompanied with rain and has continued to blow so very heavy that we have been riding ever since with two anchors ahead and lower Yards and Top Gallant Masts down and there is every appearance of its continuing— this is particularly unfortunate as it gives the Enemy an opportunity to be better prepared to meet us—and our own Troops are becoming Sickly, crowded as they are on board of the small vessels, where not more than one half can get below at one time— they are not only exposed to the rain, but the Sea makes a fair breack over them.

Immediately after the action of the 27th. Ulto. I put as many wounded on board of the *Asp*,¹ and *Gold Hunter*² as they could carry and ordered them to Sacketts Harbor, but the Easterly Winds prevailing and blowing so heavy that they could not keep the Lake— they returned to this anchorage on the 2d. inst.— I have since succeeded in landing the wounded from those two vessels, as well as those from the *Lady of the Lake*³ at Niagara— We still have a number of sick and wounded on board of the Fleet which I shall land as soon as the Weather moderates— I shall leave here the first moment, that the weather moderates so as to make it proper for the small vessels to be upon the Lake—

The stores found at this place are considerable but it will be impossible for me to get a return untill they are landed— each vessel had orders to take on board

as much as they could carry, and we succeeded in getting the *Glouster* off and caulking her, so as to load her with stores also— We found at this place 28 Cannon of different calibre, from 32 to 6 pounders a number of Muskets large quantities of fixed ammunition—shot—shells and munitions of War of various kinds a great deal of which was put up in boxes and marked for Niagara and Malden—the ship building at this place was intended to mount 30 Guns and was to be launched in about 4 weeks— The *Glouster* was undergoing a thorough repair and intended to mount 16 Guns— We found a small schooner here, which was claimed by an individual— General Dearborn thought it best to pay for, and burn her— We also destroyed or brought off many boats which had been prepared for the transportation of Troops, Stores, &c. the store which the Enemy burned was filled with Cables, Cordage, Canvass, Tools and Stores of every kind for the use of this Lake and Lake Erie, supposed to be worth \$500,000— the loss of stores at this place will be an irreparable one to the Enemy, for independent of the difficulty of transportation, the articles cannot be replaced in this Country— the provisions and Cloathing also taken and destroyed will be a serious loss to him—in fact I believe that he has received a blow, that he cannot recover and if we succeed in our next enterprize (which I see no reason to doubt) we may consider the upper Province as conquered—however to put nothing at hazard I directed Mr. Eckford to take 30 Carpenters from Sacketts Harbor and proceed in the *Lady of the Lake* to Niagara where he has been landed and gone to Black Rock to put the vessels laying at that place in a perfect state of repair, ready to leave the River for *Presque Isle* the moment that we are in possession of the opposite Shore— I have no doubt but that he will have the vessels ready by the end of this month. I have the honor to be Very respectfully Sir Yr. Mo. Ob. St.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 3, No. 101 (M125, Roll No. 28).

1. The schooner *Asp* was formerly the Canadian merchantman *Elizabeth*, captured by *Growler* in November 1812 and purchased by the United States as a prize vessel in February 1813.

2. The schooner *Gold Hunter* has not been identified; she was convoyed to Sacketts Harbor following the Battle of York, but was not owned by the Navy Department.

3. The U.S. schooner *Lady of the Lake* was launched at Sacketts Harbor on 5 April 1813.

The British Forces in the Aftermath of the York Attack

The British lost two vessels in the American attack on York on 27 April 1813. Sir Isaac Brock (under construction) was burned to keep her from falling into American hands; Duke of Gloucester, built in 1807 for the Provincial Marine, was captured but was too rotten ever to see active service as an American warship. Fortunately for the British, Prince Regent, a twelve-gun schooner, had been moved to Kingston a few days before the attack.

The need for a reorganization of the British marine establishment on Lake Ontario became even more clear after the attack on York. Lieutenant Robert Heriot Barclay¹ along with several officers from Admiral Sir John B. Warren's squadron had arrived at Kingston on 5 May to take command until Sir James Lucas Yeo arrived from England.

Sir Roger Hale Sheaffe, who had led the hasty retreat from York, offered a weak explanation for his defense of the town, but the Canadians had lost confidence in their commander. He was recalled as commander in chief a few months later.

1. Barclay was later sent to Amherstburg, Upper Canada, to command the fleet on Lake Erie.

CAPTAIN ALEXANDER GRAY, BRITISH ARMY, TO
MAJOR GENERAL SIR ROGER HALE SHEAFFE, BRITISH ARMY

Kingston Dock Yard
4th May 1813

Sir/

I have the honor to report the present state of our Marine force at this Post.

	Total
1 <i>Royal George</i> ----- 20-32 pr. Carronades 2 long 9 prs.-----	22.---
2 <i>Moirra</i> ----- 10-10 ----- Do.----- 4 do.--do.-----	14 ---
3 <i>Prince Regent</i> ----- 10-12 ----- Do.----- 2 do.--6 prs.-----	12.---

The above are completely equipped and ready for Sea.

4 *Sir George Prevost* pierced for 24 Guns now lying along side the Wharf taking in her Masts will be ready for her Guns and Crew in about three weeks.

5 The Brig now on the Stocks¹ is intended to carry 16 Guns (24 or 32 pr. Carronades) This vessel is seventy feet Keel, and twenty four feet Beam, and will be ready for sea in about five weeks or probably sooner if our stores arrive from below.

In reporting upon the state of the Marine of Lake Ontario, I beg leave to suggest the Propriety of laying down a vessel of a large class, upon the Slip, from whence the *Sir George Prevost* was launched, to replace the *Sir Isaac Brock* recently destroyed. This measure may easily be carried into effect, as I have engaged (provisionally) as much Timber as will effect this object, and the Shipwrights on their way from York will furnish an abundant supply of workmen.

There is every reason to suppose that a vessel of this Description may be built in four or five weeks. In short something must be done to recover the loss we have sustained at York, and this appears to me to be the only mode of recovering our Naval ascendancy.

I am far from thinking the cause lost, as we have, still entire, the principal part of our Naval force, and with the addition of the *Sir George Prevost*, and the Brig on the Stocks, I have every reason to believe we shall be enabled to cope with the Enemy. It is however advisable to put this matter past a doubt by persevering in our exertions in the Dock Yard.

If this measure meets your approbation, the Keel of the new ship may be laid the instant the Shipwrights from York, arrive. I have the honor to be, Sir, your most obedient humble servant

(signed) A Gray
Actg. Dy. Q Mr. Genl.
True Copy
Robert R. Lossing ADC

Copy, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 678, pp. 232-33.

1. H.M. brig *Lord Melville* was laid down as a schooner and altered to a brig during construction; she was launched in July 1813.

MAJOR GENERAL SIR ROGER HALE SHEAFFE, BRITISH ARMY, TO
GOVERNOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE PREVOST

Kingston 5th. May 1813.

Sir,

I did myself the honour of writing to Your Excellency on my route from York to communicate the mortifying intelligence that the Enemy had obtained possession of that place on the 27th of April, and I shall now enter into a fuller detail, than I was enabled to do at the date of that letter.

In the evening of the 26th of April I received information that many Vessels had been seen from the Highlands to the eastward of York, soon after daylight the next morning the Enemy's Vessels were discovered lying to not far from the shore of the peninsula in front of the town; they soon afterwards, made sail with a fresh breeze from the eastward, led by the Ship lately built at Sackett's harbour, and anchored off the point where the french fort formerly stood; many boats full of troops were soon discerned assembling near the Commodore's Ship, apparently with an intention of effecting a landing on the ground off which he was anchored; our troops were ordered into the Ravine in the rear of the Government Garden and fields; Major Givins and the Indians with him were sent forward through the wood to oppose the landing of the Enemy—the Company of Glengary Light Infantry was directed to support them, and the Militia not having arrived at the Ravine, The Grenadiers of the King's Regiment and the small portion of the Royal Newfoundland Fencibles belonging to the Garrison of York were moved on, led by Lt. Colonel Heathcote of that corps commanding the [?] this movement was directed to be made within the [?] parallel to the Lake side, and only so far from it, as not to be discovered by the Enemy's Vessels, several of which were not at a great distance from the shore: Captain Eustace's company of the King's Regiment, and some Militia that were quartered at the east end of the town, and had been left there during the night, lest the Enemy might make some attempt on that flank, were ordered, with the exception of a small party of the Militia, to join these troops—which was soon effected: while these operations were going on Major General Shaw Adjutant General of Militia led a portion of the Militia on a road at the back of the wood to watch our rear, and to act according to circumstances; by some mistake he led the Glengary Company ~~was drawn~~ away from the direction assigned to it, to accompany this detachment, so that it came late into action, instead of being near the Indians at its commencement; the movement of the other troops was retarded by the difficulty of the wood, while

the Enemy being aided by the wind, rapidly gained the shore under cover of a fire from the Commodore's ship and other vessels, and landed in spite of a spirited opposition from Major Givens and his small band of Indians; the Enemy was shortly afterwards encountered by our handful of troops, Captain McNeal of the King's Regiment was early killed while gallantly leading his Company which suffered severely; the troops fell back, I succeeded in rallying them several times, and a detachment of the King's with some Militia, whom I had placed near the edge of the wood to protect our left flank repulsed a column of the Enemy which was advancing along the bank at the Lake side: but our troops could not maintain the contest against the greatly superior and increasing numbers of the Enemy— they retired under cover of our batteries, which were engaged with some of their Vessels, that had begun to beat up towards the harbour, when their troops landed, occasionally firing, and had anchored a short distance to the Westward of the line from the Barracks to Gibraltar Point; from that situation they kept up a heavy fire on our batteries, on the Block house and Barracks, and on the communications between them, some of their Guns being thirty two pounders; to return their fire, we had two complete twelve pounders, and two old condemned guns without trunnions (—eighteen— pounders) which, after being proved, had been stocked and mounted under the direction of Lieut. Ingouville of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment whom I had appointed Assistant Engineer; a twelve pounder of the same description was added during the engagement; with these defective means the Enemy was kept at bay for some time, when, by some unfortunate accident, the travelling Magazine at the Western battery blew up, and killed and wounded a considerable number of Men; many of them belonging to the Grenadier company of the King's Regiment, the battery was crippled, the platform being torn up, and one of the eighteen pounders overturned: the magazine was replaced and the battery restored to some order, but it was evident that our numbers and means of defence were inadequate to the task of maintaining possession of York against the vast superiority of force brought against it, though providentially little mischief had hitherto been done by the long continued cannonade of the Enemy, except to some of the buildings: the troops were withdrawn towards the town, and the grand Magazine was at the same time blown up, the Enemy was so near to it, that he sustained great loss, and was, for a time, driven back by the explosion; some of our own troops were not beyond the reach of fragments of the stone, though they escaped with very little injury; Captain Loring my Aide de Camp received a severe contusion, and the horse he rode was killed.

The troops were halted at a ravine not far to the westward of the Shipyard, I there consulted with the superior Officers, and it being too apparent that a further opposition would but render the result more disastrous, some of the Enemy's Vessels indicating an intention to move up the harbour in order to cooperate with their land forces, I ordered the troops of the line to retreat on the road to Kingston, which was effected without any annoyance from the Enemy; when we had proceeded some miles we met the Light company of the King's Regiment on its march for Fort George, I had sent an express the preceding evening to hasten its movement, but it was at too great a distance to be able to join us at York.

The Ship on the Stocks and the Naval stores were destroyed to prevent the Enemy from getting possession of them, an attempt to set fire to the *Gloucester*, that was fitting out for purposes of transport, proved abortive; she was aground a mere hulk, her repairs not being half finished: I have been informed that the Enemy succeeded in getting her off, and putting her into a state to be towed

away, a number of Shipwrights having arrived from Sackett's harbour with the expectation of employing them in a similar task on our New Ship.

The accounts of the number of the Enemy landed vary from eighteen hundred and ninety to three thousand; our force consisted of a Bombardier and twelve Gunners of the Royal Artillery to assist whom Men were drawn from other Corps, two Companies of the 8th or King's Regiment, one of them, the Grenadier, being on its route for Fort George, about a Company in number, of the Royal Newfoundland regiment, and one of the Glengary Light Infantry, and about three hundred Militia and Dock Yard Men; the quality of some of these troops was of so superior a description, and their general disposition so good, that, under less unfavourable circumstances, we might have repulsed the Enemy in spite of his numbers, or have made him pay very dearly for success; as it was, according to the reports that have reached me, his loss was much greater than ours, a return of which I have the honour of transmitting, except of that of the Militia, of which a return has not yet been received; but I believe it to have been inconsiderable: Donald McLean Esqr. Clerk of the House of Assembly gallantly volunteered his Services with a musket, and was killed.

Captain Jarvis of the Incorporated Militia, a meritorious Officer, who had a share in the successes at Detroit and Queenston, had been sent with a party of Militia in three batteaux for the Militia clothing, which had been left on the road from Kingston, he came to me during the action to report his arrival, and soon afterwards he was severely wounded; a few of the Indians (Missasagus & Chipeways) were killed and wounded, among the latter were two Chiefs.

Thinking it highly probable that the Enemy would pay, an early visit to York, I had remained there long beyond the period I had originally assigned for my departure to Fort George, in order to expedite the preparations which the means in my power enabled me to make for the defence of the place; Your Excellency knows that I had intended to place Colonel Myers, Acting Quarter Master General, in the command there, at least for a time; I afterwards learnt that Colonel Young was in movement towards me with the 8th or Kings Regt., I then decided to give him the command, to avoid the inconvenience of seperating the head of a department from me, and being informed that he was to move up by himself as speedily as possible, I was for some time in daily expectation of seeing him; at length, having reason to believe that he was to accompany one of the divisions of his Regiment, I wrote to him both by the land and by the water route to come to me without delay; about the 25th of April I received certain intelligence, of what had been before rumoured, that he was detained at Kingston by a severe illness, and on the 26th I learnt that Colonel Myers was to leave Fort George that day for York; I therefore determined to wait for his arrival, and to leave him in the command until Colonel Young might be in a state to relieve him; it was in the evening of the same day that I heard of the approach of the Enemy: I have thought it proper to enter into this explanation, as Your Excellency may have expected that I had returned to Fort George before the period at which the attack was made on York. I propose remaining here until I shall have received Your Excellency's commands. I have the honour to be, With great respect, Your Excellency's Most obedient humble servant,

R H Sheaffe
M Genl. &c. &c.

LIEUTENANT ROBERT H. BARCLAY, R.N., TO
NOAH FREER, BRITISH MILITARY SECRETARY

(Duplicate)

H.M.S. *Wolf* Kingston Lake Ontario
May 9th. 1813—

Sir/

I had the honor of receiving His Excellency's letter dated the 26th. of April, and am happy to say that all the Naval force, with the Exception of the *Gloucester*, is now in Kingston, and that the Ship formerly named the "*Sir George Prevost*" now by his Excellency's desire named the "*Wolf*" was launched without any accident on the 27th. of April, and is now in a considerable state of forwardness.

You will be pleased to assure His Excellency that no exertion on my part, or on that of the other Naval Officers shall be wanting, to put in force his wishes of having His Majesty's Squadron on the Lake equal to going out, and utterly destroying that of the Enemy—

I enclose lists of Stores &c which are required to supply the immediate wants of the Squadron, and have to beg His Excellency will be pleased to cause them to be sent up with all convenient despatch, as they will much accelerate the equipment of it, particularly the Cables, Cabouses, Pitch and tar; of these four articles we are totally destitute, and although all the requisition is highly requisite, if there in an opportunity of procuring these before the rest, it would be advisable to do so—

In the Royal Navy, the sea men are allowed Butter, and cheese, or in cases where these are not to be obtained Cocoa, and Sugar; I perceive that neither is allowed in the Provincial Marine—I beg leave to suggest to His Excy. the propriety of sending up from Quebec a sufficient supply of these provisions to be ready to issue to the crews when they arrive, as part of their accustomed Rations—

As at the Capture of York the Enemy deprived us of the finest vessel on the establishment—I propose to His Excy. to lay down a ship here of the same force—The Shipwrights from York furnish us with men, and Capt: Gray has with the greatest promptitude provided a sufficient quantity of wood, (provisionally) to carry the project into execution, should it be approved of—

I have taken on myself, with the concurrence of Sir Roger H. Sheaffe to order Six Gun boats to be laid down, capable of carrying a long 24, or 18 pounder, as the guns can be procured. I hope they will be ready in time to be useful, and that His Excy. will approve of the measure—

The state in which I found the executive part of the Dock Yard reflects the highest credit on Capt: Gray—but it will require a great change in the System to prevent the great abuse of public Stores; which shall be adopted as soon as possible; He retains his situation as Commissioner and I have no doubt, that every thing will be amply provided for by him

The Ships are I think as fine vessels of their kind as I have ever seen. The *Moir* is small, it is true, but she is by no means so despicable as was represented—The *Regent* is a fine vessel for a despatch boat, but I do not think her capable of much severe active service—

The Provincial Officers appear to feel the loss of their commands more sensibly than was expected, and with the exception of two or three, will, I think apply for retirement or any other situation they may be judged fit for—Capt: Earl¹ would accept the post of Master Attendant of this arsenal, and in the event of

Lieut. Platt² preferring active service, I should think him a very fit person for it— I can easily feel for Capt: Earl, but as to the rest who have been placed in their situations from so low a sphere, I think it requires his Excellency's consideration what remuneration they deserve, if any, on their retirement from active service at this time when their local knowledge is so much wanted—

I enclose also a list of the distribution of officers for His Excellency's information those of the Provincial Marine therein mentioned told me that they would serve with pleasure, if their local rank and pay was continued, subordinate to the officers of the Royal Navy; but since that they have, I suspect, been tampered with, and I understand wish to rank with us according to the dates of their Commissions which is totally inadmissible—

Tobacco is another great essential to the comforts of a seaman, the want of it would be seriously felt, and there is none here— I think it might be sent up with the cocoa and sugar; I know that a seaman would forego almost any comfort rather than his tobacco. They are accustomed to have it provided with the slop cloathing and may of course expect it here.

As I understand that the Ships on the Lakes are intended to be put on the list of the Navy; would it not be better to alter the name of the "*Royal George*" as there already appears one bearing the same on the Navy List—not that I think it of any great consequence, I merely mention that it is so—

As I am not aware of what slop clothing may come from Halifax I shall only state in a general manner what will be necessary to begin with—

Captain Sampson³ was put in arrest by Captain Gray, and Mr. Smith⁴ from the *Royal George* was put in Command of the *Moir* instead of him— When Captain Finnis⁵ joined Mr. Smith returned to his ship again, and Lt. Sampson is out of Employment I shall enquire into his case and make a report to you for his Excellency's information I have the Honor to be Sir Your most obdt. & Humble Servant

R. H. Barclay Comr. & Senior Officer

LS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 729, pp. 183-88. Duplicate copy sent. Attached was a two-page list of ships' stores and shipbuilding supplies, "Required to Complete the Fitting of His Majesty's Ships at Kingston," signed by Barclay and dated 9 May 1813.

1. First Lieutenant Hugh Earle, Provincial Marine.
2. A Lieutenant Platt was not found in the records of the Provincial Marine.
3. First Lieutenant Theophilus Sampson, Provincial Marine.
4. Second Lieutenant George Smith, Provincial Marine.
5. Lieutenant Robert A. Finnis, R.N.

The American Fleet on Lake Champlain

Progress in shipbuilding on Lake Champlain had proceeded slowly during the winter of 1812-13. In February fifteen ship carpenters arrived from New York, and in March naval ordnance was shipped to Whitehall. Lieutenant Thomas Macdonough's three largest vessels, the sloops President, Eagle (formerly Bulldog), and Growler (formerly Hunter), were overhauled to carry more guns. By May Macdonough had moved the fleet

from its station at Burlington, Vermont, to Plattsburg, New York, which would be the center of military operations during the active season of the year. Macdonough still waited for a reinforcement of sailors to man his fleet adequately.¹

1. Everest, War of 1812, pp. 92-93, 108.

LIEUTENANT THOMAS MACDONOUGH TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

U.S. Cutter *President*
Plattsburgh May 1st. 1813—

Sir

I have the honor to inform you of the arrival at this place of the vessels under my command on Lake Champlain, and of their being ready for service with the exception of the remainder of the men from New York and the mounting of the carronades which we are now employed about. I have received the Powder shot &c which you directed to be sent me, I have at present about fifty men and officers whom I intend to put on board the three sloops, and lay the two gun Boats up untill I receive more men or there should be a necessity for their being equipped, as the present force of the enemy consists of three vessels carrying two guns each, with about forty men each, calculated for boarding, which force I consider myself superior to, without the Gun Boats; the timely increase of our force has in all probability prevented the augmentation of that of the enemy which it was well understood they intended last winter— I shall as soon as the carronades are mounted proceed down in the vicinity of the lines prepared to accomplish such service as will be in my power to effect— Since the removal of Mr. Beale¹ (Purser) the duties of that office have devolved on me, which under the present manner of procuring supplies (as directed by the Honble. Mr. Hamilton and I believe the best one that could be adopted) is attended with much difficulty—and perplexity of account'g independent of those immediately of the men & officers. I have in consequence to inform you that the purser whom you intended sending to me in the place of Mr. Beale has not come on and I consider the presence of that officer at a place like this where, there is no agent of whom supplies might be procured essential— I have the honor to be Sir your most Obt. Servt.

T. Macdonough

ALS, DNA, RG45, BC, 1813, Vol. 2, No. 5 (M148, Roll No. 11).

1. George Beale was appointed a purser and ordered to Lake Champlain 14 October 1812. Because the Senate failed to confirm his nomination, Beale's appointment was revoked on 6 March by Secretary Jones. The Senate finally confirmed his nomination on 24 July, and on 4 August Beale was ordered once again to Lake Champlain.

Joint Operations on the Niagara Frontier: Attack on Fort George

The American strategy on Lake Ontario called for an attack on Forts George and Erie, located on the Canadian side of the Niagara River, following the attack on York. Com-



Capture of Fort George

modore Isaac Chauncey cooperated with Major General Henry Dearborn in the planned assault on 27 May 1813. The navy's vessels bombarded Fort George with a heavy fire, allowing American army troops to land west of the fort. The amphibious assault was jointly directed by Colonel Winfield Scott and Master Commandant Oliver H. Perry in an action remarkable for its cooperation between the services.

Following the loss of Fort George, British general John Vincent ordered the evacuation of the other forts on the Canadian side of the river. The American ships that had been trapped at Black Rock opposite Fort Erie were thus able to join the fleet building at Erie. Control of the Niagara frontier would be contested for the remainder of the year as American and British troops attempted to hold and regain these strategic points.¹

1. Hickey, War of 1812, pp. 139-43; Dudley, "Chauncey and Joint Operations," pp. 144-45; Skaggs, "Joint Operations," p. 125.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 21 U.S. Ship *Madison*
Sacketts Harbor 15 May 1813

Sir

Wishing to obtain the true situation of the Enemy's vessels at Kingston, before I left here for Niagara I thought it a good opportunity to send a flag over with Lieut. M. L. Green, of the Royal Navy (taken at York) upon his parole—I accordingly dispatched the *Lady of the Lake*, with that Officer and two Seamen on the 14th.— She returned this day, and the Officer reports to me, that the *Royal George*, *Earl Moira*, *Prince Regent* and *Simcoe*,¹ were ready for Sea, and that the New Ship had her lower Mast in and rigging and tops overhead and apparently nearly ready in other respects—that a Post Captain of the Royal Navy was on board of the "*Lady of the Lake*" and made many enquiries respecting the Ship building at this place &c.— I have also a Montreal Paper of the 1st. Inst. which mentions that eight Officers of the Royal Navy (amongst whom was a Rear Admiral) passed through that City for Kingston, a few days before—under all these circumstances I have determined not to leave this place entirely without Naval protection—I have therefore ordered Lieutenant Chauncey in the *Fair American* & Actg. Lieutenant Adams in the *Pert*, to take on board their proportion of Troops and proceed to Niagara—land them, and return to this place as soon as possible, where I shall keep them Cruizing, until my return—the remainder of the Squadron except the Ship will take on board Troops and proceed to Niagara tomorrow—I shall remain with 300 of Col. Macombs Artillery, until a reinforcement arrives which I understand is on the road. I do this from a conviction of its necessity,—for if I should leave here now, I should leave this important post to be protected by about 300 or 350 effective Men and those Volunteers, and I think Sir, that you will consider the Ship building at this place of too much importance to be left with such protection— The moment that the reinforcements arrive I shall not loose any time, in joining the Squadron at Niagara, and carrying into execution your instructions.— I have the honor to be Very respectfully Sir Yr. Mo. Ob. St.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 3, No. 141 (M125, Roll No. 28).

1. The brig *Governor Simcoe* was later renamed *Sir Sidney Smith*.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 28 U.S. Ship *Madison*
Niagara River. 27th. May 1813

Sir

I am happy to have it in my power to say, that the American Flag is flying upon Fort George— We were in quiet possession of all the Forts at 12 O Clock. I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir, Yr. Mo. Ob. St.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 3, No. 187 (M125, Roll No. 28).

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 29 U.S. Ship *Madison*
Niagara River. 28th. May 1813

Sir

Agreeably to arrangements which I have already had the honor of detailing to you—I left Sacketts Harbor with this Ship on the 22d. inst. with about 350 of Col. Macombs Regiment on board—the Winds being light from the Westward I did not arrive in the vicinity of Niagara before the 25th. the other parts of the Squadron had arrived Several days before, and landed their Troops— The *Fair American* and *Pert* I had ordered to Sacketts Harbor, for the purpose of watching the Enemy's movements at Kingston—I immediately had an interview with General Dearborn for the purpose of making arrangements to attack the Enemy as soon as possible and it was agreed between him and myself to make the attack the moment that the Weather was such as to allow the Vessels, and Boats to approach the shore with safety.— On the 26th. I reconnoitred the position for landing the Troops and at Night sounded the shore and placed Buoys to [point?] out the Stations for the small vessels— It was agreed between the General and myself to make the attack the next Morning (as the Weather had moderated, and had every appearance of being favorable)— I took on board of the *Madison*, *Oneida* and *Lady of the Lake* all the heavy artillery and as many Troops as could be stowed—the remainder were to embark in Boats and follow the Fleet— at 3 yesterday Morning the signal was made for the Fleet to weigh and the Troops were all embarked on board of the boats before 4 and soon after Generals Dearborn and Lewis came on board of this Ship, with their Suites—it being however nearly calm the Schooners were obliged to sweep into their positions— Mr. Trant in the *Julia* and Mr Mix in the *Crowler*, I directed to take a position in the Mouth of the River and silence a battery near the Light House which from its position commanded the Shore where our Troops were to land— Mr Stevens in the *Ontario*, was directed to take a position to the North of the Light House so near in shore as to infilade the battery and cross the Fire of the *Julia* and *Crowler*— Lieut. Brown in the *Governor Tompkins* I directed to take a position near to two Mile Creek where the Enemy had a Battery, with one heavy Gun— Lieut. Pettigrew in the *Conquest* was directed to anchor to the S.E. of the same Battery so near in as to open it in the rear, and cross the Fire of the *Governor Tompkins*— Lieut. MacPherson in the *Hamilton*, Lieut. Smith in the *Asp*, and Mr. Osgood in the *Scourge* was directed to anchor close to the Shore and cover the landing of the Troops, and to scour the Woods and plain whenever the Enemy made his appearance— all these Orders were most promptly and gallantly executed— all the Vessels anchored

within Musket shot of the Shore, and in ten minutes after they opened upon the batteries, they were completely silenced and abandoned. Our Troops then advanced in three Brigades—the advance led by Col. Scott and landed near the Fort, which had been silenced by Lieut. Brown—the Enemy who had been concealed in a ravine now advanced in great force to the edge of the Bank to charge our Troops—the Schooners opened so well directed and tremendous a fire of grape and canister that the Enemy soon retreated from the Bank—our Troops formed as soon as they landed, and immediately assended the Bank and charged and routed the Enemy in every direction—the Schooners keeping up a constant and well directed fire upon him,—in his retreat towards the Town—Owing to the Winds having Sprung up very fresh from the Eastward which caused a heavy Sea directly on Shore, I was not able to get the Boats off to land the Troops from the *Madison* and *Oneida*, before the first and Second Brigades had advanced.—Capt. Smith with the Marines, landed with Col. Macombs' Regiment and I had prepared 400 Seamen which I intended to land with myself, if the Enemy had made a stand, but our Troops pursued him so rapidly into the Town and Fort George, that I found that there was no necessity for more force—moreover the Wind had increased so much and hove such a sea on Shore that the situation of the Fleet had become dangerous and critical—I therefore made the signal for the Fleet to weigh and ordered them into the River, where they anchored immediately after the Enemy had abandoned Fort George—The Town and Forts were in quiet possession of our troops at 12 O Clock and the Enemy retreated in a direction towards Queenstown.—

Where all behave so well, it is difficult to select any one for commendation, yet in doing justice to Lieutenant Macpherson, I do not detract from the merits of others—he was fortunate in placing himself in a Situation where he rendered very important service in covering the Troops so completely, that their loss was trifling.

Captain Perry joined me from Erie on the Evening of the 25th. and very gallantly volunteered his services and I have much pleasure in acknowledging the great assistance which I received from him in arranging and Superintending the debarkation of the Troops—he was present at every point where he could be useful, under a shower of Musketry, but fortunately escaped unhurt—We lost but one killed and two wounded, and no injury done to the Vessels—I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir, Yr. Mo. Ob. St.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 3, No. 190 (M125, Roll No. 28).

BRIGADIER GENERAL JOHN VINCENT, BRITISH ARMY, TO
GOVERNOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE PREVOST

40 Mile Creek
May 28th. 1813—

Sir/

I have the honor to inform your Excellency that yesterday morning about day-break the Enemy again opened his Batteries upon Fort George; the Fire not being immediately returned, it ceased for some time.—About 4 o'clock A.M. a combination of circumstances led to a belief that an invasion was meditated; the morning being exceedingly hazy, neither his means or his intention could be ascertained, until the mist clearing away at intervals, the Enemy's Fleet consisting of fourteen or fifteen vessels was discovered under weigh standing towards the Light House in

an extended line of more than two miles covering from ninety to one hundred large boats, and scows, each containing an average of fifty or sixty men.—Though at this time no doubt could be entertained of the Enemy's intention his points of attack could only be conjectured;—having again commenced a heavy fire from his Fort, line of Batteries and Shipping, it became necessary to withdraw all the Shipping Guards and Piquets stationed along the Coast between the Fort and Light House, and a landing was effected at the two mile creek, about half a mile below the latter place. The party of Troops and Indians stationed at this point, after opposing the enemy and annoying him as long as possible, were obliged to fall back, and the fire from the Shipping so completely enfiladed and scoured the plains that it became impossible to approach the beach.—As the day dawned the Enemy's plan was clearly developed, and every effort to oppose his landing having failed, I lost not a moment in concentrating my Force, and taking up a position between the Town of Fort George and the Enemy, there waiting his approach. This movement was admirably covered by the Glengarry Light Infantry joined by detachments from the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and Militia, which commenced skirmishing with the Enemy's Riflemen, who were advancing through the Brush-wood. The Enemy having perfect command of the Beach, he quickly landed from three to four thousand men with several pieces of artillery, and this Force was instantly seen advancing in three solid columns, along the Lake Bank, his right covered by a large body of Riflemen, and his left and front by the fire of the Shipping and Batteries in their Fort. As our Light Troops fell back upon the main body which was moved forwards to their support, they were gallantly sustained by the 8th. King's Regiment commanded by Major Ogilvie, the whole being under the immediate direction of Colonel Myers Acting Quarter Master General, who had charge of the Right Wing. In the execution of this important duty, gallantry, zeal, and decision were eminently conspicuous, and I lament to report that I was deprived of the services of Colonel Myers, who having received three wounds was obliged to quit the Field—Lieut. Colonel Harvey the Deputy Adjutant General whose activity and gallantry had been displayed the whole morning, succeeded Colonel Myers, and brought up the right division consisting of the 49th. Regt. and some Militia.—The Light artillery under Major Holcroft, were already in position waiting the Enemy's advance on the plains.—At this moment the very inferior force under my command had experienced a severe loss in officers and men, yet nothing could exceed the ardour and gallantry of the Troops who shewed the most marked devotion in the service of their King and Country and appeared regardless of the consequence of the unequal contest.

Being on the spot, and seeing that the Force under my command was opposed with tenfold numbers who were rapidly advancing under cover of their shipping and Batteries from which our positions were immediately seen and exposed to a tremendous fire of shot and shells, I decided on retiring my little force to a position which I hoped might be less assailable by the heavy ordnance of the enemy, and from which a retreat would be left open in the event of that measure becoming necessary.—There after waiting the approach of the Enemy for about half an hour, I received authentic information, that his force consisting of from four to five thousand men had reformed his columns and was making an effort to turn my right flank.—At this critical juncture not a moment was to be lost, and sensible that every effort had been made by the officers and Men under my command to maintain the Post of Fort George, I could not consider myself justified in continuing so unequal a contest, the issue of which promised no advantage to the interests of His Majesty's Service.

Having given orders for the Fort, to be evacuated, the guns to be spiked, and the ammunition destroyed, the Troops under my command were put in motion and marched across the Country in a line parallel to the Niagara River, towards the position near the Beaver Dam beyond Queenston Mountain, at which place I had the honour of reporting to Your Excellency a depôt of provisions and ammunition had been formed some time since. The rear guard of the army reached that position during the night, and we were soon afterwards joined by Lieut. Col. Bishopp with all the detachments from Chippewa to Fort Erie.— The Light and one Battalion Company of the 8th. King's joined us about the same time as did Captain Barclay with a detachment of the Royal Navy.—

Having assembled my whole force the next morning, which did not exceed sixteen hundred men, I continued my march towards the head of the Lake, where it is my intention to take up a position and shall endeavour to maintain it until I may be honoured with Your Excellency's Instructions which I shall feel most anxious to receive. I beg leave to suggest the great importance there exists for a communication being opened with me through the medium of the Fleet; the anchorage under Mr. Brandts house is perfectly good and very safe.— I believe Your Excellency need not be informed that in the event of its becoming necessary that I should fall back upon York the assistance of shipping would be requisite for the transport of my artillery— I cannot conclude this long communication without Expressing a well merited tribute of approbation to the gallantry & assiduity of every officer of the Staff and indeed of every individual composing my little army; every one most gallantly discharged the duties of his respective station— The struggle on the 27th. continued from three to four hours and I lament to add it was attended with very severe loss.

I have the honour to enclose a list of killed and wounded and missing with as much accuracy as the nature of existing circumstances will admit; many of the missing will I hope be found to be only stragglers, and will soon rejoin their corps. I shall reach the Head of the Lake tomorrow evening.— Hitherto the enemy has not attempted to interrupt my movements: information reached me this morning through an authentic channel that he has pushed on three thousand infantry and a considerable body of Cavalry towards Queenston.— His whole force is stated to amount to nearly ten thousand men and I cannot conceal from Your Excellency my conviction that unless some disaster attends their progress, that force will daily increase. My sentiments respecting the Militia are already known, and it will not be supposed that their attachment to our cause can be very steady under the peculiar complexion of the present times.—I have the &c &c.

John Vincent
Brig Genl.

P.S. I send this despatch by Mr. Matheson who acted as a volunteer on the 27th. and I am happy to inform Your Excellency—that his conduct was very honourable to his character, and merits my marked approbation.— Ammunition will be wanted by the first vessel.— Captain Milnes has been kind enough to remain with me 'till my next Despatch.—

ALS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 678, pp. 318–26. The list of killed, missing, and wounded referred to in this letter can be found in CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 678, pp. 336–37. It lists a total of 358 casualties or missing: 52 killed, 44 wounded, and 262 wounded and missing.

The Battle of Sackets Harbor, 29 May 1813

While Chauncey's fleet was at Niagara, Commodore Sir James Lucas Yeo, who had been at Kingston only a fortnight, and Governor-General Sir George Prevost launched an attack on the American naval base at Sackets Harbor. Their goal was to destroy General Pike, the new ship under construction, and to disrupt shipbuilding at the American station.

Although the Americans repelled the attack, the day went poorly on all fronts. Sir James Yeo was under the direction of Governor Prevost, who hesitated about making an attack after nightfall. The attack was delayed overnight, allowing the Americans sufficient time to rally the army and militia and prepare for the defense of the town. During the assault, the inexperienced militia broke and ran when faced with British regulars, leaving Brigadier General Jacob Brown of the New York militia to try to rally them. An anxious junior naval officer, fearing that the town had fallen to the British, ordered the ships and storehouses burned, thus partially accomplishing for the British what they could not do themselves by force.¹

¹ Drake, "Yeo and Prevost," pp. 160–61.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO LIEUTENANT WOLCOTT CHAUNCEY

Lieut. W. Chauncey
commg. U.S. Schooner
Fair American—

U.S. Ship *Madison*
S.H. 20 May 1813.

Upon your arrival here you will cruize with the *Fair American* & *Pert* between this place and the Island of Fonti in order to watch the movements of the Enemy. You will be careful however in your approaches towards Kingston, and not get so near in as to endanger the loss of your vessels by a calm or sudden shift of wind. You are not to cruize to the Westward of the real ducks nor at any time go far out as to endanger your being cut off from this harbor. If the enemy should come out and make any movements towards this place, you will immediately return to port, moor your vessels inside the bar, and defend the new Ship to the last extremity. If you are drove from your vessels, retreat to the Block-houses where I recommend you to mount 2–6 or 4 pdrs. At all events if this place should be attacked, let the defence of the new Ship be such, as to do yourself credit and silence clamour. I leave the officers and men on the point under your direction. They ought to be frequently exercised at the guns mounted there, and see that they are well supplied with powder and Balls. If the enemy should make a movement before I return you will dispatch some fast sailing Boat to give me the information as soon as possible. Trusting much to your discretion and judgement I shall forbear dwelling longer upon the importance of your command and am with great respect Dear Sir your most ob. H. St.

Isaac Chauncey

LB Copy, MiU-C, Isaac Chauncey Letter Book.

COMMODORE SIR JAMES LUCAS YEO, R.N., TO
FIRST SECRETARY OF THE ADMIRALTY JOHN W. CROKER

No. 3

His Majesty's Ship *Wolfe*
at Kingston, in Upper Canada,
the 26th. of May 1813

Sir/

I have the Honor to acquaint you for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that I arrived here on the 15th. Instant, with 150 of the Officers and Seamen under my Command, the remainder have also arrived here at different periods between that and the 24th.—

The Ships and Vessels here were in a very weak state the *Royal George*, had 18–32 Pounder Carronades, and two long nine pdr. Guns, the *Moir*, 10–18 Pounder Carronades, the *Beresford*¹ 10–12 pdr. Carronades, and two long six Pounder Guns, the *Wolfe* was launched but not Decked, or Rigged, nor any Guns on board, she has since been furnished, at different times, with twenty Guns and Carronades of various Calibers, collected from the Forts and which have arrived from Quebec, the Enemy have burnt on their taking possession of York a Ship that was Building there intended to carry 30 Guns, as was stated in my Letter No. 1 at Quebec on the 5th. instant.

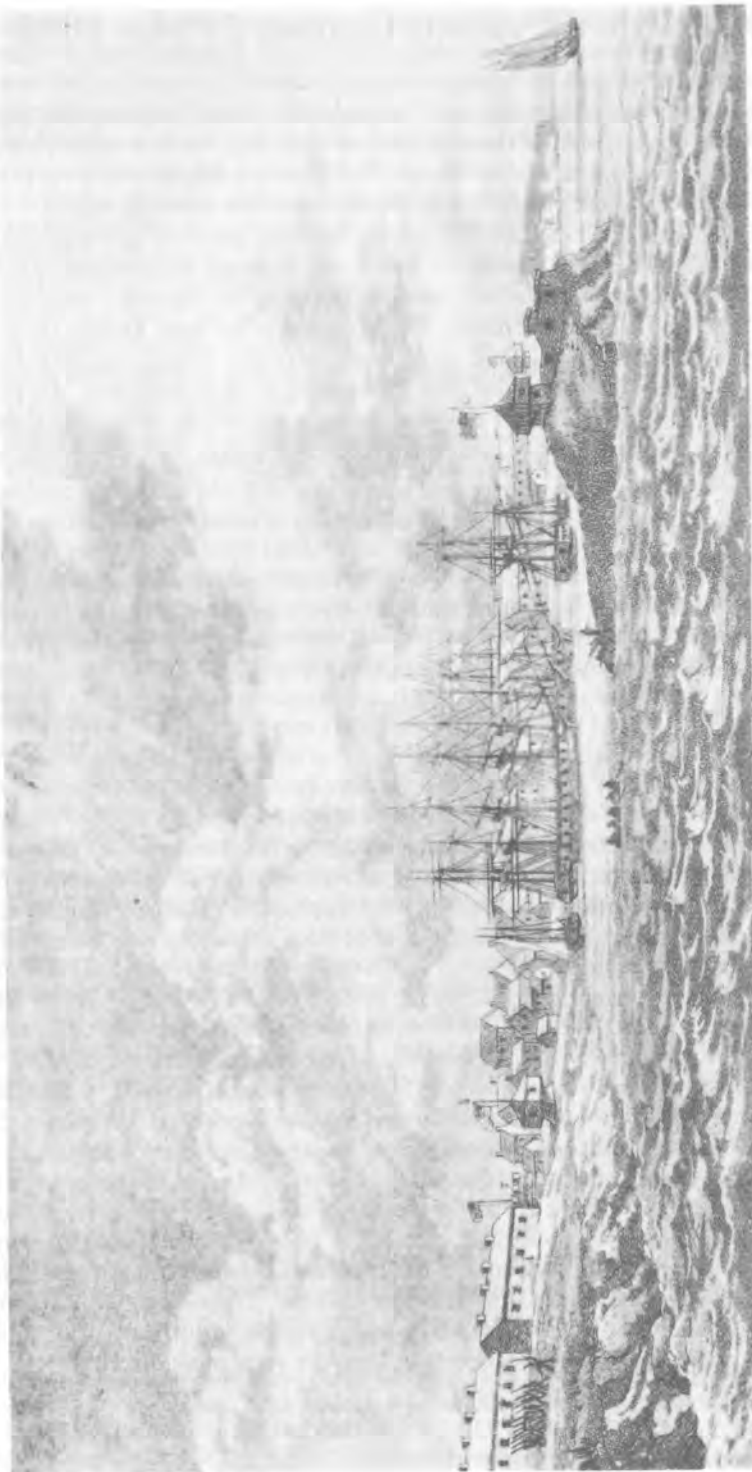
From the arrival of the Establishment, to the present date, all hands have been very actively employed in fitting and preparing the Squadron, in the best possible manner the short time would allow, in a state to put to Sea, or defend themselves in case of surprize.

The Enemy's Squadron are very superior, both, in number and the complete way they are equipped, their force consist of one Ship of 20–32 Pounder Carronades and 6 long 18 Pounder Guns, a Brig with 18–24 Pounder Carronades, and 16 smaller Vessels, each carrying a long 32 Pounder Gun some 4 and others 6 Carronades besides, they have also a Ship of thirty and a Brig of Eighteen Guns nearly ready for launching at Sacketts harbour.²

They having the above stated advantage on the Lake at present, and the certainty of their shortly being reinforced by those Building it will appear evident to their Lordships that the Enemy (now possess a force which are equal if not superior,) if not checked will soon get too formidable for an attack to be made on them that might prove advantageous, I am therefore about to proceed to Sea to meet them, as the possession of upper Canada must depend on whoever can maintain the Naval Superiority on Lake Ontario.

I beg leave to draw their Lordships attention that even in the event of being successful, the Superiority cannot long be maintained without an immediate reinforcement of Seamen, as the Enemy from their proximity to New York, can obtain any supply of Men, or, Stores at a few hours notice.

I have further to state to their Lordships that I found on my arrival, Messrs. Barclay, Pring,³ and Finnis, Commanders, and four Lieutenants, which had been sent from Halifax, by Sir John B. Warren, Bt.



"South-east view of Sackett's harbour"

Also transmit a list of Acting appointments and removals, up to this period, of Commissioned, and Warrant, Officers, and a Report of Survey on Thomas England Esqr. Commander Invalided, and have the Honor to be Sir your most obedient humble Servant

James Lucas Yeo. Commodore

LS, UkLPR, Adm. 1/2736, pp. 80-83.

1. The schooner *General Beresford*, formerly called *Prince Regent*, was built at York for the Provincial Marine in June 1812; she was renamed about May 1813.

2. *General Pike*, launched 12 June 1813, was under construction at Sackets Harbor; the prize schooner *Duke of Gloucester*, captured by the Americans at York on 27 April, may have been undergoing repairs at the harbor, but would never see active service as an American ship of war.

3. Lieutenant Daniel Pring, R.N., was transferred from Halifax to the lakes in May 1813; he was given command of the squadron on Lake Champlain on 19 July 1813.

MEMOIR OF LIEUTENANT DAVID WINGFIELD, R.N.¹

[Extract]

The ships were ready for sea by the latter part of May, and a strong body of troops were assembled at Kingston to make an attack upon the enemy's works at Sacketts harbour, which, if once in our possession, would have put an end to the naval war on Lake Ontario, and saved some millions of pounds, and thousand of lives, as the Americans had no other harbour along the coast fit for a naval depôt, an excellent opportunity likewise offered for putting the plan into execution, their fleet having sailed about 100 miles up the Lake to attack one of our Forts on the bank of the river Niagara, and not believing that our ships could be prepared for sea so early, they had left the place nearly defenceless: in the afternoon we weighed and stood out of the harbour, anchoring about six miles off Kingston to await the troops who were embarked in batteus and gun boats; the latter had 24 pounders mounted on circular platforms; the troops did not join the fleet till late in the evening, when it being quite calm the boats were made fast to the ships

At daybreak a light breeze sprung up and we got under weigh, the boats occasionally laying on their oars to keep company; having but light breezes, and frequent calms we made but little way progress, about noon, on rounding a point we came in full view of the enemy about 10 miles distant, who, immediately they perceived us, commenced firing alarm guns to call in the surrounding militia, at 2 PM we were totally becalmed within six miles of the town of Sacketts; Sir James Yeo had gone in shore in his gig some time before to reconnoitre, and perceiving several shots fired at the boat, a gun vessel was ordered to cover her retreat, if necessary; on her return we received orders to prepare for disembarking the troops, the ships cleared for action, and nothing was wanting but a good breeze to take them close enough in shore to cover the landing; about 6 PM a fresh breeze sprung up dead on the land, the ships bore up and took in their small sails, the guns were prepared in the gunboats, and soldiers, who were not employed at the oars, in place of the seamen who had to fight the gun, had their musquets in their hands, and lay down at the bottom of the boats to prevent confusion; every heart now beat high with eagerness and expectation, but when nearly within gun shot of the shore, the ships suddenly hauled their wind

and stood out to sea, making a signal for the boats to follow; as soon as they got a good offing, they hove too, and the boats assembled round the Commodore's ship, where we learned that the attack was suspended till the following morning; this order emanated from the Governor general of the two Provinces, who was on board the flag ship, and of course, commanded in chief, and the officers ~~and~~ being in the provincial service, and pay, Sir James was obliged to obey, though much against his will, this caused some altercation between the two Commanders, on board, Sir James urging the expediency of an immediate attack, and the Governor alleging the decline of the day to defer it; the delay, however put a great damp upon our spirits, as we plainly saw by our glasses, several boats well manned, enter the harbour to reinforce the garrison, and well knew they would be receiving reinforcements all the night, as they kept up an incessant firing of minute guns; whereas if we had made a bold dash at once, it is most probable that few, if any, guns would have been fired upon us and the troops would have been landed immediately under their batteries, and in the town, under cover of the shipping who would have run right into Sacketts harbour; we soon after learned that the Americans were not above 300 strong when we first hove in sight, and had made every preparation for destroying the public buildings and stores, particularly a large ship upon the stocks, we knowing it would be the utmost folly to attempt standing against such a force as they must perceive we had, independent of the shipping: this days work ended with ordering the troops on board the ships, and the boats to be made fast to their sterns, except some to row guard along shore during the night, where they captured about 150 of the enemy coming down the Lake for Sackets

When the troops were on board the ships, they made sail further off shore, as the breeze freshened and continued blowing dead on the land; at midnight it fell calm and left us about five miles off the town: at dawn of day the hands were turned up, the soldiers embarked in the boats, and the ships stood in for land, but having light baffling winds, they made but little progress and none came within gun shot except a schooner of 10 guns, and she did not arrive until the men had made good their landing

After some consultation, the boats were ordered to proceed under cover of the gun boats only, but our favourable opportunity was gone, and the troops knew it as well as ourselves, for, though there was no murmuring, or attempt to disobey orders, their countenances, so different to what they were the evening before, plainly shewed they did not obey the orders with that cheerfulness which confidence inspires; the enemy had nearly 24 hours notice, and had made the best use of their time by minute guns, and expresses, to receive strong reinforcements, and it being daylight before the boats shoved off from the ships, our motions were distinctly perceived by the Americans, who, not being awed by the shipping had drawn great numbers of men from the town, concealing them among the bushes, behind trees, logs, and rising grounds, just above the beach, which enabled them to take deliberate aim as we approached the shore; they had likewise brought out four field pieces to annoy us

About 3 am we formed the line, the gun boats leading the van, and commenced pulling in shore about a mile above the town in order to keep out of the range of the shot from the forts and block houses; the boats were heavily laden, and proceeded but slowly, while the enemy kept up an ill directed fire from their field pieces: when within musquet shot of the beach, the gun boats pulled ahead and fired a few rounds of grape and canister shot to scour the

beach, but the Yankies had anticipated us, and were so well sheltered, that I believe none were killed or wounded; the batteus and ships boats advanced, and I observed to an officer of the 104th Regt, who commanded the troops in the boat under my charge, that the Americans intended to let us land unmolested, but it soon appeared I was mistaken, for when about pistol shot from the beach, and we had encouraged each other with the usual salutation of three cheers, they opened a well directed fire from their field pieces, and rifles, that almost every shot did execution, which for the moment staggered us, but soon recovering from the surprise, every boat made the best of her way to land; the gun boats kept up a continued fire, but having no other mark than the smoke from the enemy's guns, but little execution was done and in a very short time there was fifteen killed and wounded in my boat, principally picked off from, and about the gun; in passing one of the boats, which appeared in great distress, I hailed the officer, who was wounded, and had but three men who had escaped the effects of the shot of the enemy; as the military officer, and myself were obliged to stand up and cheer on the men, we were too prominent a mark to remain long and I took a mental leave of the few friends I had left; the men being so deliberately picked off from the gun, the crew got in some confusion, for as the seamen were disabled, others took their place, and were relieved at the oars by the soldiers; while occupied in this double transfer, the army officer, with his glass, had discovered a body of men drawn up a short distance from the beach, who being dressed in green, the uniform of all the American foot soldiers, could scarcely be perceived among the trees and underwood, he called me and pointed them out, while so occupied the coxswain of the boat was struck with two balls and fell, the soldier took the tiller, while I went forward to the gun which being loaded with grape and canister shot, I had it pointed to the spot and made a great havock among the bushes, if not the men; by this time some of the boats had made good their landing, and the troops formed, upon which the enemy made a precipitate retreat into the town

When the soldiers were all landed, and the wounded men placed on the beach, those gun boats which were not disabled, rowed towards the batteries, and commenced firing, to draw off some of the attention of the enemy from the advancing party; here we were kept till half past seven, when we were recalled to the landing place to take on board the troops who were retreating in great haste; they were once in the town, but being dreadfully cut up from some block houses, and a great dust seen rising from the opposite entrance ~~to the town~~, supposed to proceed from a reinforcement to the garrison, a retreat was sounded, but who gave the orders no one knew, the Governor and his staff positively denying having done so, however it was not the less obeyed; in a few minutes a smoke was seen rising from their dock yard, which caused an attempt to be made to rally the troops, but did not succeed: before the soldiers were all embarked it was known to a certainty that, what was supposed to be a reinforcement, was nothing else but the main body of the Americans retreating, leaving some block houses manned, until their new ship, and public store houses were on fire, and then to follow

I was informed by several officers of the American Army and Navy, when I was taken prisoner,² that had the attack commenced immediately after we hove in sight the day before, so far from defending themselves, the number of men in the garrison would have scarcely been sufficient to destroy the public works

We lost nearly 400 men killed and wounded in this disgraceful affair, when, in every probability the place would have been taken without the loss of a single man had things been conducted as they ought: this failure caused a coolness between the Governor, and Commodore, and at length broke out into an open rupture, in consequence of the loss of our flotilla on Lake Champlain³ which, in Sir James Yeo's public dispatches he attributed to the misconduct of the Governor, who was soon after suspended, and a court martial called, but he died soon after his arrival in England

The soldiers were greatly disheartened, and it was well for us that the troops at Fort George, the place the Americans had gone to attack, were better commanded, otherwise their ships would have been down upon us, and from our crowded state, most probably would have taken us all; we arrived in Navy bay the same evening and disembarked the troops and wounded men: thus ended an expedition begun under the most favourable auspices

I before remarked that, could we get possession of Sackets harbour, it would have saved an immensity of blood and treasure

D, CaOOA, David Wingfield, "Four Years on the Lakes of Canada, in 1813, 1814, 1815, and 1816; by a Naval Officer under the command of the late Sir James Lucas Yeo. . . ." MG24, F18, extract from pp. 6-10. The memoir is not dated, but internal evidence suggests it was written after 1834.

1. David Wingfield, born in 1792, was a Royal Navy midshipman in 1813; he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant on 20 March 1815, the highest rank he attained during his career. For the attack on Sackets Harbor, see Ellison, "David Wingfield."

2. Wingfield was commander of *Confiance* when that vessel was captured by the American fleet on 5 October 1813.

3. The Battle of Lake Champlain took place 11 September 1814.

BRIGADIER GENERAL JACOB BROWN¹ TO SECRETARY OF WAR ARMSTRONG

Head Quarters
Sackets Harbour June 1, 1813

Sir

You will have recd. mine of the 29th. Ulto. from the field of Battle.— All that I then stated is so—

I have now to add that on the 25th. Ulto. I recd. a communication from Genl. Dearborn desiring me to take the command at this Post— I hesitated— Col. Backus was here, an officer of experience in whom I placed the most implicit confidence and I could not do an act which I feared might wound his feelings— In the night of the 27th. Col. Backus wrote me by Majr. Swan desiring that I would come & take the command— I could no longer hesitate— Early in the morning of the 28th. I was here—

As the day opened Lieut. Chauncey ~~the Brother of our worthy Commodore~~ came in from the Lake firing alarm guns, the signal guns that had been agreed upon some days previous to rally the Militia were fired in answer and I sent out expresses in evry direction to alarm the country— As soon as Lieut. Chauncey came into Port he advised me that the Fleet approaching was an enemy & with the Glass we could distinctly see that they had a verry liberal supply of Boats, I

then no longer doubted but that they were resolved to land with a chosen body of Troops and storm our works—

The few Artillerists ~~we had to man the Guns of Fort Tompkins~~ & Volunteers ~~prepared themselves for the event~~ and Lt. Chauncey did every thing possible to support & strengthen Navy Point the guns on which were altogether under his command and mand. with his Officers and Men— As Col. Backus had recently arrived on this station I invited him and others to accompany me in a thorough examination of the Grounds around our position and as soon as this had been done we settled a regular place of defense ~~with Lieut. Chauncey~~. I had ever been of opinion that no military man would ~~ever~~ risque the Landing of Men in the mouth of Sackets Harbour for reasons which would be superfluous here to explain—

I knew that there was a place where determined men might land with considerable safety under cover of the fire from their small flat bottomed Gun-Boats which I also knew had recently arrived from Montreal and were in all probability, with the fleet— At the waters edge near Horse Island where I believed the enemy would land I was resolved to meet them and with this view the plan of defence was settled between myself Col. Backus Col. Mills Lieut. Chauncey Majr. Swan & Majr. Brown—

I was myself destined to meet the Enemy at the waters edge ~~where I believed that they would land~~ with all the Militia that came in and the Albany Volunteers under command of Col. Mills— At the alarm an order given by me Col. Backus was to order a body of Regulars to advance so as to meet the enemy after they had broken or disposed of the force with me— This force ~~with me~~ being broken I was to rally them and fall upon the enemys right Flank, so as to retard their approach toward Fort Tompkins as long as possible always hoping that the country would send forth all its means to our assistance and believing that to gain time was to ensure Victory—if however the enemy should overcome the assembled Regulars & Militia and drive us the whole length of way from Horse Island to Fort Tompkins and carry that Fort Lieut. Chauncey would then and in that case see the stores on Navy Point destroyed the New Ship Burnt and retire with his schooners & the men he had left to the south shore of the Bay east of Fort Volunteer— the Force remaining with me were to retire to Fort Volunteer (being the highest Ground) as our last and dearnier [*dernier*] resort—and if the enemy should prove too hard for Lieut. Chauncey, he was to land his men blow up his vessels and join me in fort Volunteer where we would be governed by circumstances. This being our plan & the enemy having first struck us as contemplated it remains to see how well our Plan was executed— The Wind being verry light during the whole of the 28th. and the enemy having arrangements to make for landing they moved slowly up the Bay but no doubt would have attacked us in the course of the Afternoon had it not been for the approach of Boats from Oswego with reinforcements— This circumstance diverted them for a time—they attacked the Boats—took [?] ² of them and a number of our men with what loss to them or to us In other respects I am yet uninformed— In the course of the 28th. & night of the 28th. & 29th. a considerable number of militia collected—they were as they arrived ordered to a small improvement on the main just within Horse Island and such provisions as could be furnished were carted to the Ground where they all eat in common paying no attention to the ordinary mode of drawing rations— Col Mills with the Albany Volunteers was on Horse Island— In the evening of the 28th. I joined the Force assembled near Horse Island and explained to the leading officers my views as I feared a

night attack—it being of the first importance to the enemy to be rapid in their movements to prevent the fatal effects to them of the Force that ~~I would have~~ would be assembled by morning and of those brave men as I supposed that would generously fly to their country's standard, ambitious to have a name in the victory which I most firmly believed was certain As the morning of the 29th approached I found myself with a part of three Regiments of militia and a part of the Albany Volunteers amounting altogether say to five Hundred men—all anxious for the fight were you to believe their professions— The moment it was so light as to see an object on the Bay the Enemys ships were discovered in nearly a direct line between the head of Horse Island and Stoney point and within Ten minutes Thirty three Boats filled with men approached us from the larger Indian or Gardener Island when the action in fact began as the enemy immediately opened upon us with his Gun Boats— I ~~immediately~~ directed Col. Backus to advance and ordered Col. Mills to join me on the main—

The moment Col. Mills had joined me I ordered [?] ³ of the Albany Volunteers who had the command of a traveling Brass Six pounder to open upon the enemy— the Albany Volunteers under Col. Mills were then laid down on the right behind a small natural Breast work on the Beach, and all the Militia under Col. Sprague behind the same breast work on the left and those under Col. Tuttle to take a position that I pointed out about 30 Rods upon my left flank by the edge of the woods near the Bay to prevent a surprise from savages that I expected would come in from that quarter the enemy by this time had landed a body of men at the head of Horse Island who were advancing in open column upon a line with the enemys front Boats—evry exertion was then made to inspire my little force with confidence & if they would but lay firm and restrain their fire I was confident that evry man must [merely?] kill his man. I then took my position in the centre by the left of the men at the Six pounder directly in front of the column approaching from the Island and all was silent with me excepting this 6— The enemy rapidly approaching and keeping up as heavy a fire as possible from their ~~gun~~ Boats—not a shot was fired from their column the Front approached charging Bayonets— It appears impossible to restrain raw troops so as to make them in any high degree useful—those with me did fire and would fire before I intended— the enemy were however pretty near and as I was attentively watching their movements and the happy effects of our fire to my utter astonishment my men arose from their cover broke & before I could realize the disgraceful scene, there was scarcely a man within several rods of where I stood— Col. Mills fell gallantly struggling to stop his men— I was more fortunate— I made all the noise I could for my men—put my ~~pocket~~ handkerchief on the point of my sword and made evry sort of flourish signal possible that they might notice me but in vain—at a little distance however I had the good fortune to come up with Capt. McNitt who had succeeded in rallying a few men and they were doing all they could from behind some large logs by the edge of the Field. I complimented them and ~~evry~~ complained of those who had left me— Ordered Capt. McNitt to stand fast and I would go and call up Col. Tuttle from the point where I had ordered him— I went—but no Col. Tuttle could I find or any other man— By the time I returned Capt. Mayo and a few others had joined Capt. McNitt I then ordered an advance upon the rear of the enemy's right flank and I trust some execution was done but as my party did not exceed one Hundred & as I deemed it verry important for me to know how things stood in front of the enemy where the regulars were most nobly con-

tending I orderd. a rapid movement forward to pass the enemy and as we were advancing a fire came at some distance upon our right flank we halted, faced about, and McNitt was in the act of Firing when I ordered a little delay saying they might be our Friends—in a moment we saw the red Coats approaching from the right of the path along which we had passd. McNitt gave them his best fire & we made a rapid retreat upon the extreme left of the few Brave men who had sustain'd the contest in front

As I last turn'd from the enemy & come out of the woods upon the left of my friends I saw an ~~awful and damned~~ alarming flame arising from Navy point the position which contained the spoils of York and some few of Commodore Chaunceys effects— With all possible expedition I made my way into fort Tompkins and found the Officer Lieut. Ketchum I had left there in the act of firing the long thirty two at the enemy's shipping I desired him to keep up as heavy a fire as possible and assured him that victory was ours— He replied "Genl. I can not discharge this piece again, the flame from the Marine Barracks is so hot that my men cannot exist here"— I felt the force of his answer and replied "do the best you can" & left him, being alarmed for the ship, the object of the contest I hurried towards her and found Major Brown who assured me the ship was safe and that what had happened was owing to the infamous conduct of those in whom Lieut. Chauncey had placed confidence—that it was without his knowledge—that they had gone from Navy point and informed Chauncey that all was lost upon the right of our line of Battle— I ordered Major Brown to send forthwith and assure him that all was safe on the right and that Victory was ours

In passing up to the Brownville, Middle & Adams Road where I perceived some hundreds of Idle men were assembled at a verry respectfull distance from danger Major Swan rode up to me & informed me that the fixed ammunition was expended— I replied "it may be so, I do not believe it— ~~but~~ if it is so tell no Man" I then rode among those people and they tried to impose upon me as they had upon the Major, but I knew them better and could admit of no such excuse many of them had drawn their boxes full the day before and never fired a gun at the enemy With much ado I got them to move towards the right flank of the enemy in hopes of throwing them into the woods behind Sir George should he presume further to advance— I then orderd. Major Lucket who I knew would not hesitate to advance with his mounted light dragoons into the open space west of Judge Sackets old House and nearly in a line between the enemy & the ship— It was done— Hurrying then to where the American & British Regulars fought I verry soon felt that victory was really ours—and if Sir George had not been off with almost the rapidity of thought—he would not have returned that day—

The closing scene of this Glorious Day for the officers and soldiers of the regular Army who had the honor to be on the spot, you have in my despatch of the 29th. Ulto.— I have only to add in relation to the officers generally that they are men who do honour to their Country and that they would do honour to any age or nation

To Capt. McNitt of the Militia I presented the sword which I wore on the 29th Ulto. as testimony of my esteem & regard for his gallant conduct And I would be gratified if you would cause him to be commissioned in the regular army—

To Col. Backus, who, praised be God still lives, I have presented the sword taken from ~~the~~ Adj. Genl. Gray who was killed not distant from where Backus fell and by the side of Sir George Prevost

I have directed Majr. Swan who had the goodness to volunteer his services as my acting adjt. Genl. and to whom I feel myself under the greatest obligations for his attentions during the arduous scene through which we have passd, to make out and transmit with this despatch a return of the killed wounded & prisoners on Both sides and also of the parts of Regiments of the regular army engaged, that you may have a correct idea of the amt. of Force on our side and that those parts of Regts. may have the honour which they have so fairly earned— The Enemy that landed were at least one thousand picked men and their fleet consisted of the new ship *Wolfe*—the *Royal George*—the *Prince Regent*—the *Earl Moira* & two schooners besides their Gun & other Boats— As I am closing this communication Commodore Chauncey has arrived with his Squadron & as I can be no longer useful here I shall return home in the morning—

I must yet add in justice to a brave honourable man that Lieut Chauncey stands higher in my estimation than ~~he did~~ before he was associated with me for the protection of this place— no blame I know by any possibility can attach to him for what happened on navy point—

He was deceived by the materials on whom he relied and nothing short of Divinity can guard against such occurrences—

Lieut. Col. Tuttle of the Regular Army who was on the march to this place made evry exertion that an officer or a soldier could make to get into the action but came too late for the fight & I am confident that Col Tuttle and evry officer under his command feels it as a misfortune individually that it was not in their power to get up in time— Respectfully

Jac: Brown
Brig: Genl. Militia

LS, DNA, RG107, Letters Received by the Secretary of War, Registered Series, B-204(7) (M221, Roll No. 50).

1. Jacob Brown was brigadier general of the New York state militia; he was appointed brigadier general in the U.S. Army on 19 July 1813 in recognition of his successful defense of Sackets Harbor.
2. Blank.
3. Blank.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

(No. 30)

U.S. Ship *Madison*
Sacketts Harbor 2d. June 1813

Sir

On the Evening of the 30th. Ulto. I received an Express from Lieut. Chauncey, stating that the Enemy was off Sacketts Harbor, with his whole Fleet— I immediately prepared to leave Niagara with the Squadron, but as I had sent the *Hamilton* with the detachment of Seamen ordered with Captain Perry as far as Lewiston and had ordered Lieut. Macpherson to proceed to Black Rock to bring down powder and grape shot for the Squadron— I was obliged to wait his return, which detained me untill the morning of the 31st.— I immediately weighed and ran over to York to see whether the Enemy had run for that port— not finding him there I run down along the Canada Shore under an expectation of meeting him going up with reinforcements— I passed within sight of Kingston yesterday about

1 P.M. and arrived here about 4, without having seen any thing of the Enemy.— I found however that he had paid this place a visit on the 29th. Ult. and landed about 1200 Men, supported by his whole Naval force aided by a number of Gun Boats, mounting 68 pounder Carronades.¹ The Troops were commanded by Sir George Prevost in person and the Naval Forces by Sir James L. Yeo—who lately arrived at Kingston with about 500 Seamen.— The Enemy penetrated to Fort Tompkins, but as every inch of ground was disputed with him, his loss by this time was so great that he retreated with some precipitation, leaving many of his killed and wounded upon the Field of Battle— he also took off many of his wounded as the Sailors were observed to be constantly employed upon that Service as the Enemy advanced.— He also gained time to get off many by sending in several flags of truce upon frivolous pretenses— the Enemy's loss must have been severe, otherwise he would not have retreated without accomplishing the object of his Visit, and one of primary importance to him—to wit, the destruction of the Ship building at this place.—

The Regular Forces stationed here behaved uncommonly well, they disputed every inch of ground with the Enemy, although double our numbers—the two Schooners were of infinite service in keeping the Enemy's small Vessels and Gun Boats in check in his approach to the Harbor, and the Officers and Men did their duty.

In this repulse of the Enemy so honorable to the American Arms—I am sorry that I am obliged to state an occurrence which has tended much to lessen our exultation which would otherwise have been complete.—

The Officer having charge of Navy Point and the Guns mounted there was directed by Lieut. Chauncey to defend it to the last extremity, but if the Enemy got complete possession of the Town and Batteries—then to fire the Barracks and retreat in Boats to the Schooners— this Officer from some cause not yet accounted for set Fire to all the Buildings upon Navy Point without necessity and retreated to the Woods— The Buildings were of no value they however contained a part of the Stores, for the New Ship and nearly all the property brought from York—the loss of the Canvass is a serious inconvenience as the Sail Makers must remain idle, until I can replace it from New York— I shall loose no time in replacing all the Stores lost by this accident— I shall also institute an enquiry into the Conduct of all the Officers concerned and report to you the result as soon as known. I have the honor to be very Respectfully Sir Yr. Mo. Ob. St.—

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 4, No. 8 (M125, Roll No. 29).

1. In the letter book copy of this document, the armament is correctly stated as 18 pounder carronades (MiU-C, Isaac Chauncey Letter Book).

CAPTAIN RICHARD SMITH, U.S.M.C., TO
LIEUTENANT COLONEL COMMANDANT FRANKLIN WHARTON, U.S.M.C.

Sir,

Before this you must be aware of the attack made on this place on the 29th. ult. by the enemy & of the result & circumstances attending that day— Commodore Chauncey with all the Squadron except two of the Schooners was absent

at the time, but owing unfortunately to some misunderstanding on the part of the commanding Naval officer then present the Marine & Navy Barracks with all the Naval Stores of every description on this Station, all the prize goods taken at York & every article of public property belonging to the Marine Corps I am sorry to inform you was set on fire & entirely destroy'd— My officers & men suffer'd much they have nearly lost all their clothing camp utensils &c— My loss is a serious one, most of my public accounts, vouchers, baggage &c, were also destroy'd, which with the public property could have been saved if the commanding Naval officer had given any previous notice of his intention to do that, which could not have been possibly effected by the enemy— Many of my men is entirely without shoes & several almost naked in consequence of the fire, to relieve them is out of my power; the clothing spoken of by you I hope may reach me soon, untill then, I shall not be able to relieve their distress'd situation— I now require clothing of every description as most of the men have it due them— Lt. Sterne has been restored to duty by order of the Secretary of the Navy— The Sick report of this morning states Twenty Six unfit for duty— Robert Forster of the detachment died on the 23d ulto. John Smith, Fifer, gave him self up to me while at Fort George, upper Canada on the 30th. ulto. as a deserter from the Command of Capt Hall Newyork— In consequence of the loss of some of my returns, it will be out of my power for the present, to forward the usual returns of pay clothing &c to the different Staff— We sail in a few days for Kingston, the enemies fleet it is said is ready for sea & willing to meet us on the Lake—the force of the two is about equal— Our new ship will be launched tomorrow but will not be ready for sea for some weeks in consequence of the late fire, her sails rigging &c were all destroy'd— Respectfully yr. obdt. servt.

R^d. Smith Capt.

Marine encampment

Sacketts Harbour June 11th. 1813.—

ALS, DNA, RG127, CMC, 1813, Letters Received.

Freeing the Ships at Black Rock

The evacuation of Fort Erie by the British gave the Americans the opportunity to free the five vessels left in an unfinished state of repair at Black Rock, New York. Henry Eckford and twenty-five ship carpenters from Sacket Harbor repaired the ships, and two hundred soldiers from Major General Henry Dearborn's army helped to move the vessels down river. It proved to be a daunting task. Strong currents in the Niagara River and contrary winds precluded sailing the craft out, so that they had to be towed using a few oxen and human force alone. After a week of effort, the vessels—Caledonia, Somers, Trippe, Ohio, and Amelia—were free and sailed to join the squadron at Erie.¹

1. Rosenberg, *Building Perry's Fleet*, pp. 55–56.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 30

U.S. Ship *Madison*
Niagara River, 29th. May 1813

Sir

Deeming the command of Lake Erie of primary importance I dispatched Captain Perry yesterday with 55 Seamen to Black Rock, to take the Five Vessels there to Erie as soon as possible and to prepare the whole Squadron for Service by the 15th. of June.— General Dearborn has promised me 200 Soldiers to put on board of the vessels at Black Rock, to assist in protecting them to Erie— Mr. Eckford has with uncommon exertions prepared these Vessels for service, since the capture of York, and I think that Captain Perry will be ready to proceed for Presque Isle, about the 3d. or 4th. of June, provided I can get the Gun carriages up, which I brought from Sacketts Harbor for the Vessels at the Rock— we are however still much in want of Men, and if none arrive before my return to Sacketts Harbor I shall be obliged to dismantle the Fleet upon this Lake, to man that upon Erie— The two Brigs building at Erie have been launched.

The *Queen Charlotte* and three others of the Enemy's vessels came down to Fort Erie, on the 26th. Inst. but as soon as they heard of the capture of Fort George, and its dependencies they proceeded up the Lake, I presume for Malden— I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir Yr. Mo. Ob. St.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 3, No. 196 (M125, Roll No. 28).

MASTER COMMANDANT OLIVER H. PERRY TO COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY

copy

U.S. Brig *Caledonia* June 12 1813.—
off Buffaloe Creek.

I have the honor to inform you that I have at length succeeded in getting the vessels from Black Rock above the rapids after almost incredible fatigue both to officers and men the wind having blown from the Westward nearly a fortnight. Without the assistance of the Soldiers sent me by Genl. Dearborn we could not have ascended the Rapids, having tracked every Vessel by main Strength.

I have received a letter from Lt. Turner who tells me the Anchors for the Brigs will not be finished before the 20th. of July, although when I was at Pittsburgh they were promised by the 1st. of May. I make no comments on this abominable deception. If you Sir have two spare anchors and would send them to Niagara with the men, I think with some contrivance, I should not be delayed for the misconduct of the Anchor Maker at Pittsburgh—

Copy, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 4, No. 103, enclosure (M125, Roll No. 29). This copy was enclosed in a letter from Commodore Isaac Chauncey to Secretary of the Navy Jones of 24 June 1813.

Preparations on Lake Erie

Master Commandant Oliver H. Perry and Lieutenant Robert H. Barclay worked tirelessly during the summer of 1813 to build, equip, and man their respective fleets on Lake Erie. They each faced similar shortages of supplies, provisions, and men. The only material available locally was timber; virtually all other material, including iron, guns, shot, canvas, and rope, had to be made and shipped from great distances over bad roads or along the lake.

The greatest problem facing both commanders was a shortage of men. Perry and Barclay would complain that their respective commanding officers—Commodore Isaac Chauncey and Commodore Sir James Lucas Yeo—were deliberately holding back men and were keeping the most skilled seamen for their own fleets on Lake Ontario.

MASTER COMMANDANT OLIVER H. PERRY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

Erie Penna. June 19th. 1813

Sir

I had the honor of receiving your letter of the 25th. Ult.¹ last eveg. The very flattering manner in which you are pleased to speak of me, is highly gratifying to a young officer whose ardent desire it is to possess the good opinion of his Government and countrymen, and who has at the same time a due sense of the responsibility of his situation, and doubts of his capacity to meet fully the expectations of Government. I can only promise Sir, not to be wanting in activity and exertions for the honor and good of the service.

I left Buffalo on the eveg. of the 14 Inst. with the vessels named in the margin² and arrived last evening without seeing the enemy although they were watching for us and from information derived from judge Sackett, it appears we were both in sight at the same time from Chatocque. I have the honor to enclose a list of the Naval Force at this place and a roll of officers & men, the vessels can be ready to go over the bar in a day after the arrival of the crews, provided the anchors and shot arrive in time from Pittsburgh, which I have no doubt will be the case from letters I have recd. from Mr. Ormsby. The sails of both Brigs are nearly finished, and the rigging of one fitted, and guns mounted the other will be rigged very shortly and the guns mounted— The Gun Boats are fitted wanting only an additional quantity of shot. The vessels from Buffalo although not well fitted are considered as ready for service at a moments notice.— The fifty men Comr. Chauncey has spared me from the other Lake will allow me to progress rapidly in the equipment of those vessels, In fact Sir the moment the crews arrive the whole force shall be on the Lake unless some unforeseen accident prevents.

From the best information I can get it appears the enemy have the vessels named in the enclosed list. Their new Ship³ (the officers of the *Queen Charlotte* reported when at Fort Erie) was to be launched on the 1st. of June. I could not learn whether they had got her guns up or not— She is said to be larger than the *Charlotte*. It appears Capt. Barclay with his men have arrived and are now on-board their fleet.

I beg leave to observe to you Sir, my great deficiency in officers of experience, those that are here, although very valuable young officers are without much naval knowledge and as I have neither a regular Boatn. or Gunner, the detail of their duties occupies a great part of my time.

I enclose an estimate of the number of officers Seamen & marines required to complete the crews of the vessels here Very Respectfully I have the honor to be Sir Your Obdt. Servt.

O. H. Perry

LS, DNA, RG45, AF7 (M625, Roll No. 76).

1. In his letter of 25 May, Secretary of the Navy Jones directed Perry to correspond directly with him regarding preparations on Lake Erie and the movements of the enemy rather than writing through Commodore Isaac Chauncey. Jones also informed him that cannon were sent to Erie, and that he was sending additional seamen and marines. See DNA, RG45, SNL, Vol. 10, pp. 439-40 (M149, Roll No. 10).

2. Text at bottom of last page of document:

Vessels From Buffalo			
<i>Caledonia</i>	Brig		
<i>Ohio</i>	Schooner		
<i>Amelia</i>	"		
<i>Sommers</i>	"	formerly <i>Catherine</i>	
<i>Trippe</i>	Sloop	"	<i>Contractor</i>

Allow me to ask the favor of knowing the names you intend for the two Brigs.

O. H. Perry

3. H.M. ship *Detroit* was launched at Amherstburg in late July 1813.

[Enclosure]

Estimate of the number of Officers, seamen, & Marines required for the Vessels of War on Lake Erie—viz

2 Brigs—	130 ea	.....	260
4 Schooners	28	.....	112
1 small Brig, <i>Caledonia</i>		.....	50
3 schooners	} from Buffalo. . .	35 . . .	140
1 sloop			
			562
deduct, number now here		.....	159
	Wanted		403

Erie, June 20. 1813
S. Hambleton
Purser.

I shall consider myself equal to the enemy with a smaller number than the above.

O. H. Perry

DS, DNA, RG45, AF7 (M625, Roll No. 76). Postscript is in the hand of Oliver H. Perry. Two other enclosures provided a list of British vessels on Lake Erie, and a list by rank of the 159 officers and men then serving on Lake Erie.

LIEUTENANT ROBERT H. BARCLAY, R.N., TO
MAJOR GENERAL HENRY PROCTER, BRITISH ARMY

HMS: *Queen Charlotte* June 29th. 1813

Sir/

In reply to your letter, requesting a statement of what is wanted to make His Majesty's Squadron effective on Lake Erie, that you sought transmitted to His Excellency the Governor in chief—

I have to state that there is a general want of stores of every description at this post but more especially Iron for chain plates, and other uses all of which have been demanded long ago, also an abstract of former requisitions has been sent by me to hasten the supply of those things which I judged indispensably necessary—

The *Detroit* may be launched in ten days, but there is no chance of her being ready for any active service until a large proportion of stores, and guns are sent here— And even admitting that she could be equipped—there is not a seaman to put on board her— The absolute necessity of Seamen being immediately sent up is so obvious that I need hardly point it out to you— The Ships are manned with a crew, part of whom cannot even speak English—none of them seamen and very few even in numbers.— The Enemy have two corvettes in a forward state at Presqu' isle, and from their resources being so contiguous I have no doubt but that they will be ready to sail very soon in a much superior force than any exertion of mine can get ready to oppose them.—

I have repeatedly pointed out to Commodore Sir James Yeo the manner in which the squadron under my command is manned, and I have no doubt of his sending as many seamen as he can spare—but I have little hopes of his sending a sufficient number, until some method is adopted to get another supply of good Seamen from England or Quebec—

A party of 12 good shipwrights is also much wanted here, the builder represents that his present party are most ignorant of their profession, and the difficulties he labours under from that circumstance must be very great. If His Excellency would cause a party to be sent here, in the event of damages by action taking place they could soon be repaired and the squadron rendered effective again— At Present when any repair or alteration is required, (of which many are indispensably requisite) from the small number of men employed, every thing must stand still until that is finished—such is the case at present but under every disadvantageous circumstance the *Detroit* will be fully ready to receive her guns and men, as soon as they are sent up— I am Sir Your most obd. & Hble. Servant

R H Barclay Comd.
H M Ships & vessels on Lake Erie

LS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 730, pp. 27-30.

then no longer doubted but that they were resolved to land with a chosen body of Troops and storm our works—

The few Artillerists ~~we had to man the Guns of Fort Tompkins~~ & Volunteers ~~prepared themselves for the event~~ and Lt. Chauncey did every thing possible to support & strengthen Navy Point the guns on which were altogether under his command and mand. with his Officers and Men— As Col. Backus had recently arrived on this station I invited him and others to accompany me in a thorough examination of the Grounds around our position and as soon as this had been done we settled a regular place of defense ~~with Lieut. Chauncey~~. I had ever been of opinion that no military man would ~~ever~~ risque the Landing of Men in the mouth of Sackets Harbour for reasons which would be superfluous here to explain—

I knew that there was a place where determined men might land with considerable safety under cover of the fire from their small flat bottomed Gun-Boats which I also knew had recently arrived from Montreal and were in all probability, with the fleet— At the waters edge near Horse Island where I believed the enemy would land I was resolved to meet them and with this view the plan of defence was settled between myself Col. Backus Col. Mills Lieut. Chauncey Majr. Swan & Majr. Brown—

I was myself destined to meet the Enemy at the waters edge ~~where I believed that they would land~~ with all the Militia that came in and the Albany Volunteers under command of Col. Mills— At the alarm an order given by me Col. Backus was to order a body of Regulars to advance so as to meet the enemy after they had broken or disposed of the force with me— This force ~~with me~~ being broken I was to rally them and fall upon the enemys right Flank, so as to retard their approach toward Fort Tompkins as long as possible always hoping that the country would send forth all its means to our assistance and believing that to gain time was to ensure Victory—if however the enemy should overcome the assembled Regulars & Militia and drive us the whole length of way from Horse Island to Fort Tompkins and carry that Fort Lieut. Chauncey would then and in that case see the stores on Navy Point destroyed the New Ship Burnt and retire with his schooners & the men he had left to the south shore of the Bay east of Fort Volunteer— the Force remaining with me were to retire to Fort Volunteer (being the highest Ground) as our last and dearnier [*dernier*] resort—and if the enemy should prove too hard for Lieut. Chauncey, he was to land his men blow up his vessels and join me in fort Volunteer where we would be governed by circumstances. This being our plan & the enemy having first struck us as contemplated it remains to see how well our Plan was executed— The Wind being verry light during the whole of the 28th. and the enemy having arrangements to make for landing they moved slowly up the Bay but no doubt would have attacked us in the course of the Afternoon had it not been for the approach of Boats from Oswego with reinforcements— This circumstance diverted them for a time—they attacked the Boats—took ~~[?]~~² of them and a number of our men with what loss to them or to us In other respects I am yet uninformed— In the course of the 28th. & night of the 28th. & 29th. a considerable number of militia collected—they were as they arrived ordered to a small improvement on the main just within Horse Island and such provisions as could be furnished were carted to the Ground where they all eat in common paying no attention to the ordinary mode of drawing rations— Col Mills with the Albany Volunteers was on Horse Island— In the evening of the 28th. I joined the Force assembled near Horse Island and explained to the leading officers my views as I feared a

night attack—it being of the first importance to the enemy to be rapid in their movements to prevent the fatal effects to them of the Force that ~~I would have~~ would be assembled by morning and of those brave men as I supposed that would generously fly to their country's standard, ambitious to have a name in the victory which I most firmly believed was certain As the morning of the 29th approached I found myself with a part of three Regiments of militia and a part of the Albany Volunteers amounting altogether say to five Hundred men—all anxious for the fight were you to believe their professions— The moment it was so light as to see an object on the Bay the Enemys ships were discovered in nearly a direct line between the head of Horse Island and Stoney point and within Ten minutes Thirty three Boats filled with men approached us from the larger Indian or Gardener Island when the action in fact began as the enemy immediately opened upon us with his Gun Boats— I ~~immediately~~ directed Col. Backus to advance and ordered Col. Mills to join me on the main—

The moment Col. Mills had joined me I ordered ~~[?]~~³ of the Albany Volunteers who had the command of a traveling Brass Six pounder to open upon the enemy— the Albany Volunteers under Col. Mills were then laid down on the right behind a small natural Breast work on the Beach, and all the Militia under Col. Sprague behind the same breast work on the left and those under Col. Tuttle to take a position that I pointed out about 30 Rods upon my left flank by the edge of the woods near the Bay to prevent a surprise from savages that I expected would come in from that quarter the enemy by this time had landed a body of men at the head of Horse Island who were advancing in open column upon a line with the enemys front Boats—evry exertion was then made to inspire my little force with confidence & if they would but lay firm and restrain their fire I was confident that evry man must [merely?] kill his man. I then took my position in the centre by the left of the men at the Six pounder directly in front of the column approaching from the Island and all was silent with me excepting this 6— The enemy rapidly approaching and keeping up as heavy a fire as possible from their ~~gun~~ Boats—not a shot was fired from their column the Front approached charging Bayonets— It appears impossible to restrain raw troops so as to make them in any high degree useful—those with me did fire and would fire before I intended— the enemy were however pretty near and as I was attentively watching their movements and the happy effects of our fire to my utter astonishment my men arose from their cover broke & before I could realize the disgraceful scene, there was scarcely a man within several rods of where I stood— Col. Mills fell gallantly struggling to stop his men— I was more fortunate— I made all the noise I could for my men—put my ~~pocket~~ handkerchief on the point of my sword and made evry sort of flourish signal possible that they might notice me but in vain—at a little distance however I had the good fortune to come up with Capt. McNitt who had succeeded in rallying a few men and they were doing all they could from behind some large logs by the edge of the Field. I complimented them and ~~evry~~ complained of those who had left me— Ordered Capt. McNitt to stand fast and I would go and call up Col. Tuttle from the point where I had ordered him— I went—but no Col. Tuttle could I find or any other man— By the time I returned Capt. Mayo and a few others had joined Capt. McNitt I then ordered an advance upon the rear of the enemy's right flank and I trust some execution was done but as my party did not exceed one Hundred & as I deemed it verry important for me to know how things stood in front of the enemy where the regulars were most nobly con-

tending I orderd. a rapid movement forward to pass the enemy and as we were advancing a fire came at some distance upon our right flank we halted, faced about, and McNitt was in the act of Firing when I ordered a little delay saying they might be our Friends—in a moment we saw the red Coats approaching from the right of the path along which we had passd. McNitt gave them his best fire & we made a rapid retreat upon the extreme left of the few Brave men who had sustain'd the contest in front

As I last turn'd from the enemy & come out of the woods upon the left of my friends I saw an ~~awful and damned~~ alarming flame arising from Navy point the position which contained the spoils of York and some few of Commodore Chaunceys effects— With all possible expedition I made my way into fort Tompkins and found the Officer Lieut. Ketchum I had left there in the act of firing the long thirty two at the enemy's shipping I desired him to keep up as heavy a fire as possible and assured him that victory was ours— He replied "Genl. I can not discharge this piece again, the flame from the Marine Barracks is so hot that my men cannot exist here"— I felt the force of his answer and replied "do the best you can" & left him, being alarmed for the ship, the object of the contest I hurried towards her and found Major Brown who assured me the ship was safe and that what had happened was owing to the infamous conduct of those in whom Lieut. Chauncey had placed confidence—that it was without his knowledge—that they had gone from Navy point and informed Chauncey that all was lost upon the right of our line of Battle— I ordered Major Brown to send forthwith and assure him that all was safe on the right and that Victory was ours

In passing up to the Brownville, Middle & Adams Road where I perceived some hundreds of Idle men were assembled at a verry respectfull distance from danger Major Swan rode up to me & informed me that the fixed ammunition was expended— I replied "it may be so, I do not believe it— ~~but~~ if it is so tell no Man" I then rode among those people and they tried to impose upon me as they had upon the Major, but I knew them better and could admit of no such excuse many of them had drawn their boxes full the day before and never fired a gun at the enemy With much ado I got them to move towards the right flank of the enemy in hopes of throwing them into the woods behind Sir George should he presume further to advance— I then orderd. Major Lucket who I knew would not hesitate to advance with his mounted light dragoons into the open space west of Judge Sackets old House and nearly in a line between the enemy & the ship— It was done— Hurrying then to where the American & British Regulars fought I verry soon felt that victory was really ours—and if Sir George had not been off with almost the rapidity of thought—he would not have returned that day—

The closing scene of this Glorious Day for the officers and soldiers of the regular Army who had the honor to be on the spot, you have in my despatch of the 29th. Ulto.— I have only to add in relation to the officers generally that they are men who do honour to their Country and that they would do honour to any age or nation

To Capt. McNitt of the Militia I presented the sword which I wore on the 29th Ulto. as testimony of my esteem & regard for his gallant conduct And I would be gratified if you would cause him to be commissioned in the regular army—

To Col. Backus, who, praised be God still lives, I have presented the sword taken from ~~the~~ Adj. Genl. Gray who was killed not distant from where Backus fell and by the side of Sir George Prevost

I have directed Majr. Swan who had the goodness to volunteer his services as my acting adjt. Genl. and to whom I feel myself under the greatest obligations for his attentions during the arduous scene through which we have passd, to make out and transmit with this despatch a return of the killed wounded & prisoners on Both sides and also of the parts of Regiments of the regular army engaged, that you may have a correct idea of the amt. of Force on our side and that those parts of Regts. may have the honour which they have so fairly earned— The Enemy that landed were at least one thousand picked men and their fleet consisted of the new ship *Wolfe*—the *Royal George*—the *Prince Regent*—the *Earl Moira* & two schooners besides their Gun & other Boats— As I am closing this communication Commodore Chauncey has arrived with his Squadron & as I can be no longer useful here I shall return home in the morning—

I must yet add in justice to a brave honourable man that Lieut Chauncey stands higher in my estimation than ~~he did~~ before he was associated with me for the protection of this place— no blame I know by any possibility can attach to him for what happened on navy point—

He was deceived by the materials on whom he relied and nothing short of Divinity can guard against such occurrences—

Lieut. Col. Tuttle of the Regular Army who was on the march to this place made evry exertion that an officer or a soldier could make to get into the action but came too late for the fight & I am confident that Col Tuttle and evry officer under his command feels it as a misfortune individually that it was not in their power to get up in time— Respectfully

Jac: Brown
Brig: Genl. Militia

LS, DNA, RG107, Letters Received by the Secretary of War, Registered Series, B-204(7) (M221, Roll No. 50).

1. Jacob Brown was brigadier general of the New York state militia; he was appointed brigadier general in the U.S. Army on 19 July 1813 in recognition of his successful defense of Sackets Harbor.
2. Blank.
3. Blank.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

(No. 30)

U.S. Ship *Madison*
Sacketts Harbor 2d. June 1813

Sir

On the Evening of the 30th. Ulto. I received an Express from Lieut. Chauncey, stating that the Enemy was off Sacketts Harbor, with his whole Fleet— I immediately prepared to leave Niagara with the Squadron, but as I had sent the *Hamilton* with the detachment of Seamen ordered with Captain Perry as far as Lewiston and had ordered Lieut. Macpherson to proceed to Black Rock to bring down powder and grape shot for the Squadron— I was obliged to wait his return, which detained me untill the morning of the 31st.— I immediately weighed and ran over to York to see whether the Enemy had run for that port— not finding him there I run down along the Canada Shore under an expectation of meeting him going up with reinforcements— I passed within sight of Kingston yesterday about

1 P.M. and arrived here about 4, without having seen any thing of the Enemy.— I found however that he had paid this place a visit on the 29th. Ult. and landed about 1200 Men, supported by his whole Naval force aided by a number of Gun Boats, mounting 68 pounder Carronades.¹ The Troops were commanded by Sir George Prevost in person and the Naval Forces by Sir James L. Yeo—who lately arrived at Kingston with about 500 Seamen.— The Enemy penetrated to Fort Tompkins, but as every inch of ground was disputed with him, his loss by this time was so great that he retreated with some precipitation, leaving many of his killed and wounded upon the Field of Battle— he also took off many of his wounded as the Sailors were observed to be constantly employed upon that Service as the Enemy advanced.— He also gained time to get off many by sending in several flags of truce upon frivolous pretenses— the Enemy's loss must have been severe, otherwise he would not have retreated without accomplishing the object of his Visit, and one of primary importance to him—to wit, the destruction of the Ship building at this place.—

The Regular Forces stationed here behaved uncommonly well, they disputed every inch of ground with the Enemy, although double our numbers—the two Schooners were of infinite service in keeping the Enemy's small Vessels and Gun Boats in check in his approach to the Harbor, and the Officers and Men did their duty.

In this repulse of the Enemy so honorable to the American Arms—I am sorry that I am obliged to state an occurrence which has tended much to lessen our exultation which would otherwise have been complete.—

The Officer having charge of Navy Point and the Guns mounted there was directed by Lieut. Chauncey to defend it to the last extremity, but if the Enemy got complete possession of the Town and Batteries—then to fire the Barracks and retreat in Boats to the Schooners— this Officer from some cause not yet accounted for set Fire to all the Buildings upon Navy Point without necessity and retreated to the Woods— The Buildings were of no value they however contained a part of the Stores, for the New Ship and nearly all the property brought from York—the loss of the Canvass is a serious inconvenience as the Sail Makers must remain idle, until I can replace it from New York— I shall loose no time in replacing all the Stores lost by this accident— I shall also institute an enquiry into the Conduct of all the Officers concerned and report to you the result as soon as known. I have the honor to be very Respectfully Sir Yr. Mo. Ob. St.—

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 4, No. 8 (M125, Roll No. 29).

1. In the letter book copy of this document, the armament is correctly stated as 18 pounder carronades (MiU-C, Isaac Chauncey Letter Book).

CAPTAIN RICHARD SMITH, U.S.M.C., TO
LIEUTENANT COLONEL COMMANDANT FRANKLIN WHARTON, U.S.M.C.

Sir,

Before this you must be aware of the attack made on this place on the 29th. ult. by the enemy & of the result & circumstances attending that day— Commodore Chauncey with all the Squadron except two of the Schooners was absent

at the time, but owing unfortunately to some misunderstanding on the part of the commanding Naval officer then present the Marine & Navy Barracks with all the Naval Stores of every description on this Station, all the prize goods taken at York & every article of public property belonging to the Marine Corps I am sorry to inform you was set on fire & entirely destroy'd— My officers & men suffer'd much they have nearly lost all their clothing camp utensils &c— My loss is a serious one, most of my public accounts, vouchers, baggage &c, were also destroy'd, which with the public property could have been saved if the commanding Naval officer had given any previous notice of his intention to do that, which could not have been possibly effected by the enemy— Many of my men is entirely without shoes & several almost naked in consequence of the fire, to relieve them is out of my power; the clothing spoken of by you I hope may reach me soon, untill then, I shall not be able to relieve their distress'd situation— I now require clothing of every description as most of the men have it due them— Lt. Sterne has been restored to duty by order of the Secretary of the Navy— The Sick report of this morning states Twenty Six unfit for duty— Robert Forster of the detachment died on the 23d ulto. John Smith, Fifer, gave him self up to me while at Fort George, upper Canada on the 30th. ulto. as a deserter from the Command of Capt Hall Newyork— In consequence of the loss of some of my returns, it will be out of my power for the present, to forward the usual returns of pay clothing &c to the different Staff— We sail in a few days for Kingston, the enemies fleet it is said is ready for sea & willing to meet us on the Lake—the force of the two is about equal— Our new ship will be launched tomorrow but will not be ready for sea for some weeks in consequence of the late fire, her sails rigging &c were all destroy'd— Respectfully yr. obdt. servt.

R^d. Smith Capt.

Marine encampment

Sacketts Harbour June 11th. 1813.—

ALS, DNA, RG127, CMC, 1813, Letters Received.

Freeing the Ships at Black Rock

The evacuation of Fort Erie by the British gave the Americans the opportunity to free the five vessels left in an unfinished state of repair at Black Rock, New York. Henry Eckford and twenty-five ship carpenters from Sacket Harbor repaired the ships, and two hundred soldiers from Major General Henry Dearborn's army helped to move the vessels down river. It proved to be a daunting task. Strong currents in the Niagara River and contrary winds precluded sailing the craft out, so that they had to be towed using a few oxen and human force alone. After a week of effort, the vessels—Caledonia, Somers, Trippe, Ohio, and Amelia—were free and sailed to join the squadron at Erie.¹

1. Rosenberg, *Building Perry's Fleet*, pp. 55–56.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 30

U.S. Ship *Madison*
Niagara River, 29th. May 1813

Sir

Deeming the command of Lake Erie of primary importance I dispatched Captain Perry yesterday with 55 Seamen to Black Rock, to take the Five Vessels there to Erie as soon as possible and to prepare the whole Squadron for Service by the 15th. of June.— General Dearborn has promised me 200 Soldiers to put on board of the vessels at Black Rock, to assist in protecting them to Erie— Mr. Eckford has with uncommon exertions prepared these Vessels for service, since the capture of York, and I think that Captain Perry will be ready to proceed for Presque Isle, about the 3d. or 4th. of June, provided I can get the Gun carriages up, which I brought from Sacketts Harbor for the Vessels at the Rock— we are however still much in want of Men, and if none arrive before my return to Sacketts Harbor I shall be obliged to dismantle the Fleet upon this Lake, to man that upon Erie— The two Brigs building at Erie have been launched.

The *Queen Charlotte* and three others of the Enemy's vessels came down to Fort Erie, on the 26th. Inst. but as soon as they heard of the capture of Fort George, and its dependencies they proceeded up the Lake, I presume for Malden— I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir Yr. Mo. Ob. St.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 3, No. 196 (M125, Roll No. 28).

MASTER COMMANDANT OLIVER H. PERRY TO COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY

copy

U.S. Brig *Caledonia* June 12 1813.—
off Buffaloe Creek.

I have the honor to inform you that I have at length succeeded in getting the vessels from Black Rock above the rapids after almost incredible fatigue both to officers and men the wind having blown from the Westward nearly a fortnight. Without the assistance of the Soldiers sent me by Genl. Dearborn we could not have ascended the Rapids, having tracked every Vessel by main Strength.

I have received a letter from Lt. Turner who tells me the Anchors for the Brigs will not be finished before the 20th. of July, although when I was at Pittsburgh they were promised by the 1st. of May. I make no comments on this abominable deception. If you Sir have two spare anchors and would send them to Niagara with the men, I think with some contrivance, I should not be delayed for the misconduct of the Anchor Maker at Pittsburgh—

Copy, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 4, No. 103, enclosure (M125, Roll No. 29). This copy was enclosed in a letter from Commodore Isaac Chauncey to Secretary of the Navy Jones of 24 June 1813.

Preparations on Lake Erie

Master Commandant Oliver H. Perry and Lieutenant Robert H. Barclay worked tirelessly during the summer of 1813 to build, equip, and man their respective fleets on Lake Erie. They each faced similar shortages of supplies, provisions, and men. The only material available locally was timber; virtually all other material, including iron, guns, shot, canvas, and rope, had to be made and shipped from great distances over bad roads or along the lake.

The greatest problem facing both commanders was a shortage of men. Perry and Barclay would complain that their respective commanding officers—Commodore Isaac Chauncey and Commodore Sir James Lucas Yeo—were deliberately holding back men and were keeping the most skilled seamen for their own fleets on Lake Ontario.

MASTER COMMANDANT OLIVER H. PERRY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

Erie Penna. June 19th. 1813

Sir

I had the honor of receiving your letter of the 25th. Ult.¹ last eveg. The very flattering manner in which you are pleased to speak of me, is highly gratifying to a young officer whose ardent desire it is to possess the good opinion of his Government and countrymen, and who has at the same time a due sense of the responsibility of his situation, and doubts of his capacity to meet fully the expectations of Government. I can only promise Sir, not to be wanting in activity and exertions for the honor and good of the service.

I left Buffalo on the eveg. of the 14 Inst. with the vessels named in the margin² and arrived last evening without seeing the enemy although they were watching for us and from information derived from judge Sackett, it appears we were both in sight at the same time from Chatocque. I have the honor to enclose a list of the Naval Force at this place and a roll of officers & men, the vessels can be ready to go over the bar in a day after the arrival of the crews, provided the anchors and shot arrive in time from Pittsburgh, which I have no doubt will be the case from letters I have recd. from Mr. Ormsby. The sails of both Brigs are nearly finished, and the rigging of one fitted, and guns mounted the other will be rigged very shortly and the guns mounted— The Gun Boats are fitted wanting only an additional quantity of shot. The vessels from Buffalo although not well fitted are considered as ready for service at a moments notice.— The fifty men Comr. Chauncey has spared me from the other Lake will allow me to progress rapidly in the equipment of those vessels, In fact Sir the moment the crews arrive the whole force shall be on the Lake unless some unforeseen accident prevents.

From the best information I can get it appears the enemy have the vessels named in the enclosed list. Their new Ship³ (the officers of the *Queen Charlotte* reported when at Fort Erie) was to be launched on the 1st. of June. I could not learn whether they had got her guns up or not— She is said to be larger than the *Charlotte*. It appears Capt. Barclay with his men have arrived and are now on-board their fleet.

I beg leave to observe to you Sir, my great deficiency in officers of experience, those that are here, although very valuable young officers are without much naval knowledge and as I have neither a regular Boatn. or Gunner, the detail of their duties occupies a great part of my time.

I enclose an estimate of the number of officers Seamen & marines required to complete the crews of the vessels here Very Respectfully I have the honor to be Sir Your Obdt. Servt.

O. H. Perry

LS, DNA, RG45, AF7 (M625, Roll No. 76).

1. In his letter of 25 May, Secretary of the Navy Jones directed Perry to correspond directly with him regarding preparations on Lake Erie and the movements of the enemy rather than writing through Commodore Isaac Chauncey. Jones also informed him that cannon were sent to Erie, and that he was sending additional seamen and marines. See DNA, RG45, SNL, Vol. 10, pp. 439-40 (M149, Roll No. 10).

2. Text at bottom of last page of document:

Vessels From Buffalo			
<i>Caledonia</i>	Brig		
<i>Ohio</i>	Schooner		
<i>Amelia</i>	"		
<i>Sommers</i>	"	formerly <i>Catherine</i>	
<i>Trippe</i>	Sloop	"	<i>Contractor</i>

Allow me to ask the favor of knowing the names you intend for the two Brigs.

O. H. Perry

3. H.M. ship *Detroit* was launched at Amherstburg in late July 1813.

[Enclosure]

Estimate of the number of Officers, seamen, & Marines required for the Vessels of War on Lake Erie—viz

2 Brigs—	130 ea	.....	260
4 Schooners	28	.....	112
1 small Brig, <i>Caledonia</i>		.....	50
3 schooners	} from Buffalo. . .	35 . . .	140
1 sloop			
			562
deduct, number now here		.....	159
	Wanted		403

Erie, June 20. 1813
S. Hambleton
Purser.

I shall consider myself equal to the enemy with a smaller number than the above.

O. H. Perry

DS, DNA, RG45, AF7 (M625, Roll No. 76). Postscript is in the hand of Oliver H. Perry. Two other enclosures provided a list of British vessels on Lake Erie, and a list by rank of the 159 officers and men then serving on Lake Erie.

LIEUTENANT ROBERT H. BARCLAY, R.N., TO
MAJOR GENERAL HENRY PROCTER, BRITISH ARMY

HMS: *Queen Charlotte* June 29th. 1813

Sir/

In reply to your letter, requesting a statement of what is wanted to make His Majesty's Squadron effective on Lake Erie, that you sought transmitted to His Excellency the Governor in chief—

I have to state that there is a general want of stores of every description at this post but more especially Iron for chain plates, and other uses all of which have been demanded long ago, also an abstract of former requisitions has been sent by me to hasten the supply of those things which I judged indispensably necessary—

The *Detroit* may be launched in ten days, but there is no chance of her being ready for any active service until a large proportion of stores, and guns are sent here— And even admitting that she could be equipped—there is not a seaman to put on board her— The absolute necessity of Seamen being immediately sent up is so obvious that I need hardly point it out to you— The Ships are manned with a crew, part of whom cannot even speak English—none of them seamen and very few even in numbers.— The Enemy have two corvettes in a forward state at Presqu' isle, and from their resources being so contiguous I have no doubt but that they will be ready to sail very soon in a much superior force than any exertion of mine can get ready to oppose them.—

I have repeatedly pointed out to Commodore Sir James Yeo the manner in which the squadron under my command is manned, and I have no doubt of his sending as many seamen as he can spare—but I have little hopes of his sending a sufficient number, until some method is adopted to get another supply of good Seamen from England or Quebec—

A party of 12 good shipwrights is also much wanted here, the builder represents that his present party are most ignorant of their profession, and the difficulties he labours under from that circumstance must be very great. If His Excellency would cause a party to be sent here, in the event of damages by action taking place they could soon be repaired and the squadron rendered effective again— At Present when any repair or alteration is required, (of which many are indispensably requisite) from the small number of men employed, every thing must stand still until that is finished—such is the case at present but under every disadvantageous circumstance the *Detroit* will be fully ready to receive her guns and men, as soon as they are sent up— I am Sir Your most obd. & Hble. Servant

R H Barclay Comd.
H M Ships & vessels on Lake Erie

LS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 730, pp. 27-30.

[Enclosure]

A Statement of the Forces of the American Squadron as last reconnoitred in the Harbour of Presque Isle June 20

Two new Brigs or Corvettes in a forward state
 Seven Schooners } Number of Guns unknown
 Two Brigs } but all Armed & Manned

The Corvettes appear to be both as large as the *Queen Charlotte* but they are still in the inner harbour, not rigged or armed but from their resources being so near at hand I cannot reasonably expect they will be long in that situation

R H Barclay Sen Offr
 on Lake Erie

DS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 730, p. 31.

[Enclosure]

A Statement of the Force of His Majesty's Squadron employed on Lake Erie

Names	Guns	Calibres	Canadians	Newfoundland	41st Regiment
<i>Queen Charlotte</i>	18	24 Prs. Caronades	40	25	45
<i>Lady Prevost</i>	12	10, 12 prs. Cds. & 2 long 9s.	30	10	36
<i>Hunter</i>	6	4 long 6s & 2, 18 prs. Cds.	20	4	15
<i>Erie</i>	2	1 Traversing long 12 prs. & 1, 12 prs. Caronade	6	4	5
<i>Little Belt</i>	2	1 Do. long 9 prs. & 1, 24 pr. Cds.	6	4	5
* <i>Chippewa</i>	2	2, 8 Inch Howitzers	6	7	
<i>Detroit</i> —pierced for 20 but not yet launched					

*Left with Brigadier Genl. Procter

R H: Barclay Senr. Offr.
 on Lake Erie

DS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 730, p. 32.

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES TO MASTER COMMANDANT OLIVER H. PERRY

O. H. Perry Esqr.
Comg. Naval Officer
Erie.

Navy Department
July 3d. 1813.

Sir,

I have received your letters of the 19th. and 24th. with the papers therein referred to, and trust the moment is near at hand, when we shall have the command of both Lakes.

I have reason to believe, that Commodore Chauncey will, ere this, have despatched a reinforcement to you, as there are now, on the way to Sackett's Harbour, 500 Officers, Seamen and Marines, who will reach that place from the 7th to the 15th. Instant.

Commodore Chauncey will be ready to meet the enemy with his whole force, about the 15th. and I trust, under such advantages as will insure a complete victory, unless the enemy shall previously have taken shelter at Kingston.— But in any event, when the force above mentioned shall have arrived, he will detach a sufficient number of Officers and men to complete the crews of the whole force under your command. Presuming that you will have such information of the force and designs of the enemy as will enable you to appreciate the consequences of hazarding a contest before you receive reinforcements, and have the other sloop of war ready for action, the determination is submitted to your judgement and discretion.

The following is a quotation from my letter of this date, to Commodore Chauncey, which you will consider as an instruction to yourself.

"I have informed Capt Perry, that as the entire command was given to you, with the most perfect confidence, a very great degree of reluctance is felt by the Department, in interposing its authority; and nothing but the apprehension of suffering the enemy to escape, under circumstances so favourable for offensive operations on our part—the probability of his being reinforced—of the Ship at Malden being brought into action sooner than expected, and of delay, or adverse circumstances on the Lakes below, could induce me to anticipate your commands. I have therefore advised him, to weigh, with great caution, the probable issue of an attempt to meet the enemy as he proposes, and if, upon mature deliberation, he is clearly of opinion, that, (with the one Sloop and 9 smaller vessels, manned with 159 officers, Seamen and Marines, and 200 regular soldiers, and such volunteers as he can pick up,) he can succeed, in cutting off the enemy's squadron, he has my authority to make the attempt;—but, immediately on receipt of my order, to communicate with you, and if he shall receive your instructions to suspend the execution of the design, or to pursue any other course, that he will substitute your orders for those of the Department."

The testimony of the deserters from the *Charlotte* is highly probable, and there is a remarkable coincidence in their narratives; yet it must be received with caution, and compared with information from other sources. According to their account, the British Naval force in men cannot be above 220 or 30, which would give you, even without any further reinforcement, a decided superiority.

The consequences of cutting off, at once, his Naval force on Erie, would be incalculably great, and probably would be immediately followed by his abandonment



View of Amherstburg

of Malden, and the upper country; which would immediately induce the desertion of the Savages, and release a great part of General Harrison's army, which might immediately be transported, by our fleet, to Niagara, and produce a decisive blow in that quarter also. This is the bright side of the picture, and we must not forget to look at the reverse. Under all circumstances and with these precautionary admonitions, the President relies upon your prudence, skill, and enterprize, to determine upon, and execute that plan, which shall appear to you best adapted to advance the public cause, and, with it, your own reputation and honour.

The Secretary of War has allowed the 200 regulars to remain under your command, until you shall receive the reinforcement of Officers and Seamen, destined for your command.

One of the sloops of war, (the first ready) is to be called the "*Lawrence*," after our brave countryman, Captain James Lawrence, late of the United States Navy;—the other the *Niagara*.¹ I am, very respectfully, Your obedient Servant,

W. Jones

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, CLS, 1813, pp. 48–51.

1. The brigs *Lawrence* and *Niagara* were built at Presque Isle and launched in early June 1813.

The Capture of *Growler* and *Eagle* on Lake Champlain

The first naval action of the year on Lake Champlain ended badly for the Americans. With his flagship grounded and needing repairs, Lieutenant Thomas Macdonough sent his two other large vessels, the sloops Growler and Eagle, to patrol the line and try to control British gunboat activity. Lieutenant Sidney Smith, eager for action and ignoring the hazards of navigating in the narrow Richelieu River, proceeded farther north towards the British base at Isle aux Noix. The sloops encountered heavy fire from British row galleys and shore batteries, and in attempting to turn in the narrow river, ran aground and were captured. The loss was a serious one for the Americans: about one hundred men were made prisoners,¹ and Macdonough's fleet was reduced to only the crippled President and two small unmanned gunboats. The balance of power on the lake had shifted in favor of the British, who lost no time in planning to use it to their advantage.²

1. For the statement of Abraham Walter, pilot of *Growler*, on the treatment of the prisoners of war, see pp. 600–602.
2. *Everest*, War of 1812, pp. 108–10.

MAJOR GEORGE TAYLOR, BRITISH ARMY, TO
MAJOR GENERAL RICHARD STOVIN, BRITISH ARMY

Isle aux Noix 3 June 1813.

Sir,—

In the absence of Lieut. Col. Hamilton I have the honor to acquaint you that one of the Enemy's Armed Vessels was discerned from the Garrison at half past five o'clock this morning when I judged it expedient to order the three Gun Boats under way, and before they reached the point above the Garrison another Vessel ap-

peared in sight—when the Gun Boats commenced firing; observing the Vessels to be near enough the shore for Musquetry, I ordered the Crews of two Batteaux & row boat, which I took with me from the Garrison to act according to circumstances, to land on each side the River and to take a position to rake the Vessels. The firing was briskly kept up on both sides, (the enemy with small arms & grape shot occasionally)—near the close of the action an express came off to me in a Canoe with intelligence that more armed vessels were approaching and about three thousand men from the Enemy's Lines by Land, on this information I returned to put the Garrison in the best order for their reception, leaving directions with the Gun Boats & parties not to suffer their retreat to be cut off from it, and before I reached the Garrison the Enemy's Vessels struck their Colours after a well contested action of three hours & a half— They proved to be the United States Armed Vessels *Growler* & *Eagle*, burthens from 90 to 100 Tons & Carrying Eleven Guns each— between them 12 eighteen & 10 six Pounder Carronades, Completely equipped under the Orders of the Senior Officer of the *Growler* Captain Sydney Smith with a complement of Fifty Men each; they had one man killed & eight severely wounded— We had only three men wounded, one of them severely from the enemy's Grape Shot on the Parties on Shore— The alacrity of the Garrison on this occasion calls forth my warmest approbation, Ensigns Dawson, Gibbon & Humphreys & acting Qr. Masters Pilkington and Crews of the 100th (Prince Regents) Regiment and Lieutt. Low¹ of the Marine Department with three Gunners Royal Artillery to each Boat behaved with the greatest gallantry—and am particularly indebted to Capt. Gordon of the Royal Artillery and Lieut. Williams with the parties of the 100th. Regiment on Shore who materially contributed to the Surrender of the Enemy. The *Growler* is arrived at the Garrison in good order & apparently a fine Vessel, and the Boats are employed in getting off the *Eagle* which was run aground to prevent her sinking, I have hopes she will be saved, but in the mean time have had her dismantled, her Guns & Stores brought to the Garrison.—

Ensign Dawson of the 100th. Regt. a most intelligent officer will have the honor of delivering you this— I have the honor to be, Sir, Your Most Obedt. & Humble Servant

Geo. Taylor
Major 100th (Prince Regents)
Regt. & Lt. Col.

Names of Officers taken on board the United States armed vessels *Growler* and *Eagle* in action with His Majesty's Gun Boats &c off Hospital Island above Isle aux Noix 3d. June 1813—

Captains { Sydney Smith Comdg.
Jarius Loomis

Masters Mates { John Trambler
John Freeburn

Midshipmen { Walter Neil Monteith
Horace Sawyer

and

Captain Oliver Herricksen² } of the United
Ensign Washington Dennison } States Army.

Number of Men Killed, wounded and Prisoners onboard the United States armed vessells, *Growler & Eagle* 3d. June 1813.—

1 Killed—
8 Wounded severely
91 Prisoners—
100 Total—

Geo: Taylor
Major & Lt. Col.

LS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 679, pp. 10–11.

1. Lieutenant William Lowe, Provincial Marine.
2. Captain Oliver Herrick, U.S. Army.

LIEUTENANT THOMAS MACDONOUGH TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

U.S. Sloop *President* at anchor
Plattsburgh 4th. June 1813

Sir,

I am sorry to acquaint you with the loss of the U.S. sloops, *Growler* and *Eagle*, under the command of Lieut. Sidney Smith— those vessels were stationed in the vicinity of the lines to prevent smuggling and the enemys Gun Boats (or galleys) making excursions in our waters— I cannot give you the particulars of this unfortunate and unlooked for capture untill Lt. Smith states them to me, I shall then forward to you his statement—¹ I have the honor to be Sir your most obt. servt.

T. Macdonough

I should require for me to get, again, the command of this Lake two sloops in the place of those captured and they can be purchased here. I hear the comdr. of this section of the army is about purchasing them, of which I shall inform you as soon as I see, or hear from him—and three experienced Lieutenants, six midshipmen, three gunners, thirty seamen and seventy ordinary seamen— my guns are gone sir, and there is not a spare one on the Lake 18 pr Cannonades I think the best kind for these vessels, as they are light and carry a greater quantity of grape shot than long guns of about the same weight and it is likely they will be used principally against small vessels with many men exposed in them, or against sloops. I should require also one thousand cylanders² for the twenty guns which I calculate to mount on the two sloops ten on each one— I also request your permission to receive from the Navy Yard at New York such supplies of rigging as I may require.

I avail myself sir, of this opportunity to recommend Midshipman Joseph Smith of Massachusetts as a suitable person to command one of these sloops, he is old in the Navy has been much in the merchants service to India &c and in the capacity of Lieutenant I am confident you would not regret the appointment—

I shall not want either grape or round shot as I have those in abundance, and the cylinders I wish to be sent filled— I have the honor to be Sir your most obt. servt.

T. Macdonough

ALS, DNA, RG45, BC, 1813, Vol. 2, No. 110 (M148, Roll No. 11).

1. For this report, see Macdonough to Jones, 22 July 1813, pp. 515–16.
2. Cylinder (or canister) shot consisted of a cylindrical tin filled with ball shot which scattered on being fired.

MAJOR GENERAL FRANCIS DE ROTTENBURG, BRITISH ARMY, TO
MAJOR GENERAL GEORGE GLASGOW, BRITISH ARMY

Copy
Secret & Confidential

Hd. Qr. Montreal
5 June 1813

Sir

In consequence of our having succeeded in taking two of the Enemy's largest vessels on Lake Champlain, an opportunity now offers for destroying the whole of their naval force Boats &c on that Lake, and I wish you immediately to consult with the Senior Officer of the Navy now at Quebec, on the possibility of his allowing about 60 or even more of the best sailors with a proportion of officers for three vessels for that purpose—as it will be a business of but a few days, the Men may return in the Steam boat— I beg you will state to the Senior Captain that it is a thing of the greatest importance to this Country, and if effected would enable us to send troops in boats to any part of the Lake, and I am convinced he cannot object to sending them.— It must be done with the greatest secrecy, and the men informed & might be even given out, that they are to reinforce the Navy at Kingston;—but you will prior to taking any other ships, let me know the naval officers' opinion, as I would wish to make my arrangements here that they might leave this place in the night they arrive, and the distance being so short, they can be put on board, and set off immediately. I think if there are no objections a naval officer should be sent up immediateley (but in colored clothes) and not saying who he is, that he might not create suspicion to see what arrangements may be necessary. I have &c

(signed) F. de R.
M. Genl. Comg.

Copy, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 679, pp. 64–65.

MAJOR GENERAL GEORGE GLASGOW, BRITISH ARMY, TO
MAJOR GENERAL FRANCIS DE ROTTENBURG, BRITISH ARMY

Quebec Monday Evening 7th June
9 1/2 oCk

Sir,

I had the honor to receive your secret and confidential Letter of the 5th. Inst. by the Mail which arrived this evening at Eight oClock, and have given immediate attention to your wishes expressed in it. I have communicated with Capt.

Russell of H.M.S. *Cygnets* the Senior Officer of the Navy in port, upon the matter proposed by you, and I have received from him a ready acquiescence therein—I have also had Capt. Kempt the agent of Transports with me, who has offered a cooperation from his Department; Capt. Russell intends to furnish from the *Cygnets* for the particular service you require, One Lieut., two Midshipmen, two petty officers, and 30 Seamen, and Captain Kempt will supply from the Transports under his directions, One Lieut. of the Navy and seventy men, including mates who will act as petty officers—The whole of the above will take their departure from hence in their own boats, tomorrow evening for Montreal; Capt. Russell & Capt. Kempt have both handsomely made an offer of their services upon the occasion which I have accepted, and it is proposed that they will leave Quebec tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock, after having made the necessary arrangements for the departure of their men, and will proceed express in colored Clothes to Montreal, to communicate with you & to prepare for the arrival of their boats, which may probably reach Montreal, in a day or two after them.

Capt. Russell of the *Cygnets* has consented to spare his men for this Service from the assurance I have given him of an Embargo being laid upon all Vessels in the port from the 10th. Inst. & until further Orders, and for which purpose I must request you will give the necessary directions—I am the more urgent in requesting your compliance with this measure, there being but few vessels about to sail with the present Convoy on the 10th. and confident that the trade will not suffer in the least from the circumstances.—As the departure of the *Cygnets* & Convoy has been positively fixed for the 10th, from which no deviation should have been admitted by Capt. Russell but under the peculiar urgency of the case, & my promise to him of an embargo being laid on, I must beg to repeat my request that your instructions to this effect, may be sent off express, so as to reach Quebec if possible on the morning of the 10th, I have the honor to be Sir your most obedient humble servant

George Glasgow
Maj Genl.

LS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 679, pp. 66-69.

British Ascendancy on Lake Ontario

After Commodore Isaac Chauncey returned to Sackets Harbor from the Niagara campaign, he was reluctant to go out again until General Pike, which was partially burned during the British attack, was completed and he judged his force was superior to the enemy's. Chauncey adopted a slower and more cautious approach—"to put nothing at hazard"—rather than to risk losing his squadron in an engagement in which he did not have the upper hand. Chauncey remained at Sackets Harbor from 1 June until 21 July. In the interim, Yeo's squadron sailed Lake Ontario almost unchecked.

The British attacked Major General Henry Dearborn's encampment at Forty Mile Creek, captured valuable army stores at the Genesee River and at Sodus, threatened the American naval base at Oswego, and attempted a secret land attack on Sackets Harbor. Chauncey sent out some of his smaller schooners with some success: On 16 June, Lady of the Lake captured Lady Murray. Chauncey, however, refused to bring his fleet out, depriving Yeo of the opportunity to bring his opponent to action.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 38.

U.S. Ship *Madison*
Sackets Harbour 11th. June 1813.

Sir,

Ever since my return to this place I have kept one of the small vessels cruising between the Ducks and Kingston for the purpose of watching the movements of the enemy; and they have occasionally looked into Kingston when the wind was such as to do it with safety. The officer has always brought me word that he saw the enemy's fleet at anchor in the harbour, but within a few days we have picked up several canoes upon the Lake with people who said that they was deserters from the other side. These people reported that the enemy's fleet had gone up the lake with troops and a determination to risque the fate of the upper province upon the issue of a battle with me, but so many deserters coming over at this time created in my mind a suspicion that a part if not the whole of them had been employed by the enemy as spys and incendiarys, for the purpose of inducing me to leave the protection of the new ship and go in quest of the enemy, in order to renew their attack upon this place or burn the ship by means of incendiarys. I therefore kept all the deserters that came over, confined, and increased the guards around the ship to near 100 men every night.—a boat however arrived last evening from Niagara, the master of which reports that he saw the enemys fleet off Niagara on Monday the 7th Inst. beating in, and that the officers at the forts thought them to be the american squadron. He also reports that generals Chandler and Winder had been surprised and made prisoners of;¹ that a reinforcement had gone to the head of the Lake which had left Forts George and Niagara with not more than 200 men in each. If this mans statement should be correct and our officers should suffer themselves to be lulled into security from a belief that the fleet then beating in was American, I am apprehensive for the consequences. Immediately upon receiving this information, I prepared to proceed in quest of the enemy, but upon more mature reflection I have determined to remain at this place and preserve the new ship at all hazards. My feelings upon this occasion can better be immagined than described: on the one hand I had the prospect (if I succeeded against the enemy) of immortalizing myself; on the other hand if I was beaten, the loss and disappointment to my country would be great and irreparable.—the only question then was, whether I was to fight for my own agrandisement or that of my country? if the latter, there could be no question as to the course that I ought to pursue, which was to put nothing at hazard: for by remaining here four weeks I could prepare the new ship for service, and with her I should consider myself as having the complete and uncontroled command of this Lake; without her, the enemy has near a fourth more guns than I have, as many men and as good, and his officers are experienced and brave. With such a disparity of force I trust that you will approve of my determination of putting nothing at hazard untill the new ship is fited. I have the satisfaction of knowing that every commissioned officer on this station coincides with me in opinion as to the propriety of remaining in port untill we can fit the New Ship.

I shall use every exertion to have her got ready for service as soon as possible and I think that I shall be able to proceed with her upon the Lake on or before the 15th of July, provided her stores and men arrive in time. The burning of the public stores here on the 29th ulto. has been a serious misfortune independent of

the loss; for the detention of the new ship in consequence will be at least three weeks longer than it otherwise would have been. We however must remedy the evil by industry. I have infatuation that the canvass to replace the sails and canvass that was burnt, left Albany on the 8th., we may therefore look for it in about three or four days. A part of the guns has arrived at Oswego and other stores are coming on. I have a number of boats waiting at Oswego to receive the stores as they arrive, and officers stationed there to superintend their shipment. I have the honor to be Very Respectfully Sir your most obt. servt.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 4, No. 47 (M125, Roll No. 29).

1. Brigadier Generals John Chandler and William Winder were captured in the Battle of Stoney Creek, 5 June 1813.

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES TO COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY

(No. 22.)

Commodore Isaac Chauncey
Comg. the U.S. Naval forces
on the Lakes.

Navy Department
June 17th. 1813.

Sir,

In my last I mentioned the crew of the U.S. late Brig *Vixen*, as having been ordered on to join you, but some obstacle having intervened, in respect to their exchange, I am obliged to detain them in New York, until the difficulty is removed, in the meantime the residue of the crew of the *Alert*, and all that can be recruited, will be sent on to you, by Lieutenant Renshaw; and moreover, I have directed Commodore Bainbridge, to send on to you, with the utmost expedition, 120 of the crew of the U.S. Brig *Siren*, just arrived at Boston.

The moment is critical, and the issue of our contest, for the ascendancy on Lake Ontario, must ere this be decided; every thing that can inspire confidence, and rational hope, is on our side; the casualty and fortune of war, alone, can turn the scale against us. You have doubtless weighed well the chances, before you risked the encounter, as the addition of the New Ship *General Pike*, for which the greater part of a complete crew will have arrived before she was ready to take the Lake, would have ensured to you the decided superiority.

To have remained in port, and suffered the enemy to range the Lake unmolested, would have been mortifying; and perhaps would have frustrated our military operations, which appear to depend, essentially, for success upon our Naval support, and cooperation.

Of this I am persuaded, that whatever may be the issue, your determination has been governed by mature deliberation, and zealous devotion to the cause, and honour of our country.

With this conviction, and the most perfect confidence in your skill, vigilance, and intrepidity, I await the issue, which is to decide the fate of Upper Canada, and the future character of the War in which we are engaged. I am, very respectfully, your Obedient Servant,

W^m. Jones.

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, CLS, 1813, pp. 32-33.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 45.—

U.S. Ship *Madison*
Sackets' Harbor 18 June 1813.—

Sir,

On the 14th. Instant the Enemy sent a Flag over with six wounded prisoners. It struck me forcibly that his object was to ascertain whether our fleet was in or not and that he intended to send Troops and Stores up the Lake. I therefore determined to intercept them and for that purpose I directed Lt. Chauncey to proceed with the "*Lady of the Lake*" that night off Presqu' Isle and cruize close in with the Enemy's shore the better to enable him to cut any thing off from the Land that might be passing up or down. I also thought it possible that he might fall in with Generals Chandler & Winder on their way down to Kingston. On the 16th. Lieut. Chauncey fell in with and captured the Schooner *Lady Murray* from Kingston bound to York with an Ensign and 15 non commissioned officers and privates belonging to the 41st. and 104th. regiments, loaded with provisions, powder, Shot, and fixed ammunition. Lt. Chauncey arrived this Morning with his prize. I shall dispatch the "*Lady of the Lake*" immediately with the hope of intercepting some of their troops passing up.—

The prisoners report that the new Brig¹ at Kingston is launched, and will soon be upon the Lake. She is to carry 20 Guns. They also state that several Gun Boats are in a state of forwardness.—

I enclose herewith a List of the Prisoners.— I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir yr. ob. servant,

Isaac Chauncey

P.S. I enclose a copy of Lt. Chauncey's Letter to me.

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 4, No. 77 (M125, Roll No. 29). A copy of a letter from Lieutenant Wolcott Chauncey to Isaac Chauncey, dated 18 June 1813, was enclosed. Enclosure in DNA, RG45, AF7 (M625, Roll No. 76).

1. H.M. brig *Lord Melville*.

LIEUTENANT MELANCTHON T. WOOLSEY TO COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY

Copy

Oswego June 19, 1813 3 p.m.

Sir,

I have the honor to inform you that the British Squadron appeared off here this morning at 11 O'clock. They were in sight to the Westward at Daylight. We had been working all night and had nearly completed a battery on the Town side in which are mounted 2-18 pdrs. & 2-12s Brass guns. The Enemy stood in about noon but meeting with a pretty warm reception from the guns on shore and the *Crowler* moored across the river, hauled off. They are now lying too with their heads off shore just out of gunshot, and are embarking troops in 2 small schooners, and 4 Boats which have just joined them apparently from the Ducks. Whether they will attempt a landing this day or not, is uncertain. From the number apparently on board these vessels I am not uneasy about the event.

The Fleet consists of the *Wolfe*, *Royal George*, *Earl Moira*, *Prince regent*, *Simcoe*, one Gun Boat and a prize schooner lately taken by them at Genessee River with Mr. Hooker's goods on board. I have no doubt but that the boats which have just joined the fleet have been to the Ducks to land a part of the Booty with which their ships were deeply laden before they left Genessee River. The Stores for the Ship are by this time at the Falls. I shall, if nothing prevents, forward them to Big Stoney or Big Sandy Creeks there to wait your orders. If I can procure a Guard I will give directions to have an Express dispatched to you from either of the above mentioned places immediately on their arrival. We muster about 300 Regulars and 200 Militia: the latter so—not enough for a powerful invading foe. Mr. Montgomery carries this Express.

Copy, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 4, No. 93, enclosure (M125, Roll No. 29). This copy was enclosed in a letter from Commodore Isaac Chauncey to Secretary of the Navy Jones dated 21 June 1813.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO LIEUTENANT MELANCTHON T. WOOLSEY

M. T. Woolsey esqr.
commg. naval officer,
Oswego,

U.S. Ship *Madison*
S.H. 12 O Clock 20 June 1813

Yours by Mr. Montgomery I have this moment received and am extremely apprehensive that the enemy will be able to effect a landing & drive your little force from the batteries. If they should the consequences to us will be serious. I am persuaded that you are aware of the importance of preserving the *Growler* and the guns and rigging for the *Genl. Pike* and that they will not be given up without a struggle. At all events the *Growler* ought to be destroyed in preference to her falling into the Enemy's hands, and the stores for this place ought to be sent into the woods for safety until the enemy has left the coast, and then they may be sent along shore in boats taking advantage of Westerly winds.

Col Macomb has ordered major Duvall with 100 men to Oswego: others will be sent if the enemy has not already done the Mischief. I shall wait with impatience to hear again from you, remember that you have much at stake and that the fate of the campaign depends in a very great degree on your exertions to preserve the guns and stores for the *Genl. Pike*. With great respect I have &c.

Isaac Chauncey.—

LB Copy, MiU-C, Isaac Chauncey Letter Book.

LIEUTENANT MELANCTHON T. WOOLSEY TO COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY

Copy Oswego June 21, 1813. 8 o'clock p.m.—

Major Carr is about sending a dispatch to Sackets' Harbor and I avail myself of the opportunity to inform you that I have information from Mr. Vaughan at the Falls that there are 2 cables and 10 guns and their tackle at the upper land-

ing. A boat load of cordage has just come down and is now loading on board the *Gold Hunter*, as soon as she is loaded I shall send her with a strong guard to Sandy Creek. Under existing circumstances I dare not take upon myself to send her further than Sandy Creek. This express will supercede the necessity of sending an Express from that place after the arrival of the boat and I shall give Capt. Dominick orders to wait at Sandy Creek for your further orders.

The British Squadron landed yesterday morning a body of men at Great Sodus and burned it. I think this savage warfare calls for vengeance. A Dr. Baldwin and a Capt. Tappen have just got in here from Sodus which place they left about 11 O'Clock this morning, at that time the Fleet appeared to be about Pultney Ville. Mr Vaughan informs me that 3 more guns are on the way: how far back he does not know. I am busily employed building a Battery to mount 7 guns. This place is in a wretched state of defense. The Militia are all returning home, and between 2 and 300 regulars are by no means competent to defend it.—

Copy, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 4, No. 93, enclosure (M125, Roll No. 29). This copy was enclosed in a letter from Commodore Isaac Chauncey to Secretary of the Navy Jones dated 21 June 1813.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 52

U.S. Ship *Madison*
Sackets Harbor
24th June 1813

Sir,

I have been this day honored with your letter of the 14th inst. and am extremely flattered with your approbation.

Under existing Circumstances I have thought it advisable to be prepared to build another vessel. I have therefore directed Mr. Eckford to prepare the Materials to build a fast sailing schooner of about 250 Tons to mount 3 long 32 pounders. I prefer this kind of Vessel for the following reasons: First, we have nearly all the ~~Timber~~ Materials in the yard left from the new Ship: she can be sooner built; will cost less money; be more efficient, and lastly we have her Armament on the spot. This vessel will not be required if the enemy keeps the Lake until I get the *Genl. Pike* ready, for whenever the two Fleets meet upon the Lake the mastery will be decided and the Conqueror left without a Rival. I am only apprehensive that he may go into Kingston and wait there until all his force is ready in which case he would have the Superiority, for in addition to his present force he has a Brig nearly ready for service which will mount 18 to 20 guns and from 6 to 10 gunboats. I shall be able to ascertain in a few days whether it will be advisable to build another vessel or not. I shall however go on in preparing the materials so that she can be built in about 4 weeks if required. I am anxious not to create expense unnecessarily but at the same time endeavour to be prepared to meet any event.

In order not to alarm the Enemy I have circulated a Report (which is generally believed even amongst the Officers) that the *Genl. Pike* cannot be got ready before the first of August, and to give currency to that report I have directed

her cables and anchors to be kept above the Falls at Oswego and when I do go out I shall take two of the *Madison's* which will answer for the Cruise. all these reports are faithfully transmitted to the Enemy which I think will put him less on his guard. I shall not rig the *Genl. Pike* until I am perfectly ready to sail which I think I shall be on or before the 15th of next Month: at any rate I shall use every exertion to get ready as soon as possible. If the Seamen should not arrive in time I shall try and obtain a sufficient number of Soldiers to replace the Men taken from this ship and the other vessels to man the *General Pike*.— I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir yr. most ob. servt.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 4, No. 104 (M125, Roll No. 29).

COMMODORE SIR JAMES LUCAS YEO, R.N., TO
FIRST SECRETARY OF THE ADMIRALTY JOHN W. CROKER

No. 5

His Majesty's Ship *Wolfe*, at
Kingston, Upper Canada, the 29th. June 1813

Sir/

I have the Honor to inform you, for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that on the 3rd. Instant, I sailed with His Majesty's Squadron under my Command, from this Port, to co-operate with our Army at the Head of the Lake, and annoy the Enemy, by intercepting all supplies going to his Army, and thereby oblige his Squadron, to come out for its protection.

At day light on the 8th. the Enemys Camp was discovered close to us, at 40 Mile Creek, it being calm the large Vessels could not get in, but the *Beresford*, Captain Spilsbury, the *Sir Sidney Smith* Lieutenant Majoribanks, and the Gun Boats, under the orders of Lieutenant Anthony (first of this ship) succeeded in getting close under the Enemy's Batteries, and by a sharp and well directed fire, soon obliged him to make a precipitate Retreat, leaving all his Camp Equipage, Provisions, Stores &c. behind, which fell into our hands, the *Beresford*, also captured all his Bateaux, laden with Stores, &c., our Troops immediately occupied the Post, I then proceeded along shore to the Westward of the Enemys Camp, leaving our Army in his front, on the 13th. we captured two Schooners, and some Boats, going to the Enemy with Supplies, by them I received information, that there was a Depôt of Provisions, at Genesee River, I accordingly proceeded off that River, landed some Seamen, and Marines of the Squadron, and brought off all the Provisions found in the Government Stores, as also a sloop laden with Grain, for the Army, on the 19th. I anchored off the great Sodus, landed a party of the 1st. Regiment of Royal Scots, and took off six hundred Barrels of Flour, and Pork, which had arrived there for their Army. Yesterday I returned to this anchorage to Victual and Refit the Squadron. I have the Honor to be Sir/ your most obedient humble Servant

James Lucas Yeo Commodore

LS, UKLPR, Adm. 1/2736, pp. 110-12. Duplicate copy sent.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 54.

U.S. Ship *Madison*
Sackets' Harbor
3d. July 1813.

Sir,

At 6 o'clock on the evening of the 1st. inst. I received information by a deserter that Sir James Yeo, with 800 to 1000 picked men, was secreted in the woods in Chaumont Bay about 7 miles from this harbor: that he left Kingston the evening before with about 20 large Boats and landed in Chaumont Bay about daylight in the morning of the 1st. hawled all his Boats on shore and covered them with the Branches of Trees and kept their men close in the Woods. It was Sir James's intention to remain concealed all day and make a desperate attack upon the fleet the following night. The *Madison* was to be boarded by 400 picked men headed by Sir James himself, and the other vessels boarded at the same instant and carried at all hazards. The plan was well arranged, and if it had been attempted there would have been a dreadful slaughter on both sides. As soon as I was informed of the plan and situation of Sir James and his party, I made my arrangements so as to have ensured defeat to the Enemy, and I think, a total annihilation of his force. We remained at our quarters all night under the anxious expectation of an attack but day light appeared without hearing any thing from the Enemy. I immediately got under way with the whole Squadron and run outside of Point Peninsula in order to cut him off from Kingston if he should be still in his hiding place. I went on board of the *Lady of the Lake* and examined the whole shore from Grenadier Island round the West Shore of Chaumont Bay without being able to discover any Enemy or the signs of any Boats. I returned to the harbor about Sundown and anchored the Squadron as before and made the same preparations for defense. At about 8 o'clock two Seamen were brought in by the Guard Boats: they deserted from the Enemy the Evening before. They stated the force and arrangements to be the same as mentioned by the first Deserter: they also stated that they left their party about 8 o'clock the preceding evening at which time they were reembarking on board of their Boats for the purpose of returning to Kingston. The reason assigned by Sir James Yeo for relinquishing the Enterprize was that some person had just given him information from the Harbor that we knew of his being there, & that we were making preparations to cut him off, & what confirmed him in this belief was that two of our guard vessels were then cruising outside of him. He assured his party that the Enterprize was only relinquished for a few days, that he meant to return the first dark and stormy Night and had no doubt of complete success. These two men lay concealed in the woods until Sir James with his party put off, which was about 10 o'clock. This day 3 other Deserters have been brought in by the guard-boats: they corroborate the account given by the others in every particular.

We are prepared to receive Sir James whenever he may think proper to make so desperate an attack. I have 16 guns mounted upon the *General Pike* and the others have all arrived and will be mounted in a few days. Nearly the whole of the rigging has arrived and fitted: her sails nearly finished, and the other parts of her Armament will be here I presume in time. I have made arrangements with the Military commanding officer at this post to furnish me with a sufficient number of men from the Army (many of whom are sailors) to compleat the crew of the *Genl. Pike*, we therefore shall not be detained an hour for men, and you may depend

upon my exertions to get upon the Lake as soon as possible for it is mortifying beyond expression to be obliged to remain here while the Enemy is cruising. I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir yr. ob. servt.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 4, No. 147 (M125, Roll No. 29).

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO MAJOR GENERAL HENRY DEARBORN, U.S.A.

Major Genl.
H. Dearborn
commdr &c &c
Fort George

U.S. Ship *Genl. Pike*
12 July 1813.—

I was yesterday honored with your letter of the 1st. inst., and regret extremely to learn that you have met with any losses, particularly as the Enemy's force in that quarter is constantly augmenting.

The *Genl. Pike* is nearly ready, her guns are all mounted, her sails finished, and she has a full complement of men, and if the Enemy should be upon the Lake, I hope to leave here in 5 days; but if he should be in Kingston I shall remain here a few days longer in hopes to induce him to go out. It will however be out of my power consistent with my present arrangements to visit the upper part of the Lake with the fleet as long as the Enemy remains in this neighbourhood with so powerful a force, and as to taking any troops on board as long as the Enemy's force is superior in point of guns, I shd. deem it unsafe and impolitic, and might hazard the safety of the fleet, but as soon as Sir James and Myself have had a Meeting and the result should be what I expect it will be, I will transport troops to any point that you may wish.—

I am much pleased to hear that your health is re-established, and that you are again able to attend to the various and important duties of your command. I hope soon to have the pleasure of seeing you and that I shall have it in my power to say that we have no Enemy to contend with upon the Lake.— I have the honor to be with great regard and esteem Dr. Sir Yr. most ob. S.

Isaac Chauncey

LB Copy, MiU-C, Isaac Chauncey Letter Book.

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES TO COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY

(No. 27.)

Commodore Chauncey
Commanding the U.S.
Naval forces on the Lakes.

Navy Department
July 14th 1813.

Sir,

I have this day received your letters, Nos. 53, 54, 55, 56, & 57. No. 54 was under a cover, superscribed in the handwriting of Mr. Anderson, with the Albany Post-Mark of the 9th, and without seal, on either the letter or cover. The hazardous plans of the British commander, evince the desperation of his case,

and are characterized more by despair than marked by judgment. I suspect the most prominent feature in his character, is impetuosity, in English phraseology, "dashing". A knowledge of the personal character of our adversary is of material importance, and may often be turned to great advantage. It is highly probable their casual success, by boarding the *Chesapeake*, may have inflated their vanity, and prompted the adoption of that mode of attack.

I wish it may—an equal foe has nothing to apprehend on that score, and copious phlebotomy is the best cure for Knight Errantry. His plan, at Chaumont Bay, was "well arranged"; but marked with desperation. What prudent commander would have abandoned his fleet, and ventured upon a hostile shore, with 800 or a 1000 men, within 7 miles of a vigorous enemy, 4000 strong. What would have been his fate, had not his fears corrected his judgment, the only evidence of which, is, his retiring.

The moment is critical, and the suspense irksome; but a certainty of superiority, is vastly more important, than the lapse of a few days.

His object may be Sackett's Harbour, and it certainly would be more judicious to make a vigorous effort, to destroy you there, than to meet you with a superior force on the Lake, or by an expedition against Fort George, expose Kingston to the attack of your whole force, Naval and Military, in the absence of his fleet and 4000 of his troops, which, I have no doubt, you would avail yourself of.

Captain Crane would be with you, with 250 or 60 men, by the 10th. and by this time, I trust, you are ready to meet the enemy.¹

It is of vast importance to make an early movement on the Upper Lake, as a few men only, are wanting there, to give us immediate possession of the enemy's force on Erie, which delay may render more difficult. I find, by my letters from Mr. Harrison, that Captain Perry will be disappointed in his heavy anchor as the Agent at Pittsburg, in a late letter to Mr. H. says he is of opinion, "the anchors may yet be sent from Philadelphia, or New York, sooner than they can be had from Pittsburg." I hope Capt. Perry will not be detained on that account, but adopt some expedient, or substitute, to increase the weight, or number of his small anchors. I have, however immediately, ordered the anchors from Philadelphia, to be at Pittsburg, positively, in 15 days; and if you have any to spare, you had better send them up the Lake, to avoid uncertainty. My accounts from Capt. Perry are to the 2nd of July; the 2nd sloop of war would be ready in 3 weeks, from the 24th of June, I have directed the first, to be called, the *Lawrence*, the 2nd the *Niagara*.

You were perfectly correct in arresting Mr. Saml. Stacy, as a spy; and you will hold him, until the President shall direct the course to be pursued with him, which I will ascertain tomorrow. It is indeed time that traitors were brought to punishment.²

Tell Lieutenant Elliot, that I early represented his claims to remuneration, for the capture and destruction of the *Detroit*, and that Congress have voted to him, and his companions in that affair, \$12,000

When promotions are under consideration, the brave Officers of the Lakes will not be forgotten. I am, very respectfully, Your Obedt. Servant

W. Jones

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, CLS, 1813, pp. 51-53.

1. Master Commandant William M. Crane and the officers and crew of *John Adams* were ordered to the lakes on 26 June 1813. See Crane to Jones, 30 June 1813, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 78 (M147, Roll No. 5).

2. For the arrest of Samuel Stacy as a spy, see pp. 520-21.

COMMODORE SIR JAMES LUCAS YEO, R.N., TO
FIRST SECRETARY OF THE ADMIRALTY JOHN W. CROKER

No. 6

His Majesty's Ship *Wolfe*, at
Kingston, Upper Canada,
the 16th July 1813

Sir/

I have the Honor to transmit to you, for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, a detailed account of the Enemy's Naval Force on Lakes Ontario, Eire, and Champlain, as also that of His Majestys, by which their Lordships will perceive how inadequate the Force under my Command, is to meet them with any thing like an equal Force at every point, as the Officers, and Men, which come from England are scarcely sufficient to Man the Squadron on this Lake, I have therefore appointed Captain Barclay, and Finnis with three Lieutenants, (sent here by Admiral Sir John B. Warren) to the Vessels, on Lake Eire, and Captain Pring, to command the Naval Force on Lake Champlain, I have also judged it expedient to promote two Midshipmen, to the Rank of Lieutenant, to serve under that Officer.

I have ever since my arrival, been so much occupied in the equipment of the Squadron, and co-operating with the Army at the head of the Lake, that I have not had time or opportunity to communicate so fully to you, for their Lordships information, as I otherwise should have done.

I have used every device in my power, to induce the Enemy's Squadron to come out, before his new Ship was ready, but to no effect. I am sorry to say she is now manned and will be ready for Sea in a few days.

Our new Brig the *Melville*, will be Launched this Week, when the two Squadrons will be in as great force, as they can be for this Year, and immediately we are both ready a general Action must take place, as every Military operation or success, depends intirely on whoever can maintain the Naval superiority on this Lake.

I am happy to state that only one Seaman, has deserted to the Enemy, and their conduct in general has been orderly, and good, every reasonable, and proper, indulgence has been given them, to keep them in this temper, but the encouragement that is held out by the Agents, of the Enemy, of which there are many in this Province, may I fear seduce them in time.

With respect to the Payment of the Seamen, I am sorry to say that at present, it is absolutely out of my power to meet their Lordships wishes, the Provincial, or old, Marine have always been regularly paid every two Months, at the rate of 10 Dollars for Able seamen and 8 Dollars for Ordinary, and Landmen, per Month, most of the Men of the former Marine, are retained in the Squadron, I represented the business to His Excellency Sir George Prevost Bt. the Governor of the Canadas and also shewed him their Lordships Instructions, on that head, at the same time expressed my anxiety to adhere as close as possible to them. His Excellency was of Opinion it would be attended with the greatest danger, if not totally impracticable to make any alteration in the Payment of the Seamen, at this momentous crisis, and to make a distinction, between the new, and the old Marine, could not be done. I have therefore been obliged to yield to necessity, and what I feel I cannot take upon myself to alter.

I consequently trust their Lordships, seeing the peculiar state of the case, will approve of the steps I have taken, or furnish me with their further directions on

that subject, indeed it has been a task of infinite Labour, and perseverance, since my arrival, to throw the former arrangements, in some measure, into a system agreeably to the Rules of the Navy.

There is one more point I wish to draw the attention of their Lordships, which is the absolute necessity of sending out more grown up young Men, as Midshipmen, and Seamen, for even a Victory over the Enemy, would not enable us to maintain the superiority without a reinforcement, being sent immediately, as the Enemy from their Rivers, have every facility, and means, of obtaining whatever they stand in need of in a few days.

I beg leave further to state that, the Seamen will receive but one Months Wages out of every two that may become due, until they are six Months in Arrear, and enclose herewith a List of the Acting appointments, and Removals, of Commissioned Officers, between the 26th. of May and 16th of July 1813, and of Warrant Officers from 27th. May to this period—also an abstract of the Weekly Accounts of the Squadron, and have the Honor to be Sir/ your most obedient humble Servant

James Lucas Yeo Commodore

LS, UkLPR, Adm. 1/2736, pp. 116-118A.

Commodore Sir James Lucas Yeo, R.N.



[Enclosure]

A List of the American Naval Force on the Lakes in Canada the 15th July 1813

Place Where	Names	How Rigged	Guns		Carronades		Men	Remarks
			No.	Caliber	No.	Caliber		
Lake Ontario	<i>General Pike</i>	Ship	long 30	prs 24	"	"	300	new ship nearly ready for sea
	<i>Madison</i> <i>Onieda</i> Fourteen	Ship Brig	" "	" "	26 18	32 24		Fit for sea Fit for sea
Lake Erie	Two	Corvettes launched but not ready for Sea			18	32 prs		To mount each
Lake Champlain	<i>President</i> Two other	Schooners	18	"	"	"	"	Dont know of what caliber they are.
	Schooners and several Gun Boats They have also some larger vessels Building on this Lake but of what Force or Rig I have not been able to learn							

James Lucas Yeo Commodore

A List of His Majesty's Ships, and Vessels on the Lakes in Canada, 15th July 1813

[Enclosure]

Place Where	Ships or Vessels Names	How Rigged	Guns		Carronades		Men	Remarks
			No.	Caliber	No.	Caliber		
Lake Ontario	<i>Wolfe</i>	Ship	8	18	10	32	22	
	<i>Royal George</i>	Ship	2	18	4	68		
Lake Ontario	<i>Melville</i>	Brig	2	18	16	32	20	
	<i>Moira</i>		2	9	2	68		
Lake Ontario	<i>Beresford</i>	Schooner	"	"	12	32	14	14
	<i>Sir Sidney Smith</i> ¹	Schooner	"	"	12	18		
Lake Erie	<i>Detroit</i> ²	Ship	18	"	12	24	12	12
	<i>Queen Charlotte</i>	Ship	"	"	when launched	"		
Lake Erie	<i>Lady Prevost</i>	Schooner	2	6	16	24	14	
	<i>General Hunter</i> ³	Schooner	2	6	10	12		
Lake Champlain	<i>Chippewa</i> ⁴	Schooner	2	6	4	12	12	
	<i>Growler</i>	Sloop	2	"	2	12		
Lake Champlain	<i>Eagle</i>	Do	11	6	12	18	12	
	Four Gun Boats	Do	"	"	"	"		
Lake Champlain	Government	Schooner	4	6	1	24 each		

James Lucas Yeo Commodore

DS, UKLPR, Adm. 1/2736, p. 124.

- Sir Sidney Smith*, a schooner, was probably the former merchant schooner *Simcoe*, launched at Kingston in November 1806.
- Detroit*, a ship of 12 guns, was built at Malden in 1813; she was later captured by the Americans in the Battle of Lake Erie, 10 September 1813. An earlier *Detroit* (formerly U.S.S. *Adams*) was built at Detroit in July 1812, captured by the British in August of that year, recaptured by the Americans at Black Rock in October 1812, and burned to prevent recapture.
- General Hunter*, a 6-gun brig, was built at Malden in 1806 for the Provincial Marine; she was captured in the Battle of Lake Erie, 10 September 1813.
- Chippewa*, a 4-gun schooner, was formerly a merchant vessel.

Manning the Northern Lakes Fleets

As shipbuilding on Lakes Ontario and Erie progressed during the spring and summer of 1813, Commodore Isaac Chauncey requested more and more sailors to be transferred to the lakes to man the new vessels. Secretary of the Navy Jones, growing weary of these requests from Chauncey and pressed by the need for crews for other naval vessels as well as demands for protection of cities on the eastern seaboard, responded with a letter of reproach to Chauncey.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 31

U S Ship *Madison* Sacketts Harbour
June 4th. 1813—

Sir,

I beg to call your attention to the situation of the Naval forces upon the Lakes—I have under my command upon this Lake 14 vessels of every description mounting 82 Guns, well man'd & well appointed. The Enemy have seven vessels & 6 Gun Boats mounting 106 Guns, well Officer'd & man'd if he leaves Kingston I shall meet him The result may be doubtful but worth the trial—I should have prefer'd having the new Ship with me but the accident of the Fire has deprived me of her stores & sails; more over when she is ready we have not an officer or man to put on board of her, and she can be of no manner of use unless we have men—I had the Honour of addressing you on this subject last winter You informed me that the men could not be spared from the *John Adams* & *Alert* at New York but authorised me to open Rendezvous to recruit men for the Lakes I accordingly wrote to Commodres. Bainbridge & Hull requesting that they would open rendezvous at New Port, Boston, Salem & Portsmouth I have since been informed by Comre. Bainbridge that I must not calculate upon men being enter'd for the Lakes that he had not got more than 3 or 4—he however sent me 150 of the *Constitutions* crew otherwise we could not have man'd our present fleet. If men are not transfer'd from other Ships the Ship building at this place & which will be launch'd in six days cannot be man'd nor can the fleet upon Lake Erie be of any manner of use as the whole number of men upon that Lake does not exceed 120 and there will be required for the vessels upon that Lake 680 men. I had calculated to have finished my operations upon this lake before this time & then to have transfer'd the Officers & Men with myself to Lake Erie but as I have been much longer detained by the operations of the Army than I had contemplated, and the Enemy having made extraordinary exertions to encrease his force & he is now in such force as to render it improper for me to leave this lake for the present I presume that you will perceive the necessity of ordering a reinforcement both of Officers & Men as soon as possible. I hope that it will not be deem'd impertinent for me to suggest the propriety of ordering Capn. Morris with all his crew to this place. He would have as good a ship as he now commands and could in my opinion render more important services to his country than he possibly can in the Potomack. It will also I think be obvious to you that an Officer of a higher grade than a Lieut. ought to succeed me in Command in case of my Death or other accident. I trust that you will do me the justice to believe that I will do every

thing in my power to support the Honor and dignity of the American flag; yet I have not the temerity to believe that I can effect impossibilities, I cannot fight a ship without men— from the information which I have received this day I have every reason to believe that the Enemy will renew their attack in 5 or 6 days with augmented force. I can only assure you that the result will either make him completely master of this Lake or me—

I have deem'd this Communication of sufficient importance to dispatch acting Lieut. Dudley with it particularly as he is upon his parole and can be better spared than any other officer.¹ If his exchange can be effected I hope that he may be permitted to return. I refer you to him for a more detail'd account of our situation, force, preparations, & prospects—

You will find him an Officer of intelligence & great promise and I avail myself of this opportunity to recommend him to your notice & protection, he is deserving of both. I have the honour to be very Respectfully Sir your Most Obt. H. St.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 4, No. 14 (M125, Roll No. 29).

1. Acting Lieutenant James A. Dudley was captured on 13 April 1813 while shooting ducks on Strawberry Island, a place considered to be neutral ground by both British and American officers.

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES TO COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY

(No. 23)

Commodore Isaac Chauncey,
Commanding the U.S. Naval
Forces on the Lakes.

Navy Department,
June 26th. 1813.

Sir,

I have this instant received several of your letters and packets from the 10th. to the 18th. Inst. which shall be noticed in detail hereafter.

I have also received a letter of the 19th. from Capt. Perry, at Erie, with a statement of our own, and of the enemy's force on that Lake. Captain P. has 159 Officers, Seamen, and Marines; and requires to man the whole force completely 450 more; but says he will be equal to the enemy with less. You will perceive, by the enclosed copy, of my letter to Capt. Crane, that I have ordered himself, and the whole of the officers, and crew of the *John Adams* to join you instantly. Commodore Bainbridge is ordered to send you 120 of the *Syren's* crew. Captain Wainwright, with 100 Marines, are on their march to the eastward of this, to join you, Lieutenant Renshaw is recruiting rapidly in New York; and part of the *Vixen's* crew, will be exchanged, and sent on to you, in a few days. Thus you may detach, immediately, a part of your force to Captain Perry; and assuredly, any temporary deficiency can be made up from the Military, as the enemy does, and the less inconvenience will be felt on that account, as undoubtedly you will have the finest body of Seamen in America. You may arrange the commands among the several Officers, in such way, as you shall think, will best promote the public interest and private harmony. It will be proper, I presume, to give Captain Crane the command of the *Madison*, and Lieutenant Elliot one of the Brigs at Erie. If you find Lieut. Deacon, a supernumerary, you may send him back to New York, or Philadelphia.

The Sailing Masters you have mentioned, shall receive their warrants immediately. Captain Leonard, having been a long time under arrest, you will bring him to trial immediately. I am, respectfully, Your obedient Servant

W^m. Jones

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, CLS, 1813, pp. 37-39.

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES TO COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY

(No. 25)

Commodore Isaac Chauncey
Commanding Naval Officer
on the Lakes.

Navy Department
July 3d. 1813.

Sir,

I this day received your Nos. 50, 51, & 52,¹ and look with anxious solicitude for the completion of the *General Pike*, the issue of which, I trust, will accomplish the original design of the Campaign on Lake Ontario. The retarded operations of which, will materially affect our designs on the Upper Lakes.

As my letters will have assured you, of an ample force in men, before the *General Pike* would be ready for action, I trust you will have detached a sufficient number to complete the crews of at least one of the sloops of war, and all the other smaller vessels at Erie, with which Captain Perry would be decidedly superior to the whole of the enemy's force, and would be enabled to clear that lake, by the time you will be ready to decide the fate of Ontario.

In conformity to the original design of our Naval operations under your command, the power and the means afforded you, have been as unlimited, as the confidence of the President, in the prompt, vigorous, and skilful execution of the plans, submitted to your direction.

With this view, and to remove all doubt, or casualty, I have ordered the following Detachments of Officers, Seamen, and Marines, the whole of which are on their way, and will be with you, by the 7th. or 8th. Inst. except Capt. Wainwright with the Marines, who will reach the Harbour certainly by the 15th. viz.

From Boston	105 Officers and Seamen
Residue of the <i>Alert's</i> crew and recruits by Lieut Renshaw	} 90
Capt Crane and entire crew of the <i>John Adams</i>	
Capt Wainwright and Marines	} 110 495.

This force, united to that you now have on both Lakes, will, most assuredly, more than man the whole of the vessels on both Lakes, better than the same number and description of vessels, ever were in any service.

After your return from York, in taking a comparative view, of your own and the enemys force, you say that the whole of your squadron was perfectly well appointed and manned, but that you had not a man for the *General Pike*, subsequent to that period, Captain Sinclair and Lieutenants Trenchard & Bullus arrived with

80 men from the *Alert*, which would of course be applicable to the *General Pike*. But, Sir, whether you had men enough to man the *General Pike* or not, must depend upon a view of your aggregate number, distributed according to the best established rules of our service, among the several classes of our vessels comprising your squadron. According to this rule, you had sufficient to man the whole squadron, including the *General Pike*, and allowing 10 per Cent for the sick list.

Our vessels are better manned than those in any other service, both in numbers and quality. With the exception of the draught of men, brought up by Sir James Yeo, his crews were very indifferent, and you observe yourself, that his small vessels are "manned principally with soldiers," and although they are commanded by a Knight, and three Post Captains, I feel that the untitled republican Commodore, and his gallant and able officers, though not "Post Captains", have nothing to apprehend from the charm of a name, or the fortuitous circumstance of superior grade.

In corroboration of what I have said, in respect to your force in men, I would just observe, that your statement exhibits 274 officers and seamen, for the *Madison* of 24 Guns; when, upon a fair comparison with the *Wasp & Hornet*, 180 would be a full complement for the *Madison*, without taking into view the difference of distant service, manning of prizes, a long cruize, &c. Captain Crane, for instance, in the *John Adams*, (a heavier ship than the *Madison*.) manned for a two years cruize, in the fullest manner, 190 in number. I have no means of testing the accuracy of your information as to the enemy's force in men, but it is certainly very extraordinary, that the *Wolfe*, a corvette built ship, of 28 Guns, should have 300 men, the full complement of a British rated 38. The number is greatly superfluous, and would be a real injury to the service. It is, moreover, certainly known, that the number of Seamen, your informant has stated Sir James Yeo to have taken up with him, say 550, is greatly overrated. Wishing to possess correct and early information from Erie, and as the route through Sackett's Harbour is tedious and uncertain, I desired Captain Perry to communicate, direct to the Department, the state of the Public force on that lake, together with that of the enemy, and such other information as he may deem interesting to the Government. Under date of the 19th. Ulto. at Erie, he transmitted, to the Department, a statement of his force, and the number of Officers and men required to man the whole.

Viz.	2 Brigs 130 each	260
	4 Schooners 28 each	112
	1 small Brig, <i>Caledonia</i>	50
	3 Schooners } from Buffaloe	35 each
	1 Sloop	140
		562
	Deduct number here	159
	Wanting Officers & men	403

With a note, at foot, "I shall think myself equal to the enemy, with a smaller number than the above."

On the 24th of June, he says, "I have great pleasure in stating to you, Sir, that one of the sloops of war will be ready for service in a few days, provided the Bower Anchor, (which I hear is on the way,) and the shot arrive; the stream anchors having already arrived, I can make out with them and one Bower. I shall bend sails

day after tomorrow. I shall be ready to execute your orders, the moment a sufficiency of officers and men arrive, with one sloop of war, and 9 smaller vessels—the other sloop will be ready as soon as the anchors arrive from Pittsburg, which I hope will be in three weeks. I omitted, in my last of the 19th. (written under severe indisposition,) to mention, that General Dearborn had placed 200 troops under my command, to assist in navigating the vessels from Black Rock, and that they are now here, still on board the vessels, subject to my order. The *Queen Charlotte & Lady Prevost* were at anchor off Carradaway yesterday.

"I shall expect your orders, Sir, with great anxiety, as I am in hopes to intercept those vessels before their return to Malden. The communication from Sacketts Harbour, to this place, occupies nearly a month, which makes it very difficult to obtain orders from Com. Chauncey, in time to execute them with any advantage."

I enclose to you the examination of three deserters from the *Queen Charlotte*, received from Capt Perry, which, after due allowance for the source from which it is derived, is nearly corroborated by previous information; the substance you will find as follows.

Ship <i>Queen Charlotte</i>	14.	24 lb carronades & 3 long 12's	{ 2 Lieuts }	87 men
			{ 1 master }	
Sch. <i>Lady Prevost</i>	12.	18 lb. Do	-----	30
Sch. <i>Hunter</i>	8	Guns	----- supposed	30
<i>Chippeway</i>	4	Do (Capt. Perry's statement)	----- Do	25
2 Gun Boats	2	Do each and 25 men each	----- Do	50
		Guns 51 (as per original) ²		Men 222

"New ship 5 feet longer and 3 feet wider than the *Charlotte*, Deck not laid—would not be launched in less than a month—few carpenters—one, says Guns were ready, 24 pd carronades—Another, Guns were not ready, saw 4 or 5 24 pound Carronades at the Beach—Another does not think guns were provided."

In other respects there is a remarkable coincidence of testimony—5 feet longer would allow but two Guns more than the *Charlotte*.

I have informed Capt. Perry, that as the entire command was given to you, with the most perfect confidence, a very great degree of reluctance is felt, by the Department, in interposing its authority; and nothing but the apprehension of suffering the enemy to escape, under circumstances so favourable for offensive operations, on our part—the possibility of his being reinforced—of the Ship at Malden being brought into action sooner than expected and of delay, or adverse circumstances in the Lake below, could induce me to anticipate your commands. I have, therefore, advised him to weigh, with great caution, the probable issue of an attempt to meet the enemy as he proposes; and if, upon mature deliberation, he is clearly of opinion, that, (with the one sloop, and 9 smaller vessels, manned with 159 officers, Seamen and Marines, and 200 regular soldiers, and such volunteers as he can pick up,) he can succeed in cutting off the enemy's squadron, he has my authority to make the attempt—but, immediately on receipt of my order, to communicate with you, and if he shall receive your instructions, to suspend the execution of the design, or pursue any other course, that he will substitute your orders for those of the Department.

The President approves of the preparation you are making, for the encrease of our force, (and particularly of the nature of that force,) which he wishes to be carried into effect, with the least possible delay; as it is evident, that any Military advantage, must be succeeded by a retrograde and disastrous movement, unless supported by a decisive Naval superiority; and for this end, nothing shall be withheld, that the Government can command. I am, very respectfully, your Obedient Servt,

W. Jones

P.S. The Secretary at War, has directed, that the 200 regulars shall remain under the command of Capt. Perry, until the proper force shall join him.

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, CLS, 1813, pp. 41-47.

1. This letter was written in reply to Commodore Chauncey's letters No. 30 (29 May), No. 31 (4 June), and No. 32 (4 June). See pp. 480, 507-8 for the first two letters cited.

2. The number of guns stated here totals forty-five. The original statement provided with Perry's letter of 19 June 1813 was added incorrectly. See Perry's enclosure, "According to examination of Deserters 24 June 13 at Erie," in Perry to Jones, 19 June 1813, DNA, RG45, AF7. See also p. 485 for Robert H. Barclay's statement of the force of his squadron on Lake Erie on 29 June 1813.

American Setbacks on Lake Champlain

Following the capture of Growler and Eagle on 3 June 1813, Lieutenant Thomas Macdonough was forced to rebuild his fleet for the second time within a year. Secretary of the Navy Jones urged him to do everything he could to prevent the British from gaining superiority on the lake. Macdonough purchased two additional sloops, which were re-named Commodore Preble and Montgomery, and continued to rebuild his gunboats. Major General Wade Hampton, newly arrived on Lake Champlain, was amassing troops and provisions at Burlington for an intended assault on Canada in conjunction with Major General James Wilkinson's army.

While the American vessels were undergoing repairs and refitting, the British were making preparations for an amphibious assault on the shores of Lake Champlain in order to capture army provisions and to provide a diversion in favor of their troops in Upper Canada. Lieutenant Daniel Pring, senior naval officer at Isle aux Noix, Commander Thomas Everard, whose vessel was laid up in Quebec, and Lieutenant Colonel John Murray, military commandant at St. Johns, launched a joint assault that came to be known as Murray's Raid. From 29 July until 3 August, the British burned the military blockhouses, barracks, and storehouses at Plattsburg, Champlain, and Swanton; attempted to cannonade Macdonough's vessels at Burlington; and captured eight merchant ships, virtually all the private vessels on Lake Champlain. Macdonough could do little except utilize his ship guns and shore batteries to protect the American fleet, for his vessels were neither fully manned nor fitted out to meet the enemy.¹

1. Everest, War of 1812, pp. 115-19.

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES TO LIEUTENANT THOMAS MACDONOUGH

Lieut. Thos. McDonnough,
commanding the U.S. Naval forces
on Lake Champlain.

Navy Department
June 17th. 1813.

Sir,

I have received your letter, announcing the unfortunate disaster and loss of the two Sloops under the command of Lieutenant Smith, as it would appear by the imprudence of that officer, of which, however, you will enquire into, and report to me the result.

It now only remains, to regain by every possible exertion, the ascendancy which we have lost; for which purpose, you are authorized to purchase, arm, and equip, in an efficient manner, two of the best sloops, or other vessels to be procured on the Lake. I have written to Commodore Bainbridge, Commandant of the Navy Yard at Charlestown Massachusetts, to send on to you 20, 18 pounder carronades, if to be procured; and you are authorized to make such requisitions as the service may require, either on John Bullus Esqr. Navy Agent New York, and if not to be had there, upon Mr. Binney, the N. Agent at Boston, to whom, when you write, you will quote this authority. You are to understand, that upon no account are you to suffer the enemy to gain the ascendancy on Lake Champlain; and as you have now unlimited authority, to procure the necessary resources of men, materials, and munitions for that purpose, I rely upon your efficient and prudent use of the authority vested in you.

General Hampton,¹ an officer of talents and energy, is appointed to the military command on Lake Champlain, with whom you will heartily cooperate, in every measure calculated to promote the efficient objects of the War. But you are to observe, that the Naval command is exclusively vested in you, and for which you are held responsible.

General Hampton will afford you every assistance in the Quarter Master's Department, with Mechanics, Labourers, &c. and if you deem it necessary to construct 4 or 5 Barges, of 50 or 60 feet long, to carry a 12 or 18 pound carronade, you are at liberty so to do.

I shall order a Purser to your station immediately. I am very respectfully yours,

W^m. Jones

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, SNL, Vol. 10, pp. 469-70 (M149, Roll No. 10).

1. Major General Wade Hampton was appointed commander of the U.S. Army's Right Wing, Military District No. 9, which encompassed Lake Champlain; he arrived at Burlington, Vermont, on 3 July.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE PREVOST TO
MAJOR GENERAL GEORGE GLASGOW, BRITISH ARMY

Copy

Headquarters Kingston
4th July 1813

Sir

You will communicate to the Senior officer of H M Ships at Quebec my earnest desire that he should proceed promptly to St. Johns to take the Commd. of the

Vessels and Gun Boats on the Richelieu, bringing with him as many Officers and Seamen as he can possibly spare from his Ship, and obtain from the Transport and Merchant Service, for the purpose of Cruizing on Lake Champlain, with a just expectation of being enabled materially to annoy the Enemy on that Sheet of water, and if fortunate to destroy the remainder of their Shipping on it, and under all circumstances to create a powerfull diversion in favour of the Army in Upper Canada— I need not dwell with you on the importance of this Service to His Majesty's North American Provinces, if it is carried into effect with Zeal and Promptitude, nor do I entertain a doubt of either of these qualifications being displayed by the Officers of His Majesty's Navy, provided circumstances admit of the undertaking. You will not fail in taking such precautionary steps as shall preclude the possibility of delay or embarrassment in the execution of so highly important a Service as the one now entrusted to your arrangement and I trust you will find Major General Sir Roger Sheaffe fully prepared to perform that part in it which must devolve upon him—I have the honor to be, Sir, Your most obedient, humble Servant,

("Signed") George Prevost

Copy, UKLPR, Adm. 1/504, pp. 321-22. This copy was enclosed in a letter from Lieutenant Thomas Everard, R.N., to Admiral Sir John B. Warren, R.N., dated 21 July 1813.

LIEUTENANT THOMAS MACDONOUGH TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

Burlington July 11th. 1813—

Sir,

In obedience to your order of the 3d. inst. I have the honor to acquaint you with my proceedings in conformity with your order of the 17th June immediately on receipt of which I purchased a sloop and have so far prepared her that the Guns & Men can be taken on board in four days from to day. I have planned her to mount ten 18 pr. carronades and one long 18 pr. on a circle forward two such long 18 prs. I have now here, procured from the Army, the other one of these Guns I calculate to Mount on the other sloop in the same manner (on a circle) and shall prepare her likewise to carry ten 18 Pr. carronades. I consider that no time has been lost in not purchasing the second sloop yet, as I have been enabled to get on so much faster with the present one and have been employed getting in timber & other Materials to begin with the sloop to be purchased immediately, which I shall do and calculate to have her in readiness for her guns & Men in two weeks from this day I had another reason for defering the purchase of the second sloop as long as I could without causing any detention to the ultimate efficiency of the force to be equipped, which was the disappointment of getting the Guns from Boston which Commre. Bainbridge early advised me of, in consequence I was at a loss what guns to prepare for, in addition to which circumstance I was in hopes the owner of the vessell would fall to a reasonable price he asked me upwards of two thousand dollars more than the vessel is worth she is a sloop of about 90 Tons very flat consequently for that tonnage roomy on deck, I have offered him \$4000—& unless he accepts this price I shall take her tomorrow & have her value appreciated. I suppose the Navy Agent in New York will immediately inform me of the Guns to be sent me

no material difference will be necessary in the work of these sloops for mounting 18 pr. carronades or long twelves or nines. I shall consequently continue in the present manner of fitting them— Two of the Boats which I mentioned to you in reply to your order of the 17th June are completed—they carry each a long heavy 12 pr the other two are ready for their guns which are to come from the Army at this place as soon as I get a little more forward with the naval force to make it prudent to take them from the battery they are long 18 prs.—

I can equip the force contemplated on this lake sooner than I at first thought I could and were the officers & men now here I have little hesitation in saying we should have the ascendancy before the expiration of July— The officers I now have are three midshipmen one only of whom is acquainted with a vessel a surgeons mate—and fifty Men (the crew of the *President*) no purser has yet Sir, made his appearance and I, now more particularly feel the want of the services of that officer, his orders were I presume of the date of the surgeons mates, & he has been on a month, the duties of the purser of this station have been in some measure unavoidably unattended to & at present my attention to those duties is still more withdrawn—

I avail myself here to acknowledge the receipt of the regulations of the War & Navy Departments and am happy to find that my opinion on this subject has been correspondent thereto and that I have been so governed during my co operation with the Army with the exception (after the loss of the sloops) of having placed two Capts of the army with a suitable number of their men in the two Gun Boats subject to my orders, this should not have been done had I had officers & men of my own to man them, they have been as guard vessels & have prevented & taken quantities of smugglers goods I shall however Sir have these Boats moored near the *President* untill I can officer & man them myself which I hope will soon be the case. I have the honor to be Sir your most obt. servt.

T. Macdonough

ALS, DNA, RG45, BC, 1813, Vol. 3, No. 21 (M148, Roll No. 12).

LIEUTENANT THOMAS MACDONOUGH TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

Burlington July 22d. 1813—

Sir,

No officers to command the vessels preparing for Guns on Lake Champlain having yet come on, I am induced to suspect that I have not been full enough in stating to you the necessity of them— These vessels are now ready for their crews & in a few days ~~could mount~~ their Guns might be mounted some detention has been caused by Wet blowing weather there being no shelter here from heavy winds, which the lake is very subject to, I shall in order to have these vessels under proper regulations & efficient require a Lieutenant to command each—there will then be three Lieutenants; there should be six or eight Midshipmen, in the whole, to allow two or three to each vessel— John Bullus Esqr. Navy Agent has advised me of his having shipped my guns, their carriages &c complete, I expect them here by the day after to morrow, I shall use every exertion to have these vessels ready for service by the first of August— Genl. Hampton is extremely desirous, & anxious for me to have the command on the lake

as soon as possible; officers of Merit & talent he says have lately joined him but the command of the lake is necessary for a movement—

I have sir, received some particulars of the affair of the sloops on June 3d, by one of the pilots who was wounded, he states that on the 3d June at day break Lt. Smith made the signal to get under weigh to the *Eagle* (commanded by Sailing-Master Loomis who was attached to this station by the late Capt Ludlow) and follow his motions, that the pilots remonstrated against going over the lines with the wind from the southward, assuring Lt. Smith that if he went down with the wind as it then was he could not return he however stood down the lake to within two miles of the Isle aux Noix bringing the batteries plain in sight, then hauled his wind to beat back the Gun Boats then came up from the Isle aux Noix and attacked him (three in number) the enemy seeing that the vessels could not beat back against the tide, sent about three hundred men on the shores opposite to the vessels, the channel being about one hundred yards wide & the water about two hundred yards, the vessels were obliged to stand close in under the Musquetry on either shore in order to gather head way enough to tack. In this situation their running rigging was cut away which rendered them unmanageable & many men would have fallen on board the vessels had not the quarters been so thick that a musquet ball could not pass through, one 24 pr. shot struck the *Eagle* at the waters edge, she could not keep the hole long on the weather side having to make such short tacks, she filled & sank her deck under, Lt. Smith shortly after gave his vessel up Many of the enemy were killed & wounded but the number we shall never know— I have not heard a word from Lt Smith since his capture, I shall forward to you the statement he may make with his reasons for so doing

The purser has not yet made his appearance Sir, although he must be aware of the necessity of his services— I have the honor to be Sir, your most obt. sert.

T. Macdonough

ALS, DNA, RG45, BC, 1813, Vol. 3, No. 42 (M148, Roll No. 12).

MAJOR GENERAL SIR ROGER HALE SHEAFFE, BRITISH ARMY, TO
GOVERNOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE PREVOST

Montreal 25th. July 1813.

Sir,

I have the honour of informing Your Excellency that Captain Everard and some Officers and Seamen of the *Wasp* sloop of war, with other seamen from various sources, in all about eighty, arrived last evening—and proceeded early this morning for Isle aux Noix,—to which post the flank companies of the 13th. Regiment and of the 103rd. Regiment, and the Light Company of the Canadian Regiment, completed to eighty rank & File each, will follow tomorrow— the companies of the 13th Regiment having been removed to La Prairie before the arrival of the Seamen:—those Companies with a detachment of a hundred men from the 100th Regiment, and with the troops already attached to the Vessels and gun boats will form a Corps of nearly six hundred Men— it is proposed to add two three pounders to this force, and to employ it, with the cooperation of the flotilla, in destroying buildings and stores for warlike purposes, or vessels

and boats on the west shore of Lake Champlain; on which, our latest information states, there is no force capable of opposing such attempts: the Enemy's troops having been withdrawn from that side and concentrated at Burlington, where they are in too great strength, and in too populous a country for any attempt to be made against them, with the means we possess.—

I shall proceed tomorrow to Isle aux Noix.—

One of the three frigates armed in flute which were dispatched to the Mediterranean for the Regiment De Meuron has been reported in the River by telegraph.—

I believe that Wind Mill point is too low and sandy to afford a good position— I expect, however, more precise information respecting it, and shall forward it when obtained. I have the honour to be, With great respect, Your Excellency's, Most obedient, humble servant,

R H Sheaffe
M Genl. &c

LS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 730, pp. 67-70.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR LIEUTENANT COLONEL JOHN MURRAY, BRITISH ARMY

Instructions for Lieut. Colonel Murray Commanding a Corps to act on the Banks of Lake Champlain.

Isle aux Noix 27th of July 1813

As the force under your Command is not sufficient to justify an attempt on Burlington, where the Enemy has concentrated his troops, Armed vessels, Craft and Boats, and has his Depôt of Stores, the chief object of the movement to the Lake will be to create a diversion in favor of the Army in Upper Canada, by alarming the Enemy with his expectation of Attack and thereby checking the movement of reinforcements to their troops in that Province.

At the points on the Western side of the Lake from which the Enemy has lately withdrawn his Troops there are probably public buildings, if not stores for Military purposes— These may be destroyed, and likewise all Vessels Boats &c found along the shore which can aid the Enemy, but All private property, and the persons of the unarmed and inoffensive are to be respected, every care and precaution must be taken to preserve them inviolate, for which purpose in case of disembarkation the vigilance of the officers will be particularly required to prevent straggling

It is expected that the Naval Armament and the Troops will act in concert, so that they shall at all times be ready to aid and support each other

The operations are to be confined to the banks of the Lake, and are not to be extended higher than Platsburg, unless it be ascertained that an important object can be effected at no great distance above it and without incurring a risk of consequences which would render it imprudent; if any of the Enemy troops be taken they are to be brought away to be sent to Quebec

The preservation of silence, good order and subordination especially in disembarkation, acting on shore, or in reembarking, the security of the Boats, Arms, Ammunition and provisions are objects which will require peculiar attention, in aid of which much will be effected by insisting on a strict adherence to

the order assigned to the Batteaux, and to the distribution of the Men, and of the several Articles in the Boats originally allotted to them.

In proceeding up the Lake, and in returning, reconnoissances are to be made to discover if the Enemy has collected a force to oppose, or has established a Battery at any point from which he may be able to annoy you

You will of course consult with Captain Everard on the operations, and concert with Him the plan of execution

In the conduct of the Service intrusted to you, I have chiefly to recommend caution, it is an important Military quality in such situations as those in which you are likely to be placed; you will avail yourself of all opportunities of obtaining information, and have Notes taken of whatever may deserve it, to be communicated to me as early as practicable, with reports of your movements, and of all interesting occurrences

The Expedition will of course return at the expiration of the period assigned for our enjoying the benefit of the aid and cooperation of Captn. Everard, his officers and Seamen, and even earlier if its remaining on the Lake will no longer promise any advantage to His Majestys Service

D, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 679, pp. 291-93. Enclosed in a letter from Major General Sir Roger Hale Sheaffe, British Army, to Governor-General Sir George Prevost.

MASTER COMMANDANT THOMAS MACDONOUGH¹ TO
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

Burlington August 3d 1813

Sir

I regret having to inform you that the enemy after having been a short time within our waters made their appearance off this place yesterday Morning with two sloops and a galley and soon after commenced firing on the shipping and Batteries which they continued for a short time, the Vessels being moored with springs on, acting on the defensive, opened upon them in concert with the batteries, when they hauled off and stood to the southward— they have taken two small craft one of which they burnt last night the other I suppose they will mount a gun on, My unfinished state in point of officers to command the two vessels lately fitted (with few exceptions) prevented my not meeting the enemy, I have Sir but one officer & he a Midn. with whom I could trust the Command of one of these vessels on an occasion of less importance than the one of yesterday— The enemy have very lately received a reinforcement of seamen from Quebec. I have in consequence requested Capt Evans to send me on fifty more men with the two Lieutenants to command the two new vessels ~~and those~~ and this additional number of men the enemy cannot keep within our waters, I should consider this force sufficient to command the lake which Genl. Hampton is very desirous should be obtained— I have the honor to be Sir your most obt. Sert.

T. Macdonough

ALS, DNA, RG45, BC, 1813, Vol. 3, No. 66 (M148, Roll No. 12).

1. Thomas Macdonough was promoted to master commandant on 24 July 1813.

COMMANDER THOMAS EVERARD, R.N., TO
GOVERNOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE PREVOST

H M. Sloop *Broke*¹ Augst. 3rd
Lake Champlain

Sir,

Major General Glasgow has apprized your Excellency of my repairing with a party of Officers and Seamen to man the Sloops and Gun boats at the Isle aux Noix, in consequence of your Letter of the 4th ult. addressed to the senior Officer of H M ships at Quebec, stating it to be of great importance to the public service that an attempt should be made to alarm the Enemy on the Montreal frontier &c— And agreeable to your wish that I should communicate any thing interesting that might occur, I have the honour to acquaint you that the object for which the corps under the command of Lt. Cl. Murray had been detached having been fully accomplished by the destruction of the Enemy's Blockhouse, Arsenal, Barracks and public Store-houses at Plattsburgh, and the Troops having embarked on the 1st Inst. to return, there being neither public buildings nor store-houses remaining on the West side of the Lake beyond Plattsburgh, I stood over to Burlington with the *Shannon* and one Gun-Boat to observe the state of the Enemy's force there, and to afford him an opportunity of deciding the naval superiority on the Lake. We were close in on the fore-noon of the 2nd and found two Sloops of about 100 Tons burthen, one armed with eleven Guns, the other with thirteen, ready for Sea, a third Sloop (somewhat larger) fitting out, with guns on board and 2 Gun Schooners laying under the protection of ten Guns mounted on a bank of 100 feet high without a breast work. Two scows mounting one Gun each as floating Batteries, and several field pieces on the shore— Having captured and destroyed four Vessels, without any attempt on the part of the Enemy's armed Vessels to prevent it, and seeing no prospect of inducing him to quit his position, where it was impossible for us to attack him, I am now returning to execute my original orders—

There were several Barracks and store-houses (one not yet finished) erected on the high Bank in the Rear of the Guns, a small wood immediately behind these buildings, and in the rear of it (the wood) an Encampment of some Extent, the whole would probably contain 5000 Men. I could not ascertain the amount of their military force, but it appeared about the strength that we had been led to expect. No satisfactory account could be collected from the Prisoners. The statement of the sea-defence is I believe accurate, as the Sloops and Gun Boat were swept within shot in order to attract their fire. I beg leave to add that the best place for effecting a Landing appears to me to be on the North side of the Town nearly two Miles from the Camp and Battery. The alarm occasioned by the appearance of a military force on the shores of the Lake appears to have been very general, our Boats were 20 Miles above Burlington in the night & heard Musketry and Drums on both Sides of the Lake I have the honor to be Your Excellency's most obedient & very Humble Servant

Thos: Everard
Commander, HMS *Wasp*

LS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 679, pp. 340-42.

1. The U.S. sloop *Eagle*, captured by the British at Isle aux Noix on 3 June 1813, was taken into British service under the name of *Broke*; she was later renamed *Finch*. The former U.S. sloop *Crowler* was given the name *Shannon*; she was later renamed *Chub*. Both vessels were used in Murray's raid on Lake Champlain.

MASTER COMMANDANT THOMAS MACDONOUGH TO
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

Burlington August 14th. 1813

Sir,

I have the honor to inform you that I have received my commission as Master-commandant in the Navy of the United States, to assure you that this preferment is highly gratifying to me and that it shall be my duty and ambition to merit the confidence you have placed in me—

Lieut. George Pearce has this day joined me and taken command of one of the sloops, Mr. Horace F. Marcelin acting Master has also joined me— George Beale purser has not yet come on—

Those sloops are now completed, and with the additional number of men, (one hundred) whom I have required of Capt. Evans at New York, for them and the ~~other~~ smaller craft, I shall have the ascendancy on the lake— The enemy have fitted out two small sloops in addition to those they before had, making in all four sloops, three galleys & two Gun Boats in consequence of this late augmentation of their force I have purchased another sloop of about fifty tons to carry four twelves and one eighteen pr. I have also anticipated your permission and have taken the masts out of our two Gun-Boats, which Boats from their rig and construction would only carry a light twelve pr. and have fitted them with thirty oars each & to carry a long twenty-four, but not having such guns here they are completed with an eighteen pr. on each— From the last accounts of the enemy they are preparing all their force, which, when completed I shall endeavour to keep within their own waters thereby prevent all annoyance ~~to~~ of the movements of the army—and aid its movements when the comng. Genl. may wish— I have the honor to be Sir your most obt. Sert.

T. Macdonough

ALS, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 106 (M147, Roll No. 5).

Espionage on the Lakes

Loyalties of those who resided along the Canadian-American border were divided during the War of 1812. Most families had relatives or business acquaintances along both sides of the line. The Saint Lawrence River and the Great Lakes served not as a barrier but as a route for communication and exchange between similar peoples. An illicit trade in provisions and military intelligence developed on both sides of the border.

The cases of two men, Samuel Stacy and Peter Hogeboom, shed some light on such clandestine activities. Stacy, a citizen of New York, was arrested in July by Commodore Isaac Chauncey. He was suspected of providing intelligence of American troop and fleet movements that allowed the British to attack the lightly guarded base at Sackets Harbor on 29 May during the absence of the American fleet. Hogeboom, a Dutchman who resided in the Canadian provinces and had relatives on the American side, presented a detailed proposal to the British commanders on how he could provide information on American military activities. Hogeboom apparently had second thoughts about the matter, for he recanted his offer shortly after.

Accurate information regarding enemy strength and movements could be invaluable in a closely matched contest. Both British and American officers denounced spies as traitors

to their country; at the same time, however, they continued to make good use of the information such persons provided.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 55.—

U.S. Ship *Madison*
Sackets' Harbor
4th. July 1813.—

Sir,

On the 1st. inst. I caused a Mr. Saml. Stacy to be apprehended as a spy. Mr. Stacy lives upon the St. Lawrence a few miles below Ogdensburgh, and I have the most positive information that he has been in the habit of conveying information to the Enemy for many Months. He visited this place a few days before the British made the attack on the 29th. of May, and I have no doubt but that he is the person that gave them information that most of the Troops had been sent to Niagara. I had information from the person that I employ on the other side that this man would visit the Harbor about the last of June: He was accordingly watched. When he left Ogdensburgh he said that he was going to Utica upon important business. He told others that he was going into the Western Country to collect Money, instead of which he came to the Harbor without any ostensible business and made a great many inquiries respecting the Fleet—when they would sail—and the force of the new Ship &c. &c. &c.; I therefore thought it my duty to detain this Man for trial. I can prove his frequent intercourse with the Enemy, at any rate I shall deprive the Enemy of the information which he would have conveyed to him which is all important at this time.—

It would be very desirable to hang this Traitor to his country—as he is considered respectable in the country in which he lives and I think that it is full time to make an example of some of our Countrymen who are so base, and degenerate as to betray their country by becoming the Spies & Informers of our Enemy. I hope the Steps which I have taken with respect to Mr. Stacy will meet with your approbation.—¹ I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir yr. ob. sert.

Isaac Chauncey

DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 4, No. 152 (M125, Roll No. 29).

1. Secretary of War John Armstrong gave orders on 26 July 1813 that Mr. Stacy be released, "on the ground that a citizen cannot be considered as a spy." See John Armstrong to Joseph Anderson, *ASP: Military Affairs*, Vol. 1, p. 384. Stacy was released and later applied to the British for aid; it is not known if he ever received any assistance from the Canadian government following his release. See Hitsman, "Spying."

LIEUTENANT COLONEL JOHN HARVEY, BRITISH ARMY, TO
COLONEL EDWARD BAYNES, BRITISH ARMY

Secret

Head Qr. St. Davids
23d July 1813—

My dear Col.

I am desired to enclose to you a Letter containing a Proposal the object of which without explanation you may be puzzled exactly to make out— Mr. Hogeboom is (as his name implies) a Dutchman, who has been long resident in this Country engaged in trade with Colonel Clarke of Chippeway who has the highest opinion of his in-

tegrity and attachment to the British Govt— The Mercantile connexion betwixt them is dissolved (by the circumstance of the times) and Mr. Hogeboom is disposable in any way that may best promote his personal advantage of which it is not the practice of his Nation to lose sight— Mr H's family is now and has long been resident in the States and he has taken it into his Head that by passing there himself he might be useful to us as a secret agent— of his zeal & fidelity I feel no doubt but of his talents the specimen which his Epistle affords is not quite so satisfactory—

His demand appears most exorbitant *prima facie* though if the important service he is inclined to undertake was really well executed no Price would be too great to pay for it—

In the event of his Proposal being declined his Plan is I understand to fix himself in trade in Lower Canada—

Clarke advances him money I am my Dr Col. yours

J Harvey

LS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 679, pp. 275-77.

PETER HOGEBOOM TO MAJOR GENERAL FRANCIS DE ROTTENBURG, BRITISH ARMY

Niagara Falls 23rd. July 1813—

Sir

agreeable to your request, I have make a statement, on the subject of asstablishing a line of intelligence Between lake Erie & Lake Ontario, and else where as circumstances will admit, & Also, as I have some particular friend in the neighborhood of Sackets Harbor. at the same time after black a person in the vicinit of that place to communicate, intelligence of over to Kingston or some place in that Quarter,—Particular Persons & places to be asstablished on the lines on this side, this of corse will be the Duty of the Commanders to whom the communication is to be made, at either of the places The mode to be persued on the Enemy's side to convey the intelligence, of course must be to the person engaged, one a week if practable and on particular occation oftener if circumstances will admit, the expense of hiring person to bring over the Dispatches, will be a separate Charge, the person Employed of corse will do his endeavour to get their person upon the best possible terms— From the nature of this Business matter may Transpire, ~~that~~ ~~the Commander~~ that communication could not at times be made once a week, in such cases, the person engaged will be the best Judge, of corse he will do his best endeavour to send them as soon as may be, at the same time all such News Papers as can be got from various parts of the U.S. will be sent over, the Politicks of the U.S. will be communicated as far as the person employed will be Capable, of Doing— And if it should so happen that the Commander in Chief should have occation to send Dispatces over land to the Sea Board or to N. York, such matters also will be attended too, but of corse will be a separate Charge— the sum that will be Required for 12 Months will be five Thousand Dollars \$2000 to be advanced, in order to Commence the Opperation,—

If any thing should farther occur to your mind you will be pleased to Communicate the same I am Sir Yrs. with Due Respect

Peter Hogeboom

ALS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 679, pp. 279-80.

PETER HOGEBOOM TO MAJOR GENERAL FRANCIS DE ROTTENBURG, BRITISH ARMY

Sir

Upon reflection I have concluded to Decline the matter on which we have had some conversation, as I told you I had not the Idea of the Extent &c. I you will pardon me for the trouble his Exclency has been put to, as well as your Self— I am yrs. with Due Respect

Peter Hogeboom

ALS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 679, p. 278.

An American Privateer Action on the Saint Lawrence

In the early morning hours of 19 July, Neptune and Fox, privateers from Sackets Harbor, captured the British gunboat Spitfire on the Saint Lawrence River along with her convoy of fifteen batteaux loaded with provisions for the British army. It was a daring feat. Since the capture of Ogdensburg in February, the Saint Lawrence had been in British control, heavily guarded from Prescott on the north and Kingston on the south. The privateer captains managed to repel an attack by four additional British gunboats and then slipped out of the river past the eighteen-gun brig Earl of Moira.

An anonymous letter, published in the Buffalo Gazette, provides an amusing account of the action, but also expresses the outrage felt by many citizens of the area against recent depredations committed by the British against American villages on the lake shore.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 66.

U.S. Ship *Genl. Pike*
Sackets' Harbor
21st July 1813.

Sir,

Yesterday I received information that two Boats from this place fitted as privateers had succeeded in surprizing and capturing 1 gun boat and 15 batteaux with stores on their way up the St. Lawrence.

I immediately dispatched the *Governor Tompkins*, *Conquest* and *Fair American* to cruise between Grenadier Island and the mouth of the River, in order to afford the privateers and their prizes protection to this harbor. This morning I directed Captain Crane in the *Madison*, to weigh and proceed with the remaining parts of the Squadron off Grenadier Island and cruise between that Island and the Ducks until I joined him, keeping up a communication by Signal with the *Genl. Pike*.—

I shall leave here this evening or tomorrow morning. I have been detained thus long for the purpose of fitting my guns completely.—

We still continue to be very sickly. Capt. Sinclair and every Lieutenant of this Ship but one, are sick, and we have 60 of the crew upon the Sick List. I hope, however, that when we get upon the open Lake, the Sick List will be very much diminished. I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir yr. ob. servt.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 5, No. 24 (M125, Roll No. 30).

AN ACCOUNT OF THE AMERICAN PRIVATEERS *NEPTUNE* AND *FOX*

From the *Ulrica Patriot*.

The following detailed account, (on the correctness of which we fully rely,) of the capture of the British boats, mentioned in our last, we extract from a letter received last evening from a gentleman at Sacket's Harbor, to his friend in this village, dated

July 28, 1813.

Dear Sir— On the 27th inst. arrived the privateer *Neptune*, carrying a 6-pr. and the *Fox*, an 18-pr. commanded by Major Dimock, and Captain Dixon, from a cruise to the St. Lawrence. On the 19th inst. at 4 o'clock A.M. they surprised and captured the British Gun Boat *Spit Fire*, mounting one 12-lb. carronade, and 15 Canadian batteaux, loaded with provisions, on their way up the St. Lawrence. The surprise was so complete and well arranged, that not a single shot was fired, or life lost on either side. The batteaux were laden with 27,000 wt. of sea bread, and 270 barrels of Irish pork, intended for the British army at Kingston. Our privateersmen retired into Cranberry Creek, where, having erected a breast work of the captured barrels of pork and hard bread, on the 21st, at sunrise, were attacked by four gunboats, mounting two 32-prs. one 9-pr. and a 6-pounder, and carrying from 250 to 300 men. The attack continued about two hours, when the enemy retired with considerable loss, and were pursued some distance. Our loss was but 3 killed, and 1 wounded. However, just before this, with a view, if possible, to succeed by menaces, or if not, to cover their retreat, they sent in a flag demanding a surrender of the PORK-and-BREAD FORT; and threatened, in case of a refusal, to bring up a reinforcement, let loose their Indians upon them, & that no quarter should be given! Maj. Dimock replied, that they should not surrender but at the point of the bayonet, and indignantly ordered off the officer requiring the surrender. The enemy's loss must have been considerable, as our men were well entrenched behind the *substantials of life*, and had a fair opportunity of dealing out a full measure of *death* to their antagonists. This is evidenced also by the precipitate retreat of the enemy. The number of men engaged on our part did not exceed 60. Upon coming out of the St. Lawrence, on their return to this place, they had a new and more formidable enemy to contend with. The British brig *Earl of Moira*, of 18 guns was purposely stationed to intercept their return. They nevertheless, by making a vigorous and daring effort, passed her without much injury. The *Fox*, Captain Dixon, who brought up the rear, passed within half musket shot of the brig: 3 9 pound shot struck the *Fox*, one of which passed through her magazine, but without any essential injury.

This expedition reflect much honor, upon the officers commanded and the men engaged in it. It was fitted out by, and composed chiefly of volunteers who have been injured by the depredations of the British. It was to be hoped that the war, upon this part of the frontier at least, would have been conducted according to the rules of civilized warfare: and that accordingly private property would be respected. But flushed with a temporary success, the British have committed repeated acts of wanton destruction and capture of the property of individuals. This experiment will convince them that it is no longer to be continued with impunity; & that a spirit of retaliation is arising, which, if it does no more, will at least check their career, and make full amends for the past as well as indemnity for the future.

A cannonade was heard in the direction of Presque Isle, (situate about midway on the north shore of the lake,) 2 days since, supposed to be an attempt of our fleet to destroy a large ship building there.

Buffalo Gazette, 10 August 1813.

Second Assault on York, 30 July 1813

Commodore Isaac Chauncey sailed from Sackets Harbor on 21 July with his new flagship General Pike, 26, and twelve other vessels in expectation of meeting the British squadron on the lake. When he did not find his opponent, Chauncey, in conjunction with Brigadier General John P. Boyd, planned an amphibious attack on a cache of provisions near Burlington Bay. Six hundred American soldiers, sailors, and marines advanced on shore on 30 July but quickly withdrew when they learned that a large reinforcement from York had arrived and the depot was well defended.

Chauncey's fleet then sailed for York. The Americans landed and captured or destroyed provisions and supplies and set fire to the barracks and storehouses. The loss of flour and provisions would later cause a critical shortage of food for General Henry Procter's army on Lake Erie and would be a factor in Lieutenant Robert H. Barclay's sailing to meet Perry's fleet. After leaving York, Chauncey returned to Niagara, where he sent on eleven officers and one hundred men to join Perry's squadron at Erie.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO
BRIGADIER GENERAL JOHN P. BOYD, U.S.A.¹

Brigadier General
John P. Boyd
commg. the forces of the U States
at Fort George & its vicinity

U.S. Ship Genl. Pike
Lake Ontario 24 July 1813

Sir

I was this day honored with your Letter of the 21 inst. by S. Master Mix and as I required the *Lady of the Lake* for special service I sent the prisoners to Sacketts Harbor in the *Raven*.—²

I am now on my way to show myself off Fort George, but as I find by your Letter that the Enemy has a deposit of Stores at the head of the Lake I think that it may be an object to make a push for them without alarming him and giving time to collect a force to defend them—I have therefore determined to run for the head of the Lake without stopping at Fort George, I in consequence take the liberty of requesting you to send by the *Lady of the Lake* the best guides that you can procure to direct us to the deposit of stores &c &c I think that this movement of mine will have the effect of alarming the Enemy so that he will break up at Ten Mile Creek and retreat towards the Forty Mile Creek where if I had a force to meet him he would be in a perilous situation.

I hope to be with you on or before the 1st. I have the honor to be, very resp. Sir Yr. ob st.

I. C.—

LB Copy, MiU-C, Isaac Chauncey Letter Book.

1. Brigadier General John P. Boyd succeeded Morgan Lewis as commander of Fort George.
2. *Raven*, a one-gun schooner purchased by the Navy Department on 6 February 1813, was used as a transport and supply vessel.

JOHN STRACHAN¹ AND GRANT POWELL,² TO
COLONEL EDWARD BAYNES, BRITISH ARMY

York 2 August 1813.

Sir

We beg leave to state for the information of his Excellency The Governor General, that about eleven o'clock on Saturday morning, the enemy's fleet consisting of twelve Sail were seen standing for this harbour. Almost all the Gentlemen of the town having retired, we proceeded to the garrison about two o'clock, and waited till half past three when the *Pyke*, the *Madison* & *Oneida*, came to anchor in the Offing, and the Schooners continued to press up the harbour with their sweeps, as the wind had become light—three coming too abreast of the town, the remainder near the Garrison. About four p.m. several boats full of troops landed at the garrison, and we having a white flag desired the first officer we met to conduct us to Commodore Chauncey—

We mentioned to the Commodore, that the Inhabitants of York consisting chiefly of women and children were alarmed at the approach of his fleet, and that we had come to know his intentions respecting the town—that if it were to be pillaged or destroyed we might take such measures as were still in our power, for their removal, and protection. We added, that the town was totally defenceless, the Militia being still on parole, and that the Gentlemen had left it having heard that the principal inhabitants of Niagara had been carried away captive, a severity unusual in war. Commodore Chauncey replied, that it was far from his intention to molest the inhabitants of York in person or property, and that he was sorry any of the Gentlemen had thought it necessary to retire, and that he did not know of any person taken from Niagara of the description mentioned. Col: Scott the Commander of the troops said, that a few persons had certainly been taken away, but it was for corresponding with the British army. The Commodore told us, that his coming to York at present was a sort of retaliation for the visits our fleet had made on the other side of the Lake, and to possess him-

self of the public stores, and destroy the fortifications, but that he would burn no houses. He mentioned something of Sodus and the necessity of retaliation should such measures be taken in future. He likewise expressed much regret at the destruction of our public library on the 27th of April—informed us, that he had made a strict search through his fleet for the books, many of them had been found, which he would send back by the first flag of truce. He then asked what public stores were here, a question which we could not answer. On parting both the Commodore & Col Scott pledged their honor, that our persons and property should be respected, and that even the town should not be entered by the troops much less any Gentlemens House

As we were quieting the minds of the Inhabitants, the troops took possession of the town, opened the jail, liberated the Prisoners, taking three Soldiers confined for felony with them. They visited the Hospitals & paroled the few men, that could not be removed they next entered the Stores of Major Allan³ & Mr. St. George,⁴ and seized the contents, consisting chiefly of flour. Observing this we went to Col Scott & informed him, that he was taking private property. He replied, that a great deal of Officers baggage had been found in Major Allans store, and that altho' private property was to be respected, provisions of all sorts were lawful prise, because they were subsistence of armies. That if we prevailed in the contest the British Govt. would make up the loss and if they were successful their Govt. would most willingly reimburse the Sufferers. He concluded by declaring, that he would seize upon all provisions he could find. The three Schooners, which had anchored abreast of the town towed out between eleven and twelve o'clock on Saturday night, and we supposed, that the fleet would have sailed immediately; but having been informed by some Traitors, that valuable stores had been sent up the Don, two Schooners came up the harbour yesterday morning—the troops were again landed, and three armed boats went up the Don in search of the Stores. I have since learned that through the meritorious exertions of a few young men two of the name of Platter,⁵ every thing was conveyed away, and the boats sunk before the enemy reached the place. Two or three boats containing trifling articles, which had been hid on the march were discovered & taken but in the main object the enemy was disappointed—As soon as the armed boats returned the troops went on board, and by Sun Set both Sailors and Soldiers had evacuated the town. The Barracks the wood yard, and the Store Houses on Gibraltar Point were then set on fire, and this morning at day light the enemys fleet sailed.

The troops which were landed act as marines and appear to be all they had on board, not certainly more than 240 men—the fleet consists of 14 armed vessels One is left at Sackets harbour. It is but justice to Commodore Chauncey & Col Scott to state, that their men while on shore behaved well and no private house was entered or disturbed We have the Honor to be With Respect Your Most Obt. Humble. Servants

John Strachan
Grant Powell

ALS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 679, pp. 324-26. Written in the hand of John Strachan.

1. John Strachan was Anglican minister at York and chaplain at Fort York. He later became the first Anglican bishop of Toronto and was active in Canadian politics as a member of the "Family Compact."

2. Grant Powell was acting surgeon in the Canadian Provincial Marine. He was the son of William Dummer Powell, an influential judge and politician in York.

3. William Allan was a York merchant and major of the Third Regiment York Militia. He was, with the other men of the local militia, captured 27 April 1813 and was released on parole awaiting formal exchange, and so was duty bound not to fight.

4. Laurent Quetton St. George was a wealthy York merchant and son-in-law of William Dummer Powell.

5. Ely and George Playter are credited with moving and concealing two boatloads of arms, baggage, and ammunition up the Don River.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

U. States Ship *Genl. Pike* at anchor
off Niagara 4th Augt. 1813

Sir

After leaving Sacketts Harbor I stretched over for the enemys shore, and from thence stood up the Lake; the winds being light I did not arive off this post untill the evening of the 27th Ultio. on the 24th I fell in with the *Lady of the Lake* on her return to Sacketts Harbor with prisoners from Fort George, I transfered the prisoners to the *Raven*, and ordered her to Sacketts Harbor. The *Lady of the Lake* I dispatched to Fort George for guides for the head of the Lake. Genl. Boyd having informed me that the enemy had a considerable deposit of provisions and stores at Burling Bay, I was determined to attempt their destruction— On the 25th I was joined by the *Pert*, and on the 27th by the *Lady of the Lake*, with guides and Capt. Cranes Company of Artillery, and Col. Scott who had very handsomely volunteered for the service— After converseing with Colo. Scott upon the subject it was thought adviseable to take on board 250 Infantry, which by the extraordinary exertions of that excellent officer were embarked before 6 oclock the next morning, and the Fleet immediately proceeded for the head of the Lake, but owing to light winds and calms we did not arive to our anchorage before the evening of the 29th; sent two partys on shore and surprised and took some of the inhabitants from whom we learned that the enemy had received considerable reinforcements within a day or two, and that his force in regulars was from 600 to 800 men, we however landed the Troops and Marines, and some sailors the next morning and reconoitred the enemys position; found him posted upon a peninsula of very high ground and strongly intrenched, and his Camp defended by about eight pieces of cannon, in this situation it was thought not adviseable to attack him with a force scarcely half his numbers and without artilary, we ~~was~~ were also deficient in Boats, not having a sufficient number to cross the Bay with all the Troops at the same time, the men were all reembarked in the course of the afternoon and in the evening of the 30 Ultimo we weighed and stood for York, arived and anchored in that Harbor at about 3 P.M. on the 31st run the schooners into the uper Harbor landed the Marines and soldiers under command of Colo. Scott, without opposition, found several hundred Barrels of Flour and provisions in the public store houses, five pieces of cannon, Eleven boats, and a quantity of shot, shells, and other stores, all which ~~was~~ were either destroyed or brought away. On the 1st Inst. after having received on board all that the vessels could take, I directed the Barracks and the public store houses to be burnt we then reembarked the men and proceeded for this place, where I arrived yesterday— Between 4 and 500 men left York for the

head of the Lake two days before we arived there some few prisoners ~~was~~ were taken some of which ~~was~~ were paroled the others have been landed at Fort George— I dispatched Lts. Eliott, Smith, and Conckling,¹ with eight midshipmen and about one hundred petty officers and seamen for Erie this morning where (from the arrangements that have been made) I think they will arive about the 7th or 8th. This force with what has allready been sent forward, will enable Captain Perry to proceed upon the Lake— I have directed him to open an intercourse, and cooperate with Genl. Harrison without delay—

In consequence of taking so many men from this ship it has so deranged her batterys that I have been loth to go on shore before I had the men requartered and stationed and seen them exercised at their Guns, consequently I have not seen the Genl. commanding at this Post, nor do I know any thing of his views, if after an interview I find that my presence is not imperiously required here, I shall return to the visinity of Sacketts Harbor and if I should not meet with the enemys Fleet on my way down, I shall Blockade him in Kingston. I have the honor to be Very Respectfully Sir Your obt. Servt.

Isaac Chauncey

ALS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 5, No. 69 (M125, Roll No. 30).

1. Lieutenant Augustus H. M. Conkling; he would command *Tigress* in the Battle of Lake Erie.

A Dispute over Reinforcements for Lake Erie

The need for sailors on Lake Erie grew critical in July. Master Commandant Oliver H. Perry's ships were completed, but he still lacked sufficient men to sail them. Perry was frustrated when he received a desperate appeal from Brigadier General William Henry Harrison in late July to help repel an attack on Fort Meigs but could offer no aid to the army.

After a reinforcement of sixty men from Sackets Harbor arrived at Erie in July, Perry sent a curt letter to Commodore Isaac Chauncey complaining about the quality of the men who had been sent. His letter implied that Chauncey had kept all the best sailors for his own squadron, and had sent only the "dregs," which included landmen and Black sailors, to Lake Erie. Chauncey upbraided Perry for his comments, maintaining that he had distributed officers and men fairly between the two squadrons. Chauncey was still smarting that Perry had in effect obtained a separate command by corresponding directly with the secretary of the navy, thereby overstepping the chain of command. This exchange provoked Perry's request for removal from Lake Erie.

MASTER COMMANDANT OLIVER H. PERRY TO COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY

"Copy"

Erie 27th. July 1813—

Sir

I have this moment received by Express the enclosed letter from Genl. Harrison,—¹ If I had officers & men (and I have no doubt you will send them)—I can fight the Enemy and proceed up the Lake—but having no one to command the *Niagara* and only one Commissioned Lieut and two actg. Lieuts., whatever

my wishes may be, going out is out of the question— The men that came by Mr. Champlin² are a motley set, blacks, Soldiers and boys, I cannot think you saw them after they were selected— I am however pleased to see any thing in the shape of a man— Very respectfully I have the honor to be Sir Your Obed. Servt.

Signed, O. H. Perry

Copy, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 91 1/2, enclosure (M147, Roll No. 5).

1. General William Henry Harrison's army at Fort Meigs was under siege by the British and their Indian allies from 23–27 July 1813. The attack failed and the British army withdrew to attack Fort Stephenson near Sandusky. Harrison's letter to Perry requesting aid has not been found. In his reply to Harrison, Perry stated that he felt "inexpressible mortification in stating to you that I am ~~unable~~ not yet able to go out, owing to a sufficient number of officers & men not having yet arrived," (extract from Perry to Jones, 2 Sept. 1813, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 116 [M147, Roll No. 5]). See also Clanin, "Correspondence of Harrison and Perry," p. 164.

2. Sailing Master Steven Champlin and sixty men were sent from Sackets Harbor to Erie on 16 July 1813. Champlin was Perry's nephew and had served in the gunboat flotilla at Newport, Rhode Island.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO MASTER COMMANDANT OLIVER H. PERRY

"Copy"

U States Ship *Genl. Pike*
at anchor off Burlington Bay—
30th. July 1813—

Sir

I have been duly honored with your letters of the 23d. and 26th ult. and notice your anxiety, for men and officers. I am equally anxious to furnish you, and no time shall be lost in sending officers and men to you, as soon as the public service will allow me to send them from this Lake—

I regret that you are not pleased with the men sent you by Messrs. Champlin and Forrest,¹ for to my knowledge a part of them are not surpassed by any seamen we have in the fleet, and I have yet to learn that the Colour of the skin, or cut and trimmings of the coat, can affect a mans qualifications or usefulness— I have nearly 50 Blacks on board of this Ship and many of them are amongst my best men, and those people you call Soldiers have been to Sea from 2 to 17 years, and I presume you will find them as good and usefull as any men on board your vessel, at least if I can judge by comparison, for those that we have on board of this Ship, are attentive and obedient, and as far as I can judge many of them excellent seamen, at any rate the men sent to Lake Erie, have been selected with a view of sending a fair proportion of petty officers and Seamen, and I presume upon examination that it will be found that they are equal to those on this Lake—

I have received several letters from the Secretary of the Navy urging the necessity of the Naval Force upon Lake Erie acting immediately, you will therefore as soon as you receive a sufficient number of men commence your operations against the Enemy, and as soon as possible Co-operate with the Army under Genl. Harrison—

As you assured the Secretary that you should conceive yourself equal or superior to the enemy with a force in men so much less than I had deemed necessary, there will be a great deal expected from you by your Country, and I trust

that they will not be disappointed in the high expectations formed of your gallantry and judgement. I will barely make an observation which was impressed upon my mind by an old Soldier, that is "never despise your Enemy"

I was mortified to see by your letters to the Secretary (extracts & Copy's of which has been forwarded to me) that you complain that the "distance was so great between Sacketts Harbor and Erie, that you could not get instructions from me in time to execute with any advantages to the service," thereby intimating the necessity of a separate command— would it not have been as well to have made the complaint to me instead of the Secretary—

My confidence in your Zeal and abilities is undiminished and I sincerely hope that your success may equal your utmost wishes—

I shall dispatch to you some officers and Seamen and further instructions, upon my return to Niagara where I hope to be the day after tomorrow— I have the honor to be Very respectfully Sir, Your obt. Servt.

Signed Isaac Chauncey

Copy, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 91 1/2, enclosure (M147, Roll No. 5).

1. Midshipman Dulany Forrest and sixty men were sent from Sackets Harbor to Erie on 16 July 1813.

MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON, U.S.A., TO
MASTER COMMANDANT OLIVER H. PERRY

Head Quarters
Seneca Town 9 miles from
L. Sandusky 4th Augt. 1813

Sir

Your favor of the 27th. Ultimo was received a few days ago— I have now the satisfaction to inform you that the siege of Fort Meigs was abandoned by the enemy on the 27th ult.— on the evening of the 1st Inst. they appeared before the Post of Lower Sandusky and about 5 o'clock P.M. of the 2nd attempted to carry it by Storm— In this rash attempt they were repulsed with great loss, two officers (a Lt. Col. by Brevet and a Lt.) with about 50 men penetrated to the ditch where they were all killed or wounded, but two or three, who were sheltered by the dead bodies by which they were covered— We have 26 prisoners— Genl. Proctor retreated down the Sandusky River with the utmost precipitation— I have examined some of the most intelligent Prisoners— They all agree that the new Ship was launched on Saturday the 17th ultimo—that neither her guns or seamen had arrived (a very few of the former being on the warf) but that both were expected from Long Point— One of the Prisoners says that they were about to take some of the Guns from the ramparts of Malden to put in her and that they expected to make up the Compliment by taking Fort Meigs— From this statement you will at once perceive that Sailing from Presquille a single day sooner or later may be of the greatest importance to your success against the enemys Fleet— I had much rather that such Stores as are intended for the army and not yet arrived at Erie should be left and brought up hereafter than they should be the cause of your delay—

Make what use you may think proper of Colo. Hill's Regt.¹ I should suppose that some marksmen might be selected from it who could render you great Serv-

ice in an action with the enemy— With great Respect and consideration I am yr. Humble Servt.

Willm. Henry Harrison

on our side but one man killed and a few slightly wounded

LS, MiU-C, Oliver Hazard Perry Papers.

1. Colonel Rees Hill, a Pennsylvania militia officer from Greene County, Pennsylvania. Hill was directed in late July to put his regiment at Perry's disposal and to sail on board Perry's fleet if they could be of use. See Andrew H. Holmes to Oliver H. Perry, 23 July 1813, in Clanin, "Correspondence of Harrison and Perry," p. 163.

MASTER COMMANDANT OLIVER H. PERRY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

U.S.S. *Lawrence* off Erie Augt. 10th 1813

Sir,

I am under the disagreeable necessity of requesting a removal from this station, the enclosed copy of a letter from Comr. Chauncey¹ will I am satisfied convince you that I cannot serve longer under an officer who has been so totally regardless of my feelings— The men spoken of by Comr. Chauncey, were those mentioned in the roll I did myself the honor to send you—they may Sir, be as good as are on the other Lake, but if so, that squadron must be poorly manned indeed—

In the requisition for men, sent by your order, I made a note saying, "I should consider myself equal or superior with a smaller number of men to the enemy," that requisition Sir, was made nearly two months since—what then might have been considered certain, may from lapse of time be deemed problematical. The Comr. insinuates that I have taken measures to obtain a separate command. I beg leave to ask you Sir, if any thing in any of my letters to you could be construed into such a meaning— on my return to this place in June last, I wrote you, the *Queen Charlotte* and *Lady Prevost* were off this harbor, and if they remained a few days might possibly be able to intercept their return to Malden— I had no orders to act—and the only way of obtaining them in time was to write to you Sir—as the communication between Comr. Chauncey and myself occupied considerably upwards of a month— in my request, I meant this as a reason for applying to you on the emergency instead of the Comr.— I have been on this station upwards of five months and during that time have submitted cheerfully and with pleasure, to fatigue and anxiety, hitherto to me unknown in the service— I have had a very responsible situation, without an officer, (except one sailg. master) of the least experience,—however seriously I have felt my situation, not a murmur has escaped me. The critical state of Genl. Harrison was such that I took upon myself the very great responsibility of going out, with the few young officers you had been pleased to send me, with the few seamen I had, and as many volunteers as I could muster from the militia—I did not shrink from this responsibility—but Sir, at that very moment I did not surely anticipate the rect. of a letter in every line of which there is insult— Under all these circumstances, I beg most respectfully and most earnestly that I may be immediately removed from this station I am willing to forego that reward which I have considered for two months past almost within my grasp— If Sir I have rendered my country any service in the equipment of this Squadron I beg it may be considered as an inducement to grant my request— I

shall proceed with the squadron and whatever is in my power shall be done to promote the honor and interest of the service— When I volunteered to join Comr. Chauncey I left a respectable command at Newport if Sir I could be ordered to that place until more active service could be found for me—it would add very much to the obligation— If this is impossible I beg I may be indulged with a short furlough the situation of my family requiring my presence. Very respectfully I have the honor to be Sir Your obt. Servt.

O. H. Perry

I enclose to you Sir a copy of the letter which Comr. Chauncey takes exception at—²

O. H. P.

ALS, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 103 (M147, Roll No. 5).

1. Perry here refers to Commodore Isaac Chauncey's letter of 30 July; see pp. 530-31.
2. See Perry to Chauncey, 27 July 1813, pp. 529-30.

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES TO MASTER COMMANDANT OLIVER H. PERRY

O. H. Perry Esqr.
Comg. U.S. Naval Forces,
on Lake Erie.

Navy Department
August 18th. 1813.

Sir,

I have received your letters of the 10th. and 11th. with much anxiety, as they indicate a state of things unfriendly to harmony, and reciprocal confidence, between the Commander in Chief and yourself, which was the less to have been expected, as he selected you for the command of the Erie Squadron, and has never ceased to speak of you, in terms of the highest approbation and confidence.

Sensible as I am of your love of Country, high sense of honour, and zealous devotion to the service, I cannot but believe, that reflection will allay the feelings of discontent which you have expressed. The indulgence of such feelings, must terminate in the most serious injury to the service, and probably ruin to yourself. Avoid recrimination—persevere in the zealous and honourable path of duty which you have hitherto pursued, with so much credit to yourself, and utility to your Country; and the result, I have no doubt, will enhance the fame of both. A change of Commander, under existing circumstances, is equally inadmissible, as it respects the interest of the service, and your own reputation. It is right that you should reap the harvest which you have sown. The season is short, and when active operations have ceased, if you continue to desire a transfer to some other station, you shall be indulged.

It is the duty of an Officer, (and in none does his character shine more conspicuous,) to sacrifice all personal motives & feelings when in collision with the public good. This sacrifice you are called upon to make, and I calculate, with confidence, upon your efforts to restore and preserve harmony, and to concentrate the vigorous exertions of all, in carrying into effect, the great objects of your enterprize. I am, Sir, respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. Jones

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, CLS, 1813, pp. 60-61.

Engagement on Lake Ontario: Loss of *Hamilton*, *Scourge*, *Julia*, and *Growler*

The British squadron, newly fitted and armed, sailed from Kingston on 31 July in order to seek a decisive action with Commodore Isaac Chauncey's fleet. The Americans had more ships and were superior in armament, but the vessels of the British fleet were better manned and could fight more effectively as a squadron. Chauncey often found it necessary to tow his smaller, dull sailing schooners in order to keep his ships together.

Calm weather and light breezes kept the two fleets apart until 7 August, when they both appeared off the head of Lake Ontario near Niagara. The crews of both squadrons remained at quarters all evening, waiting for a change of wind to engage their opponents. In the early morning hours of 8 August, a sudden squall carried two American schooners, *Hamilton* and *Scourge*, to the bottom, with the loss of all but sixteen of their crews. These schooners had been built as merchant vessels of shallow draft; they were not designed to carry the weight of heavy cannon on deck and were unstable in stormy weather. *Hamilton* had been refitted to carry nine guns and *Scourge* ten, far more than the other schooners of comparable size in the American squadron.

The opposing fleets continued to maneuver in the light breezes for two more days until the evening of 10 August, when Yeo bore down for the American line and succeeded in cutting off and capturing two vessels, the schooners *Julia* and *Growler*.¹ The Americans had lost nearly 160 men and twenty-three guns in two days. The loss of four of his eleven schooners was a serious blow to Chauncey and no doubt shook the confidence of the usually cautious American commodore.

1. A vivid, first-person account of the loss of *Scourge* and the capture of *Julia* is found in Cooper, Ned Myers, pp. 77-100. For an account of the recent discovery and documentation of *Hamilton* and *Scourge*, see Cain, *Ghost Ships*; and Nelson, "Ghost Ships."

MAJOR WILLOUGHBY MORGAN, U.S.A.,¹ TO
LIEUTENANT COLONEL DAVID CAMPBELL, U.S.A.²

Fort George 9th August 1813

Dear Colonel.

The fleets have done nothing yet. Commodore Chauncey has endeavoured to bring the enemy to action; but having the advantage of the wind he has been able to avoid a rencontre. The reason he avoids an action at present is pretty evident. He wishes to make sure work; there is no necessity now for his risking any thing, and in the course of six weeks he will be uncontroled master of the lake—having a large ship building at Kingston which will be finished by that time.

The Commodore is out now endeavouring to bring the enemy to a fight, but I am much afraid he will not be able to effect his purpose.

A most distressing occurrence has happened to our fleet. The night after the enemys fleet came in view whilst the fleet was out Cruising a squal came up so suddenly that two of the sloops were capsised and entirely lost. Only twelve of the crew were saved. No vestage of the vessels is to be seen. Independant of the deep sorrow this unfortunate event excites we have sustained a loss of nine Guns.³ Nevertheless the Commodore is trying to bring Sir James to battle; but

Sir James still avoids it with all his dexterity. To my apprehension Sir James in prudence has every reason to avoid a rencontre; the Commodore every reason to desire it— Why did Sir James leave Kingston? It is not Known; but the Officers of the Navy Conjecture that he hoped to have surprised our fleet—

I believe ere this we should have tried our hands again in conjunction with the fleet if the British vessels had not appeared— But of this say nothing— I believe the mail does not go out till tomorrow. I will keep my letter open till that time.

9 O'clock at night The wind blows fresh but is diametrically against us. This has been the case ever since the enemys ~~fight~~ fleet appeared insight. Fortune declares for Sir James or something superior to [fortune?]. The Commodore is still out trying to prevent Sir James' escape, but unless the wind changes I am fearfull that it is all to no purpose.

10th. in the morning the British fleet is in view, ours is not but no doubt it is near at hand. Sir James finds it difficult to get out of the head of the lake. He has attempted it once or twice. The wind is still against Chauncy, If he can once get to the windward action [will be sure?]. Adieu

Willoughby Morgan Major

ALS, NcD, Campbell Family Papers. Addressed to Lieutenant Colonel David Campbell, 20th Infantry, Winchester, Virginia.

1. Willoughby Morgan, 12th U.S. Infantry, was promoted to major on 26 June 1813.
2. Lieutenant Colonel David Campbell, 20th U.S. Infantry, was appointed 12 March 1812.
3. Nineteen guns were actually lost in the accident.

COMMODORE SIR JAMES LUCAS YEO, R.N., TO
GOVERNOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE PREVOST

Wolfe off York 11th. August 1813
1/2 past 1 P.M.

My Dear Sir,

Yesterday evening the Enemy's Squadron stood for us with a fine breeze from the East. Our's was becalmed off the Post at 12 Miles Creek.— At sun set a breeze came off the land which gave us the wind of the Enemy, And I stood for them. On which he immediately stood from us under as much sail as his schooners could keep up with him.

He was in a long line, the *Pike*, *Maddison*, *Oneida*, six schooners and two to windward to rake our Masts as we came up.— At 11 we came within Gun shot of the schooners when they opened a brisk fire and from going so fast it was more than an hour before we could pass them. At this time all our squadron was two & three miles astern of the *Wolfe*. On coming up with the *Maddison* & *Pike* they put before the Wind made sail firing their stern chase Guns—and I found it impossible to get the Squadron up with them, as the *Wolfe* was the only Ship that could keep up. I therefore made sail between Him and the two schooners to windward which I captured the *Julia* & *Growler* each mounting one long 32 & one long 12 Pr. with a compliment of forty Men.

I am also happy to acquaint You that two of his largest schooners the *Hamilton* of nine guns & the *Scourge* of ten guns up-set the night before last in carrying sail to keep from us, and all on-board perished, in numbers about one hun-

dred. This has reduced his Squadron to ten and increased ours to eight but they will take men from the Ships.

I feel confident that by watching every proper opportunity we shall get the better of him, but as long as he is determined to sacrifice every thing to his own safety, I shall never in this narrow water be able to bring the two ships to action as I have no vessel that sails sufficiently well to second me.

This conduct He cannot persevere in long for His own Honor as the loss of all his schooners (which I ever must have in my power) will be an indelible disgrace to him, and I am at a loss to know how he will account to His Government for it. The *Pike* mounts 28 long 24 Ps. & four hundred and twenty men. The *Maddison* 22-32 Pr. carronades and three hundred & forty men (Good Head Money!) Their squadron took on board the day before Yesterday nine boats full of Troops I suppose to repel boarders.

I am happy to add that the *Wolfe* has not received any material damage and no one hurt on-board. I am now landing the Prisoners and repairing the damages of the *Growler* who has lost her Bowsprit & otherwise much cut up.

It concerns me to find I have such a wary opponent as it harasses me beyond my strength. I am very unwell and I believe nothing but the nature of the service keeps me up.

I must close this which is more than I have my eyes for these forty eight hours—and hope my next will be more acceptable. I have the Honor to remain Dear Sir Your Excellency's obedient humble Servant

James Lucas Yeo.

ALS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 730, pp. 81-84.

1. A bounty (or head money) for each person on board a captured ship was added to the valuation of the prize, and the sum was divided among the officers and crew.

AN UNKNOWN MIDSHIPMAN TO J. JONES

Sacketts Harbour on board the *Madison* Augt. 13th. 1813—

Most Respected Uncle

Dear Sir

In my last I informed you in haste of our sailing which was at the moment rather unexpected. I now hasten to inform you of my safe return to the Harbour. Would to God I could say of the safe return of us all. From the 21st. Ult nothing worth mentioning occurred until the 29th. when we arrived at 4 mile creek and anchored. We took on board the fleet 150 Soldiers—Weighed and directed our course for Burlington where we arrived the following day (the 30th.) B. is a deposit for public stores supposed to contain of flour only, 10,000 barrels. We landed Soldiers, Marines and Sailors about 600 before advancing for we were informed of the enemy's strength which was so great that had we advanced to the enemy's stores situated about 4 miles up the bay we should have been surrounded and massacred by the Savages and English. We then returned to the place of our landing, and reembarked. I was informed by an inhabitant that our men who fell or were taken at the battle of 40 Mile Creek were most shockingly butchered.

Their heads skinned, their hearts taken out and put in their mouths, their privates cut off and put in the places of their hearts—We owing to someones imprudence, narrowly escaped a similar fate. 31st. we weighed, and stood down the lake— August 1st. we came to anchor in 14 fathoms water. York light house bearing 3 1/2 north distant 2 miles. We landed and took some stores. August 2nd. at 2 1/2 P.M. we got under way and stood for Fort George where we arrived Augst. 3rd.— Augst. 7th. while at anchor off Fort George at 4 A.M. discovered 6 sail supposed to be the enemy's fleet bearing W.N.W. 10 miles distant. at 5 Com. made signal and we got under way. at 7 signal was made for battle, the American Ensign was hoisted. Sir George displayed the English Union, being within long shot the Com. fired 5 or 6 guns which they did not return but continued bearing down upon us. The Com. thunder struck (and no doubt frightened) at their coolness and determined bravery, tacked ship and left them! under pretence of endeavouring to get the weathergage. Never again will we have the opportunity we have this day had, of settling the contest with so small a sacrifice. This night also Sunday and S'night continued endeavouring to get the weathergage, Sunday at midnight we were struck by a heavy squall and were near experiencing the fate of two of our finest schooners, which were lost the Crews excepting 16 perished. This is only part of the evil arising from not attacking the enemy on the third, for which the Com. is answerable and perhaps highly censurable, (you know he is a peace man) Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday still in chace and manoeuvring, on Wednesday night at 1/2 past 9 (in the afternoon we had the weathergage but wind shifted) notwithstanding having lost the weathergage by change of wind our schooners opened a heavy fire on the enemy's ships which no doubt did them much injury, we were all ready for the fight the enemy's balls flew briskly round us. We kept closing, two of our Schooners were in the midst of the enemys fleet when the Com. wore ship and left the enemy! the two schooners were taken— They fought like heroes and it is feared every man was killed, we being out of provisions returned to S. Harbour, where we this moment arrived. Our boats are bringing off provisions and we will no doubt sail immediately.

Excuse my haste and remember me to Mrs. and to all your family whom I am anxious to see and hear from, and believe me my dear uncle most affectionately yours—

Copy, DNA, RG45, CL, 1814, Vol. 2, No. 70 (M125, Roll No. 35). A copy of this letter was enclosed in a letter from J. Jones of 114 Water Street, New York, to Secretary of the Navy Jones dated 25 March 1814.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 71—

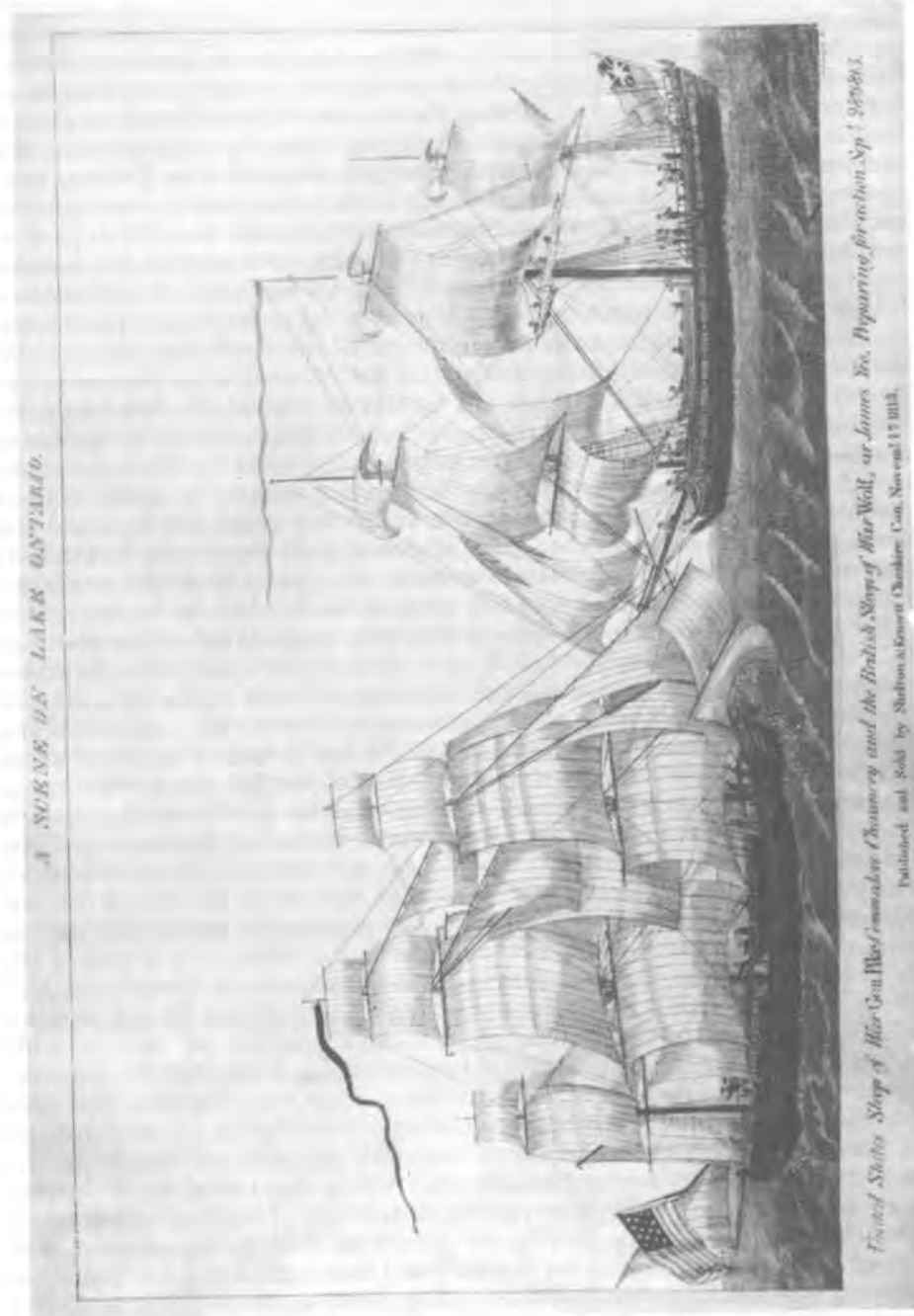
U.S. Ship *Genl. Pike*
Sacketts Harbor. 13 Aug. 1813

Sir

I arrived here this day with this Ship, *Madison*, *Oneida*, *Governor Tompkins*, *Conquest*, *Ontario*, *Pert* and *Lady of the Lake*,—the *Fair American* and *Asp* I left at Niagara.— Since I had the honor of addressing you last, I have been much distressed and mortified,— distressed at the loss of a part of the force intrusted to my command and mortified at not being able to bring the Enemy to action.— The follow-

ing movements and transactions of the Squadron since the 6th. inst. will give you the best idea of the difficulties and mortifications that I have had to encounter.—

On the 6th. inst. I had a conference with Generals Boyd and Williams and it was determined to attack the Enemy immediately and to insure the capture or destruction of his whole army. I was to take on board of the Fleet, the next day Fifteen Hundred Men, under the command of Genl. Williams and land them at Burlington Bay, and after carrying the Enemy's position at that place, Genl. Williams was to march upon the road for Fort George in order to attack the Enemy in rear, while Genl. Boyd made a simultaneous movement and attacked him in front— by these arrangements (the fleet acting in concert) the enemy's fleet would have been completely cut off, and his whole army must have surrendered in the course of a few days— On the 7th at day light the Enemy's fleet, consisting of two Ships, two Brigs, and two large Schooners were discovered bearing W.N.W.—distant about five or Six Miles—Wind at West.— at 5 weighed with the Fleet, and manouv'ed to gain the Wind— at 9 having passed to Leeward of the Enemy's line and abreast of his van (the *Wolf*) hoisted our colours and fired a few guns to ascertain whether we could reach him, with our Shot, finding they fell short, I wore and hauled upon a wind on the Starboard Tack— the rear of our Schooners then about 6 miles astern the enemy wore in Succession and hauled upon a Wind, on the same tack, but soon finding that we should be able to weather him upon the next Tack, he tacked and made all Sail to the Northward— as soon as our rear Vessels could fetch his wake, tacked and made all sail in chase— in the afternoon the Wind became very light and towards night quite calm, the Schooners used their Sweeps all the afternoon in order to close with the Enemy, but without Success— late in the afternoon I made the signal of recall and formed in close order— Wind during the Night from the Westward and after midnight Squally— kept all hands at Quarters, and beat to Windward in hopes to gain the Wind of the enemy— at 2 A.M. missed Two of our Schooners at daylight discovered the missing Schooners to be the *Hamilton & Scourge*, Soon after Spoke the *Govr. Tompkins* who informed me that the *Hamilton* and *Scourge* both over-set and sunk in a heavy Squall about 2 O'Clock, and distressing to relate every Soul perished except 16— this fatal accident, deprived me at once of the Services of two valuable Officers (Lieut Winter and Sailing Master Osgood) and two of my best Schooners, mounting together 19 Guns— this accident giving to the Enemy decidedly the Superiority. I thought he would take advantage of it particularly as by a change of Wind he was again brought dead to Windward of me—formed the line upon the larboard Tack, and hove too— Soon after 6 A.M. the enemy bore up and set studding-sails apparently with an intention to bring us to action— when he had approached us within about four miles he brought too on Starboard Tack— I wore and brought too on same tack, finding that the Enemy had no intention of bringing us to action I edged away to gain the land in order to have the advantage of the land breeze in the afternoon— it soon after fell calm— I directed the Schooners to sweep up, and engage the Enemy, about noon we got a light breeze from the Eastward,— I took the *Oneida* in tow (as she sails badly) and Stood for the Enemy when the Van of our Schooners was within about 1 1/2 to 2 Miles of his rear— the Wind Shifted to the Westward, which again brought him to Windward— as soon as the breeze struck him, he bore up for the Schooners in order to cut them off, before they could rejoin me, but with their Sweeps and the breeze soon reaching them also they were soon in their Station— the Enemy finding himself foiled in his attempt upon the Schooners hauled his Wind, and hove



A SCENE ON LAKE ONTARIO.

Front of Ships, Ship of War Genl. Williams's Squadron and the British Ships of War Wolf, and James. See, Preparing for action, Sp. 1 950883.
Published and Sold by Shulton & Bennett (London: Can. Naval 17 1813.

too.— It soon after became very Squally and the appearance of its continuing so during the Night and as we had been at quarters for nearly forty hours and being apprehensive of separating from some of the heavy sailing Schooners in the Squalls induced me to run in towards Niagara and anchor outside the bar— Genl. Boyd very handsomely offered any assistance in Men that I might require— I received 150 Soldiers and distributed them in the different Vessels to assist in boarding or repelling boarders as circumstances might require, blew very heavy in Squalls during the Night— Soon after day light discovered the Enemy's Fleet, bearing North weighed and stood after him— the Wind soon became light and variable and before 12 O'Clock quite calm at 5 fresh breezes from North the Enemy's fleet bearing North distant about 4 or 5 leagues, wore the fleet in succession and hauled upon a wind on the larboard Tack— at Sun down the enemy bore N.W. by N. on the Starboard tack— the Wind hauling to the Westward, I stood to the Northward all night in order to gain the North Shore— at day light tacked to the Westward the Wind having changed to N.N.W. soon after discovered the Enemy's fleet, bearing S.W.— I took the *Asp* and the *Madison*, the *Fair American* in tow and made all sail in chase— It was at this time that we thought of realizing what we had been so long toiling for—but before 12 O'Clock—the Wind changed to W.S.W. which brought the enemy to Windward tacked to the Northward at 3 the Wind inclining to the Northward wore to the Southward and Westward and made the Signal for the Fleet to make all Sail— at 4—the Enemy bore S.S.W., bore up and steered for him— at 5 observed the Enemy becalmed under the Land, nearing him very fast with a fine breeze from N.N.W.— at 6—formed the order of battle within about 4 Miles of the Enemy—the Wind at this time very light— at 7, the Wind changed to S.W. and a fresh breeze which again placed the enemy to Windward of me tacked and hauled upon a wind on the larboard tack under easy Sail— the Enemy standing after us at 9 when within about two gun Shot of our rear, he wore to the Southward— I stood on to the Northward under easy Sail— the fleet formed in two lines—a part of the Schooners forming the weather line, with orders to commence the fire upon the Enemy—as soon as their Shot would take effect and as the enemy neared them to edge down upon the Line to Leeward and pass through the intervals and form to Leeward— at about half past 10 the enemy tacked and stood after us,— at 11 the rear of our line opened his fire upon the Enemy— in about 15 minutes the fire became general from the weather line which was returned from the enemy at half past 11 the weather line bore up and passed to the Leeward except the *Growler* and *Julia* which soon after tacked to the Southward, which brought the Enemy, between them and me— filled the maintopsail and edged away two points to lead the enemy down, not only to engage him to more advantage but to lead him from the *Growler* and *Julia*— he however kept his Wind, untill he completely separated those two vessels from the rest of the Squadron— exchanged a few Shot with this Ship as he passed, without injury to us, and made Sail after our Two Schooners tacked and stood after him at 12 (midnight) finding that I must either separate from the rest of the Squadron or relinquish the hope of saving the two which had separated, I reluctantly gave up the pursuit rejoined the Squadron then to Leeward and formed the line on the starboard tack— the firing was continued between our Two Schooners and the Enemy's Fleet, untill about 1 A.M. when I presume they were obliged to surrender to a force so much their Superior— saw nothing more of the enemy that night, soon after day light discovered them close in, with the North Shore, with one of our Schooners in tow the other not to be

seen, presume she may have been Sunk— the enemy showing no disposition to come down upon us, altho to windward and blowing heavy from West— The Schooners laboring very much, I ordered two of the dullest to run into Niagara, and anchor the gale increasing very much and as I could not go into Niagara with this Ship—I determined to run for Genesee Bay as a shelter for the small vessels—and with the expectation of being able to obtain provisions for the Squadron as we were all nearly out the *Madison* and *Oneida* not a single days on board when we arrived opposite Genesee Bay— I found there was every prospect of the gales continuing, and if it did I could run to this place and provision the whole squadron with more certainty and nearly the same time that I could at Genesee admitting that I could obtain provisions at that place after bringing the breeze as far as Oswego, the Wind became light inclining to a calm which has prolonged our passage to this day.— I shall provision the Squadron for Five weeks and proceed up the Lake this Evening, and when I return again I hope to be able to communicate more agreeable news than this communication contains.

The loss of the *Growler* and *Julia* in the manner in which they have been lost is mortifying in the extreme and altho' their Commanders disobeyed my positive orders, I am willing to believe that it arose from an error of Judgement and an excess of zeal to do more than was required of them thinking probably that the enemy intended to bring us to a general action, they thought by gaining the Wind of him they would have it more in their power to annoy and injure him than they could by forming to Leeward of our Line.— From what I have been able to discover of the movements of the Enemy he has no intention of engaging us except he can get decidedly the advantage of Wind and Weather and as his Vessels in Squadron sail better than our Squadron he can always avoid an action unless I can gain the Wind and have Sufficient daylight to bring him to action before dark, his object is evidently to harrass us by Night attacks by which means he thinks to cut off our Small dull Sailing Schooners in detail fortune has evidently favored him thus far, I hope that it will be my turn next and altho inferior in point of force—I feel very confident of success. I have the honor to be Very Respectfully Sir Yr. Mo. Ob. St.

Isaac Chauncey

P.S. I enclose herewith a plan of the order of battle on the Night of the 9th. inst.—¹

I. C.

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 5, No. 99 (M125, Roll No. 30).

1. This plan can be found in DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 5, bound between Nos. 100 and 101 (M125, Roll No. 30).

Life of a Naval Surgeon on Lake Ontario

In response to a proposed cut in his pay, Dr. Walter W. Buchanan wrote a letter of protest to the secretary of the navy in which he provided many details about his role as a surgeon in the U.S. Navy. Dr. Buchanan first entered naval service in October 1800 during the Quasi-War with France when he was appointed surgeon and ordered to join Ganges. That

ship had just returned from a cruise to the West Indies, where virtually the entire crew had contracted a debilitating fever. The vessel was refitting when Buchanan joined her. Her next cruise proved to be a short one: while en route to Havana in January 1801, *Ganges* was damaged in a storm and found unfit for sea. Buchanan was discharged in August 1801 with the reduction in the navy under the Peace Establishment Act.

Buchanan returned to New York where, in 1808, he became professor of midwifery at Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons and practiced at the New York Almshouse (predecessor to Bellevue Hospital).¹ He was later recruited by Isaac Chauncey for service on the lakes and was appointed naval surgeon on 31 August 1812.² Buchanan participated in all naval engagements on the lake and was in charge of the makeshift naval hospital at Sackets Harbor.

1. Cushman, "Columbia Alumni."

2. Buchanan's appointment as surgeon was confirmed on 21 December 1812; he formally accepted his commission on 15 March 1813.

SURGEON WALTER W. BUCHANAN TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

The Honourable
Wm. Jones
Secretary of the Navy U.S.

Sackets' Harbour August 27th 1813.

Sir

Mr. Fitzgerald, Purser on this station has just submitted to my perusal, a communication from Mr. Turner, relative to my extra pay as Hospital Surgeon, referring to an indorsement made by you on that subject, stating "that as living cannot be as high at Sackets Harbour as at Newyork—he must make a deduction of 25 per cent upon the usual allowance"—I cannot presume Sir, to suppose that you are acquainted with the grounds upon which I was induced to relinquish a respectable private practice of 11 or 12 years standing & adopt the perilous & arduous duties of a navy Surgeon—Permit me therefore to submit to your candid consideration the reasons which influenced my decision

In 1800 I was appointed a surgeon in the navy—I then became acquainted with Commodore Chauncey & my attachment to him has encreased with my knowledge of the man—Upon the reduction of the Navy I retired to the paths of private life & my ambition never lead me to expect, or even wish again to wear the uniform of our Country—Upon the contemplation of the expedition to the Lakes, Dr. Bullus & Comr. Chauncey both solicited me to embark in the enterprize—in a manner flattering to my professional feelings—& eventually succeeded in gaining my acquiescence, by your predecessor placing me on the same footing as other Hospital Surgeons.

Considering that this would be a permanent establishment—I relinquished my private practice, gave up a situation in the Newyork alms house of 300\$ per ann:—vacated a Professional chair in Columbia College in that city—left the bosom of a young & rising family—& aged parents who are indebted to me for support & whose reduced circumstances are known to have resulted from the Part my father took in our revolutionary war—& excluded myself from society by following Comr. Chauncey at a few days notice, to this inhospitable clime—There in common with my brother officers we have suffered every hardship & every pri-

vation that men can suffer even the necessaries of life, instead of "not being as high as at New York" is infinitely beyond what I have ever paid during 12 years I have been master of a family in that city—The article of potatoes alone were lately 12/ per Bushel—During my residence here I have submitted to every deprivation—I have been engaged in every expedition from the attack upon Kingston last November—to the two late interviews with Sir James Yeo's squadron—In consequence of excessive fatigue & professional exertions at York, I was seized with a complaint which confined me to Bed for 4 Weeks & 2 days—During the last winter, in consequence of the illness of Messrs. Cook & Caton¹—I attended the Hospital & squadron in the most inclement season—almost unassisted & during 10 months disagreeable service, I am not conscious of having been guilty of any act, that could impair the confidence that Com: Chauncey & the Government were pleased to place in me—I entered the service under (I presumed) an implied obligation on the part of Government to make good that salary—(whether I could expend it here or not)—which Com: Chauncey was authorized by the then Secretary of the Navy to offer me—I have conscientiously fulfilled according to the Best of my abilities—the duties delegated to me by my Country—But there is also, Sir another duty which must be as imperiously fulfilled—it is the duty I owe myself my family to my Profession—I therefore Sir Respectfully submit my case to your reconsideration—I do not appeal to your generosity or that of my Government—But to a more exalted & a more noble principle—I Remain, Sir Very Respectfully your Obdt. Humble Servt.²

W. W. Buchanan

ALS, DNA, RG45, BC, 1813, Vol. 3, No. 130 (M148, Roll No. 12).

1. Surgeon's Mate Andrew B. Cook and Surgeon William Caton.

2. Secretary of the Navy Jones agreed to continue Dr. Buchanan's extra pay as hospital surgeon; see Jones to Buchanan, 5 Oct. 1813, DNA, RG45, SNL, Vol. 11, p. 106 (M149, Roll No. 11).

Perry Gains the Lake

Lieutenant Robert H. Barclay was frustrated in his attempts to build and adequately man and equip his squadron on Lake Erie. The guns and stores intended for his fleet were captured by the Americans in their two attacks on York in April and July, and a sufficient reinforcement of sailors was not forthcoming from Commodore Sir James L. Yeo. If Barclay could not build a superior naval force on the lake, he hoped he could at least destroy the enemy's ships before they could get out of Presque Isle Bay. Major General Henry Procter and Barclay planned to launch an attack on the American base; they only awaited reinforcements to carry out the assault. Their plan was halted when Brigadier General Francis de Rottenburg was made administrator and commander of the forces in Upper Canada on 19 June and refused to provide the additional troops needed for the assault.

Despite his own disappointed hopes for an adequate number of trained sailors, Master Commandant Oliver H. Perry was ready to sail by late July. His final obstacle was getting his ships across the bar that sheltered Presque Isle harbor. This was accomplished by the use of "camels," watertight boxes that were submerged alongside a ship, then pumped out to help float it through shallow water. The American vessels were lightened by removing their guns and ballast, but they were in danger of attack until rearmed.¹

Although Barclay kept a close watch on the American base, he withdrew his ships about 30 July—allowing Perry time to move his vessels onto the lake. Barclay probably went to Long Point, the British depot for stores and the main point of communication between Lakes Erie and Ontario, to ready the sails and armament for his new ship Detroit, which had been launched and was then fitting out for service. He also anticipated the imminent arrival of reinforcements of sailors and soldiers; without additional men, Barclay could not meet the Americans either inside or outside of Presque Isle harbor. The British vessels were also running short of provisions after a fortnight on the lake and had to return to Long Point to resupply.

1. On the use of camels to move Perry's vessels, see Rosenberg, *Building Perry's Fleet*, pp. 50–52.

LIEUTENANT ROBERT H. BARCLAY, R.N., TO
GOVERNOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE PREVOST

H.M.S. *Queen Charlotte*
Long point—July 16th 1813

Sir/

The present state of His Majesty's Naval force on Lake Erie induces me to call your Excellency's serious attention to it—more particularly as the means that I possess, have been so entirely misrepresented—

On my taking the command here, I instantly reconnoitred the Enemy's naval stations, and on finding so great a force getting ready at Presqu'isle, I judged that an immediate attack by Land and the Lake would decidedly be the best mode of annihilating their naval equipments at once— Under that impression I wrote to Genl. Vincent for a sufficient body of regulars, to join what Genl. Procter could bring with him from Amherstburg, and a body of Indians (which he could at all times command) to enable me to attack Presqu'isle at once— Genl. Vincent having promised the remainder of the 41st. Regt. I sail'd from this bay, to apprise Genl. Procter of it— He perfectly coincided in the propriety of the measure, and prepared to come down with his troops and Indians—but, just when all was ready Genl. de Rottenburg gave him to understand that no assistance could be given from that quarter, he was obliged in consequence to desist from an enterprise ~~that~~ for which he had not sufficient numbers to make the success even probable—

I left Amherstburg with all the vessels that I could employ as men of war—and manned with the former Canadian crew, strengthened by 50 of the 41st. Regt.—but our actual force being so much inferior, to that of the Enemy when they get equipment for them renders the situation of this squadron in a most hazardous situation—

I have further received from Lt. Colonel Evans 70 of the 41st Regt. and intend proceeding early to morrow for Presqu'isle— and take advantage of their not being yet on the Lake, and endeavour to prevent it by a blockade until the *Detroit* is ready for sea— But that circumstance will never take place, if seamen, and ordnance, together with stores of every description are not immediately sent up— It is the more to be insisted on, as if the Enemy do gain the ascendancy on this Lake, all supplies must necessarily be cut off.

I enclose a statement of the force of the rival squadrons, and if prompt assistance is not sent up, although my officers and crews will do every thing that zeal and intrepidity can do; the great superiority of the enemy may prove fatal—

I write this to Your Excellency in the hope that you will take the squadron on Lake Erie into consideration—and that you will see the immense advantage that will accrue to the Enemy by being enabled to transport troops either to annoy the right of the army under Genl. de Rottenburg, or to cut off Genl. Procters communication with the lower province except by Land—

Indeed the whole line under Genl. Procter must lay open to the Enemy, in the event of their being able to make His Majesty's Squadron retire—

The *Detroit* will be ready to launch on the 20th. instant—but there is neither a sufficient quantity of ordnance, Amunition or any other stores—and not a man to put in her— If that vessel was on the Lake I would feel confident as to the result of any action they might chuse to risk—but at present although for the good of H.M. Provinces I must attack them— I cannot help saying—that it is possible that they may have an advantage—'though I trust not a decided one—

I have communicated with Sir James Yeo on the same subject—and if he, from the exigencies of the service on the Lake Ontario will not admit of his sending many seamen, even fifty would be of the greatest service for the present—but it will require at least from 250, to 300 seamen, to render His Majesty's Squadron perfectly effective— I have the Honor to be Your Excellency's Most obdt. and Humble Servant

R. H. Barclay Senr. Offr.
on Lake Erie

ALS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 730, pp. 33–38. An extract of this letter (found in CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 679, pp. 256b–c, 257a–b) includes Barclay's signed "Statement of the Force of His Majesty's Squadron employed on Lake Erie," which is not found with this copy.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE PREVOST TO
LIEUTENANT ROBERT H. BARCLAY, R.N.

Kingston 21st July 1813

Sir,

I have received your Letter of the 16th Inst. upon the subject of your wants for the manning and equipment of the Naval Force under your command— I am fully aware of all the difficulties you have to contend with & shall endeavour as far as lays in my power to enable you to surmount them but you must be sensible of the impossibility in the present state of the Country part of which is in the occupation of the Enemy of supplying you with all the articles of which you stand in need—

I repeat to you what I have already said to General Procter that you must endeavour to obtain your Ordnance and Naval Stores from the Enemy— I am satisfied that this cannot be effected without an addition to your present strength and have therefore strongly pressed upon Sir James Yeo the necessity of sending forward to you immediately a supply of Petty Officers & Seamen and he has assured me that he will do so without delay

I have also given positive directions for the remainder of the 41st to be sent to Br. Genl. Proctor, I am in hopes that the arrival of these reinforcements aided by your own resources will in time afford the means of attempting something against the Enemy's Flotilla before they shall be in a state to venture out up the Lake— You will please to communicate this Letter to Br. Genl. Proctor— I am Sir &c. &c.

(signed) George Prevost
Commander of the Forces

LB Copy, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 1221, pp. 3-4.

MASTER COMMANDANT OLIVER H. PERRY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

U.S.S. *Lawrence* at anchor
out side of Erie Bar Augt. 4th 1813
9 P.M.

Sir,

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.— I have sent an express to Comr. Chauncey requesting in the most urgent manner, officers and men,— he has however sent me no answer, and, as it is doubtful whether I am to receive any more reinforcements, I have distributed the few I have in the best manner I am capable among the different vessels.— Lt. Turner has charge of the *Niagara*, and Mr. Magrath¹ (a gentleman of experience) has the *Caledonia*. The enemy have been in sight all day and are now about four leagues from us— We shall sail in pursuit of them, at three tomorrow morning. Very Respectfully I am Sir Your Obed. Servt.

O. H. Perry

ALS, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 93 (M147, Roll No. 5).

1. Humphrey Magrath was appointed a midshipman in 1800, made sailing master in 1803, lieutenant in 1809, and purser in 1812. As staff officers, pursers were not generally given sea commands. Magrath resigned his commission on 4 June 1814 and committed suicide on 11 July 1814.

LIEUTENANT ROBERT H. BARCLAY, R.N., TO
COMMODORE SIR JAMES LUCAS YEO, R.N.

No. 15

H.M. Ship *Queen Charlotte*
Augt. 5th. 1813 off Presque Isle

Sir

The time is now come which I have so long feared; that of being obliged to withdraw from this without supplies.

On reconnoitring the Enemy's Squadron this Morning I found them all over the Bar: Viz. two large Brigs—1 Smaller and 7 Schooners.

I before did myself the honor to state to you our Comparative force and I hope that taking into consideration the great disparity, and also the certainty of Speedy reinforcement by having the *Detroit*—You will approve of what I have done: for what in my opinion is best for the preservation of His Majesty's Squadron, and also for ultimately having the Superiority on this Lake

But the greatest misfortune attending their being on the Lake, is that no farther Supplies can be sent from Long Point & that the Seamen will now have to be sent by Land; there are no boats at Long Point that could convey many, even if you choose to risk their coming by Water; when it is probable the Enemy will be doing all he can to prevent any thing coming up that way, there are only one large Boat and a common *Battoe*.

And as to the Guns I should recommend their being kept at Burlington and I will run the *Detroit* with such Guns as I can procure at Amherstburg, then come down and have them immediately sent over.

They have not as yet made any shew of following us: but if they were not ready for Service they would hardly venture over the bar, although under the protection of their Batteries, and I think it more probable, from the great addition to their Military Strength at Presque Isle that their first attempt will be to reinforce Harrison and cut off Genl. Procter's retreat but it is to be hoped from the length of time that he has been there that he may have effected his purpose.

I have sent Lieut. O'Keefe of the 41st. Regt. to ensure your receiving this letter and I have directed him to join me again without delay at Amherstburg, in the event of meeting any body of Seamen that he may assist them in every way to cause their speedy arrival at Amherstburg as certain as is in my power. I have the honor to be Sir Your Obedt. Servant

(Signed) R. H. B.

From my information from below I have great hopes that you will soon meet your Enemy in which I am joined by Captn. Finnis and also most sincerely that you will have a noble addition to your Squadron.

(Signed) R. H. B.

Copy, UKLPR, Adm. 1/5445, pp. 139-40. This copy was introduced as evidence in the court-martial of Lieutenant Robert H. Barclay.

LIEUTENANT ROBERT H. BARCLAY, R.N., TO
MAJOR GENERAL HENRY PROCTER, BRITISH ARMY

No. 14

H.M.S. *Queen Charlotte*
Off the Islands August 9th 1813

Sir

On the 3rd Inst. I wrote, advising you that from the forward state in which the Enemy's Squadron were at Presque Isle I doubted the propriety of remain-

ing off that port with so inferior a force longer than the 6th and that I should then return to Amherstburg and employ all my means in fitting out the *Detroit*. But the Winds being light and Westerly—I came up with the *Miami*¹ by which vessel I sent it.

On last reconnoitring Presque Isle I found the Enemy's Squadron over the Bar and Anchored under the protection of their Batteries.

Knowing their force and supposing that they would not venture out unless well prepared, I thought it more prudent to sail at once for Amherstburg, leaving the *Erie* with orders to bring any dispatch that might have arrived during my last absence from Long Point Anchorage.

I was the more induced to do so, from the total silence held relative to Seamen, or Stores coming up; for surely there was time enough during the Month I have been out for that purpose—

From the great increase of Military at Presque Isle I rather think their object must be an expedition to some point—Whether against you, to co-operate with Harrison—or in your absence, against Amherstburg, I cannot determine.

Having 150 of the 41st. Regiment on board, should they attempt the latter place; such an addition to the force will be very seasonable

On my leaving Presque Isle Lt. OKeefe of the 41st volunteered his services to carry a letter to Burlington to advise any Officer, or Men, of my removal from that place, also to render them any assistance in his power to forward them by Land. I accepted his offer, and he left me on the 6th.

I send this by Lt. Purvis to whom I have given directions to follow your wishes relative to the Transports and *Chippewa*—for it would be a serious loss, these Vessels to us, and a very great accession to the force of the Enemy

I enclose a Copy² of a Letter I recd. from His Excellency Sir George Prevost: which is in answer to one I wrote him relative to our wants and of the imperious necessity of their being supplied.

You will receive any particular information relative to the Enemy from Lt. Purvis. I have the Honor to be Sir Your Most Obedt. Hble. Servant

(Signed) R. H. B.

Be pleased to send to me what instructions you have relative to the Detachment of the 41st. They are healthy and in good spirits. I shall need their assistance more than ever.

(Signed) R. H. B.

P.S. I had forgot to say that 60 of the R.N.F.L.³ Regt. had gone to Amherstburg by Land for the Squadron.

Copy, UKLPR, Adm. 1/5445, pp. 137–39. This copy was introduced as evidence in the court-martial of Lieutenant Robert H. Barclay.

1. *Miami* was a British gunboat on Lake Erie.

2. The enclosure was not found with this letter. Barclay is probably referring to Prevost's letter of 21 July 1813; see pp. 545–46.

3. Royal Newfoundland.

MASTER COMMANDANT OLIVER H. PERRY TO
CHRISTOPHER RAYMOND PERRY

U.S.S. *Lawrence* at Anchor off Erie
Aug 9th. 1813

Dear Father

I have this mornng. recd. your letter of the 26th. July and beg you to accept my thanks for the circumstantial detail of events passing in your quarter.— I have at length got my little squadron out, but am only half man'd and officer'd— I hear of about 90 men being on their way to join me this will not be half enough— I have made one short cruise, after the enemy he however retreated up the Lake in a great hurry—we shall be after him the moment those men arrive— I am pleased with co-operating with Genl. Harrison, he is the only officer we have of enterprize—

I intend writing you a long letter as soon as I get underweigh at present I am entirely overrun with business— Alexr. is well and is as smart a midn. onboard the vessels as any I have—will make a fine officer.¹ My love to all. I shall write in a day or two Your aff. son

O. H. P.

our force here is

Brigs	{	<i>The Lawrence</i>	20 Guns
		<i>Niagara</i>	20
		<i>Caledonia</i>	3 heavy
Schor	{	<i>Ariel</i>	3 light
		<i>Scorpion</i>	2 heavy
		<i>Somers</i>	4 light & heavy
		<i>Porcupine</i>	1
Sloop	{	<i>Tigress</i>	1
		<i>Trippe</i>	2 } heavy
Schoors	{	<i>Ohio</i>	1
		<i>Amelia</i>	1

ALS, MiU–C, Oliver H. Perry Papers. Addressed to “Chris. R. Perry Esqr., Chelsea Landing, Norwich, Cont.” A handwritten copy of this letter, evidently transcribed by one of Perry's siblings, had the following notation written at the bottom: “note by copyist *I cannot make out the name of the last vessel, The letter was evidently written in great haste—and I remember that when it was received our parents were very much depressed at his saying there were not half men enough, for, as they said, it required much to make him complain—”

1. Perry's younger brother, James Alexander Perry, served as a midshipman on board *Lawrence*.

The British Fleet on Lake Erie

By mid-summer, the situation of the British army and navy on Lake Erie had grown more desperate. Their fleet still lacked sufficient cannon, ammunition, and stores; the guns were removed from Fort Malden in order to fit out the new ship Detroit. The British

army's attempt to capture needed supplies from Fort Meigs in July had failed, and by August provisions were desperately low.

In addition to his own army, Major General Henry Procter was feeding his Indian warriors and their wives and children. Procter, who never really controlled his Indian allies, feared the consequences if he could no longer placate them with food and presents.

Lieutenant Robert H. Barclay's vessels were ill-prepared to cruise the lake for want of naval stores. However, he faced an even greater problem—an acute shortage of experienced sailors. His crews were completed with drafts of soldiers who knew nothing of sailing; many were French Canadians who could not even speak English.

While Perry was on the lake exercising his men and meeting with Major General William Henry Harrison to plan strategy, Barclay was still waiting for reinforcements. On 9 September, with provisions at Amherstburg nearly exhausted, Barclay's squadron left port for its inevitable encounter with the American fleet.¹

1. On British naval preparations on Lake Erie, see Drake, "Loss of Mastery."

MAJOR GENERAL HENRY PROCTER, BRITISH ARMY, TO
GOVERNOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE PREVOST

Sandwich
August 26th 1813

Sir

I have had the Honor to receive your Excellency's Letter of the 22d Inst. Captain Barclay was immediately acquainted that an officer and fifty or sixty Seamen were on the Way here. I beg to say that a more essential Piece of Service could not be rendered to us here by an active zealous Officer than to push them on by the quickest possible means for I assure your Excellency we are peculiarly in need of them, both Officers and Seamen. If I had not even received your Commands to communicate with your Excellency with the Frankness of a zealous Soldier, I should have felt it my Duty to expose to you whatever the Good of the Service made it requisite you should know. Your Excellency speaks of Seamen valorous and well disciplined. Except, I believe, the 25 whom Captain Barclay brought with him, there are none of that Description on this Lake, at least on Board His Majesty's vessels. These are scarcely enough, and of a miserable Description to work the Vessels, some of which cannot be used for want of Hands, such even as we have. I have the highest Opinion of Captain Barclay and have afforded him every Aid I possibly could. We have set too strong an Example of Cordiality, not to have it prevail thro' both Services. We have but the one Object in View, the Good of His Majesty's Service or Preservation of this District. Captain Barclay has, besides the Royal Newf'd Land, one hundred and fifty of the 41 Reg., better Soldiers these cannot be, but they are only Landsmen. I beg to observe that Sir James Yeo was over manned with prime Seamen, British. I have Reason to believe that the Indians will heartily oppose the Enemy and that we stand rather high in their Opinion, tho' they observe the Enemy's Fleet on the Lake, possessing the Command of it. Your Excellency is aware that the Indian Body is seldom disposable, never so, contrary to their opinion, or Inclination. Mr. Harrison has informed them of his Intention to advance, and they expect him; therefore no Influence will or can prevail on them, or any Part of them, to leave their Families; especially

whilst the Enemy can choose his Points of Attack, that is whilst he has the Command of the Lake. I will venture to offer my Opinion to your Excellency that as long as Captain Barclay, without Seamen, can avoid the Enemy he should do so. All my Ordnance is on Board except the Fields and in the Event of any Disaster to the Fleet, the Arrival of any Body of Seamen would be of no use whatever. Seamen should be pushed on even by Dozens. I shall send to have Conveyances ready for them, a few Hours gained is or may be of the greatest Consequence not only to us but to the upper Province. The Fleet once manned, one Flank secured I have no Doubt that a Body of Indians may be induced to move to the centre Division on a Prospect of being actively employed with the Troops. The Enemy's Fleet reconnoitered ours laying off Hartley's Point, three Miles below Amherstburg. They anchored off the Settlement twenty Miles below Amherstburg. Boats are collecting in numbers at the Islands. I have the honor to be with the highest respect, Your Excellency's Obedient Servant

Henry Procter
Major General
commt.

ALS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 679, pp. 494-99.

LIEUTENANT ROBERT H. BARCLAY, R.N., TO
COMMODORE SIR JAMES LUCAS YEO, R.N.

Private,
A Copy

September 1st. 1813—

My dear Sir/

We are now in most anxious expectation of being able to meet the Enemy who are still about the Islands, but have never shewn since their first appearance, what they are about I cannot imagine, every day to them is a loss not to be regained. I have not sent any thing to reconnoitre them lately except a Canoe (which is now out) fearing that from the frequent Calms, and their vessels being so well qualified to sweep they might take her, and increase their force at our expense.—

By dint of exercising the Soldiers on board I hope they will make a good hand of it, when they are backed by a few Seamen, I hope you will add to this gang from the *Dover*,¹ as they will be a small reinforcement of themselves however valuable even a small number is.—

As to our coming to Long point, it much depends on the motion of the Enemy's Squadron whether they chuse to fight us or not, for if they have made themselves works in the harbour among the Islands and take shelter under them we must remain and watch their motions; lest, that in our absence, they might take advantage of it and come here.— But I shall send a Transport the moment I can with safety, both for what Stores, and Guns there may be coming to me; and for provisions which are beginning to be very much wanted here.—

The quantity of Beef and flour consumed here is tremendous, there are such hordes of Indians with their wives, and children.—

The *Detroit* is a very fine Ship, but I fear with her Shores (for she has one under every beam) she will sail heavily: but at all events fast enough to ensure a general action if they run, and wish to save their small craft.—

The Officers and Seamen whom you send would much better be forwarded to Amherstburg by land, that is a certain mode, by the Lake in boats it is most uncertain.— I am sure, Sir James if you saw my Canadians, you would condemn every one (with perhaps two or three exception) as a poor devil not worth his Salt.— Capt'n. Finnis begs to be kindly remembered to you and Mulcaster, and he is sincerely joined by My dear Sir Yours most faithfully

R H Barclay

Copy, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 730, pp. 126–28.

1. *Dover* was a Royal Navy troopship; forty-one officers and men were sent from *Dover* at Quebec to reinforce the squadron on Lake Erie, arriving 5 September.

MAJOR GENERAL HENRY PROCTER, BRITISH ARMY, TO
NOAH FREER, BRITISH MILITARY SECRETARY

Sandwich
September 6th 1813

Sir,

The probable Consequences of any further Delay in sending an adequate Supply of Indian Stores to this District are of so serious a Nature, that I cannot refrain from urging the necessity of their being pushed forward by every possible Means: and that if unfortunately they should not have arrived in the Country, they may be procured, if possible, immediately from the North West Company for the present at least. His Excellency the Commander of the Forces is well aware that the scanty Supplies, and Purchases were barely adequate to the necessities of the moment. The long expected Supplies cannot any longer be delayed without the most frightful consequences. The Indian's and his Family's suffering from Cold will no longer be amused with Promises, His Wants he will naturally attribute to our neglect at least; and Defection is the least of Evils we may expect from him. There have not been among the Indians, with whom we are concerned, any Traders; consequently their necessities can be supplied by us only or the Enemy, who are not inattentive to any Circumstances respecting the Indians, that may be turned to their Advantage. I do not hesitate to say, that if we do not receive a timely and adequate Supply of Indian Goods, and Ammunition, we shall be inevitably subjected to Ills of the greatest magnitude. Mr. Robert Dickson,¹ to whose Zeal and Ability, which from Circumstances have not had full Scope, I must offer full Testimony, will have the Honor more fully to speak to the Purport of this Letter as well as another Subject on which we are fully agreed, the Indian Department. I have the honor to be Sir Your most obedient humble Servant

Henry Procter
Major General comg.

ALS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 680, pp. 26–29.

1. Robert Dickson, a fur trader, was appointed assistant superintendent of the Indians of the western nations in 1813. During the summer of 1813, he rallied and led the Indian troops in the vicinity of Amherstburg.

The Battle of Lake Erie, 10 September 1813

After a hard-fought action lasting upwards of three hours, Master Commandant Oliver Hazard Perry claimed a decisive victory over the British fleet on Lake Erie. His actions on that day, and the words he wrote announcing his victory, would be among the most celebrated in American naval history.

Perry's victory secured American control of Lake Erie for the remainder of the war. More importantly, it allowed Major General William Henry Harrison's army to advance in the northwest territory and reclaim the American military posts on the Ohio and Michigan frontier that had been lost the previous year. Because the British could not keep open their lines of communication and supply to the westward without a naval force on the lake, the American victory in the Battle of Lake Erie changed the balance of both military and naval power in the northwest.

MASTER COMMANDANT OLIVER H. PERRY TO
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

U.S. Brig *Lawrence*,
off Sandusky Bay, Sept. 2. 1813.

Sir,

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 & 25th of last month and again yesterday.

Owing to a severe Indisposition which confined me to my Birth 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 their 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.

It is said by some Deserters who have arrived at Camp Meigs from Malden that the small vessel chased by the squadron run ashore in her attempt to escape and was lost. I have the honor to be Sir Very Respectfully Your Obdt. Servt.

O. H. Perry

ALS, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 115 (M147, Roll No. 5).

CAPTAIN OLIVER H. PERRY¹ TO
MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON, U.S.A.

We have met the enemy and they are ours: Two Ships, two Brigs one Schooner & one Sloop.² Yours, with great respect and esteem

O H Perry.

Facsimile, DNA, RG45, AF7 (M625, Roll No. 76). Reproduced in Lossing, *Pictorial Field-Book*. The location of the original document is not known.

1. Oliver H. Perry was promoted to the rank of captain retroactive to the date of the Battle of Lake Erie.

2. The British fleet actually consisted of two ships (*Queen Charlotte* and *Detroit*), one brig (*General Hunter*), two schooners (*Lady Prevost* and *Chippewa*), and one sloop (*Little Belt*). *Lady Prevost*, a large schooner, was mistaken for a brig; both vessels are two-masted, but a brig carries square sails and a schooner fore-and-aft sails. The error was first recorded in the logbook of *Lawrence* when the British fleet was sighted at a distance on the day of the battle: "At 7 discovered the whole of the Enemys Squadron Viz, two Ships—two Brigs—One Schooner & one Sloop with their larboard tacks aboard to the W'd about 10 miles dist." (RNHi, William V. Taylor Papers, Logbook of U.S.S. *Lawrence*, entry for 10 Sept. 1813). At that distance, *Lady Prevost*, of about 230 tons, was mistaken for a second brig since she was larger and carried more guns than the brig *General Hunter*, of 180 tons. The error was repeated in subsequent reports, which were based on information in the logbook.

CAPTAIN OLIVER H. PERRY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

U.S. Brig *Niagara* off the Western
Sister Head of Lake Erie, Sepr. 10th. 1813
4 p.m.

Sir,

It 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 & 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

ALS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 6, No. 33 (M125, Roll No. 31).

LIEUTENANT GEORGE INGLIS, R.N., TO
LIEUTENANT ROBERT H. BARCLAY, R.N.

Copy—

His Majesty's late Ship *Detroit*,
September 10th. 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, 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, as a number of the Guns on 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 a head of us if possible and attempted to back our Fore Topsail to get astern, but that Ship laying completely unmanageable, every brace cut away, the Mizzen 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 rak-

ing 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 remain Sir, your obedient, humble Servant—

(Signed) George Inglis Lieutt.

Copy, UKLPR, Adm. 1/504, pp. 387-89.

LIEUTENANT ROBERT H. BARCLAY, R.N., TO
COMMODORE SIR JAMES LUCAS YEO, R.N.

Copy

His Majesty's late ship *Detroit*
Putin Bay, Lake Erie, 12th. Sept. 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 Amhersburg, 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 days 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 Genl. Proctor (whom by your Instructions I was directed to consult, and whose wishes I was enjoined to execute as far as related 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 Inst. fully expecting to meet the Enemy next morning as they had been seen among the Islands, nor was I mistaken, soon after daylight they were seen in motion in Putin Bay, the Wind then at S W, and light, giving us the Weather gage, I bore up for them, in hopes of bringing them to Action amongst 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 twelve Prs., the other a long thirty two and twenty four pr. 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 pr. Caronades useless, while she was with the *Lady Prevost*, exposed to the heavy and destructive Fire of the *Caledonia* and four other Schooners armed with heavy Guns like those I have already described.

Too soon, alas, was I deprived of the Services of the noble & intrepid Capt. Finnis, who, soon after the commencement of the action fell, and with him fell my greatest support. Soon after Lieut. 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 Lieut. Irvine 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 Capt. 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 defenseless 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, 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 onboard her. My Gallant first Lieut. 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 every thing that a brave and experienced Officer could do in a Vessel armed with 12 pr. Carronades against Vessels carrying long Guns, I regret to state that he was very severely Wounded.

Lieut. Bignell of the *Dover*, Commanding the *Hunter*, displayed the greatest intrepidity, but his Guns being small, 2, 4, & 6 prs., he could be of much less service than he wished.

Every officer in the *Detroit* behaved in the most exemplary manner. Lieut. Inglis shewed such calm intrepidity, that I was fully convinced 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 Lieut. Purvis, and the Military officers Lieuts. Garden of the Royal Newfoundland Rangers, and O'Keefe of the 41st. Regt. 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 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*; But the great cause of losing His Majesty's Squadron on Lake Erie was the want of a competent number of Seamen: until the thirty six arrived from the *Dover*, I had not more than ten or fifteen, and those you know Sir, were of the very worst quality, the rest consisted of Canadians, who could [not?] even speak English, and Soldiers, who except crossing the Atlantic, had never seen a ship.

Such was the means I had to defend the Squadron entrusted to my charge against a Force superior in itself and fully equipped and manned, and in a situation where an Action was inevitable, or probably we must have at last surrendered for want of Provisions.

Captain Perry has behaved in a most humane and attentive manner, not only to myself and Officers but to all the Wounded.

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 Honour 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

"Signed" R. H. Barclay
Commander and late Senr. Officer

Copy, UkLPR, Adm. 1/505, pp. 379-86. The enclosed list of killed and wounded is in Adm. 1/505, following p. 289.

CAPTAIN OLIVER H. PERRY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

(Copy.)

U.S. Schooner *Ariel*,
Put in Bay 13th. Sepr. 1813.

Sir,

In my last I informed you that we had captured the Enemy's Fleet on this Lake. I have now the honour to give you the most important particulars of the Action.

On the morning of the 10th. Inst., 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 10 A.M. the wind hauled to S.E. and brought us to windward; formed the Line, and bore up. At 15 minutes before twelve, the Enemy commenced firing; at 5 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 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 Lieut. Yarnall, who, I was convinced, from the bravery already displayed by him, would do what would comport with the honour of the Flag. At half past two, the wind springing up, Capt. 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 shew of resistance would have been a wanton sacrifice 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 45 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 the others conducted themselves as became American Officers and Seamen.

Lieut. Yarnall, first of the *Lawrence*, although several times wounded, refused to quit the Deck.

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

I have great pain in stating to you the death of Lieut. Brooks of the Marines, and Midn. Laub, both of the *Lawrence*, and Midn. 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. Midn. Claxton, and Swartwout, of the *Lawrence*, were severely wounded.

On board the *Niagara*, Lieuts. Smith and Edwards, and Midn. 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.

Lieut. 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*, Lieut. Packet, and *Scorpion*, Sailing master Champlin, were enabled to get early into action, and were of great service.

Capt. 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 Capt. 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 honour 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 Lieut. of the *Queen Charlotte*, and first Lieut. of the *Detroit*, were killed;— Capt. 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 I have not yet been able to ascertain; it must, however, have been very great.

Very respectfully, I have the honour to be, Sir, Your Obedt. Servant,

(signed.) O. H. Perry.

Copy, DNA, RG46, Records of the U.S. Senate, Committee on Naval Affairs, Petitions and Memorials, SEN 13A-F6. The original manuscript copy of Perry's letter to the secretary of the navy has not been located.

SAILING MASTER WILLIAM V. TAYLOR TO ABBY TAYLOR

U.S. Sloop of War *Lawrence*
Put in Bay— 15th. Sepr.—

Heaven has allow'd us, My dear Wife, to gain a most decisive victory & preserved your husband unhurt. I say unhurt because my wound was trifling, I scarcely felt it—a flesh wound in my thigh— The Action commenced on the 10 Sepr. on the British side at 1/4 before 12 on our Side at 12— the *Lawrence* alone rec'd the fire of the whole British squadron 2 1/2 hours within Pistol shot—we were not supported as we ought to have been— Capt. Perry led the *Lawrence* into [ac]tion & sustain'd the most destructive fire with the most [gall]ant spirit perhaps that ever was witnessed under similar circumstances— they observing us to be the flag ship directed their whole fire at us viz. Ship *Detroit* of 19 long 24's 18's & 12's *Queen Charlotte* of 19 guns carronades Brig *Lady Prevost* 13 guns Brig *Hunter* of 10 guns *Chippewa* of 3 guns & *Little Belt* of 1 gun

Judge the scene at 1/2 2 P M when 22 Men & officers lay dead on decks & 66 wounded, every gun dismounted carriages knock'd to pieces—every strand of rigging cut off—masts & spars shot & tottering over head & in fact an unmanageable wreck. I say at this time when not another gun could be worked or fir'd or man'd Capt. Perry determined to leave her— got a Boat along side haul'd down his own private flag which we fought under with the last words of Lawrence on it—Dont give up the Ship—& bore it in triumph on board of the *Niagara*—leaving Lts. Yarnell, Forrest & myself to act as we thought proper we at this time all wounded— about 10 minutes after he got on board the *Niagara*—we concluded as no further resistance could possibly be made from this Brig & likewise to save the further effusion of human blood as at this time they kept up a galling fire on us, agreed to haul down our colours— many poor fellows men as well as officers that lay wounded on our decks, shed tears of grief saying Oh dont haul down our colours— No ship my dear girl this war has been fought so obstinately & suffer'd so much as the *Lawrence*— their long guns carried shot through & through us—two shots pass'd through our Magazine—it was a narrow escape for us— When Capt. Perry assumed the command of the *Niagara* he found she had not lost a man kill'd or wounded—he immediately made sail & led her most gallantly into close action—sending Capt Elliot in the Boat to bring up the small vessels— this was a proud moment for our beloved Commander— he engaged the two ships & brig on one Side & a brig on the other & obliged them to haul down their colours in five minutes— soon after the other two small vessels haul'd down theirs & we all came to anchor & secured the prisoners— when Capt. Perry returned to the *Lawrence*,

every poor fellow rais'd himself from the decks to greet him with three hearty cheers—I do not ~~say~~ hesitate to say there was not a dry eye in the Ship

Lt. Brooks of Marines was kill'd early in the action—by my side— Midn. Laub kill'd— Midn. Claxton—severely wounded. Midn. Swartwout severely wounded— Lt. Yarnell wounded Lt. Forrest do—I will not mention myself— Mr. Hamilton [*Hambleton*] was severely wounded—this was all the officers on board except Capt. Perry & his brother—neither of whom was touched I forgot to mention Mr. Breese who likewise escaped with myself—total loss in our Squadron was 29 kill'd & 25 Wounded the British acknowledged a loss of about 45 kill'd & upwards of 100 wounded— Capt. Barkley their commander was severely wounded his 1st. Lt. kill'd— the Capt. of the *Queen Charlotte* Kill'd 1st. Lt. severely wounded & many other commissioned officers who I cannot mention kill'd & wounded— Lt. Turner—Mr. Almy—Mr. Brownell—Mr. Dunham are all well— I expect to go to *Erie* to day with the *Lawrence* & all the sick & wounded—where I will write you again— My love to our dear Parents Brothers & Sisters—friends & acquaintances—kiss my little children— I felt perfectly cool in action—my prayers were for you & my little children— God be praised that I was spared, to take care of you all— may I never lose that confidence which I placed in him on that day it animated me to exertion.— Heaven bless you

Wm. V. Taylor

The British were 10 guns & 200 men superior to us.

ALS, RNHi, William V. Taylor Papers.

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES TO CAPTAIN OLIVER H. PERRY

O. H. Perry Esqr.
Comg. U.S. Naval Forces
on Lake Erie.

Naval Department
Sept. 21st. 1813.

Sir,

Rumour 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.

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

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, SNL, Vol. 11, p. 93 (M149, Roll No. 11).

A Surgeon's Account of the Battle of Lake Erie

Dr. Usher Parsons, a twenty-five-year-old surgeon's mate on the Lake Erie squadron, found himself the only physician available for duty on the day of the decisive battle; the two senior surgeons were too ill with fever to attend. Dr. Parsons was an enthusiastic and competent physician despite his youth and lack of experience in treating battle injuries. Like many surgeon's mates, Parsons received his medical training through an apprenticeship rather than through college education. He completed his medical training under Dr. John Warren, an eminent Revolutionary War physician from Boston, in 1812. Realizing that prospects for physicians in the military would be good during the war, Parsons entered naval service. He was assigned to John Adams and was transferred with her crew to the lakes in 1812.

Dr. Parsons had to treat about one hundred sick and wounded on the day of the battle. He reported a remarkable rate of success in the treatment of the wounded. This was no doubt due in part to the doctor's insistence on boiling all drinking water, keeping hospital quarters clean and ventilated, and providing an adequate diet of fresh food for the injured. Moreover, there were so many wounded that Parsons had to delay a day or two before performing amputations, which allowed the patients time to recover somewhat from the trauma of their injuries.

Parson's letters to his parents, his diary, and his daybook of practice provide a remarkable glimpse into his naval career and the treatment of the sick and injured during the War of 1812.¹

1. On Parson's career, see Goldowsky, *Yankee Surgeon*.

SURGEON'S MATE USHER PARSONS TO WILLIAM PARSONS

Off Lower Sandusky, near Put In
Bay and near the head of Lake Erie
on board Brig *Lawrence* Sept. 22nd. 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 150 men (our ships crew) 31 of whom were sick previous to the action we had rising 80 killed and wounded, among whom ~~where~~ were nearly all our officers save the intrepid commander— On board all the others were about 30 killed and wounded. This vessel supported a destructive fire from the enemy's two ships on one side and a brig astern raking us ~~fore and aft~~ 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 15 minutes in making all three strike. It may seem misterious to one how some of the other vessels 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 ~~who was~~ 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 7000. Tomorrow they cross to Malden a distance of about 18 miles.— Since the loss of the British fleet the Indians have deserted Detroit after leaving 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 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 cruize 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,¹ dated August 28th.—

Remember me to enquiring friends Yr. affectionate son

Usher Parsons

Saml.² is steady & well.

ALS, RHi, Usher Parsons, "A Diary Kept During the Expedition to Lake Erie, Under Captain O. H. Perry, 1812-14." This letter was bound into the diary.

1. Dr. Abiel Hall, Jr., of Alfred, Maine, was a friend of Usher Parsons's, and the son of Dr. Abiel Hall, Sr., with whom Usher had studied medicine; Charlotte Parsons was Usher's sister-in-law.

2. Usher's older brother Samuel Parsons also served on the lakes.

SURGEON USHER PARSONS'S ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE¹

Surgical account of the Naval engagement on Lake Erie on the 10th Sept. 1813—
By Usher Parsons M.D.

Surgeon U.S. Navy—

Mess: Editors. To such of your readers as are unacquainted with the duties of a surgeon in a sea engagement and with the description of wounds that fall under his care, the following sketch may be acceptable—

The U. States' force employed in this action, consisted of 9 vessels with about 600 officers and men, and had been out of port four weeks, either cruising, or lying at anchor in Put-in bay, a safe harbor, among a cluster of islands, near the head of the Lake. The crews left port in good health, but shortly after were visited with an epidemic, which spread through the fleet attacking about 20 or 30 in a day. It answered the descriptions of a bilious remittent fever; was of short duration; except in a few instances, in which it degenerated into a Typhus; and in only one instance proved fatal. So rapid were the recoveries, that, of above

two hundred cases, only seventy eight were reported unfit for duty, on the day previous to the action. Thirty one of these were on board the *Lawrence*, and about the same number on board the *Niagara*, their whole crews being about one hundred and forty men each.—

About 12 O'clock on a clear pleasant day we met the enemy. The action soon became general and was severely felt, especially on board the *Lawrence*, the flag ship, two of the enemy's largest vessels engaging her at short distance for nearly two hours, part of which time the men fell on board her faster than they could be taken below. The vessels being shallow built, afforded no Cocklepit or place of shelter the wounded were therefore received on the wardroom floor, which was about on a level with the surface of the water. Being only nine or ten feet square this floor was soon covered which made it necessary to pass the wounded out into another apartment as fast as the bleeding could be stanch'd either by ligature or tourniquettes. Indeed this was all that was attempted for their benefit during the engagement, except that in some instances division was made of a small portion of flesh by which a dangling limb that annoyed the patient was hanging to the body. Some after this treatment were again wounded; among whom were Midn. Laub who was moving from me with a tourniquette on the arm when he received a cannon ball in the chest—and Charles Pohig a seaman brought down with both arms fractured was afterwards struck by a cannon ball in both lower extremities which he survived about one hour.

An hour's engagement had so far swept the decks that new appeals for surgical aid were ~~more~~ less frequent a remission at this time very desirable both to the wounded and myself for the repeated request of the Commodore to spare him another man had taken from me the last one I had to assist in moving the wounded; indeed many of the wounded themselves took the deck again at this critical moment. Our prospects nevertheless darkened; every new visiter from the deck bringing tidings still more dismal than the last 'till finally it was announced that we had struck— The effect of this on the wounded was distressing in the extreme—medical aid was rejected and little else could be heard from them than "sink the ship" "Let us all sink together"— But this state of despair was short. The commodore was still unhurt, had gone on board the *Niagara* and with the small vessels bearing down upon the enemy soon brought down the flags of their two heaviest ships and thus changed the horrors of defeat into shouts of victory. But all the wounded were not permitted to mingle in the joy. The gallant Brooks and some others were no more. They were too much exhausted by their wounds to survive the confusion that immediately preceeded this happy transition.

The action terminated shortly after 3 o'clock; and of about one hundred men, reported fit for duty in the morning, twenty were found dead, and sixty one wounded. The wounded [arteries] occupied my first attention, all which, except where amputation was required, were rendered secure before dark. Having no assistant, I deemed it safer to defer amputating till morning in the meantime suffered the tourniquettes to remain on the [limbs]. Nothing more was done through the night than to administer opiates, and preserve shattered limbs in a uniform position. At day light a subject was on the table for amputation of the thigh, and at 11 o'clock all amputations were finished. The impatience of this class of the wounded to meet the operation, rendered it necessary to take them in the same succession in which they fell. The compound and simple fractures were next attended to; then luxations, lacerations, and contusions; all which occupied my time till 12 o'clock at night.—

The day following I visited the wounded of the *Niagara*, who had lain till that time, with their wounds undressed. I found the surgeon sick in bed, with hands too feeble to execute the dictates of a feeling heart. Twenty one were mustered, most of whom were taken on board the *Lawrence* and dressed; and afterwards such as were lying in like manner, on board the small vessels. In the course of the evening, the sick were prescribed for, which was the first attention I had been able to render them since the action.

The whole number of wounded was ninety six. Of these, twenty five were cases of compound fracture; viz. of the arm, six; of the thigh, four; of the leg, eight; of the shoulder, three; and of the skull and ribs, three.— Of simple fracture there were four cases, viz. of the thigh, leg, arm, and ribs.— Grape shot wounds were three; and canister, four. The splinter and lacerated wounds, large and small, were thirty seven. There were two cases of concussion of the brain; of the chest, three; and of the pelvis, two. The contusions, large and small, were ten; and the sprains six.

Of the whole number there died three; viz. midshipman Claxton, with compound fracture of the shoulder, in which a part of the clavicle, scapula, and humerus, was carried away; also a seaman with a mortification of the lower extremity, in which there had been a compound fracture; and another with a fracture of the skull, where a part of the cerebral substance was carried away.—

The compound fractures of the extremities, were much retarded in their cure, by the frequent displacement of the bones, by the motion of the ship in rough weather, or by some other unlucky disturbance of the limb. In this way the bones in one case did not unite, until after forty days had elapsed, and in two or three other cases, not till after twenty five days.

The delay of amputations, already mentioned, had no effect on the success of the operations. Every case did well.

There were not more than two very singular wounds, or such as would be unlikely to occur in any sea engagement. In one of these cases, grape shot, four times as large as a musket ball, passed under the pyramidal muscle, without injuring the peritoneum. In the other, a canister shot, twice the size of a musket ball, entered the eye, and on the fifth or sixth day, was detected at the inside of the angle of the lower jaw, and cut out. In its passage, it must have fractured the orbital plate of the superior maxillary bone, the orbito-temporal process of the splenoid bone, and, passing under the temporal arch, inside the coronal process of the lower jaw, must have done great injury to the temporal muscle and other soft parts, lying in its way. ~~This subject was a Kentucky rifleman, and the loss of his right eye is rather calculated to spoil his sport.~~

The recovery of so great a proportion of the wounded may in some measure be attributed to the following causes.— First, the purity of the air. The patients were ranged along on the upper deck, with no other shelter from the weather, than a high awning to shade them. They continued lying in this situation for a fortnight, and, when taken on shore, were placed in very spacious apartments well ventilated.— Secondly, to the supply of food best adapted to their cases, as fowls, fresh meat, milk, eggs, and an abundance of vegetables. The second day after the action, the farmers on the Ohio shore brought along side every article of the above description, that could be desired. Thirdly to the happy state of mind, which victory occasioned. The observations, which I have been enabled to make on the wounded of three engagements, have convinced me, that this state of mind has greater effect, than has generally been supposed; and that the surgeon on the conquering side will, *caeteris paribus*,² always be more successful,

than the one, who has charge of the vanquished crew: and that it is of the first importance ~~to keep the mind as tranquil and cheerful~~ in such cases to soothe and cheer the patient as much as circumstances will permit.

Lastly to the assistance rendered me by a Mr. Davidson³ and Commodore Perry. The former was a volunteer among the Kentucky troops ~~under Col Johnson~~ and volunteered to serve on board the fleet during the engagement— The day after the action he ~~assisted me~~ rendered me the wounded every aid in his power and remained with them three months— And the Commodore's solicitude for the welfare of the wounded ~~was quite~~ seemed to equal what he could have felt for the success of the action.

Draft, RPB, Usher Parsons Papers. With slight changes, this paper was published in *The New England Journal of Medicine and Surgery*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Oct. 1818), pp. 313-16.

1. Usher Parsons was promoted to surgeon on 15 April 1814. He wrote this account about 1818 based on his notes and diaries.

2. *Caeteris paribus*, other things being equal.

3. Private Joseph Davidson served in Captain John Payne's Company of Colonel Richard M. Johnson's Regiment of Kentucky Volunteers.

Operations on the Detroit Frontier

American control of Lake Erie enabled Major General William Henry Harrison and Captain Oliver H. Perry to launch a major offensive against the retreating British army in Canada. Perry served as a volunteer aide de camp to Harrison and offered support to the army by assisting with the transportation of men and supplies in naval vessels and by providing cannon fire to cover army troop movements.¹

The British outposts of Amherstburg and Detroit fell without resistance on 27 September; the Americans then defeated the British in the Battle of the Thames on 5 October. The close cooperation between Harrison and Perry in these joint operations assured an American victory on the Detroit frontier and led to the breakdown of the British alliance with the Northwest Indian tribes.

1. Skaggs, "Joint Operations"; Skaggs, "And They Are Ours."

MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON, U.S.A., TO
SECRETARY OF WAR ARMSTRONG

H.Q. Mouth of Portage River
on Lake Erie 15th. Sept. 1813

Sir

You will have been informed from the letter of Com. Perry to the Sec. of the Navy of the Brilliant Naval victory obtained by him & the capture of the whole of the enemy's flotilla on this Lake. I arrived here the day before yesterday with a part of the troops from Seneca Town & this morning Genl. Cass has brot. on the remainder. Gov. Shelby has also arrived with his militia. We are busily engaged in embarking the Stores & Artillery & by the day after tomorrow the whole will be

afloat— Genl. McArthur will join me the day after at the Bass Islands with the troops from Fort Meigs & on the following night if the weather permits we shall sail for the Canada Shore. As soon as I have driven the Enemy from Malden & Detroit I shall despatch a detachment for the reduction of Macinac & St. Josephs & will expect your orders for my further movements. The upper part of the province of U.C. being cleared of the enemy, unless it should appear expedient to pursue the Indians the army under my command might move down the Lake to Long point or below it & cooperate with that under General Wilkinson. From my present impressions with regard to our affairs in that quarter I should if I considered myself authorized to do so immediately proceed to the Lower end of the Lake.

Com. Perry had out with him in the late action about 130 of my men, he speaks in the highest terms of their Conduct. Major Wood had arrived at this place with two Companies when the Com. returned to Putinbay, he immediately sent him a reinforcement of fifty men which were of great service in securing the prisoners. I have the honor to be &c. &c.

W. H. Harrison

ALS, DNA, RG107, Department of the Army, Letters Received by the Secretary of War, Registered Series, H-231 (M221, Roll No. 53).

MAJOR GENERAL FRANCIS DE ROTTENBURG, BRITISH ARMY, TO
GOVERNOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE PREVOST

Head Quarters of the Centre Division
4 Mile Creek 17th September 1813

Sir

With feelings of Sorrow and affliction I transmit to your Excellency a Dispatch from Genl. Proctor which I received last night and a copy of the answer I send him in consequence— This terrible disaster if not counterbalanced by a complete Victory on this Lake must eventually change all my dispositions and force me back to the Position of Burlington Heights— I shall now stop the sailors at Burlington until I hear from Sir James. Every exertion shall be used to provide General Proctor with provisions by land I have the Honor to be most respectfully Your Excellency's Most obedient and most humble Servant

Francis De Rottenburg
M. General

By mistake Your Excellency's letter which was forwarded from this yesterday was dated the 17th instead of the 16th

LS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 680, p. 78.

[Enclosure]

Sandwich
September 12th. 1813

Sir

With the Deepest Regret I acquaint you that the Squadron of His Majesty's Vessels* under the Command of Captain Barclay sailed at 3 O Clock P M on the 9th Instant to seek that of the Enemy**, and that on the 10th Inst. the two

Fleets were seen engaged between the Islands, about 25 Miles from the Settlement below Amherstburg. The Action lasted from twelve to nearly half past three, and I understand from Lt. Colonel Warburton who saw the Action from an elevated situation fifteen Miles below Amherstburg, that the Firing was incessant, and the Vessels appeared to be very near each other. The Spectators were fully impressed with the Idea that our Fleet were the Victors, but circumstances have since placed it beyond a Doubt, that the whole of our Fleet have been taken or destroyed. The Wind was fair for Amherstburg, the whole of the 10th. & the 11th Inst. no Accounts from or of Capt. Barclay, and on the latter Day, the vessels*** evidently under one Flag worked down the Lake. The Commissariat might have preserved this District, or a due Attention to the naval Establishment on this Lake. I have no neglects to upbraid myself with, that could have the slightest Effect on the Safety of this Country, tho' one is implied in your Letter, "not employing the *Queen Charlotte* and my Craft diligently in conveying Provisions from Long Point, at the opening of the Navigation." I beg Leave to observe in Answer that those from whom you received that Information, might have mentioned that the unfortunate Ship *Queen Charlotte* could not be used at the Period alluded to, for want of Hands, who were in the Craft employed on the Expedition to the Miami which has received the approval of His Excellency the Commander of the Forces. I take the Liberty of suggesting, the Expediency of occupying immediately an eligible Piece of Ground at Turkey Point, by Blockhouses connected by Picketing, that may be defended by from three to five hundred men. I do not see the least Chance of occupying to advantage my present extensive Position, which can be so easily turned by means of the entire command of the Waters here which the Enemy now has. A Circumstance that would render my Indian Force very inefficient. It is my Opinion that I should retire on the Thames, without Delay, preparatory to any other movement that may be found requisite, or determined on. I have written to Colonel Talbot to send to the Thames whatever Articles of Food there may be in his Reach, also to have the Road, as far as possible, repaired, thro' the Wilderness. I feel myself much at a Loss with Respect to the Indians. The Loss of the Fleet is a most calamitous Circumstance. Michilimackinac will require immediate attention. It is to be apprehended that the Enemy may make an immediate Attempt to pass up some of their Vessels to possess themselves of that Place, and some Vessels we must send to the upper Lake. Requesting to hear from you by Return of the Express I have the Honor to be Sir Your Obedient humble Servant

Henry Procter
Major General
commr.

Major General de Rottenburg

* *Detroit, Queen Charlotte, Lady Prevost, Hunter, Chippewa, Ariel*, two ships, schooner, brig, small schooner, Sloop, six Sail

** Nine sail, two Brigs carrying 20 32 Pound carronades each and two long 12 Pounders

*** Eleven

ALS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 680, pp. 71-74.

[Enclosure]

Head Quarters Centre
Division 17th. Septemb. 1813

Sir/

Major G. De Rottenburg received your letter of the 12th. Inst. yesterday evening. He directs me to ask in the first place whether the sailing of Captain Barclays Squadron to meet the Enemy at a time when it was so incompetently manned, was the consequence of a positive order to that purport from Commodore Sir Jas. Yeo, or the commander of the Forces, or whether that measure was adopted by you, and in that case that you will be pleased to state the circumstances or motives by which you was led to the adoption of so hazardous a measure, with the knowledge which you possessed of the intention to urge forward seamen, with all possible expedition and the assurance which you had received, that they were actually on their way—

Secondly I have Major General De Rottenburgs direction to say, that he does not clearly see the necessity or expediency, of your immediately retiring from your present position— There certainly may be reasons which you have not stated, or with which the Major General is consequently unacquainted, which may point more urgently to the necessity of such a movement, than he is at present aware of— But the View M. Genl. De Rottenburg is inclined to take of your situation as connected with the loss of the Squadron, is that, that event cannot affect you as immediately as to make any precipitate retrograde movement necessary— After an action of three hours and a half the Enemy's Vessels must have received so much damage as not to be in a situation to undertake any thing further for some time— This interval you will employ in looking well at your situation, in communication with Tecumseh, and the Indians, in ascertaining the impression which this disaster has produced on them, and in concerting with them the measures best calculated, to lessen the consequences of that disaster— concentrating on making such a disposition of your remaining Force, as may prove to them the sincerity of the British Government, in its intention not to abandon them, so long as they are true to their own interests— An officer of Engineers proceeds immediately to Long Point to construct the Block Houses you recommend, and such other defensive works as may appear to him to be required— Colonel Murray who has lately joined this Division of the Army, will also proceed to assume the command at Long Point— He will be instructed to call out the Militia—

With reference to the concluding Paragraph of your letter, I am directed to inquire what means we possess in vessels &c, by which to send assistance to Michilmackinac. Does the Enemy possess any vessels at present on Lake Huron, and would it be practicable to prevent their possessing the Narrows of the Sinclair, and thus to preserve the ascendancy on that Lake (Huron) the Enemy possessing that of Lake Erie? Would the Seamen now hourly expected be of any service, or may their progress be stopped? Do you wish the 10 24 prd. caronades intended for the *Detroit* to be sent on and to what Place? Your answers to these Queries and a full communication of every thing relating to your situation, intentions and wants, it is requested may be transmitted by the most expeditious means at your disposal—

(signed) J. Harvey
D.A.G.

(copy)

Major Genl. Proctor
&c &c &c

Copy, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 680, pp. 75-77.

CAPTAIN OLIVER H. PERRY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

U.S. Schoor. *Ariel* Put in Bay
Sepr. 24th. 1813

Sir

I have the honor to acquaint you that about twelve hundred troops were yesterday transported to a small Island distant about 4 leagues from Malden, notwithstanding it blew hard, with frequent squalls this day although the weather is not settled, the squadron will again take over as many more.— We only waite for favorable weather to make a final move.— I need not assure you Sir, that every possible exertion will be made by the officers & men under my command to assist the advance of the army, and it affords me great pleasure, to have it in my power to say, that the utmost harmony prevails between the army & Navy. I have the honor to be Sir Very Respectfully Your Obdt. Servt.

O. H. Perry

ALS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 6, No. 81 (M125, Roll No. 31).

CAPTAIN OLIVER H. PERRY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

U.S. Schooner *Ariel*
Septemr. 1813—

Sir

I have the honor to acquaint you, that on the 26th Inst, the commander in chief of the N.W. Army, and myself, in the *Ariel*, reconnoitered the enemys shore, and determined on the place to land the Army.

At 3 a.m. of the 27th. commenced the embarkation from the middle Sister (Island) at 9. the troops being on board, and in boats, the squadron weighed, and stood for the place of landing. At 2 P.M. the vessels anchored in a line (1/4 of a mile distant from the shore) about 1 1/2 miles to the Eastward of Bar Point, for the purpose of covering the landing of the Troops. At 45 minutes past two, those in the boats, landed without opposition, in excellent order.

Finding on enquiry, that the Enemy had evacuated Malden, the Squadron got underweigh, and anchored off the Town of Amherstburg, where the remaining troops were landed.

No opportunity offered to the officers under my command, to shew their Gallantry, but Sir, they evinced throughout, the greatest disposition to be serviceable in transporting the Army and rendering it, every assistance in their power.

The arrangement for the debarkation of the Troops, I had intrusted to Capt. Elliott, from the cordial assistance he received from every officer of the Army, and his own exertion and judgement, that service was most admirably performed. Very Respectfully I have the honor to be Sir Your Obdt. Servt.

O. H. Perry

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 6, No. 1 (M125, Roll No. 31).

CAPTAIN OLIVER H. PERRY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

U.S. Schooner *Ariel*

Sir

I arrived off Sandwich with a part of the force under my command on the 29th. Ult, and immediately proceeded with Genl. Harrison at the head of a Division of his Army to repossess Detroit. A considerable body of Indians were in, and about the Town, at the time of our crossing, but they fled without making any resistance.

The wind being favourable on the 30th Sept. I detached the *Niagara*, *Lady Prevost*, *Scorpion*, & *Tigress* under the Orders of Capt. Elliott, up Lake St. Clair in pursuit of the Enemy's vessels said to be loaded with the baggage and Artillery of the Enemy.

I shall proceed immediately with the *Ariel*, and *Caledonia* to the river Thames to cooperate with the Army. The other Vessels of this Squadron are employed in the transportation of troops, provisions &c for the Army. Very Respecty. I am Sir your obd. Servt.

O. H. Perry

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 7, No. 21 (M125, Roll No. 32).

CAPTAIN OLIVER H. PERRY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

U.S. Schooner *Ariel*

Detroit 7th. October 1813—

Sir

I have the honor to inform you, that I have returned to this Place, after having had the pleasure of witnessing the capture of the British Army, and the defeat of their Indians, by the Army under Majr. Genl. Harrison.

On the 2nd Inst. I proceeded to the mouth of the Thames and joined the Vessels that I had previously detached. On the morning of the 3d, on our Army's advancing, immediately stood into the River with the Gun boats, *Scorpion* & *Tigress*, & was soon after joined by the *Porcupine*, the only vessels that could cross the bar. They proceeded up as far as McCrea's under the direction of Capt. Elliott, in company with the Army. There, they were obliged to stop as the banks of the River were too high for their guns to be of any service. Since the capture of the Enemy, have been employed in bringing down the large quantity of ammunition and stores taken from them.

The Vessels not employed in this service have been transporting provisions, Baggage &c for the Army— Very Respectfully I have the honor to be Sir your obd. sert.

O. H. Perry

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 6, No. 131 (M125, Roll No. 31).

MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON, U.S.A., TO
SECRETARY OF WAR ARMSTRONGHead Quarters
Detroit 9th October 1813

Sir

In my letter from Sandwich of the 30th ultimo, I did myself the honour to inform you, that I was preparing to pursue the enemy, the following day. From

various causes however, I was unable to put the troops in motion until the morning of the 2nd. Instant and then to take with me only about one hundred and forty of the Regular Troops, Johnson's mounted Regiment and such of Gov. Shelby's volunteers as were fit for a rapid march, the whole amounting to about three thousand five hundred men. To Genl. McArthur (with about seven hundred effectives) the protecting of this place and the sick was committed. Genl. Cass's Brigade and the Corps of Lt. Col. Ball were left at Sandwich, with orders to follow me as soon as the men received their knapsacks and blankets, which had been left on an Island in Lake Erie.

The unavoidable delay at Sandwich was attended with no disadvantage to us. Genl. Proctor had posted himself at Dolson's on the right bank of the Thames (or French) fifty six miles from this place, where I was informed, he intended to fortify and wait to receive me. He must have believed, however, that I had no disposition to follow him, or that he had secured my continuance here, by the reports that were circulated that the Indians would attack and destroy this place upon the advance of the Army; as he neglected to commence the breaking up the bridges until the night of the second instant. On that night our army reached the river which is twenty five miles from Sandwich and is one of four streams crossing our route, over all of which are bridges; and being deep and muddy, are unfordable for a considerable distance into the Country— the bridge here was found entire and in the morning I proceeded with Johnson's Regiment to save if possible the others— At the second bridge over a branch of the river Thames, we were fortunate enough to capture a Lieut. of Dragoons and eleven privates, who had been sent by Genl. Proctor, to destroy them. From the prisoners I learned that the third bridge was broken up and that the enemy had no certain information of our advance. The bridge having been imperfectly destroyed, was soon repaired and the army encamped at Drake's farm, four miles below Dolson's.

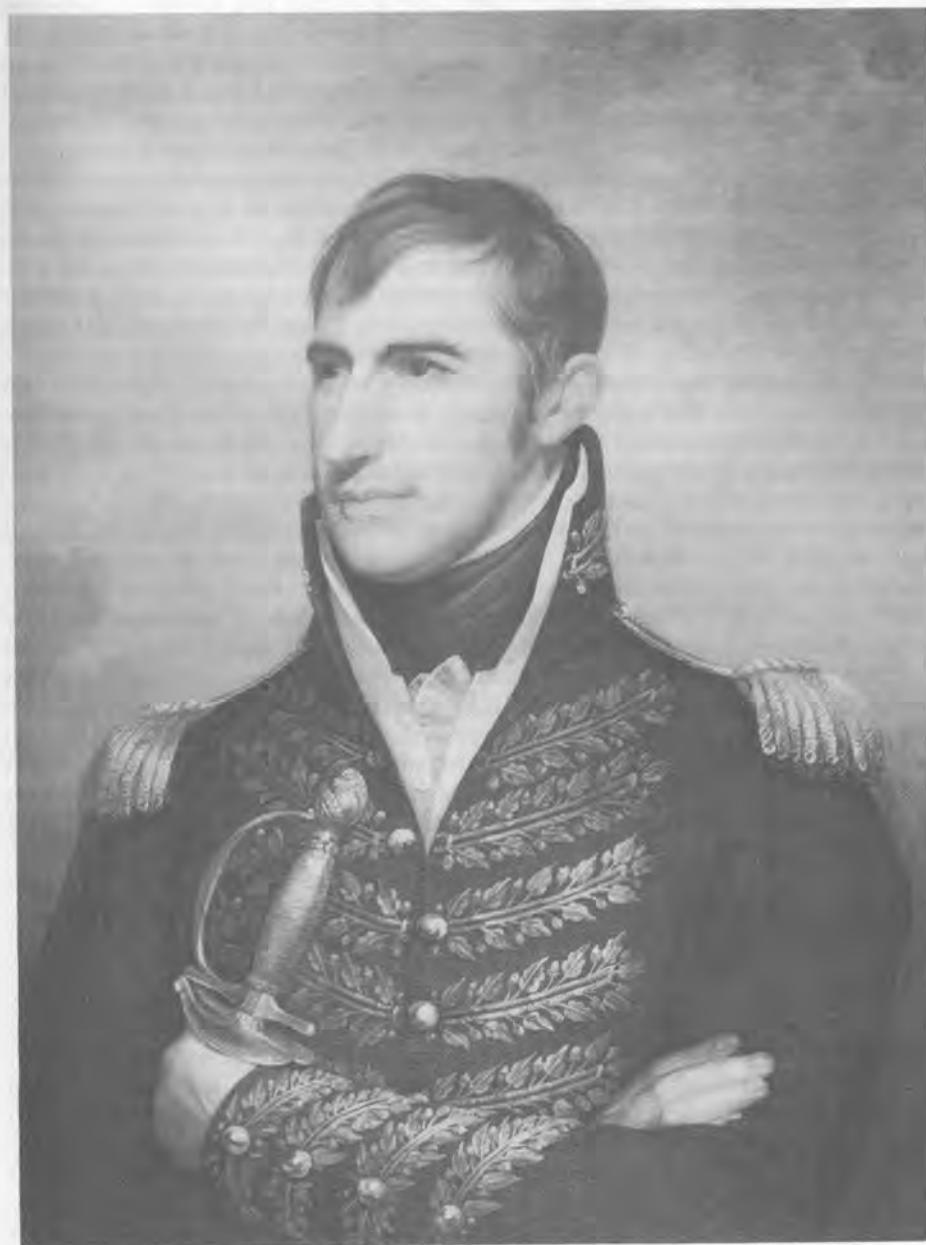
The river Thames, along the banks of which our route lay, is a fine deep stream, navigable for vessels of considerable burthen, after the passage of the bar at its mouth, over which, there is six and a half feet water.

The baggage of the army was brought from Detroit in boats protected by three Gun boats, which Commodore Perry had furnished for the purpose, as well as to cover the passage of the army over the Thames itself, or the mouths of its tributary streams; the banks being low and the Country generally open (Prairies) as high as Dolson's, these vessels, were well calculated for that purpose—above Dolson's however, the character of the river and adjacent Country is considerably changed. The former, though still deep, is very narrow and its banks high and woody. The Commodore and myself therefore agreed upon the propriety of leaving the boats under a guard of one hundred and fifty Infantry, and I determined to trust to fortune and the bravery of my troops to effect the passage of the river. Below a place called Chatham and for miles above Dolson's is the third unfordable branch of the Thames; the bridge over its mouth had been taken up by the Indians, as well as that at McGregor's Mills, one mile above,—several hundred of the Indians remained to dispute our passage and upon the arrival of the advanced Guard, commenced a heavy fire from the opposite bank of the Creek as well as that of the river. Believing that the whole force of the enemy was there I halted the army, formed in order of battle, and brought up our two six pounders to cover the party, that were ordered to repair the bridge. A few shot from those peices, soon drove off the Indians and en-

abled us, in two hours to repair the bridge and cross the troops— Col. Johnson's mounted regiment being upon the right of the army, had seized the remains of the bridge at the Mills under a heavy fire from the Indians. Our loss upon this occasion, was two killed and three or four wounded—that of the enemy was ascertained to be considerably greater. A house near the bridge, containing a very considerable number of muskets had been set on fire—but it was extinguished by our troops and the arms saved. At the first farm above the bridge, we found one of the enemy's vessels on fire, loaded with arms and ordnance Stores and learned that they were a few miles ahead of us, still on the right bank of the river with the great body of the Indians— At Bowles's farm, four miles from the bridge, we halted for the night, found two other vessels and a large distillery filled with ordnance and other valuable stores to an immense amount, in flames—it was impossible to put out the fire— two twenty four pounders with their carriages were taken and a large quantity of ball and shells of various sizes— The army was put in motion early on the morning of the 5th. I pushed on in advance with the mounted Regiment and requested Gov. Shelby to follow as expeditiously as possible with the Infantry; the Govs. zeal and that of his ~~troops~~ men, enabled them to keep up with the Cavalry, and by 9 O'clock, we were at Arnold's Mills, having taken in the course of the morning, two Gun boats and several batteaux, loaded with provisions and ammunition.

A rapid in the river at Arnolds Mills affords the only fording to be met with, for a very considerable distance, but upon examination, it was found too deep for the Infantry— Having however fortunately taken two or three boats and some Indian Canoes on the spot and obliging the horsemen to take a foot man behind each, the whole were safely crossed by 12 O'clock.— 8 miles from the Crossing we passed a farm, where a part of the British Troops had encamped the night before under the command of Col. Warburton.— The detachment with Genl. Proctor had arrived the day before at the Moravian Town, four miles higher up. Being now certainly near the enemy, I directed the advance of Johnson's Regiment to accelerate their march, for the purpose of procuring intelligence— The officer commanding it, in a short time, sent to inform me, that his progress was stopped by the enemy, who were formed across our line of march. One of the enemy's Waggoners being also taken prisoner, from the information received from him, and my own observation, assisted by some of my officers, I soon ascertained enough of their position and order of battle, to determine that, which it was proper for me to adopt.

I have the honour herewith to enclose you, my general order, of the 27 ultimo prescribing the order of March and of battle when the whole army should act together— But as the number and description of the troops had been essentially changed since the issuing of the order, it became necessary to make a corresponding alteration in their disposition— From the place where our army was last halted, to the Moravian Town, a distance of about three & a half miles—the road passes through a beech forest without any clearing and for the first two miles near to the bank of the River.— At from two to three hundred yards from the river, a swamp extends parallel to it, throughout the whole distance— The intermediate ground is dry and although the trees are tolerably thick, it is in many places clear of underbrush— across this strip of land, its left appayed¹ upon the river, supported by artillery placed in the wood, their right in the swamp covered by the whole of their Indian force, the British Troops were drawn up.—



Major General William Henry Harrison, U.S.A.

The troops at my disposal consisted of about one hundred and twenty regulars of the 27th Regiment, five brigades of Kentucky volunteer Militia Infantry under his Excellency Gov. Shelby, averaging less than five hundred men and Col. Johnson's Regiment of Mounted Infantry, making in the whole an aggregate something above three thousand. No disposition of an army opposed to an Indian force can be safe unless it is secured on the flanks and in the rear— I had therefore no difficulty in arranging the Infantry conformably to my General order of battle— Genl. Trotters brigade of five hundred men formed the front line, his right upon the road and his left upon the swamp— Genl. Kings brigade as a second line one hundred and fifty yards in the rear of Trotters and Chiles's brigade as a *corps de reserve* in the rear of it— these three brigades formed the command of Major Genl. Henry the whole of Genl. Desha's Division consisting of two brigades were formed *en potence*² upon the left of Trotter

Whilst I was engaged in forming the Infantry, I had directed Col. Johnsons Regiment, which was still in front, to be formed in two lines opposite to the enemy and upon the advance of the Infantry to take ground to the left and forming upon that flank the endeavour to turn the right of the Indians. A moments reflection however convinced me that from the thickness of the Woods and swampiness of the ground, they would be unable to do any thing on horseback, and there was no time to dismount them and place their horses in security; I therefore determined to refuse my left to the Indians and to break the British lines at once by a charge of the Mounted Infantry— the measure was not sanctioned by any thing that I had seen or heard of—but I was fully convinced that it would succeed. The American backwoodsmen ride better in the woods than any other people.— A musket or rifle is no impediment to them, being accustomed to carry them on horseback from their earliest youth. I was persuaded too that the enemy would be quite unprepared for the shock and that they could not resist it— Conformably to this idea, I directed the regiment to be drawn up in close column, with its right at the distance of fifty yards from the road, (that it might be in some measure protected by the trees from the artillery) its left upon the swamp and to charge at full speed as soon as the enemy delivered their fire.— The few regular troops of the 27th Regiment under their Colo. (Paul) occupied in column of sections of four, the small space between the road & the river for the purpose of seizing the enemy's artillery and some ten or twelve friendly Indians were directed to move under the bank— The *Crotchet*³ formed by the front line and Genl. Desha's division was an important point— at that place, the Venerable Governor of Kentucky was posted, who at the age of sixty six preserves all the vigor of youth, the ardent zeal which distinguished him in the Revolutionary War and the undaunted bravery which he manifested at King's Mountain. With my Aids de Camp, the acting assistant adjutant General Capt. Butler, my Gallant friend Commodore Perry who did me the honour to serve as my Volunteer aid de Camp and Brigadier General Cass, who having no command tendered me his assistance— I placed myself at the head of the front line of Infantry, to direct the movements of the Cavalry and give them the necessary support.— The army had moved on in this order but a short distance, when the mounted Men received the fire of the British line and were ordered to charge— the horses in the front of the column recoiled from the fire, another was given by the enemy and our Column at length getting in motion broke through the enemy with irresistible force, in one minute, the contest in front was over; the British officers seeing no hopes of reducing their disordered ranks to

order, and our mounted men wheeling upon them and pouring in a destructive fire immediately surrendered— it is certain that three only of our troops were wounded in this charge (upon the left however, the contest was more severe with the Indians—Col. Johnson, who commanded on that flank of his regiment received a most galling fire from them, which was returned with great effect.) The Indians still further to the right advanced and fell in with our front line of Infantry, near its junction with Desha's division and for a moment made an impression upon it.— His Excellency Gov. Shelby however brought up a regiment to its support and the enemy receiving a severe fire in front, and a part of Johnson's Regiment having gained their rear, retreated with precipitation— their loss was very considerable in the action and many were killed in their retreat.

I can give no satisfactory information of the number of Indians that were in the action but they must have been considerably upwards of one thousand— From the documents in my possession (Genl. Proctor's official letters all of which were taken) and from the information of respectable inhabitants of this Territory, the Indians kept in pay by the British were much more numerous than has been generally supposed In a letter to Genl. De Rottenburg of the 27th. Inst. Genl. Proctor speaks of having prevailed upon most of the Indians to accompany him— Of these it is certain that fifty or sixty Wyandot Warriors abandoned him.*

The number of our troops was certainly greater than that of the enemy—but when it is recollected that they had chosen a position that effectually secured their flank which it was impossible for us to turn and that we could not present to them a line more extended than their own, it will not be considered arrogant to claim for my troops, the palm of superior bravery.

In communicating to the President through you, Sir my opinion of the conduct of the officers who served under my command I am at a loss how to mention that of Gov. Shelby being convinced that no eulogium of mine can reach his merits—

The Governor of an independent state, greatly my superior in years, in experience and in military character, he placed himself under my command and is not more remarkable for his zeal and activity than for the promptitude and cheerfulness with which he obeyed my orders. The Major Generals Henry and Desha and the brigadiers Allen, Caldwell, King, Chiles and Trotter all of the Kentucky Volunteers manifested great zeal and activity— Of Gov. Shelby's staff His adjutant General Col. McDowell and his Quarter Master Genl. Col. Walker rendered great service, as did his Aids de Camp Genl. Adair and Majors Barry and Crittenden—the military skill of the former was of great service to us and the activity of the two latter Gentlemen could not be surpassed. Illness deprived me of the talents of my Adjutant General Col. Gaines who was left at Sandwich. His duties were however ably performed by the acting assistant Adjutant General Capt. Butler— My aids de camp Lt. O'Fallon and Capt. Todd of the Line and my volunteer aids John Speed Smith and John Chambers Esq. have rendered me the most important services from the opening of the Campaign. I have already stated that Genl. Cass and Commodore Perry assisted me in forming the troops for action— the former is an officer of the highest merit and the appearance of the brave Commodore cheered and animated every breast.

It would be useless Sir after stating the circumstances of the action, to pass encomium upon Col. Johnson and his regiment. Veterans could not have manifested more firmness— the Colonel's numerous wounds prove that he was in

the post of danger. Lt. Col. James Johnson and the Majors Payne and Thompson were equally active though more fortunate— Major Wood of the Engineers, already distinguished by his conduct at Fort Meigs attended the army with two six pounders— Having no use for them in the action, he joined in the pursuit of the enemy and with Major Payne of the Mounted regiment, two of my aids de Camp, Todd and Chambers and three privates, continued it for several miles after the rest of the troops had halted and made many prisoners.

I left the army before an official return of the prisoners or that of the killed and wounded was made out— it was however ascertained that the former amounts to six hundred and one regulars including twenty five officers. Our loss is seven killed and twenty two wounded—five of which have since died. Of the British Troops twelve were killed and twenty two wounded the Indians suffered most—thirty three of them having been found upon the Ground, besides those killed on the retreat.

On the day of the action, six pieces of brass artillery were taken, and two iron twenty four pounders the day before. Several others were discovered in the River and can be easily procured— of the Brass pieces, three are the Trophies of our Revolutionary War, that were taken at Saratoga and York and surrendered by General Hull—

The number of small arms taken by us and destroyed by the enemy must amount to upwards of five thousand— most of them, had been ours and taken by the enemy at the surrender of Detroit, at the river Raisin and Colo. Dudley's defeat. I believe that the enemy retain no other military trophy of their Victories than the standard of the 4th Regiment— They were not magnanimous enough to bring that of the 41st Regiment into the field or it would have been taken—

You have been informed, Sir, of the conduct of the Troops under my command in action—it gives me great pleasure to inform you that they merit also the approbation of their country for their conduct, in submitting to the greatest privations with the utmost cheerfulness

The Infantry were entirely without tents and for several days, the whole army subsisted upon fresh beef without bread or salt. I have the honor to be with great respect, Sir, your Humble Servt.

Will^m. Henry Harrison

* A British officer of high rank, assured one of my Aids de Camp, that on the day of our landing Genl. Proctor had at his disposal, upwards of three thousand Indian Warriors but asserted that the greatest part had left him previous to the action—

P.S. Genl. Proctor escaped by the fleetness of his horses, escorted by forty dragoons and a number of Mounted Indians—

LS, DNA, RG107, Letters Received by the Secretary of War, Unregistered Series, H-1813 (M222, Roll No. 7).

1. From the French term *appuyer*, a military maneuver in which the flank of a line of troops is supported by placing them alongside an obstruction such as a river, woods, or fortification.

2. A military formation in which a part of a line is thrown forward or backward at an angle to the main line.

3. The intersection of two lines of troops arranged at an angle to each other.

Perry Resigns His Command on Lake Erie

The bitter dispute between Captain Oliver H. Perry and Commodore Isaac Chauncey over manning the fleets hampered cordial relations between the two officers. Perry again asked for removal from the Lake Erie station; his request was granted by the secretary of the navy in the same letter that informed Perry of his promotion to the coveted rank of captain.

Chauncey protested this "indulgence" in a letter to the secretary of the navy dated 13 October. The letter reveals much about Chauncey's ideas of duty and personal sacrifice to the naval service and offers insight into his thoughts and opinions.

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES TO CAPTAIN OLIVER H. PERRY

Capt. O. H. Perry,
Comd. the U.S. Squadron,
on Lake Erie.

Navy Department
Sept. 29th. 1813.

Sir,

The President has confirmed the sentiments, which I anticipated, in my letter to you of the 21st. Inst. in a manner the most ample and expressive.

I have, by his direction, executed a Commission promoting you to the rank of 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.¹ 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.

In the event of your resigning the command of the Erie Squadron, it will, of course, devolve on Captain Elliot, who will communicate with, and receive the instructions of Commodore Chauncey, the Commander in chief, who will be furnished with a copy of this Letter.

Capt. Elliot 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.

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, SNL, Vol. 11, pp. 102-3 (M125, Roll No. 11).

1. In his letter of 20 September 1813, Oliver H. Perry reiterated his request to leave the Lake Erie station and asked for permission to parole Lieutenant Robert Heriot Barclay on account of the severity of his wounds.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 95

U.S. Ship *General Pike*
Sacketts Harbor 13th Octo. 1813

Sir,

I have this moment been honored with your Letter of the 29th Ult. and notice with regret that you have consented to suffer Captain Perry to resign his command upon Lake Erie and retire from the Lake service— altho Captain Perry is as much entitled to indulgence as any other Officer, yet the principal which it establishes will be found to be a troublesome one—for the moment that it is discovered that the Department is disposed to indulge all who are dissatisfied with the Lake Service it will be inundated with applications and I shall be left without an Officer of experience to support and assist me in the various duties of my command—

I have not been disposed to complain from a wish not to be troublesome knowing at the same time that it was not always convenient for the Department to order Officers from one Station to another—I have therefore been satisfied with such Officers as I have had, but which with very few exceptions were much too young and inexperienced for the important situations that they held, but if the few who have experience should be withdrawn my reputation as a Naval Commander will rest upon a very uncertain tenor.

The Idea which I have of Service and which I have cherished ever since I have had the honor to bear a Commission, is that an Officer has no right to question the propriety of an order which he receives from his Superior—it is his business and his duty to obey it—he has no right to select for himself a particular service or be dissatisfied with that assigned to him for it is to be presumed that the head of that Department under which he serves or the Commanding Officer who selects him has done it with a view of his peculiar fitness to perform the service assigned to him— with these impressions I have never asked a change in any order that I have ever received and I should have accepted of the command of a half dozen bark canoes on Lake Superior with as much alacrity as I did the command on these Lakes—

It is a fact that I believe is generally known amongst my Naval Brotherun, that few, if any Officers made greater Sacrifices than myself, both in a pecuniary point of view and in domestic comforts yet I have no disposition to complain— the Government of my Country has thought that I could serve them better upon the Lakes than upon the Atlantic— I am satisfied and altho I have not been fortunate in gathering Laurels, I have the consolation to believe that I have done my duty and I have certainly provided the means for others to reap the harvest— It will be recollected that when I received my appointment 13 months since, that the only vessel owned by the government of the United States upon Lakes Ontario, Erie, Huron, and Michigan, was the little Brig *Oneida*. Since that period there has been two fleets created, one of which has covered itself with glory—the other tho' less fortunate has been quite as industrious— I however acknowledge with gratitude that all this could not have been done but from the unlimited confidence and plenary powers conferred on me by the Navy Department for which I am grateful and my unremitting exertions shall be used to merit a continuance of such confidence.

If the Lake Service is a hard one I have not been exempt from its hardships and its privations, but have shared in common with the other Officers the fa-

tigues and anxieties incident to such a service, yet I should be ashamed to ask a removal before I had accomplished the object for which I was sent.

The removal of Captain Perry from Lake Erie will subject the Department to inconvenience if not loss. I mean in the final settlement of the accounts upon that Lake, for as Captain Perry had discretionary power most of the expenditures were by his orders and if he does not examine and certify to the correctness of the accounts before he leaves the station the Department will not only be subject to imposition, but I shall have much trouble in a final settlement of the accounts upon that Lake.

I have the highest opinion of the zeal and talents of Captain Elliott and as this opinion coincides with yours I shall leave him in command upon Lake Erie after Captain Perry retires— I have instructed him accordingly— Copies of my Letters to him and Captain Perry are herewith inclosed. I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir Yr. Mo. ob. St.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 6, No. 168 (M125, Roll No. 31).

Engagement Near the False Ducks

Following the loss of his four schooners in August, Commodore Isaac Chauncey briefly returned to Sackets Harbor to take on provisions. His new schooner Sylph, carrying sixteen guns, joined the American squadron when they set forth again. She had been launched on 18 August, only twenty-one days after her keel was laid.

The American fleet encountered the enemy on 11 September amid the False Duck Islands near Kingston. The British at first had the advantage, but when the wind changed Yeo ran for safety into Amherst Bay. Chauncey, with his dull sailing schooners in tow, chased the British squadron but could not bring them to action. The Americans had the advantage of the weather gauge, but Chauncey would not cast off his heavy schooners, nor would he risk taking his vessels into the unknown waters of Amherst Bay.

The encounter off the False Ducks was indecisive but is noteworthy for the degree of caution shown by both commanders. As the stakes in men and ships increased, neither Chauncey nor Yeo seemed willing to risk a battle in which they did not clearly have the upper hand—an attitude that would make a decisive naval battle on Lake Ontario unlikely.

COMMODORE SIR JAMES LUCAS YEO, R.N., TO
ADMIRAL SIR JOHN B. WARREN, R.N.

Copy

His Majesty's Ship *Wolfe* off the
false Duck Islands, on Lake
Ontario the 12th. of September 1813.

Sir,

I have the Honor to acquaint you that His Majesty's Squadron under my command, being becalmed off Genesee River, on the 11th. Instant, the Enemy's fleet of eleven sail having a partial Wind, succeeded in getting within range of their long twenty four, and thirty two Pounders, and from their having the Wind of us,

and the dull sailing of some of our Squadron, I found it impossible to bring them to close Action, we remained in this Mortifying situation five hours, having only six Guns in all the Squadron, that would reach the Enemy, (not a Carronade being fired) at sun set a breeze sprang up from the Westward, when I steered for the false Duck Islands, under which the Enemy could not keep the Weather gage, but be obliged to meet us on equal terms, this however he carefully avoided.

Altho I have to regret the loss of Mr. William Ellery, Midshipman and three Seamen Killed, and Seven Wounded, I cannot but conceive it fortunate that none of the Squadron have received any material damage which must have been considerable, had the Enemy acted with the least spirit, and taken advantage of the Superiority of position they possessed.

I found the Enemy this Cruize reinforced by a new Schooner of 18 Guns 4 of which are long 32 or 42 Pounders, this Vessel is 85 feet Keel, was intended for a large Brig, and was Actually laid down, Built and ready for Sea in Six Weeks.¹ In-closed is a List of Killed and Wounded— I have the Honor to be Sir Your most obedient humble Servant

(Signed) James L. Yeo Commodore

Copy, UkLPR, Adm. 1/2736, pp. 137-38.

1. *Sylph*, a schooner built by Henry Eckford at Sackets Harbor, was laid down 26 July and launched 18 August 1813. She carried 4 long 32-pounders and 12 6-pounders. During the winter of 1813-14, she was rigged as a brig, and her armament was changed to 2 9-pounders and 16 24-pounder carronades.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

U. States Ship *Genl Pike*
off the Ducks Islands 13th Sept. 1813

Sir

On the 7th at daylight the Enemies fleet was discovered close in with Niagara River, and from the southward made the signal and weighed with the fleet (prepared for action) and stood out of the River after him; he immediately made all sail to the Northward, we made sail in chase with our heavy schooners in tow and have continued the chase round the Lake night and day untill yesterday morning, when he succeeded in getting into Amherst Bay which is so little known to our pilots and said to be full of shoals that they are not willing to take me in there.— I shall however (unless drove from this station by a Gale of wind) endeavour to watch him so close, as to prevent his getting out upon the Lake.—

During our long chase we frequently got within from one to two miles of the enemy, but our heavy sailing schooners prevented our closing with him untill the 11th off Genesee River we carried a breeze with us while he lay becalmed to within about 3/4 of a mile of him when he took the breeze and we had a running fight of three & a 1/2 hours, but by his superior sailing he escaped me and run into Amherst Bay yesterday morning— In the course of our chase on the 11th I got several broadsides from this ship upon the enemy, which must have done him considerable injury as many of the shot was seen to strike him and people was observed over the side plugging shot holes; a few shot struck our Hull and a little rigging was cut but nothing of importance not a man was hurt.—

I was much disappointed that Sir James refused to fight me as he was so much superior in point of force, both in Guns and men having upwards of twenty Guns more than we have and heaves a greater weight of shot— I think his object is to gain time to add to his force and play a sure game, or as the boisterous season is approaching he may wish to defer an action untill he meets me upon the Lake when it is blowing heavy and to Leeward of him, when my small vessels would be off no service and he might succeed in cutting some of them off—

This ship, the *Madison*, and the *Sylph* has each a Schooner constantly in tow yet the others can not sail as fast as the Enemies squadron which gives him decidedly the advantage and puts it in his power to engage me when and how he chuses— I shall however endeavour to manage this little fleet so as to make it answer the main object for which it was created, even if I am not able to take or destroy the enemies Naval force on this Lake. I have the honor to be Very Res. Sir Your most obt. Humble Servt.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 6, No. 43 (M125, Roll No. 31).

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES TO COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY

Commodore Isaac Chauncey
Commanding the United States Naval forces
on the Lakes,
Sacketts Harbour

Navy Department
Septemr 19th. 1813.

Sir

Your Letters No. 73 to 82 inclusive have been received and your Official Account of the transactions during your efforts to bring the enemy to action, has been published as you will have seen.—

To the elements we must submit for it is not for valor skill and enterprize, to counteract their influence, or command success.

I would not depreciate the talents or the prowess of your antagonist, but an impartial world must impeach his candour and veracity, and unhappily there are those, who appear more disposed to give Credit to the enemy than to those, whose talents and lives are devoted to the protection of the national rights & honor.

The last private advices from Fort George are of the 7th. which place you in pursuit of the enemy with a fine wind, and every prospect of bringing him to close action.

Your Country and its entire Government have seen nothing in your conduct but proofs of zeal skill and intrepidity, and look with confidence to the issue of a combat which it is hoped and believed the fickle elements cannot much longer avert.

Your numerical force in Guns is inferior to that of the enemy, but in everything which constitutes real efficiency you are his equal and I trust will be found his superior.

The Schooner *Sylph* I am persuaded has concentrated more efficient strength than you lost by tempest and capture. Indeed the issue of your present cruize will determine the nature and extent of the force which it will be proper subsequently to employ.— Should you be victorious, your present force will be ample

for the future but should the conflict prove indiciſive, it will be proper to abandon the leaſt ſerviceable of the ſmall Veſſels and increaſe our force in Veſſels of a more formidable Claſs. For this purpoſe, I have recently and privately ſounded Meſſrs. Browns the builders on the ſubject of building at Sacketts Harbour in the leaſt poſſible time three ſloops of war from the draughts and moulds of the "Peacock" now nearly completed by them.¹ Their answer is prompt and deciſive, they will undertake it immediately & transport 400 Carpenters to that place the inſtant we engage. They propoſe to find all the materials for the Hulls complete. If it ſhall be determined upon, perhaps Mr. Eckford might be united with them, or undertake one of the Sloops. I await only the iſſue of your preſent cruize and your ſentiments on the ſubject.—

The "Peacock" is a noble and elegant Veſſel 118 feet Gun Deck & 32 feet Beam, capable of carrying 20, 42 pd. Carronades & 2 long 24s.— Her form combines all the properties of fleetneſs ſtability and accomodation.— I have ſent from this place by the way of Delaware and Jerſey, 45 42 pr. Carronades with a ſpecial view to this object, they will be in New York in a few days, alſo a few 24 pd. Carronades which I have deſired to be retained there for the Lake ſervice.—

Your Letter to Capt. Perry is certainly calculated to correct the impreſſions he had cheriſhed, and I truſt will have a good effect. By the expreſs mail of yeſterday from Pittsburg, a Letter from the Deputy Comiſſary of Ordnance has a poſtſcript in his hand writing on the cover dated the 15th. inſtant ſaying "Com Perry has captured Six British Veſſels."— I ſincerely hope this may prove to be true.

The Secretary of War will communicate to you his plans of operation, and I have only to requeſt a continuance of that prompt & zealous co-operation which has hitherto diſtinguiſhed your command.—

I truſt you will ſeize the firſt poſſible moment to convene a Court Martial for the trial of Capt. Leonard, and as ſoon as may be convenient, tranſmit to this Department correct Muſter Rolls of the Officers and Crews, of the ſeveral Veſſels under your Command, & an approximate eſtimate of the ſupplies for the Lake Service during the year 1814.— I am very reſpectfully Your Obedt. Servt.

W Jones

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, CLS, 1813, pp. 69–71.

1. *Peacock* was built by Adam and Noah Brown at the New York Navy Yard; ſhe was laid down 9 July and launched 19 September 1813, although ſhe did not make her firſt cruize until March 1814. See pp. 225–29 for more on *Peacock* and the ſloops of war built in 1813.

Conteſt for the Command of Lake Ontario

The movements of the two oppoſing fleets were watched with great intereſt from the ſhores of Lake Ontario. British and American military commanders realized that control of the water route was neceſſary before a ſucceſſful land campaign could be waged, and they urged their naval counterparts to action. Both fleets manuevered in an attempt to gain command of the lake.

Commodore Isaac Chauncey conferred with Secretary of War John Armſtrong at Sacketts Harbor before his fleet ſailed on 18 September. Armſtrong wanted to move troops from Nia-

gara to Sacketts Harbor for the planned aſſault on Kingſton and Montreal, and he requeſted naval protection for the convoy.

On 28 September, Commodore Chauncey engaged his oppoſent in a three-hour battle that came to be known as the "Burlington Races." In the encounter, ſeveral veſſels on each ſide were diſmaſted, but there were few casualties. The British ran for the protection of the batteries on Burlington Heights; the American fleet purſued them for ſeveral hours, but broke off the chaſe when the winds increaſed to gale force.

While the British repaired their damaged veſſels, the American army uſed the opportunity to convoy troops from Niagara to Sacketts Harbor. The British fleet ſlipped paſt Chauncey's blockade and ſailed for the eaſtern end of the lake in order to cooperate with the British army in protecting Kingſton and the Saint Lawrence River. On 4 October, the Americans captured four ſchooners and ſloops transporting British troops near the False Ducks off Kingſton.

SECRETARY OF WAR ARMSTRONG TO PRESIDENT JAMES MADISON

Sacketts harbor 21 Sept. 1813.

Dear Sir,

Commodore Chauncey left this place on the 18th for Fort George. It is obvious that Yeo will continue to reſuſe a battle. His object will be better answered, by waiting the campaign & hazarding nothing. I have therefore endeavored to impreſs the Commodore with the neceſſity of counteracting this policy—not by purſuing an enemy who eſcapes him on ſystem, but by convoying the troops immediately to this poſt & thus enabling us, to go to our particular object. Several ſmall meaſures have been taken to carry the maſs of the British land force to the weſtward. Even our errors at Fort George, have fortunately favored this plan & Prevot has ſo far given into it, as at this moment to have at Kingſton and Preſcot, ſomewhat leſs than three thouſand troops, eleven hundred of which only, are troops of the line. Prevot himſelf is again at Kingſton. The corps at this place is now healthy—well ſupplied and under a courſe of regular inſtruction. It improves daily and will render efficient ſervice. Gen. Hampton has croſſed the lake and will be ready to move by the 25th. I had directed him to carry the *Isle aux Noix*, St. John's &c before him, on his way to La Chine. He ſtates this to be impoſſible, as Lt. McDonough has not the command of the narrow waters on which theſe poſts ſtand. We muſt therefore, by a well choſe poſition on the plains, paſs up the enemy in their fortreſſes untill our main object is carried. Of Gen. Harrison I have heard only, that he would be ready to embark, on the 13th inſt. I have thought it important in various aſpects to hold Fort George. The works, (with a ſmall gariſon) as now conſtructed, will be ſufficient againſt an aſſault; & a ſeiſe, under the preſent circumſtances of the enemy and at the preſent advanced ſeaſon of the year is not to be expected. Gen. W. has authority to organize the friendly Indians and a Corps of volunteers, which, with a body of militia, will cover our own frontier. Gen. Dearborn's aid de camp is now here & will perhaps explain the General's wiſhes. To aſk a Court of enquiry, where no imputation has been made by any agent of the Govt. or officer of the army, is unreaſonable. Were the removal of an officer from one Mil. command to another, ſufficient cauſe for courts of enquiry—we ſhould have much (& very uſeleſs) occupation, beſides that of combating the enemy. We muſt be cautious therefore

of making a precedent, which will draw after it such consequences. I offer this as an opinion—& am most respectfully, Dear Sir, Your faithful & obedt. servant

J. Armstrong.

Mr. Ellicot was recommended by Mr. Jones—Mr. Roberdeau (who has been his pupil) & several others, highly respectable men from Pena. We have the use of his mathl. astronomical & Philose. apparatus. I never saw, nor had any other kind of intercourse with Mr. Ellicot—& was prompted only by his high character as a Mathematician. The Engineer Corps, or rather its head, Col. Swift, is much pleased with the appointment. If however there are substantial reasons against it—he may be set aside.¹

ALS, DLC, James Madison Papers, Ser. I, Vol. 53, No. 47.

1. The army was recruiting a force of eight topographical engineers in 1813. Isaac Roberdeau was appointed and assigned to Fort Mifflin; Andrew Ellicott, professor of mathematics at West Point, was a candidate but was not appointed.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

U S Ship *Genl. Pike*
Niagara River 25th September 1813

Sir

After I had the honor of addressing you on the 13th, I continued to Blockade the Enemy untill the 17th, when the wind blowing heavy from the westward, the Enemy having run into Kingston, and knowing that he could not move from that place before a change of wind, I took the opportunity of runing into Sackett's Harbor for the purpose of having a personal conference with Genl. Armstrong, the result of which determined me to proceede to this place for the purpose of protecting the Troops down the Lake and also to induce the Enemy to leave his station at Kingston to follow me which would enable me to get between him and that place and either force him to risque an action or suffer us to accomplish our object without it—

I remained but a few hours at the Harbor and left it at daylight on the morning of the 18th, but did not arive here untill yesterday, owing to continual head winds, not having laid our course during the passage. On the 19th I saw the Enemies fleet near the false ducks, but took no notice of him. I wished him to follow me up the Lake.

Genl. Wilkinson informs me that the last of the Troops will be ready to embark on the 28th when himself and suite will come on board of this ship and I shall proceed down the Lake with all the expedition that the nature of the service will admit of— The Troops at the Harbor will be ready to move by the time that we arive there and I calculate that the result of the contemplated operations will be such as not to disappoint the just expectations of our country

There is a report here, and generally believed, that Capt. Perry has captured the whole of the enemies fleet, on Lake Erie. If this should prove true in all its details (and God grant that it may) he has immortalised himself and not disappointed the high expectations formed of his talents and bravery

I have learnt from a source which can be depended upon that we did the enemy much more injury in our rencounter on the 11th than I had expected—I find that we killed Captain Mulcaster of the *Royal George* and a number of his men and did considerable injury to the ship as well as several of the other vessels.¹ It was truly unfortunate that we could not have brought the enemy to a general action on that day as I am confident that the Victory would have been as complete as that upon Lake Erie— I however have the consolation to know that every exertion was used to bring him to close action if we did not succede it was not our fault. I yet hope to have the proud satisfaction of communicating to you that Sir Jas. L. Yoe is my prisoner. I have the honor to be Very Respectfully Sir Your obt. Humble Servt.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 6, No. 92 (M125, Roll No. 31).

1. Commodore Chauncey was mistaken about the death of William Howe Mulcaster; five seamen were killed and thirteen wounded in that action, but Mulcaster was not among them.

COMMODORE SIR JAMES LUCAS YEO, R.N., TO
ADMIRAL SIR JOHN B. WARREN, R.N.

(Copy)

His Majestys Ship *Wolfe* at
the Head of Lake Ontario the
29th September 1813

Sir/

I have the Honor to acquaint you that the Squadron under my Command, having landed supplies for our Army, at the Head of the Lake, proceeded in quest of the Enemys Squadron, which was discovered, (eleven in number that of His Majesty's five,) to Windward of York yesterday morning, the Wind blowing strong from the Eastward. They immediately bore down in a long extended line, our Squadron keeping their Wind under a press of sail, at 12 OClock the *Pike* Commodore Chaunceys Ship being nearly within Gun Shot, our Squadron tacked in succession to close with the Centre and Rear of their line, the Enemy wore at the same time, and the action became general, at one the Main and Mizen Topmasts of this Ship were shot away, by which she became unmanageable on a Wind, and the *Pike* immediately hauled off and took her distance for her long Guns, I therefore put the Squadron before the Wind, for a small Bay at the Head of the Lake where he would have been under the necessity of engaging on more equal terms, this however he declined contenting himself with keeping at the utmost range of his long Guns, and on approaching the Bay he hauled off, leaving us in this state perfectly unmolested to refit the Squadron.

I have deeply to lament the loss of our Masts as otherwise we should in a quarter of an hour have brought them to close Action, but I can assure you Sir, that the great advantage the Enemy have over us from their long 24 Pounders almost precludes the possibility of success, unless we can force them to close action, which they have ever avoided with the most studied circumspection.

The *Pike* had her Main Top Gallant Mast shot away, and appeared cut up in her sails, and Rigging.

The very zealous and active support, I have received from the Captains, Officers, Seamen, and Soldiers, on this as on every occasion justly excites my warmest praise.

On the *Wolfe* losing her Top Masts, the Enemy directed their attention chiefly to disable the *Royal George*, but the steady and well directed fire from that Ship frustrated their design, she was altogether conducted by Captain Mulcaster, with his accustomed energy and zeal.

Captain Spilsbury of the *Melville*, Lieut. Charles Anthony, acting in Command of the *Moirra*, during the illness of Captain Dobbs also merit my mark'd approbation, which is likewise due to Lieutenants Cunliffe Owen, in Command of the *Sir Sydney Smith*, and Charles Radcliffe, commanding the *Beresford*.

I return a List of the Killed, and Wounded, and also a statement of the relative strength of the two Squadrons. I have the honor to be with respect Sir, your most obedient humble servant.

(Signed) James Lucas Yeo. Commodore

Copy, UklPR, Adm. 1/2736, pp. 154-57.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

(No. 85)

U.S. Ship *General Pike*
Off Niagara 1st. Octor. 1813.

Sir

On the 26th. Ulto. it was reported to me that the Enemy's Fleet was in York—I immediately dispatched the *Lady of the Lake*, to look into York, and ascertain the fact she returned in the Evening with the information that the Enemy was in York Bay—I immediately prepared to weigh but owing to a strong wind from N.N.E. was not able to get out of the River before the Evening of the 27th—and owing to the extreme darkness of the Night, a part of the Squadron got seperated and did not join before next Morning at 8 A.M.—On the 28th. the *General Pike*, *Madison* and *Sylph*, each took a Schooner in tow and made all sail for York, soon after discovered the Enemy's Fleet under way in York Bay, shaped our course for him and prepared for action—he perceiving our intention of engaging him in his position, tacked and stood out of the Bay—wind at East—I formed the Line and run down for his Centre,—when we had approached within about 3 Miles he made all Sail to the Southward—I wore in succession and stood on the same Tack with him edging down gradually in order to close—at 10 minutes past meridian the Enemy finding that we were closing fast with him and that he must either risk an action or suffer his two rear vessels to be cut off he tacked in succession, beginning at the van, hoisted his Colors and commenced a well directed fire at this Ship, for the purpose of covering his rear, and attacking our rear as he passed to Leeward—perceiving his intention, I was determined to disappoint him—therefore as soon as the *Wolf* (the Leading Ship) passed the centre of his line and abeam of us I bore up in succession (preserving our Line) for the Enemy's Centre—this manoeuvre not only covered our rear but hove him in confusion—he immediately bore away—we had however closed so near as to bring our Guns to bear with effect, and in 20 minutes the Main and Mizzen Top Mast and Main Yard of the *Wolf* was shot away—he immediately put before the Wind and set all sail upon his foremast—I made the signal for the Fleet to make all Sail—the Enemy however Keeping dead before the Wind was

enabled to out-sail most of our Squadron, as it brought all the Sail upon one Mast, he did not feel the loss of his Main and Mizzen Top Mast—I continued the chase untill near 3 O'Clock during which time I was enabled in this Ship (with the *Asp* in tow) to keep within point blank shot of the Enemy and sustained the whole of his fire during the chase, Capt. Crane in the *Madison* and Lieut. Brown in the *Oneida* used every exertion to close with the Enemy, but the *Madison* having a heavy Schooner in tow and the *Oneida* sailing very dull before the Wind, prevented those Officers from closeing near enough to do any execution with their Carronades. The *Governor Tompkins* kept in her Station, untill her Foremast was so badly wounded as to oblige her to shorten sail—Lieut. Finch of the *Madison* who commanded her for this Cruise (owing to the indisposition of Lieut. Pettigrew) behaved with great gallantry and is an Officer of much promise—Captain Woolsey in the *Sylph* was kept astern, by the *Ontario* which he had in tow, but did considerable exertion with his heavy guns.—

At 15 minutes before 3 P.M. I very reluctantly relinquished the pursuit of a beaten Enemy—the reasons that led to this determination, were such as I flatter myself that you will approve—they were these, at the time I gave up the chase this Ship was making so much water, that it required all our Pumps to keep her free (owing to our receiving several Shot so much below the Water edge, that we could not plug the holes from the outside) the *Governor Tompkins* with her foremast gone and the Squadron within about Six miles of the head of the Lake, blowing a gale of Wind from East and increasing with a heavy Sea on, and every appearance of the Equinox, I considered that if I chased the Enemy to his anchorage at the head of the Lake I should be obliged to anchor also, and altho' we might succeed in driving him on Shore, the probability was that we should go on shore also—he amongst his friends, we amongst our Enemies and after the gale abated, if he could succeed in getting off one or two vessels out of the two Fleets, it would give him as completely the command of the Lake as if he had Twenty Vessels,—moreover he was covered at his anchorage by a part of his army and several small Batteries thrown up, for the purpose, therefore if we could have rode out the gale we should have been cut up by their Shot from the Shore—under all these circumstances and taking into view the consequences resulting from the loss of our Superiority on the Lakes at this time, I without hesitation relinquished the opportunity then presenting itself of acquiring individual reputation at the expense of my Country—

The loss sustained by this Ship was considerable owing to her being so long exposed to the fire of the whole of the Enemys Fleet, but our most serious loss was occasioned by the bursting of one of our Guns, which killed and wounded 22 Men and tore up the Top Gallant forecastle which rendered the Gun upon that deck useless.—we had four other Guns cracked in the Muzzle which rendered their use extremely doubtful—our Main Top gallant Mast was shot away in the early part of the action, and the Bow Spirit, Fore and Main Mast wounded, rigging and Sails much cut up and a number of Shot in our hull, several of which were between wind and water and 27 Men killed and wounded including those by the bursting of the Gun—The *Madison* received a few Shot, but no person hurt on board—The *Governor Tompkins* lost her Foremast and the *Oneida* her Main Top Mast badly wounded—we have however repaired nearly all our damage and are ready to meet the Enemy—during our chase one if not two of the Enemys small vessels was completely in our power, if I could have

been satisfied with so partial a victory, but I was so sure of the whole that I passed them unnoticed, by which means they finally escaped—

The Gale continued until last Night, but the Wind still blows from the Eastward—I thought it important to communicate with General Wilkinson to ascertain when he meant to move with the Army—I therefore run off this place for that purpose and he thinks that the public service will be promoted by my watching Sir James at the head of the Lake and if possible prevent his return to Kingston, while he proceeds with the Army for Sacketts Harbor, I shall therefore proceed immediately in quest of the Enemy.—

I have great pleasure in acknowledging the assistance I received from Captain Sinclair¹ during our Chase in using his best exertions to bring this Ship into close action, the other officers and Men behaved to my perfect satisfaction, and were extremely anxious to close with the Enemy even singly, and if he ever gives us an opportunity for close action, they will show that they are not inferior to any of their Countrymen. I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir Yr. Mo. Ob. St.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 6, No. 115 (M125, Roll No. 31). The enclosed list of killed and wounded on board *General Pike* has not been reproduced here.

1. Arthur Sinclair was promoted to captain on 24 July 1813.

COMMODORE SIR JAMES LUCAS YEO, R.N., TO
GOVERNOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE PREVOST

Sir Sidney Kingston
7th. Octr. 1813.

Sir,

The Courier being on the point of going off I have only time to announce to Your Excellency the arrival of the Squadron off Collinses Bay in the Bay of Cante, where I have left them for the purpose of protecting Kingston to the Westward, and ready to go down either Channel to the Eastd. as circumstances may make necessary.

It is with much regret I find the Convoy Captured by the Enemy's Squadron—particularly as it proceeded from the obstinacy or stupidity of Lieutt. Macklean who instead of keeping in with our shore as he was ordered & was recommended the evening he was captured—stood over to the Real Duck Islands and the wind coming [from] the NNE he could not regain his own shore.

The *Enterprize* which was the worst sailing Vessel, came in safe— she was in tow of the *Hamilton* at the time they saw the Enemy & recommended going Lieutt. Macklean to go inside the False Ducks—or be cast off—which they did & had they all followed his example, would have escaped also.

General de Rottenburg will have informed Your Excellency of his motive for himself & the squadron coming down the Lake—I left him at the Head of the Lake on the 5th. in the Evening.

Colonel Drummond with his party will be here this Evening.

I am doing every thing in my power to get as many Gun-Boats ready as possible & shall man them from the squadron until the Seamen arrive.

Your letter to me left this for York, four hours before my arrival. I have the Honor to remain with respect Sir Your Excellency's Most obedient humble Servant.

James Lucas Yeo

ALS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 731, pp. 5-7.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 91

U.S. Ship *General Pike*—
Sacketts Harbor 8 Octo. 1813

Sir

As soon as the last of the Flotilla with the Troops cleared the Niagara I proceeded in quest of the Enemy—on 2d inst. at 10 a.m. discovered him steering a course for Niagara with Studding sails and all sails set—Wind from the South & Westward, we made all sail in chace but as soon as we shot out from the Land so that he could fairly make us out he took in Studdingsails and hauled upon a wind to the Westward and made all sail from us the Wind being light all day we made but little progress against the Current and at Sun down the Enemy was off the 20 Mile Creek and had evidently gained considerably from us, during the night the Wind continued so light that we altered our position but very little and at day light on the 3d. saw the Enemy at anchor close in with the Land between the 12 and 20 Mile Creek as soon as he saw us he weighed and made all sail to the Westward. Wind from South to South West and squally I made Sail in chase and continued the chase the whole day it blowing very heavy in Squalls— at Sundown we could barely make him out from the Mast head when he appeared nearly up to the Head of the Lake it continued squally, with rain and the Night very dark— at day-light on the 4th hazy could see nothing of the Enemy—continued working up for the head of the Lake, towards Meridian it became calm I ordered the *Lady of the Lake* to sweep up to Burlington Bay and ascertain whether the Fleet was there— at half past 9 P.M. She returned with information that the fleet was not there. Saw but two Gun Boats— It struck me at once that he had availed himself of the darkness of the preceding night and had either run for Kingston or down the Lake, for the purpose of intercepting the Flotilla with the Army, I therefore made all sail and shaped my course for the Ducks, with a view of intercepting him or his prizes if he should have made any. The Wind increased to a strong gale from the Northward and Westward and continued during the whole day on the 5th we therefore made a great run for at 1 P.M. we passed Long Point— at 3 discovered 7 Sail near the False Ducks presuming them to be the Fleet made Sail in chase at 4 made them out to be Sloops and Schooners I made the Signal for the *Sylph* and the *Lady of the Lake* to cast off their Tow and chace N.E. soon after perceiving the Enemy seperating on different Tacks, I cast off the *Governor Tompkins* from this Ship, gave the squadron in charge of Capt. Crane and made all sail in chase, at 5 the Enemy finding us to gain fast upon him and one of his Gun vessels sailing much worse than the rest he took the people out and set her on fire at Sundown, when opposite the real ducks, the *Hamilton* (late *Growler*) *Confiance* (late *Julia*) and *Mary Ann* struck to

us—the *Sylph* soon after brought down the *Drummond* cutter rigged—the *Lady Gore* run into the Ducks, but the *Sylph* (which was left to watch her) took possession of her early the next morning—the *Enterprize* a small Schooner is the only one that escaped and she owed her safety to the darkness of the Night.

Finding much difficulty in shifting the prisoners, owing to the smallness of our boats and a heavy Sea I determined to take the prizes in tow and run for this place and land the prisoners and Troops that I had on board we arrived here at day light— on the 6th the *Lady of the Lake* having towed one of the prizes in I dispatched her immediately to cruise between the real and False Ducks She returned the same afternoon, having discovered the Enemy's Squadron going into Kingston.—

I have repaired the principal damage sustained by this Ship in the action on the 28th. Ulto. and have put a new Fore mast into the *Governor Tompkins*— we are now ready and waiting the movement of the Army which is contemplated will leave here on the 10th.

The vessels captured on the 5th. are Gun vessels mounting from 1 to 3 Guns each with Troops from the head of the Lake (but last from York) bound to Kingston— We learn't from the Prisoners that the Enemy was very much cut up in their Hulls and Spars and a great many men killed and wounded particularly on board of the *Wolf* and *Royal George*. I inclose herewith a List of the prisoners taken on the 5th. I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir yr. Mo. Obt. St.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 6, No. 147 (MI25, Roll No. 31).

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 92

U.S. Ship *General Pike*
Sacketts Harbor. 8th Octo. 1813

Sir

Your Letter of the 19th Ulto.¹ conveying to me the undiminished confidence of yourself and government was truly gratefull to my feelings, particularly at this time, and will stimulate to still greater exertions, (if greater was possible) for the accomplishment of the object and wishes of the Executive, altho' an Officer may be conscius himself of having done all that it was possible for him to do in the execution of his duty, yet he may fall far short of the expectations and wishes of his Employers, consequently suffer (tho' innocently) in his reputation.—

Fifteen years of the best part of my life has been devoted to the Service of my Country, the remaining years and the small portion of talents that I possess, with life itself, is still at her service and if I am so fortunate as to execute the various duties intrusted to me by the Government of my Country to its satisfaction, it is immaterial what the opinions of the opposition may be with respect to me and my conduct—

I am still in hopes to be able to bring the Enemy to close action, if I do, I am confident of success— a few days must determine— I have no idea, that Sir

James will come out and fight me upon the open Lake, but in a few days I shall take a possition for the purpose of covering the Troops in landing near Kingston which I think will induce the British Commodore to risk an action in which the Supremacy of this Lake must be determined— if I am as successfull as I hope to be we have force enough— but if the Enemy should be triumphant he not only destroys this Fleet, but preserves Kingston, which will enable him to encrease his present force so, as to preserve his ascendancy upon the Lake— but if any circumstance should prevent a meeting of the Two Fleets this Fall, and the Enemy should retain possession of Kingston it would be necessary for us to build a sufficient number of Vessels to meet him in the Spring upon equal terms,—to do this we must build vessels of an equal class— From the best information that I can get, there is materials prepared at Kingston for three vessels— Two of them are in some state of forwardness,—one of these Vessels is to be a Frigate— the length of her keel obtained from various sources is 150 feet—a part of her frame is already raised— the other two are to be 20 Gun Ships or Brigs.

Altho' I have the highest opinion of Messrs. A. & N. Brown—yet as Mr. Eckford has built 4 vessels at this place, and has become acquainted with the resources and people of this part of the Country, I think that he could have built sooner, and perhaps cheaper than any other Man, and as to his talents as a Ship Carpenter I am bold to say, that there is not his equal in the U. States, or perhaps in the World— his exertions here was unexampled— the *Madison* was built in 45 working days in a new Country, where every thing was transported from New York except the Timber— The *General Pike* would have been launched in 40 days, except from the circumstance of my being obliged to send Mr. Eckford with 35 of his best workmen to Black Rock where he rebuilt and fitted out five vessels in less than 30 days,—returned to this place and launched the *Pike* in 62 days from the time her keel was laid— The *Sylph* a Schooner of 340 Tons was built in 21 days—

Such exertions on the part of Mr. Eckford, I should humbly hope would entitle him to a share of public patronage and from your known liberality I trust that you will at least make him an Offer, as it must be extremely mortifying to him to see others preferred after his best exertions had been used to obtain the confidence of his government—

With respect to Captain Leonard I do assure you Sir, that I am as anxious as he possibly can be, to bring him to trial, and not one moment shall be lost in doing so, whenever it will not interfere with the public service, a few weeks cannot make so great a difference to him—the cruising Season is almost over— when the trial can take place without injury to the public service.— In fact it may be convenient to convene a Court when the Squadron next returns to Port—if so it shall be done.

Muster Rolls shall be forwarded to the Department, as soon as they can be made out—as also estimates for the ensuing year— I have the honor to be very Respectfully Sir Yr. Ob. Hbe. St.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 6, No. 146 (MI25, Roll No. 31).

1. See pp. 581–82.

Joint Operations on the Saint Lawrence River

The army's campaign against Kingston and Montreal seemed doomed from the start. Delays postponed the embarkation of the troops until mid-October, a time when early winter storms made navigation uncertain. Secretary of War John Armstrong tried to direct the attack from Sackets Harbor, but he could not extract cooperation between his two commanders, Major General Wade Hampton on Lake Champlain and Major General James Wilkinson on Lake Ontario. Even the objective of the campaign was still undecided when the army embarked troops on the Saint Lawrence River in mid-October.

Commodore Isaac Chauncey was angered when he learned that the army had finally determined to attack Montreal instead of Kingston (which had been the original objective of the 1813 campaign). A reduction of the British naval base at Kingston would benefit the navy the following season, but an attack on Montreal offered no such advantage. Chauncey objected to the navy's being used as a mere transport service for the army with little role in strategic planning.

The American armies did not fare well in the late fall season. General Hampton's division, on its movement from Plattsburg, was defeated in the Battle of Chauteauguay on 25–26 October. General Wilkinson's army was attacked by British vessels at French Creek on 1 November and was defeated in the Battle of Chrysler's Farm ten days later. These setbacks ended the campaign on the Saint Lawrence River for the year.

SECRETARY OF WAR ARMSTRONG TO PRESIDENT JAMES MADISON

Sackets harbor
17th Oct. 1813.

Dear Sir,

Our troops left Fort George for this place under the command of Gen. Boyd on the 30th ult. On the 3d. instant the enemy had notice of this movement. On the 9th. after burning his surplus stores & baggage, he began his march for Burlington bay, which he reached on the night of the 11th & whence, it is said, he has arrived at Kingston, by the bay of Quanta, with 1200 sick and convalescent and 1500 effective rank & file. The whole of Boyd's division is not yet here! With nine days start of the enemy, what might not have been done? At Kingston, we shall no longer find him naked & napping. He is sufficiently awake to our designs and sufficiently strong to make an obstinate resistance. Before De Rottenberg's arrival, his whole regular force did not exceed 1200 men. What we do now at this point, must be done by hard blows, perhaps by tedious operations. Frost, hail and snow admonish us against the latter. To reinstate our superiority of force, Hampton's Division may be brought up to join us—but this also would produce delay & compel us to abandon the other and better object below. Under these circumstances it remains to choose whether we shall attempt Kingston by assault or proceed directly to Montreal. This will be decided at Grenadier Island, whither the first division of the army sailed yesterday. The second would have followed to-day but for the intervention of a most violent storm. Wilkinson is indisposed, but better than he has been.

I have received two letters from Gen. Williams wishing employment in the Creek war. This arrangement would I think be very useful. The British fleet hav-

ing gone to Halifax, there is no probability that he will be wanted on the Seaboard. I should accordingly have ordered him on the south western service, had I been sure that it would have entirely consersted with your arrangements. If under these he cannot be first, he may perhaps be second. Should this suggestion be approved, it would save time were he informed directly of it. I am Sir, with the highest respect, Your most obedient & faithful servant

John Armstrong

ALS, DLC, James Madison Papers, Ser. I, Vol. 53, No. 66.

COMMODORE SIR JAMES LUCAS YEO, R.N., TO
GOVERNOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE PREVOST

His Majesty's Ship *Wolfe*
at Kingston 17th. October 1813

Sir/

I have had the Honor to receive your Excellencys Letter of the 14th. Inst. as also seen your communication to Major General De Rottenburgh, by which I perceive your anxiety that every effort should be made by the Squadron to stop and defeat the Enemys Flotilla going down the St. Lawrence.

I have therefore (as the only alternative left to accomplish that object) ordered such part of the Squadron, as can act in the River, down to the East End of long or Wolfe Island, until all the Gun Boats, can be collected from Prescott, as that narrow Channel properly Blockaded, will in my opinion leave the Navigation as safe as if the Gun Boats were with the Convoys, that is for a few days until we can be assured of the Enemys real intention, for if they go down the River, it would be necessary to have all the Gun Boats, collected and ready to follow them up. I have consulted every Pilot as to the practicability of the two Ships being of any use in the narrow Waters, and they all agree that they can go down the River to Prescott, with a fair Wind, but that, there is not room to manoeuvre or Work them in the narrow Channel, I therefore do not like to risk them unless the Enemys Squadron go down, in which case they are all ready to follow, or to do their utmost in repeling the Enemy on an Attack on this place.

It is with the greatest reluctance I divide the Squadron, and nothing but your Excellencys pointed Instructions on that head could have induced me to do it, as I have a strong presentiment that Kingston is the place they will Attack, particularly if they hear that we have divided our force—or they may take advantage of it and go up to York, these being my sentiments, I request your Excellency will explicitly make known to me your opinion as to the disposition I have made that any other arrangement may be made without delay.

I am both surprised and disappointed at Captain Barclays not having written or dictated a line on the Subject of his Action.

Your Excellency having in your note of the 19th. of September requested me to make known to you my unreserved sentiments upon subjects of Public concerns, was my reason for informing you of the Shipwrights leaving the Yard, as I am convinced that unless some effort is made to retain those we have, and obtain a number of others to join,—the present force of the Yard is very inadequate to the service they have to perform, as the Total Number of Shipwrights

now Employed in the Yard only amounts to fifty four. I have the Honor to be with respect Sir, your Excellency's most obedient humble servant

James Lucas Yeo Commodore

P.S. 10 P.M. a Man has this moment returned from Sackets Harbour by whom we have received such information, as to make it more necessary than ever keeping the Squadron together a chain of signals post are Established between this and the East End of long Island, [and] also one on the Island opposite Kingston, I therefore have no doubt but that I shall receive any information of the Enemys movements in sufficient time to repair to any Point

J. L. Y.

LS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 731, pp. 47-51.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 101

U States Ship *Genl Pike*
off Stony Island 30th October 1813

Sir

By request of Majr. General Wilkinson, I visited him yesterday at his Quarters on *Grenidear Island* for the purpose of making final arrangements as to the co-operation of the Fleet, with the Army, in its operations against the enemy—

I was much disapointed and mortified to find that the General had taken his determination to descend the St. Lawrence and attack Montreall in preference to Kingston, disapointed because in all our consultations upon this subject for the last four weeks Kingston was fixed upon as the point to be first attacked, and when I parted with the Secretary at War on the 16th I understood that it was his decided oppinion that Kingston should be first reduced, mortified to find that the Navy had been used as a mear attendant upon the Army for the purpose of Transport and protection and when it could be no longer used for those purposes and the season too far advanced to cruise on the Lake with safety it is left to protect itself in the best manner it can without the possibility of participating in any enterprize against the enemy this season

To my mind there are various and important objections to attacking Montreall at this advanced season of the year and leaving Kingston in full possession of the enemy in the rear, I will state those that strike me as the most prominent

1st The enemy for the last month has been under the impression that Montreall was the point to be attacked consequently he is better prepared there than Kingston and we have certain information that he has fortified the different passes in the river particularly about the rapids so as to annoy and cut up our troops in their passage down the River; this will oblige the Genl. to land at each of those fortified passes and take possession of them to insure a safe passage to his Army these necessary detentions will probably prevent his arrival in the visinity of Montreall, untill late in November, this will enable the enemy to draw the whole of his disposeable force from Quebeck to the protection of that Island, and possibly be able to keep our Army in check for ten or fifteen days longer and when he is eventually obliged to abandon the city and Island, to our

troops, we shall be reduced by sickness and death, to probably, eight or nine thousand men this force will be constantly diminishing during the winter and in the spring, the enemy may and probably will transport an army of double that force to Montreall which he can readily do as sloops of war and transports can assend the river quite to that Island.

If therefore the force that may be collected at Kingston, this winter should act, in concert with those from Quebeck in the spring it would place our Army in a perilous situation and possibly eventuate in their defeat and surrender

The second objection to the Generals determination to attack Montreall in preference to Kingston, is, that the latter place may be occupied by our troops in ten days and I think with less loss than we shall sustain at Montreall,— The possession of Kingston would place in our hands an immense quantity of stores both of provisions clothing and munitions of war and also the whole of the enemies fleet on this Lake which would enable the army to persue its conquests un-interruptedly, it would also enable the Government to withdraw a large number of officers and seamen for other objects besides avoiding the expense of making any addition to our Naval force on this Lake which can be no longer usefull, than while the enemy has possession of the province above Kingston

Another view of this subject is that the occupation of Kingston presents as many advantages to the final conquest of the uper province as that of Montreall and many more to our own troops; for if the army landed below Kingston (as proposed) the enemy would be obliged to retreat upon York where he could not procure supplys for such a body of men, moreover it would place him between General Harrison's Army and the one at Kingston, which would oblige him to surrender at discretion, and place in our power between four and five thousand men; besides this advantage over the enemy, our own troops would occupy a position perfectly secure from any attack, either this winter or spring and at the same time be in the visinity of a deposit at Sacketts Harbor; (made safe by their situation,) from which they could draw supplys or reinforcements— I will venture to say that in one month after our troops occupy Kingston there would not be a hostile soldier to the Westward of Montreall, which would render that city less an object of protection to the enemy.

The third and not the least objection to the determination of the General, of leaving Kingston in the full and quiet possession of the enemy and withdrawing the whole of the force from Sacketts Harbor, is that it exposes the fleet and stores to certain and total distruction the ensuing winter; for if the enemy collects the whole of his force from the different points of the upper province at Kingston he will have, from the best information between from four and five thousand regular soldiers; with this force he can (after the first of January) cross on the Ice to Sacketts Harbor in one day, burn the fleet and Town and return to Kingston, without difficulty; in fact I should not be astonished if Sir James should take advantage of a westerly wind while I am down the St. Lawrence and run over to the Harbor and burn it which he certainly can do if he knows its defenseless situation; for to the best of my knowledge there is no troops left there except sick and invalids nor is there more than three Guns mounted.

I however concieve it to be my duty to afford to the Army every facility of Transport and protection in my power, I shall therefore accompany and protect it untill it passes a point beyond which it will be perfectly secure from annoyance by the enemies fleet. I shall then make the best of my way out of the St.

Lawrence as it is deemed unsafe to be in that River after the first of November, on account of the Ice—

I have deemed it to be my duty, thus briefly to state to you, Sir, my objections to the contemplated movement of the Army, and my fears for the consequences of such movement; I beg at the same time to assure you, that my exertions shall not be relaxed for the preservation of this fleet and the protection of the Army; nor my prayers, withheld for the complete success of our arms, against the enemy, both by land and water I have the honor to be with great respect Sir Yr. most obt. humble Servt.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 7, No. 63 (M125, Roll No. 32).

ACTING CAPTAIN WILLIAM HOWE MULCASTER, R.N., TO
COMMODORE SIR JAMES LUCAS YEO, R.N.

(Copy)

His Majesty's Sloop *Melville*,
East End of Long Island
2nd. November 1813

Sir/

I have the Honor to acquaint you that His Majesty's Sloops *Melville*, and *Moira*, accompanied by 4 Gun Boats, formed a junction with the *Sir Sidney Smith*, and *Beresford* Schooners, yesterday morning, and I instantly made an arrangement with the Commanders of those Vessels for an immediate attack on the Enemy's Position at French Creek, as soon as we could see through the Snow. The Squadron Weighed, and made Sail, the Enemy had posted a strong detachment of Infantry on the Bluff, at the entrance of the Creek, to pour Musquetry on the Vessels Decks, the Bluff, was passed by His Majesty's Squadron within hail, receiving the fire of the Enemy, and returning discharges of Grape and Canister,—they were compelled to abandon their Post with precipitation, nor was it again reoccupied during our stay.

On rounding the Bluff the Enemy appeared in great force, drawn up in three Columns, with a Battery of two brass 18 Pounders in Front, and a numerous train of Artillery on their Flanks, I anchored the *Melville*, *Moira*, and *Sir Sidney Smith*, in Order of Battle, (there not being room for the *Beresford*, owing to the narrow Entrance of the Creek) a sharp Cannonading now commenced from the Ships, which was well returned from the shore, for near an hour.

On a preconcerted Signal being made the Gun Boats, under Capt. Spilsbury, put off and pulling along the Eastern bank, kept up an animated fire; as the day was closing fast, and the Enemy's Troops could no longer be discerned from the thickness of the Trees, so as to fire at them with precision, and the Squadron having received several shot in their Hulls, and a few between Wind and Water, I thought it right to haul off for the night.

The Wind was too strong for the Gun Boats, to pull in, and annoy the Enemy in the middle of the night, as had been intended; however at Daylight the Wind abated, and the Squadron again passed, and Exchanged fire with the Batteries;— The Enemy had mounted several Guns in the night, and some red-hot Shot, came on board the Squadron.

The Scows, and Bateaux, of the Enemy were hauled upon the Shore, to have brought off or destroyed them, would have cost an immense number of Men (considering the fine Position of the Enemy) which I could not afford, having to guard against the Enemy's Squadron in the morning.

One Merchant Schooner without a Soul on board, was afloat, but a Boat came off and cut her Cables, as we rounded the Bluff, and she drifted on the Rocks; I am happy to say our loss has been trifling, one Seaman Killed, Mr. Walter Leslie, Master's Mate, and 4 Seamen Wounded.

From the manner in which the Enemy's Troops were at times exposed, I am warranted in saying they must have lost Men.

I have much satisfaction in Reporting to you the great exertions of Captains, Spilsbury and Dobbs, of Lieuts., Radcliffe, of the *Beresford*, and Owen, of the *Sir Sidney Smith*, and all the Officers, and Men, both in the Squadron, and Gun Boats, whom you did me the Honor to place under my command. I have the Honor to be Sir your most obedient humble Servant

(Signed) W. H. Mulcaster Actg. Captain

Copy, UKLPR, Adm. 1/2736, pp. 186–89. Copy enclosed in letter from Commodore Sir James Lucas Yeo to Admiral Sir John B. Warren of 3 November 1813.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 106

U.S. Ship *General Pike*
Sacketts Harbor 11th. Novemr. 1813

Sir

I had the honor on the 4th inst. of informing you that the Squadron was then at anchor off the East end of Long Island and that the Army was collected at French Creek a little below me.—

I have now the honor to inform you that the whole of the Army left its position at French Creek on the 5th and proceeded down the River with a fair Wind and fine Weather.— The same day the Enemy's fleet dropped down below Kingston on the North side of Long Island and anchored off Sir Johns Island within about five Miles of me— the North and South Channels, in which the two Fleets lay are separated by a chain of Small Islands, connected by reefs of Rocks, and there is but one passage (which is situated near the foot of Long Island) that Vessels can pass from one channel to the other, and in this passage vessels drawing more than twelve feet Water, cannot pass— I however determined to attack the Enemy, if he remained in his position, and I could get this Ship through the reef which separated us—for this purpose I meant to lighten the *General Pike* and *Sylph* and warp them through— early on the Morning of the 6th I sent boats to sound out the best Water in the channel and buoy it out— the moment that the Enemy perceived us, he weighed and run up under the Guns at Kingston, which made it unnecessary for us to get our Fleet into the North Channel.

I was apprehensive that when the Enemy found that our Army had descended the St. Lawrence and that he had nothing to apprehend for the safety of Kingston, that he would take on board a thousand Men and take possession

of Carlton Island which would have given us much trouble, and perhaps led to the final destruction of the Fleet.—

Upon Carlton Island there is a regular work and very strong both by nature and Art and a thousand Men with a few pieces of Cannon would command the Channel most completely and would prevent a fleet much stronger than ours from passing up or down— knowing the commanding situation of this Island I felt anxious (after the Enemy returned to Kingston) to take a position near it, so as to command the passage from the Westward and prevent him from taking possession. I accordingly shifted my station from the foot of Long Island to Carlton Island where I remained untill the Evening of the 9th. when I changed my anchorage to Gravelly Point— there I lay untill yesterday, when from the threatening appearance of the Weather I was induced to leave the River and proceed for this place, where the Squadron arrived safe this Morning— It is now blowing a heavy Gale from the Westward with Snow, and every appearance of the Winter having set in.

From the 2d. to the 10th. the Weather has been uncommonly fine—the Winds prevailed from the Southward and Westward and clear dry Weather, and as mild as the Autumns are in the Middle States— the Army could not have asked for a more favorable time, which I have no doubt, but that the General has taken advantage of and I presume by this time is in Montreal. I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir Yr. Mo. Obt. St.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 7, No. 93 (M125, Roll No. 32).

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO MAJOR GENERAL JAMES WILKINSON, U.S.A.

Major General James Wilkinson
Commr. in Chief of the Amn. forces
at or near Montreal— &c &c &c

U.S. Ship *General Pike*
Sacketts Harbor 12th. Novem 1813

Dear General

I arrived here yesterday and left the River the day before in consequence of the threatening appearance of the Weather which has really set in now to be Winter— from the time that you left French Creek untill the 10th, I never in my life saw finer Weather which rejoiced me on your account and I have no doubt but that you profited by it and reached Montreal before this bad Weather commenced and are now in Snug Quarters taking a Comfortable Glass of Wine, which I will do this day to your health

Your rear was not out of Sight on the 5th. when the whole of the Enemys fleet with several Gun Boats dropped down within about five Miles of me where they lay untill the next day when observing me making some preparations to get into the North Channel where he lay he moved up under the Guns at Kingston.—

I shall endeavour to run up to Fort George to bring a part of General Harrison's Army down for the protection of this place, after which I shall lay up for the Winter.—

Will you, my Dear General have the goodness to send me an order to take possession of Fort Tompkins and the Block House near it I don't know whether

you are knowing to the circumstance, but the fact is nevertheless true, that the ground upon which Fort Tompkins and the Block House stand, is under lease to the Navy Department for which I pay a heavy Ground Rent— The Fort was built by the labor and materials of the Navy and was lent to the Army at a time, when we had no use for it— the Block House, tho' built at the expense of the War Department was delivered over to the Navy by order of General Dearborn and has been occupied by us untill within a few Days, when Col. Dennis ordered all our people out of it— my reason for wishing the Block House and Fort Tompkins is to occupy them with Marines and Seamen for the Protection of the fleet during the Winter. Wishing you Health Honor, and Happiness, I have the honor to be Dear Sir Yr. Mo. Ob. St.

I. C.—

LB Copy, NHi, Isaac Chauncey Letter Book.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 111.

U.S. Ship *General Pike*
Sacketts Harbor 21 Novemr. 1813

Sir

I had the honor of addressing you on the 15th inst. from off Niagara— On the 16th I received on board of the fleet General Harrison and Suite and about 1100 Troops and got the whole of the fleet out of the River— the Wind however continued from the Eastward, and on the 17th increased to a gale and continued to blow with increasing violence attended with Snow and heavy rains untill the Night of the 19th when it changed to the Westward which enabled me to arrive here last Evening with this Ship.

The Fleet was separated the first Night of the gale, and as the Weather continued thick I was not able to collect them afterwards— I was drove by the violence of the Gale to nearly the head of the Lake and as I knew that this Ship was a much better Sailor than the rest of the fleet I was extremely anxious for their safety— I was however somewhat relieved on the 19th when in Stretching in towards Niagara, I found that the *Madison* was at anchor in that River— at 12 O'clock that Night the Wind changed to the Westward and blew with some violence— I shaped my course for this place as I had ordered the vessels in case of seperation to run for Sacketts Harbor and as it was in my power to amuse the Enemy (in case he was out) and give the Small vessels an opportunity to get in— I arrived last Evening, and the *Sylph* in about one hour after me, the *Oneida*, *Lady of the Lake*, *Conquest*, *Pert*, and *Ontario* arrived this Morning—the four former from Niagara where they put in during the Gale without any material injury— they left at that place the *Madison*, *Fair American* and *Governor Tompkins*, the *Madison* with but little injury—the *Governor Tompkins* with the loss of her rudder, and the *Fair American* on shore, but expected to be got off this day— I am sorry however to inform you that the *Julia* is missing— She has not been seen by any of the Squadron, since the first night of our Separation, and I am apprehensive that She has either foundered or gone on shore.¹

The Troops and Seamen suffered extremely, as they were wet from the commencement of the Gale, untill their arrival here—the Water was so deep on the

birth deck, that we were obliged to scuttle it to let the Water off,—yet the Men arrived in better health, than could have been expected.—

I am in great hopes, that the *Madison* and *Governor Tompkins*, will be in this Evening as the Wind is fair if they Should not I shall proceed tomorrow off the Ducks, to Watch the movements of the Enemy, untill the arrival of all our Vessels, or untill I am satisfactorily informed of their situation. I have the honor to be very respectfully Sir Yr. Mo. ob. st.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 7, No. 114 (M125, Roll No. 32).

1. All the American vessels returned safely to Sackets Harbor; see Chauncey to Jones, 24 Nov. 1813, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 7, No. 126 (M125, Roll No. 32).

Prisoners of War in Canada

What constituted just treatment of prisoners during the War of 1812 was never satisfactorily resolved by the United States and Great Britain. Charges of harsh treatment on both sides were frequent. Americans told of being forced to navigate British vessels or even to fight against their own countrymen. Both American and British seamen complained of crowded and dirty housing, spoiled food, and mistreatment.

British authorities sent naturalized American citizens whom they claimed as British subjects to England to be tried on charges of treason—a crime punishable by death. The United States, in May 1813, determined to retaliate for the imprisonment of twenty-three Irish-Americans captured at the Battle of Queenston in 1812. When these prisoners were sent to England as royal subjects to await trial, American officials ordered twenty-three British prisoners held in close confinement, to suffer the same fate if their counterparts in England were put to death. Great Britain responded by holding an additional forty-six men as hostages, with the United States following suit. The situation escalated until virtually all American and British officers were held in close confinement by 1814. Officers had previously been released on parole and allowed to return home or to enjoy the freedom of a town until they were formally exchanged. The system of retaliations practiced by the United States and Great Britain in 1813 and 1814 resulted in worsening conditions for prisoners of both nations.¹

1. On the topic of prisoners of war, see Dietz, "Cartel Vessels"; Dye, "Maritime Prisoners"; and Robinson, "Prisoners." For a description of the treatment of seamen captured in Canada and sent to Melville Island, Halifax, see Cooper, Ned Myers, pp. 99–136.

DEPOSITION OF ABRAHAM WALTER

State of New York
Clinton County

Abraham Walter formerly Pilot to the Sloop of War *Growler* on Lake Champlain, being duly sworn deposes and saith, that he was employed on board

that Sloop when it was taken by the British in June last that after the Sloops *Growler* and *Eagle* were surrendered, the prisoners both Officers and Sailors were taken to Quebec where they were immediately confined on board a Prison Ship. there they were examined by a Public officer or Examiner and about Eight or ten of the prisoners were declared to be British Subjects; these were immediately separated from the rest put on board a Man of War and Sent to England to be tried for treason. One of these was Known to be a native of New Hampshire by Capt. Herrick of the Newhampshire Volunteers who was also a Prisoner, & who had known him from his infancy—and several of the rest were declared by others of their acquaintance to be native citizens of the United States. these representations were unavailing to with british Officers who commanded & they were torn thus from their Companions to defend themselves against the Charge of treason in England.— The residue were still confined to their Prison Ships in a situation more disagreeable than can will be imagined—

Some time after a number of British Vessels were wishing to proceed to Halifax the Crews of which had mostly been pressed out of them to fight the American forces on the upper lakes; & seaman were wanted to supply their place— Gov. Provost sent an order to Gen. Glascow who then commanded there, directing him to proceed on board the Prison Ship and to induce the Prisoners to volunteer to man their Fleet for Hallifax, & in case they refused to comply, to force them on board for that purpose. the application was made, but the American Prisoners considering the measure unjustifiable towards their own government refused to volunteer; and were accordingly forced on board the Vessels by a british press gang; where this Deponent understood they had Quarters assigned them & were compelled to assist in navigating British Vessels to hallifax, & afterwards to England as this deponent has since been informed— and further that not one of the Seamen who was Prisoner there was exempted from this proceeding—

And this Deponent further saith that in the beginning of the Present Month of November an order was received in conformity to the Prince Regents Order & Proclamation to seize forty Six American Officers and noncommissioned Officers who were then Prisoners of War & to imprison them to be kept in close confinement agreeable to the tenor of that Proclamation— Prisoners to that number most of whom were Officers there on their Parole many of them in a delicate State of health, were immediately put under arrest and marched guarded to the Public Prison and immured for what fate *God only Knows* is to him unknown, among those destined for close imprisonment are Lieut. Smith then in a declining state of Health and Doct. James Wood a citizen of Champlain who was taken from his home while he was in the Employment of the Revenue but as this Deponent believes no way connected with the Army— they were imprisoned on the fifth of Nov. instant

This deponent further saith that the Enemy has uniformly at that place treated American Prisoners, Both Officers & Privates with extreme rigour. that sometime since an American Midshipman and two masters mates, merely for having proceeded on a Party of Pleasure about a half a mile beyond the Limits assigned them though they immediate returned within them, were seized & put into prison and kept in Irons, till the general imprisonment of Officers & non-commissioned Officers as above related took place. and this Deponent further saith that all that was allowed for the American Prisoners on board the prison Ship was Daily—one pound of Old wormy bread, which the Inhabitants declared

had been wise to the commissioners & condemned for spoiled bread & one half pound of exceedingly bad Meat which in almost any other situation would be absolutely not Eatable; no Liquors, no soap to prevent themselves from becoming Lousy, no candles ~~no~~ & none of the other comforts of Life; and that it was the opinion of all the prisoners that many of them had actually starved to death not being able to eat the Provisions and further that immediately on the Prince Regents Proclamation being received Col Gardner¹ the American agent there who had been Occupied in paying off the sick & Privates of the Land Service, was immediately notified by Gov. Provost to Consider himself confined to the same Limits which were assigned for the Officers at Beaufort. and when this Deponent Left that Place he was compelled to remain with Genl. Winchester & others & was not permitted to visit the prisoners who were in distress on board the Prison Ships or to visit ~~the~~ the town to negotiate his bills for the relief of the Officers & had already been obliged to share what little private money he had with him Among them for their temporary relief. This Deponent further saith that he started from the neighborhood of quebec and came by the way of Derby in Vermont and arrived at this Place two Days since and farther this deponent saith not

Abraham Walter

Sworn before me

This 23d day of November 1813

Henry Delord one of the Judges of the Court of Common Pleas in and for the County of Clinton

DS, DNA, RG45, AF7 (M625, Roll No. 76).

1. Robert Gardner, U.S. Army Pay Department; American agent for prisoners of war in Canada, appointed 3 Aug. 1813.

PAROLE OF LIEUTENANT DAVID DEACON¹

Copy

Head Quarters
Montreal 25 novr. 1813

These are to certify that the bearer hereof David Deacon Lieutenant in the navy of the united States as described on the back hereof has permission to return to the united States, he having given his Parole of honour, that he will not enter into any naval Military or other service whatever against the united Kingdom of Great Britain or any of the dominions thereunto belonging or against any power at peace with Great Britain, untill a regular exchange shall have been made and ratified [*ratified*] by an agent of the British Government duly authorised so to do.— By command of his Excellency

Edward Baynes
Adj. General
U C

Name – David Deacon

Rank – Lieutenant in the navy

Age – Thirty two

Stature – five feet ten & a half inches

Person – thin
Visage – Round
Complexion – Sallow
Hair – Dark
Eyes – Gray
marks or } none
wounds &c. }

Copy, DNR, Operational Archives, ZB File.

1. Deacon was commanding officer of *Growler* when that ship was captured on Lake Ontario on 10 August 1813.

LIEUTENANT DAVID DEACON TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

Honble. William Jones

Phila. Decr. 11th. 1813.

Sir

I have just arrived at this place from Quebec. In company with Lieut. Colonel Borstler,¹ we were permitted to return to the U States in consequence of the same Indulgence having been granted to Lieut Col Myers and Capt. Gordon of the British army. Proposals are likewise made by Sir George Provost to exchange me for Capt. Gordon. Should this arrangement take place I have most urgently to request your permission to visit you at the Navy Dept.— I have much to say Both for your Information as well as for my own Justification— I have been unfortunate Sir, But am confident I have Done my Duty— I shall retire to my place of residence Burlington N. Jersey, at which place I shall wait your orders. I have the Honour to Be Sir your Obt. St.

D. Deacon

ALS, DNA, RG45, BC, Vol. 4, No. 142 (M148, Roll No. 12).

1. Lieutenant Colonel Charles G. Boerstler, 14th U.S. Infantry, was the commander at Black Rock, New York; he was captured in the Battle of Beaver Dams, 24 June 1813.

Rebuilding on Lake Champlain

Master Commandant Thomas Macdonough's force was seriously weakened by the loss of Growler and Eagle in June, and by the destruction of stores and boats during Murray's raid in July. At the close of 1813, the American fleet on Lake Champlain consisted of the sloops President, Commodore Preble, and Montgomery, and four gunboats. Macdonough's two hired vessels, Frances and Wasp, sailed so poorly that they would later be returned to their owners. With this makeshift fleet, the Americans were able to chase the British back into the Richelieu River whenever they attempted to enter American waters. Macdonough maintained a precarious balance of power on the lake, but it was clear the British were strengthening their force at Isle aux Noix for the coming year.

Macdonough's task during the winter of 1813–14 was to rebuild his weakened squadron in order to gain control of Lake Champlain early in the spring. Secretary of the Navy Jones gave Macdonough his full support for the effort, but supplies and men were

still slow in coming. With his vessels in winter quarters on Otter Creek, Macdonough drew on local forges, rolling mills, and lumber mills at Vergennes, Vermont, to provide timber, cannonballs, and iron fittings for the vessels built there during the winter.

MASTER COMMANDANT THOMAS MACDONOUGH TO
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

Plattsburg Bay 23 Nov. 1813

Sir

I have the honor to inform you that the enemy still continues within his own waters and that I keep prepared to meet him should he come out.

The North and South ends of the lake will be frozen in the course of a few days which will make it necessary for the enemy as well as us to go into Winter quarters but I calculate for the protection of the public stores on the shores of this lake to keep out longer than the enemy the most northern deposit of those stores being at Plattsburg. I find, Sir, the enemy can and have brought over from the river St. Lawrence galleys, by land, on large trucks which they have constructed for that purpose—they have now at the Isle Aux Noix from nine to twelve of those boats some of which carry a long 24 pounder in the bow which fire only on a line with the keel and a 32 pr. cannonade in the stern which fires abeam or in any other direction as it traverses and carrying upwards of fifty men.— they have a number of those boats (though probably small and carrying only gun) in the river St. Lawrence and is it not probable, as the seat of war may be in the vicinity of this lake next summer that they will transport some of those boats into this water and thereby make an increase of our naval force necessary.

If not in anticipation of this measure of the enemy, I should propose building twenty or five and twenty boats this winter some to carry an 18 or 24 pr. with a cannonade in the stern, then should they not bring their boats from the St. Lawrence we should be prepared as the Army advanced into Canida to go down the Sorrell river, pass the Chamblee rapids (of six miles) and enter the St. Lawrence, there to co-operate with the army as it progresses against Montreal or Quebec—these boats should carry about 30 men each. The transportation of cannon &c. will be easy this winter on the Snow to Vergennes at which place materials are at hand for building also shot contracted for by Government and as soon as the ice would permit they could be all ready for service. The force would probably prevent the enemy endeavouring to raise a force to cope with us on the lake which has been their system. Having been twelve months absent from my family I beg you will favour me with permission to pass a part of this winter with them in Middletown, Connecticut, as soon as I shall have laid the vessels up, leaving them in charge of a very capable officer, Lieut. Cassin—from thence to go on to New York and select the cannon &c. necessary for those boats should the building of them meet your approbation.

Accompanying this is the voluntary statement of Abraham Walters who was pilot of one of the Sloops taken last summer—he made his escape from Quebec and after a severe journey of ten days reported himself to me yesterday.— I have the honor to be Sir Yr. mo. obd. Servt.

T. Macdonough

ALS, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 169 (M147, Roll No. 5). See pp. 600–602 for the deposition of Abraham Walter.

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES TO
MASTER COMMANDANT THOMAS MACDONOUGH

Thomas MacDonough Esqr.
Comg. U.S. Naval Forces,
on Lake Champlain,
Plattsburg.

Navy Department
Decr. 7th 1813.

Sir,

I have received your letter of the 23d Novr. I wish early preparations to be made, for building fifteen Galleys, for which plans and Draughts will be immediately forwarded to you, similar to those now constructing here, and at Baltimore, for the Flotilla of the Chesapeake.¹

The first Class, 75 feet long and 15 wide, to carry a long 24 and a 42 pound Carronade, row 40 oars, and drawing but 22 inches water, with all on board.

Second class, 50 feet long and 12 feet wide, to carry a long 18 and 32 pd. carronade, and row 26 oars; they have been tried, and are the most perfect of their kind.

Large supplies of Naval and Ordnance Stores are ordered to Albany, before the close of the Hudson, for the Lake service.

Your visit to your family had better be made soon, and as short as possible; as great exertions will be required to meet the Enemy on the first opening of the Navigation.

I wish a correct return of your present force, with Muster rolls of the officers and men attached to each vessel, to be forwarded to the Department as soon as possible. I am, respectfully, Your obedient Servant,

W. Jones

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, SNL, 1813, Vol. 11, p. 163 (M149, Roll No. 11).

1. See pp. 373–81 for the construction of gunboats for the Chesapeake Bay flotilla.

MASTER COMMANDANT THOMAS MACDONOUGH TO
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

Plattsburgh 18 Decr. 1813

Sir

I have the honor to inform you that I shall proceed tomorrow with the United States Flotilla under my command to winter quarters in the mouth of Otter Creek. I hope Sir it will be considered that I have fulfilled the duties required of me on this lake and that I have merited the trust and confidence reposed in me by my government.— Since the completion of a force adequate to the meeting of our enemy he has never appeared except in predatory excursions at the most favourable times for him. I can assure you Sir that we have always been prepared to repel or defeat him—we have frequently sought him and he has as frequently avoided us. It has never been my good fortune to fall in with the enemy and I have to lament the apparent tacit disapprobation of the President of the United States in his late communication to Congress by finding no mention made of this part of our force employed against our enemy in Canada. You will please to observe that the most northern deposit of the provi-

sions and military stores belonging to the Army are at Plattsburgh— this deposit as well as all others on the margin of the lake I considered immediately under my particular charge and keeping what I supposed one great object of the war in view (the conquest of Canada) I hazarded not their loss by unnecessarily exposing my vessels in the northern end of the lake where it is very narrow, full of reefs and decidedly advantageous for an action for the enemy with the heavy gallies which they lately brought up the Sorrell river from Quebec. The Flotilla under my command has I am very conscious always manifested a perfect willingness to see the enemy on fair terms. In October past arrangements were made for it to precede a part of the Army against the Isle Aux Noix but this was I presume deemed inexpedient by the commanding General in consequence of intelligence received by him of the strength of that place. Should you deem this letter improper I beg you will consider it as emanating from feelings not at ease because it may be considered that I have not done that which it was in my power to do.— I have the honor to be with the highest respect Sir Yr. mo. obd. Servt.

T. Macdonough

ALS, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 190 (M147, Roll No. 5).

MASTER COMMANDANT THOMAS MACDONOUGH TO
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

Vergennes Decr. 28th. 1813—

Sir

Herewith I have the honor to send you a statement of our Naval force on this lake, the purser will in a day or two forward to the Depmt. muster rolls of the officers & men attached to each vessel this sir, should have been done before, but during the time that this station was without a purser irregularities inevitably occurred which has caused the delay—

Sloop <i>President</i>	6–18 pr. Columbiads— 4. Twelves
Sloop <i>Commre. Preble</i>	7–12 prs. and 2 18 pr. Columbiads
Do <i>Montgomery</i>	7–9 prs. and 2 18 pr. Columbiads
Do <i>Wasp</i>	3–12 prs.

Four Gallies each carrying a long 18 pr.

The sloop *Wasp* is a small vessel & sails badly, I took her last summer from a Merchant of this place and promised to pay him what she should be appraised at, this however being little I suspect her owner will take her again & will be satisfied for the time I have had her by the repairs done to her I shall endeavour to make this arrangement as the sloop is not fit for the service. I calculate to mount on the bow of the sloop *President* a long 24 pr. on a pivot— I have the honor to be most respectfully Sir, your Obt. Sert.

T. Macdonough

ALS, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 197 (M147, Roll No. 5).

The American Fleet on Lake Erie

While the United States controlled Lake Erie at the close of 1813, fear of a British counteroffensive left the Americans uneasy as winter approached. Virtually all the ships on the lake had been damaged in the Battle of Lake Erie or in the operations on Lake St. Clair and the Thames River; most needed extensive repairs. Moreover, the vessels were widely dispersed—the largest ships were at Erie, and others were at Put-in-Bay or ashore at Buffalo. This rendered them vulnerable to British attack during the winter. The transport of Major General William Henry Harrison's army to Sackets Harbor and the St. Lawrence River left the Lake Erie fleet largely unprotected.

Master Commandant Jesse D. Elliott had assumed command of the Lake Erie station on 25 October 1813 after Captain Oliver H. Perry returned to Rhode Island. Elliott was anxious to leave the station—he had requested leave of absence numerous times since his first request on 11 September 1813, the day following the Battle of Lake Erie. As the senior officer on the lake, Elliott was denied leave each time. He was forced to remain in charge of an officer corps that was bitterly divided by a growing controversy over Elliott's role in the battle.¹

1. Elliott, commanding Niagara, had failed to bring his vessel into close action during the heat of the Battle of Lake Erie. He later claimed a large role in the American victory, although other officers of the fleet thought he deliberately held back his ship. For the next thirty years, Elliott would try to exonerate his reputation. See Roske and Donley, "Perry-Elliott Controversy"; Belovarov, "Brief Overview"; and Friedman and Skaggs, "Jesse Duncan Elliott."

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES TO MASTER COMMANDANT JESSE D. ELLIOTT

Jesse D Elliott Esqr.
Commanding Naval Officer
Lake Erie.

Navy Department
Novemr. 30th. 1813—

Sir

The Army under the command of Genl. Wilkinson having gone into Winter Quarters short of the contemplated object of the Campaign and so low down upon the St. Lawrence as to forbid its return to the Lakes should circumstances require its presence; and as that under the command of Genl. Harrison has also descended to the foot of Lake Ontario, leaving the force at Niagara & Detroit very feeble, it is not improbable that the Enemy, should his red Allies remain with him in any considerable force, may make an effort to regain some of his lost ground by a vigorous push for Detroit, with the hope of cutting off Genl. Cass, destroying any naval force we may have in that River or at Malden, and of restoring the confidence and regaining the services of the Savages.— It is therefore deemed important to take the earliest moment to apprise you of the existing state of things below, in order that you may adopt the most effectual means in your power, to guard against the consequences and defeat the object of the enemy.—

I trust that as much of our Naval force under your Command, has been collected at Erie as was practicable.— And in order that early measures may be taken to repair and equip such force as may be deemed expedient on Lake Erie for the ensuing Campaign, you will immediately forward to me, the duplicate of a report which you will make to Commodore Chauncey, relative to the whole

Naval force on Lake Erie including the captured fleet, describing the state and condition of the several Vessels, the repairs & equipments which each will require, and the local situation of each.— Also a general view of the stores and supplies on hand and contracted for and the probable wants of the most necessary articles not attainable on the shores of the Lake or at Pittsburgh.—

A correct Muster Roll of the Officers and Men under your command is also required.— You will communicate to Genl. Cass such parts of this Letter as may be proper for his information.—I am very respectfully Your Obedt. Servt.

W. Jones—

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, CLS, 1813, p. 77.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO MASTER COMMANDANT JESSE D. ELLIOTT

Captain Jesse D Elliott
Commandg. Naval Officer
at Erie Pennsylv.

U.S. Ship *General Pike*
Sacketts Harbor 1st. Decemr. 1813

Sir

Your Communication of the 8th Ult. by Mr. Webster has been duly received and the manner in which you have laid the vessels up approved of—but I think that the force left with the two Ships at Put In Bay is much too small unless you can add to it from the Army I therefore recommend you to make immediate application to the Commanding Officer at Detroit for fifty more Men

The Block House for the protection of the Vessels at Erie ought to be built immediately but the Hospital and Store House I think may be dispensed with, you may substitute some of the small vessels for those purposes

I have to request that you loose no time in having the *Laurence* and *Niagara* repaired in their Masts Spars and rigging and Sails and put in the best order for Service— You will also have all the necessary repairs put to the other vessels of the Squadron—except the two Prize Ships which you will leave in their present state untill further Orders— I presume that the Mechanics of the Fleet will be found sufficient to do all the repair required during the Winter—if they should not you will employ others so as to have all the Vessels in a complete state of preparation for actual service the moment that the Lake becomes navigable in the Spring.

With respect to the vessels that have unfortunately got on Shore at Buffaloe ¹ if you have not been able to get them off you will cause them to be stripped and all their Guns and Stores taken out and deposited with their Rigging and sails in some good Store House near Buffaloe. I should recommend you to Store them 2 or 3 Miles from Buffaloe upon the Main Post road— You might leave one Midshipman and two Seamen to watch them during the Winter and order all the rest to join me at Erie as they can be better taken care of there and at less expense than at Buffaloe. You will recruit all the Marines that offer during the Winter.

With respect to the many promotions made by Captain Perry upon Lake Erie I presume that he has the Secretary's authority for so doing as he has never consulted me upon the Subject I shall not therefore interfere with them

Your request to visit your family (which at first view might be considered a reasonable one) I request [*regret*] that I cannot grant— to an Officer of your



Master Commandant Jesse D. Elliott

merits and experience a single glance at the situation of the Fleet upon Erie will convince you that the request ought not to have been made and I am well persuaded that upon reflection that you will acquiesce in my decision with great cheerfulness—Your situation is a responsible one and you must be aware that it is all important to the Government that the Vessels upon Erie should not only be preserved but prepared in every respect for any Service that they may be required for in the Spring—and who is so proper to attend to the various duties appertaining to the Station as yourself.

Your presence is absolutely necessary to curtail as much as possible the expenses of the Station—to examine and approve all Bills and to regulate expenditures generally and also to provide for the Wants of the Station by making timely requisitions for stores Provisions Clothing &c &c— I do assure you that it would have afforded me infinite pleasure to have gratified you with a visit to your friends if I could have done it without injury to the public service as it is you must submit as I am obliged to I have the honor to be very Respectfully Sir Yr. Mo. Ob. St.

I. C.

LB Copy, NHi, Isaac Chauncey Letter Book.

1. Four vessels, *Ariel*, *Trippe*, *Chippewa*, and *Little Belt*, were driven on shore in a gale during the last week in October. These ships were later destroyed by the British when they attacked the town on 30 December 1813.

MASTER COMMANDANT JESSE D. ELLIOTT TO COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY

Copy of a letter to Comr. Isaac Chauncey dated

U.S. Sloop *Niagara*
Erie 19th December 1813.

Sir

Your letter of the 1th Inst. I have had the pleasure to receive, and agreeable to instructions from the Honorable the Secretary of the Navy (a copy of which I enclose you) I inform you of the exact situation of the Naval Force on Lake Erie. In my last I stated to you my intention of visiting Buffalo, for the purpose of endeavouring to get the Vessels off that had been driven on shore in the storm of October. I remained at that place two weeks without being able to accomplish that end, caused by continual winds from the westward, the ways are prepared, and early in the Spring, they can be got into the water. The *Lawrence*, *Niagara*, *Caledonia*, *Scorpion*, *Ohio*, *Porcupine*, and *Amelia*, are at this place, the *Somers & Tigress*, are up the Lake. (I expect them down in a few days) the *Ariel* and *Trippe*, are on shore at Buffalo, their masts out, Rigging, Sails and Stores placed in a Store House at that place, the three first will want considerable repairs. Of the Prize Vessels, the *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte*, are at Put in Bay, in charge of a Sailing Master, M. Mate, a Midshipman and twenty seamen, an officer of the Army and forty men, they are dismasted, and will want considerable repairs, the *Lady Prevost* and *Hunter*, are at this place the former, in want of many repairs, the latter few, the *Little Belt* and *Chipawa* on shore at Buffalo, little injured. I regret excessively you should have delayed so long in letting me hear from you on the subject of the defense of the vessels, It is my opinion (as Fort George has been evacuated) that the Enemy may make an attempt to destroy the shipping at this Place however with what force I have, they shall be a dear privelege I am fearful we shall not be able

to recruit marines, I would suggest the Idea to you, of naming to the Honorable the Secretary of the Navy, the necessity of having a few of the Army as a substitute, they may be ordered from the Pittsburg Rendezvous. Every thing requisite for Sailing the fleet, can be obtained on the Lake Shore or at Pittsburg.

I most cheerfully recall my application, for permission to return to my family, and Sir, will be most happy, that, in the Spring, I may be superceded in this command, and join you as your Captain in the *Genl. Pike*.

When the fleet is in a situation of defence, I shall visit Pittsburg for the purpose of obtaining supply's for the ensuing summer. The wounded of the Enemy as well as our own are recovering fast. I have sent sixty of the former to Pittsburg for safe keeping, the remainder will follow in a day or two— Very Respectfully I have the honor to be Sir your obd. Servt.

Signed Jesse D. Elliott

Copy, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 195 (M147, Roll No. 5). This copy was enclosed in a letter from Jesse D. Elliott to Secretary of the Navy Jones dated 22 December 1813 (reproduced below).

MASTER COMMANDANT JESSE D. ELLIOTT TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

U.S. Sloop, *Niagara*
Erie 22nd December 1813—

Sir

Your letter of the 30th Ult. I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of, and herewith enclose you the duplicate of a report made to the Commander in chief, of the situation of the Naval Force under my command on Lake Erie, together with the muster Roll of the Station, Agreeable to your instructions, strengthened by the recent occurrences on the Niagara River, I dispatched an express for Detroit, with information to Brigr. Genl. Cass of the situation of our Troops in Lower Canada, together with their evacuation of Fort George, and the Force the Enemy have at Burlington Heights. You will in one moment observe the situation of Detroit when I inform you that Genl. Cass has stated to me, in a letter dated the 9th Novemr. that he has only an effective force of 400 men, and surrounded by disaffected persons I am apprehensive our force at Put in Bay will not be sufficiently strong to resist the Enemy if in numbers, therefore would suggest to you the propriety of having an additional number of Soldiers, And Sir, I presume you are acquainted with the situation of this Lake, when the winter will have set in. When the Ice forms it is sufficiently strong to bear any weight from Point Ebans to Cateragus a distance of about 25 miles, thence up our side of the Lake to this place, entirely unseen when approaching. Therefore to make my force as strong and as effectual as possible, I have moored the Vessels close [in?] and in an Eight Square, presenting a fire all round the Compass, and covered by a Block House, that I expect will be finished by the time the Ice will make on the Lake, I would also suggest to you the necessity of having a few Soldiers at this place, as substitutes for Marines.

In a former communication to Comr. Chauncey, I mentioned to him that the terms of service, of almost all the men will have expired, before the vessels can be in service in the Spring and I am fearfull that from the many privations seamen have on Lake Service, that few will reenter.

Some time since I wrote you on the subject of a young Gentlemen who has in two actions served with me, as an acting midshipman and has on each occasion been severely wounded, will you Sir, do me the favour to warrant him as a midshipman, dating it when he received his first wound, 8th October 1812—¹

I beg leave to enclose to you the memorial of Doctr. John Kennedy, Late Surgeon of his Brit. Majys. Ship *Queen Charlotte* who has rendered essential service, since the Action of the 10th Sept. to the wounded of the Enemy, as well as our own.

On this Station we are at great inconvenience in consequence of the great delay of the mail between this place and Pittsburg. Letters are delayed 12 days, probably the thing may be remedied at the General Post Office—Very Respectfully I have the honor to be Sir your obt. servt.

Jesse D. Elliott

LS, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 195 (M147, Roll No. 5). The enclosed copy of a letter to Isaac Chauncey is reproduced above; the enclosed statement of Dr. John Kennedy has not been located.

1. Acting Midshipman John L. Cummings was involved in the capture of the brigs *Detroit* and *Caledonia* in 1812; for Elliott's report, see Dudley, *Naval War of 1812*, Vol. 1, pp. 327–31.

Shipbuilding on Lake Ontario

As winter approached, Commodores Isaac Chauncey and Sir James Lucas Yeo turned their attentions to readying their respective squadrons for the 1814 campaign. Intelligence of their enemy's rapid progress in shipbuilding spurred each commander to greater exertions in building new vessels for the coming season. The winter months would set the stage for the great shipbuilding contest on Lake Ontario the following year.

The British had two new frigates and four gunboats under construction at Kingston during the winter of 1813–14. Their new ships, Prince Regent of 58 guns and Princess Charlotte of 42, were launched in April 1814. Plans were underway to construct an immense ship of the line at Kingston the following spring. The Americans built two large brigs, Jefferson and Jones, at Sackets Harbor during the winter. They also were making plans to build two large 44-gun frigates the next year.

Commodore Isaac Chauncey left Sackets Harbor late in December to travel to Washington in order to confer with Secretary of the Navy Jones and President James Madison on the campaign for the coming year. During his two-month absence, shipbuilding would progress under the direction of his second in command, Master Commandant William M. Crane.

COMMODORE SIR JAMES LUCAS YEO, R.N., TO
ADMIRAL SIR JOHN B. WARREN, R.N.

Copy.

His Majestys Ship *Wolfe*
at Kingston, Upper Canada
the 6th December 1813.

Sir.

Being apprehensive that written Communications may meet with delay, or miscarry at this Season of the Year, and conceiving it of the first importance that

you should be informed of our exact Situation, and what we stand in need of to insure Success on the opening of the navigation, I have judged it expedient to send Mr. Scott, my first Lieutenant overland to Halifax who having a thorough Knowledge of every thing that is going on here—will be enabled to lay before you Sir, the nature, and wants of this Service more clearly than if I was to write Volumes on the Subject.

The two new Ships are in a very forward State, and I am almost certain of having a force in the Spring sufficiently strong to meet the enemy with effect and decision. I need not point out to you Sir the great advantages that are to be hoped for by this Squadron being on the Lake three weeks or a month before that of the Enemy. This I think is certain if I receive a Reinforcement of Seamen by the beginning of April, but not otherwise, and I know of no other possible means of obtaining them but by their marching across to Quebec. This Service Lieutenant Scott is well qualified to conduct having travelled that Road before.

I trust whatever Men are sent from Halifax may be selected for this particular Service, as I have not the Power of keeping up that strict discipline and Subordination which I could do on the Atlantic I therefore must depend much on the good disposition of the Seamen. The Marlbro's¹ have been guilty of every extravagance, and given more trouble than all the establishment put together; there were also several Black and American Citizens among them, the latter of which I of course immediately discharged.

From the unavoidable exposure of the Seamen in the Gun boats at this Season of the Year, we have a great number Sick (nearly eighty) I therefore am certain (to insure Success) we shall require 200 or 250 additional Seamen.

I beg leave to refer you to Lieutenant Scott for any further Particulars as that Officer is in full Possession of my Sentiments.

I am informed that the Enemy have added Sixty Eight Shipwrights to their Naval Yard at Sackets Harbour to assist in building two Frigates. I have the honor to be with the highest respect, Sir Your most obedient humble Servant

Signed James Lucas Yeo.
Commodore

Copy, UKLPR, Adm. 1/505, pp. 225–27.

1. Four officers and 110 men, drafted from H.M.S. *Marlborough*, a 74-gun ship, were sent from Quebec to Lake Ontario by Admiral Edward Griffith in October. These sailors replaced the men previously sent from H.M. troopship *Dover* when they were ordered to return to Quebec.

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 130.

U.S. Ship *General Pike*
Sacketts Harbor 17th Decemr. 1813

Sir

I was last evening honored with your Letter of the 1st inst. with the enclosures therein referred to.

I trust that in a day or two after the date of your Letter that you was relieved from your anxiety for the safety of the Fleet by the receipt of my Letters from this place.

I have had the honor in former communications of stating to you that the Enemy had two vessels in a considerable state of forwardness and that the keel of

a third was laid and recent advices state that, materials are preparing for a fourth of this however there may be some doubts, but none whatever that he is building three vessels and that the length of keels as stated is pretty nearly correct, but of the breadth of beam or the number of Guns that they are to mount I can obtain no information that can be relied on—I have however employed a Man who has promised to obtain that information for me from a friend in Kingston. The Enemy has received between the first of October and last of November a reinforcement of about five hundred Seamen with a proportionable number of Officers—this additional force I presume is intended for the vessels building, but by the last accounts no stores either to arm or equip these New Vessels had arrived at Kingston but from the situation of our Army no obstruction can be offered to the Enemy's sending from Quebec or Montreal any quantities that he may require and no doubt but that he will profit by the opportunity.

The Enemy's physical force at this time is certainly equal if not superior to ours, add to that force the three vessels which he is building it will make him vastly superior—therefore to place ourselves upon an equality with him we necessarily must build three vessels of a force corresponding with his—but I should recommend to add a fourth vessel of the size of the *Sylph* in lieu of all the heavy Sailing Schooners, for really they are of no manner of Service except to carry Troops, or use as Gun Boats.

If it is determined to prosecute the War offensively and secure our Conquests in Upper Canada—Kingston ought unquestionably to be the first object of attack, and that so early in the Spring as to prevent the Enemy from using the whole of the Naval force that he is preparing—with this view of the subject we should require to be built this Winter two vessels that would insure our ascendancy even if the Enemy should have ready at the breaking up of the ice in the Spring the two vessels that are the most forward.

But on the other hand if it should be determined to act on the defensive until our Troops are collected and disciplined the additional Naval force required upon this Lake may be better built in the spring than now and I presume 20 per cent cheaper—moreover the transportation of stores from New York at this Season of the Year would not only be attended with difficulty, but a vast expence.

The Enemy is collecting a considerable force at Kingston and no doubt will push forward a part of it to the neighborhood of Fort George and when an opportunity offers he will attempt and probably succeed in recovering that Fortress in which case he will reoccupy Fort Erie and the whole of the North Side of the Niagara frontier which will expose the ~~whole~~ four vessels that are on shore at Buffaloe to be burnt by him unless a small force should be stationed there—I have however directed Captain Elliott, that in case he could not get the vessels off to dismantle them and deposit the stores a few Miles from Buffaloe.

Whether the Enemy will extend himself as far as Malden will I presume depend much upon the disposition of the Indians to second his views by re-uniting their force with his—If he should reoccupy Malden the two prize ships at "Put in Bay" I consider in a dangerous situation and the force left with them quite inadequate to their defence. If the Enemy should be in sufficient force to defend these ships it would be his policy not to destroy but preserve them and by building attempt to regain his ascendancy on the Lake—I have directed Captain Elliott to apply to the Commanding Officer at Detroit for an additional guard for those Vessels—would it not be adviseable to order them destroyed in preference to their falling into the Enemy's hands?

Captain Perry has never made a return to me of the prisoners taken upon Lake Erie, or Said one word to me on the subject and I am still ignorant of the number or grade or in what manner they were disposed of—and I am almost as ignorant of the Prizes, as no particular return of them has ever reached me.

I shall loose no time in having the Prizes valued agreeably to your instructions and transmit the valuation to the Department.

I directed Captain Perry in October last to transmit to me correct Muster Lists of the Officers and Men upon Lake Erie—these Lists I received a few days since from Captain Elliott which I will transmit to the Department as soon as copied together with Muster Rolls of the Officers and Men on this Station.

I shall continue to make all the necessary preparations here for building and collect all the timber that will be first required but shall recommend to Doctor Bullus to detain the Ship Carpenters in New York until he receives further instructions from you upon the subject. I adopt this course lest we might incur expense, that by a little delay might be avoided. I have the honor to be very Respectfully Sir Yr. Mo. Obt. St.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 8, No. 67 (M125, Roll No. 33).

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 138

U.S. Ship *G. Pike*

Sacketts Harbor 24th Decr. 1813

Sir,

I shall leave here on the 26th for Washington and shall make no stop on the way except one day with my family at New York.

The fleet is moored in two lines at right angles with each other, so that each line is calculated to support the other and also to afford protection to the Block Houses, situated on the two sides of the Harbor.

I consider the fleet as safe from any attack of the Enemy, unless he comes in such force as to take possession of the Harbor, and by getting possession of the Batteries, drive us from the vessels with hot shot; at any rate there is no probability that the St. Lawrence will be sufficiently frozen to bear Troops before some time in Feby. The season is uncommonly open and mild although the Harbor and Bay has been several times frozen over, it is now perfectly open and free from Ice.

I leave Capt. Crane in command during my absence, who is an officer of more than common merit, and who will, from his known industry and talents, be always prepared to meet any contingency or repel any attack that may be made by the enemy.

With the view to promote the public Interest add, to the safety of the fleet and insure a more rigid and a better discipline amongst the officers and men, I have thought it best to put out of commission the schooners mentioned below, and have distributed the officers and men, on board of the larger vessels of the fleet; which measure I hope you will approve. I have the honor to be Very Respectfully Sir yr. most obt. Humble. Servt.

Isaac Chauncey

Conquest
Fair American
Pert
Julia

Asp, exchanged for *Julia* in October,
Raven Growler and other prize vessels has been used as transports to the Army.

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 8, No. 101 (M125, Roll No. 33).

Winter on the Lake Ontario Station

The Americans stationed on the northern lakes fared much better during the second winter of the war than they had during the first, yet conditions remained harsh. Housing had improved with the construction of barracks, but sickness still prevailed. "Lake fever" (probably malaria) was common throughout the late summer into the winter months, and secondary cases recurred at any time. Dysentery and other disorders also weakened the American forces. When the lakes froze over and crews of the vessels became idle, discipline problems increased. The prices of goods in the local markets were exorbitantly high, and pay was irregular. Morale ran low as winter set in and hopes for an end to the war diminished.

Master Commandant William M. Crane, formerly commander of John Adams, assumed temporary charge of the Lake Ontario station when Commodore Isaac Chauncey left for Washington. Crane's orders for governing shipboard life, prepared in December 1813 and July 1814, provide insights into the discipline problems on the station and into the habits and practices of common sailors.¹

1. These regulations were adapted from Crane's earlier "Rules and Regulations for the Internal Government of the U.S. Sloop Argus," Oct. 1811, in DNA, RG45, William M. Crane, "Journal Kept on Board Argus and Nautilus, October 1811-July 1812."

MASTER COMMANDANT WILLIAM M. CRANE'S RULES FOR THE REGULATION OF SHIPBOARD LIFE

On board U S S *Madison* in
Sacketts Harbor Decr. 19th. 1813

Sir

You will cause the following regulations for the internal government of the United States Ship *Madison* under my command to be carried into effect Respectfully Yr. Obd. Sevt.

W. M. Crane

To the Senior Lieut.
On board U S Ship *Madison*
Prest.

- Art 1st. The Laws for the Government of the Navy and the President of the United States printed Instructions must be strictly adhered to.
- Art 2d The Deck is always to be in charge of a Lieut. or Sailing Master, who will on assuming the command acquaint himself with the precise situation of the vessel and battery which is at all times to be kept in readiness for service.

- Art 3d All the Lieuts. of Divisions will keep correct Lists of their Mens Cloathing, Mattrasses and Blankets, and the Master those of the brace men and others stationed in the Magazines, passages, pumps, and Shot Lockers, there will be a general Inspection every Sunday— Watch and Quarter Bills are also to be kept by every Officer.—
- Art 4th. The Officers will individually charge the men against the shameful practice of selling their Cloaths, or the Tobacco and small stores which they may draw from the Purser as I am determined to punish with the utmost severity all those found guilty.—
- Art 5th. The Purser is forbidden to furnish any supplies of cloathing, or Stores to the crew without my written order, which will be given provided the Division Officer deems them necessary for their comfort. All requisitions by the Crew for Cloathing, or small stores, are to be made out in writing, and if approved signed by the Division Officer and presented to me
- Art 6th. No Officer or other Person belonging to the Ship is to sleep out of her, without special permission from me.—
- Art. 7th. The Lights and Fires are to be extinguished under the Forecastle, on the Birth Deck and in the Steerage at 9 P M and no lights to be permitted there again but in Lanthorns, leave first having been obtained from the Officer Commanding the Watch.—
- Art. 8th. The First or Senior Lieut. will execute all the Watching Quartering messing & birthing & stationing of the Crew, he will also superintend all the general duties of the Ship, in which he is to be aided by every Officer in the vessel he will grant permission to Officers (and Seamen who have conducted with propriety) when they can be spared from duty, keeping in view however, the unequivocal order in the 6th. Article, he will also appoint a Midshipman or Masters Mate to take charge of the Birth Deck which he will carefully inspect every day, no Ships stores are to be converted to any other purpose, or given out by those having charge of them but by a written order from the first Lieutenant
- Art. 9th. Cleanliness promotes health, perhaps as much as any other circumstance, I therefore request that the Officers will be particularly careful to keep their Apartments and Servants clean— they must also impress it on the men of their Divisions— no particular day can be assigned for washing bags and cloaths, the weather will govern in this respect— but the Beds and Blankets must be frequently aired and the Dust beaten out—
- Art. 10th. The Officer of the Deck will muster all the boys at 9 A.M. and inspect their appearance punishing those who have dirty Cloaths, face feet or hands, and it would be well in the Division Officers to carefully examine their men in this respect at muster.
- Art. 11th. The Officer in charge of the Birth Deck will daily inspect the Mess Chests and Bread Bags keeping them clean and free from Grease &c the Birth Deck is not to be washed in Winter without an order from the first Lieut. who will consult the Surgeon before he directs it it should be white washed once a fortnight and fumigated morning and evening.
- Art. 12th The Crew are to be mustered and inspected at Quarters every morning at 1/4 past 9 again in the afternoon, and an exercise provided

- the weather will permit, at all events there must be a muster at sun set when the battery must be cleared of Lumber, Pikes &c distributed and all arrangements made to meet an attack
- Art. 13th. All filth and rubbish must be removed from about the Ship, by cutting holes in the Ice and depositing it in the water as often as may be necessary
- Art. 14th. The Sailing Master will be careful in noting all the transactions in the Log Book, Wind, weather, Public Stores recd. or landed and the particular manner in which the Ships company are employed— he will also frequently examine the situation of the Cables and Rigging, acquainting me with their situation and condition—
- Art. 15th. The sick are under the immediate and sole care of the Surgeon, whose skill and humanity creates the highest confidence, they are to be visited at least twice every day, no comforts the service admits of must be withheld from them, extra attendants may be had on application to the first Lieut. or Officer of the Watch The Surgeon or his assistant will daily inspect the boilers and cooking utensils, in order that they may be kept perfectly clean, their situation he will report to the first Lieut. The Surgeon and Mate are not to be absent from the Ship at the same time with out permission from me— The Sick mens cloaths will be washed by their mess mates, their Bedding frequently aired and their persons kept clean
- Art. 16th The Gunner will have always filled Thirty round of Cartridges, one Powder Horn and Sixty Tubes with priming cartridges for each gun forty eight primed matches. Gun Locks Division Bags Guns & Gun Carriages and Tackles in complete readiness for actual service, also the small arms are to be kept in perfect repair, fifty rounds for each Musket and thirty for each Pistol Pikes and Cutlasses at hand— he is never to open the Magazines without an order from the Commanding Officer— all deficiencies are to be reported to me
- Art. 17th. The Boatswain will turn his attention to the fitment and preservation of the Rigging which he will carefully inspect and frequently examine.—
- Art. 18th. The Sail Maker will carefully examine the Sails and repair such as require it.—
- Art. 19th. The Carpenter will keep the Pumps in perfect order, inspect Boats and Spars and keep them in Repair, he will also superintend all the work performed by his crew, the Hull of the Ship must be frequently examined as well as the Masts and Spars—
- Art. 20th. The Crew are to be divided into four watches with a proportionate number of petty officers loggerheads always kept in the Galley during the night, and the Snow thrown off the Guns and Deck; all persons approaching the Ship after dark are to be hailed and if suspicious examined & detained for this purpose a good look out must be kept on all sides.
- Art. 21st. The good conduct of the Petty Officers and Seamen will receive every encouragement and all indulgences the service admits of will be granted to those who are distinguished by their correctness, they are expressly guarded against fighting with each other, drunkenness, selling cloaths, small stores tobacco or grog, nor are they permitted to exchange their apparel, every Saturday, after the ordinary work is

- over, they will be allowed to mend their cloaths— all promotions will be made, from those who are cleanly, obedient, and seamen like in their department—
- Art. 22d. If any man has cause for complaint, he is to apply in a respectful manner to the Officer of the Deck, who will redress his grievance unless it is of a nature to require my interference—
- Art. 23d. The Mates and Midshipmen are to be divided into three watches, they are never to leave the Deck untill regularly relieved, either at the expiration of their watch or to their Meals, whenever they are sent with a wooding or watering party, or in a Boat they will recollect the men are confided to their care, and no circumstance can warrant a breach of this important duty— they will receive every proper attention and the Commander in Chief will be made acquainted with their merits.
- Art. 24th. In case of an alarm of Fire the Ships Company will immediately assemble at Quarters when the Sail Trimmers will procure wet swabs and the firemen fill their Buckets with water—
- Art. 25th. The first Lt. only is allowed to flog the men for misconduct, and he is never to give them more than one dozen for an offence with a piece of nine thread ratline—

W. M. Crane.

U S Ship *Genl. Pike*
Sacketts Harbour July 28th. 1814

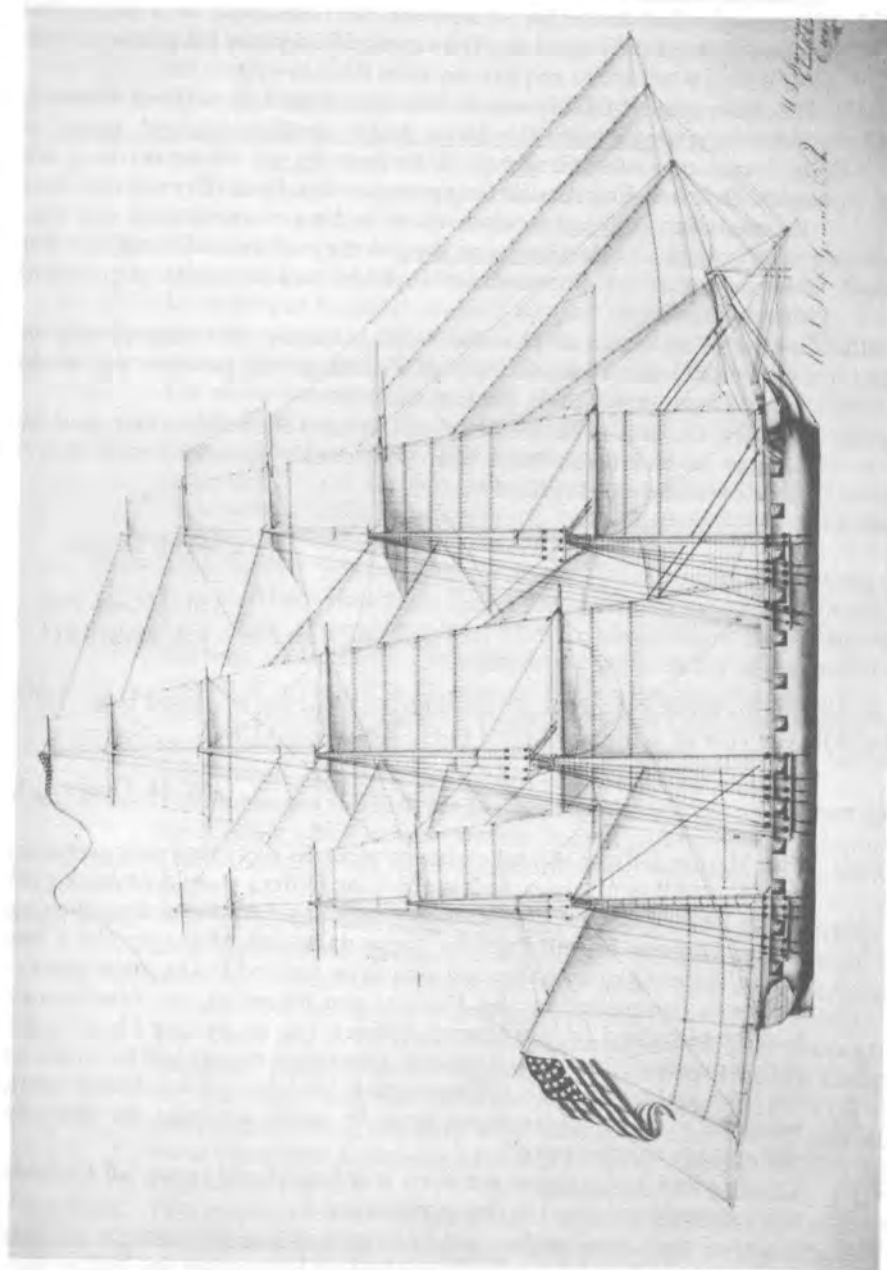
The regulations for the internal government of the *Madison* dated Decr. 19th. 1813 will be the rule of action on board the U S Ship *Genl Pike*

W. M. Crane

- Art. 26th The Marine Officer will take charge of all Soldiers that may come on board as well as Marines, unless a Senior Officer should embark with them, he is to inspect the Arms, Ammunition Cloathing and Messing of the Marines he will exercise them daily and whenever the Crew are called to Quarters; they are also to be trained to the great guns— Offences committed by the Marines not requiring my interference may be punished by the Marine Officer, not exceeding One Dozen with a piece of nine thread ratline, a morning report will be made to me acquainting me with the strength & situation of the detachment, no reductions, or promotions must be made amongst the Marines without my concurrence
- Art 27th. Cursing and Swearing at the men it is hoped will cease, all Officers are expressly enjoined to discountenance it
- Art 28th. If any of the Crew, neglect either to turn out in their watch, or duty such persons may be confined, or the first Lieut. sent for, but no person save the first Lieut. is permitted to flog them—

July 28th. 1814

W. M. Crane.



Plan of Spars and Sails of U.S.S. General Pike

Articl. 29. The Spirit room is never to be opened but in the presence of a Com-
missioned, or warrant officer, the Master at Arms will also attend to
guard against accident from the lights, which are never to be out of a
good lantern

W. M. Crane

Art 30th. All the Lieutenants, Master, Masters Mates, and Midshipmen will be
particularly careful to keep a correct cloaths list, watch, quarter and
Station Bills

W. M. Crane

DS, NCooHi, General Orders (NM 45.57).

COMMODORE ISAAC CHAUNCEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

No. 131

U.S. Ship *General Pike*
Sacketts Harbor 19th Decemr. 1813

Sir

Since our return from Niagara the crews of the different vessels have become
extremely sickly particularly the *Madison*—the deaths from that Ship for the last
twenty days have averaged nearly one a day— the Marines are also very sickly av-
eraging from 35 to 40 every day on the Sick report.— The Men have every
thing that this place can afford to make them comfortable, yet the very best
constitutions sink under the effects of the Climate for notwithstanding the best
medical attendance they frequently die after two or three days sickness— It is
really disheartening to see so many fine fellows sinking under disease with
scarcely a possibility of saving them.—

Beleving that it would benefit the Service and meet your approbation—I
have directed all the Wounded, Ruptured and those rendered unfit for duty by
long and fixed diseases to be discharged from the service of the United States
as their continuance here would endanger their own lives and add to the ex-
pence of the Station without rendering service— I have the honor to be very re-
spectfully Sir, Yr. Mo. Ob. St.

Isaac Chauncey

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 8, No. 72 (M125, Roll No. 33).

AN UNKNOWN MIDSHIPMAN TO J. JONES

Sacketts Harbour December 21st. 1813

Most Esteemed Uncle,

I this moment recd. yours of the 10th. Inst. and am surprised to learn you
have not received my letters. I wrote you on the 10th. Ulto. and also on the first
Inst. Informing you of my having been attacked with the fever. You may be as-
sured nothing gives me more pleasure than to write to or hear from you my
dear uncle, who have been more than a parent to me.

Operations of an offensive nature are suspended here for this season. 'tis' exceedingly cold, and every article we have to pay the most extravagant prices for. 'tis' reported we are going to build two ships and a brig. I hope it may be true, for if I may be allowed an opinion I conceive it of more importance that our forces on the Lakes should be strengthened than on the Ocean. 'Tis' also reported that our prize agent, J. N. Heard is coming on to pay us our prize money. I know not whether 'tis' correct, would to God it may be so. You may judge how much we have need—

The Como. has given the men one dollar apiece to celebrate Christmas and there are not five Officers who have money sufficient to take their letters from the Post Office. It is much to be regretted that our land forces have been so unfortunate; but Montreal must and will be ours. We have nothing to do here of any consequence. I ardently wish I could visit you this winter and my health requires it.

In case my prize money should be as much as it is supposed, with your consent, I will resign visit Washington and obtain a Lieutenancy in Macomb's Regiment. This situation will be more lucrative and promotion more rapid. I may then safely calculate on a Captaincy in 18 months, war or peace. I cannot think of any thing like a Lieutenancy in the Navy these four years—

My health is recovering tho' I am far from being well, my love to yourself and family and respects to any who may enquire after me. While I have the honor to be &c.

Copy, DNA, RG45, CL, 1814, Vol. 2, No. 70 (M125, Roll No. 35). A copy of this letter was enclosed in a letter from J. Jones of 114 Water Street, New York, to Secretary of the Navy Jones dated 25 March 1814.

Destruction along the Niagara Frontier

The campaign on the Niagara in 1813 ended with the wanton destruction of homes and villages on both the Canadian and American sides of the border. Fort George, held by the Americans since April 1813, was only weakly garrisoned as winter set in. The militia stationed there trickled away as their times of service expired, and many were discharged before they were even paid. When a British force advanced on Fort George on 10 December, the commander, Brigadier General George McClure of the New York State militia, gave orders to abandon and destroy the post. Residents of nearby Newark, Ontario, were given short notice to evacuate their homes, and the village was burned, ostensibly to keep the British army from finding shelter there during the winter. In their retreat, the Americans did not have time to destroy the fort or its supplies and ammunition, and Fort George fell to the British.

The Americans retreated across the river to Fort Niagara. On 18 December, the British surprised and captured the American troops, who were unprepared for an attack despite earlier warnings that one was likely to occur. The nearby village of Lewiston was plundered and burned by the British army and its Indian allies.

On 30 December, the British army advanced to Black Rock, which was only weakly defended by local militia units. They plundered and burned the villages of Black Rock and Buffalo and destroyed the two American vessels and two prizes that lay aground there. Master Commandant Jesse D. Elliott feared that the British intended to advance on the naval base at Erie next.

The year ended with the British in control of the entire Niagara frontier; the Americans had lost all the territory on the Niagara that they had gained that year. Hundreds of families, both Canadian and American, could only watch as their homes and possessions were destroyed as winter set in on the Niagara.

BRIGADIER GENERAL GEORGE MCCLURE TO SECRETARY OF WAR ARMSTRONG

Fort Niagara 10 Dec: 1813.—

Sir

This day found Fort George left to be defended by only sixty effective Regular Troops under Capts. Rodgers and Hampton of the 24th. Regt. U.S. Infy. and probably forty volunteers—

Within the last three days, the term of service of the militia has been expiring and they have recrossed the river almost to a man— Foreseeing the defenseless situation in which the Fort would be left, I had authorized some of my most active subalterns to raise volunteer companies for two months, and offered a bounty in addition to the monthly pay— It is with regret I have to say that this expedient failed of producing the desired effect—a very inconsiderable number indeed was willing to engage for a further term of service on any conditions— From the most indubitable information, I learn that the Enemy are advancing in force— this day a scouting party of Col: Wilcocks' 1 volunteers came in contact with their advance at twelve mile creek—lost four prisoners and one killed—one of the former they gave up to their savages— This movement determined me in calling a Council of the principal Regular and Militia officers left at Fort George this morning— They all accorded in opinion that the Fort was not tenable with the remnant of a force left in it— I, in consequence, gave orders for evacuating the Fort since dark and with but three boats have brought over already all the light artillery and most of the arms, equipage ammunition &c and shall doubtless have time to dispose of the heavy cannon before the Enemy makes his appearance— The village of Newark is now in flames—the few remaining inhabitants in it, having been noticed of our intention, were enabled to remove their property—The houses were generally vacant, long before— This step has not been taken without council, and is in conformity with the views of your Excellency disclosed to me in a former communication*

The Enemy are now completely shut out from any hopes or means of wintering in the vicinity of Fort George— It is truly mortifying to me that a part of the Militia at least could not have been prevailed on to continue in service for a longer term, but the circumstance of their having to live in tents at this inclement Season, added to that of the Paymaster's coming on only prepared to furnish them with one out of three months pay, has had all the bad effects that can be imagined— The best and most subordinate militia, that has yet been on this frontier, finding that their wages were not ready for them, became with some meritorious exceptions, a disaffected and ungovernable multitude—**

I am much surprized at not having received long before this time some instructions from your Department for my government—***

Having received none—the Militia all returning to their homes and no troops to supply their places—I am driven to the only alternative left me—

I shall remain at this garrison myself until I can hear either from you or from his Excellency the Governor of this State— I have the Honor to be yr. most obt. servt.

Geo. McClure Br. Genl.
Commdg.

* not true, my letter authorized it only in case it should be necessary to the de-
fense of Fort Geo. In that case the measure would be justifiable.

** Major Lee was expressly ordered to pay these Troops & the Indians.

*** Letters were sent by the Presidents direction enabling him to give boun-
ties—& I made a requisition early in Nov. on Gov. Tompkins for 1000 men &
gave gen. instructions for keeping the fort & furnishing a competent garrison.

LS, DNA, RG107, Department of the Army, Letters Sent to the Secretary of War, Regis-
tered Series, M-257(7) (M221, Roll No. 55). Footnotes denoted by asterisks were written
in another hand and were probably added by the secretary of war.

1. Joseph Willcocks, an Irish immigrant, held minor government appointments in Upper Canada
from 1800 to 1807. He came to sympathize with the cause of revolutionary Ireland and the whig tra-
dition; as an elected member of the legislature of Upper Canada from 1808 to 1812, he was the
leader of the parliamentary opposition group. In July 1813 he raised and commanded a unit of ex-
patriate Upper Canadians fighting on the American side.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL GORDON DRUMMOND,¹ BRITISH ARMY, TO
GOVERNOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE PREVOST

Fort Niagara, Decr. 20th. 1813.—

Sir,

Conceiving the possession of Fort Niagara to be of the highest importance, in
every point of view, to the tranquillity and security of this Frontier, immediately
on my arrival at St. David's, I determined upon it's reduction, if practicable
without too great a sacrifice.— There being, however, but two Batteaux at this
side the water, I did not think proper to make the attempt, until a sufficient
number should be brought from Burlington; at this season of the year a most
difficult undertaking. But, by the indefatigable exertions of Captain Elliott,
Deputy Assistant Quarter Master General, every difficulty, particularly in the
carriage of the Batteaux by land for several miles, notwithstanding the in-
clemency of the weather, (the ground being covered with snow, & the frost se-
vere,) was overcome; they were again launched; and the troops, consisting of a
small Detachment of Royal Artillery, the Grenadier Company of the Royal
Scots, the Flank Companies of 41st. and the 100th. Regts. amounting in the
whole to about 550, which I had placed under the immediate orders of Colonel
Murray, Inspecting Field Officer, were embarked.— The enclosed report of that
most zealous, and judicious Officer, will point out to you the detail of their fur-
ther proceedings.— At 5 O'Clock, A:M: the Fort was attacked by Assault, at the
point of the Bayonet; two Picquets, posted at the distance of a mile, and of a
mile and half, from the Works, having previously been destroyed, to a man, by

the same weapon: and at half an hour afterwards this important place was com-
pletely in our possession.

By this gallant atchievement, 27 Pieces of Ordnance, (mounted on the sev-
eral Defences,) 3000 Stands of Arms, a number of Rifles, a quantity of Ammu-
nition, Blankets, Clothing, several thousand pairs of Shoes, &c, have fallen
into our hands; besides 14 Officers, and 330 others, Prisoners. And 8 re-
spectable inhabitants of this part of the Country, who had been dragged from
the peaceable enjoyment of their property to a most unwarrantable confine-
ment, were released; together with some Indian Warriors of the Cocknawaga,
and Six Nation, Tribes.— The Enemy's loss amounted to 65 in killed; and to
but 12 in wounded; which clearly proves how irresistible a weapon the Bayo-
net is in the hands of British Soldiers. Our loss was only 5 killed; and 3
wounded.— I have to regret the death of a very promising young Officer,
Lieutenant Nolan, of the 100th. Regt.

I beg leave to bear the highest testimony of the anxious, active, and meritori-
ous exertions of Colonel Murray; who, I regret to say, received a severe, though
not dangerous wound in the wrist; (which I hope will not, at this critical period,
deprive me, for any great length of time, of his valuable services;) and to Lieu-
tenant Colonel Hamilton, of the 100th. Regt. and the Officers, Non Commis-
sioned Officers, and Soldiers, who so gallantly achieved this most daring and
brilliant enterprize.—

The Militia came forward with alacrity; and assisted much in launching, and
transporting the Batteaux across the River, in a very rapid current, for which
service they are deserving of the highest praise.— Captain Norton, the Indian
Chief, volunteered his services; and accompanied the Troops.— And I beg to
recommend in the strongest terms to the favor and protection of His Royal
Highness, The Prince Regent, Captain Elliott, of the 103rd. Regt., Deputy Assis-
tant Quarter Master General; whose conduct on this, as on every other occa-
sion, has been so distinguished; as also Lieutenant Dawson, of the 100th. Regt.
who commanded the Forlorn Hope; Captain Fawcett, of the same Regiment,
who immediately supported him with the Grenadiers; and Captain Martin, who,
with three Companies, gallantly stormed the Eastern DemiBastion.—

My best acknowledgements are due to Major Generals Riall, and Vincent, for
the cordial and zealous assistance I received from them in making the arrange-
ments; to Lieutenant Colonel Harvey, Deputy Adjutant General; and to the Of-
ficers of my personal staff.—

I have the honor to forward to Your Excellency the American Colours, taken
on this occasion, by Captain Porter, my Aide de Camp; who being in my fullest
confidence will give Your Excellency such further information as you may require.
I have the honor to be, Sir, Your Excellency's most obedient, humble servant,

Gordon Drummond
Lt. General

LS, CaOOA, British Military and Naval Records, RG8, I, "C" Ser., Vol. 681, pp. 253-57.
The return of the killed and wounded enclosed with this letter is not reproduced here.

1. Lieutenant General Gordon Drummond succeeded Major General Francis de Rottenburg as
commander in chief and administrator of Upper Canada; Drummond arrived in Canada in Decem-
ber 1813.

MASTER COMMANDANT JESSE D. ELLIOTT TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

U.S.S. *Niagara*,
Decr. 31. (11 PM.) 1813

Sir,

I have the honour herewith to enclose you a copy of a Dispatch this moment received from Majr. Isaac Barnes commanding a force on the retreat from Buffalo and Black Rock. The Ice will soon make sufficiently strong to bear a force which no doubt is advancing for the destruction of Erie and the fleet under my command— The latter will be defended as long as ammunition, Provisions & men will last—a disposition to defend the helpless village of Erie has induced me to require of the commg. militia officer present together with the officer commanding the Division that the former would order his Regiment under arms immediately and that the Divisional Officer would with all possible despatch repair to this place with such number of men as he may think advisable—

A few days since I had the honour to enclose you the copy of a Report made Commodore Isaac Chauncey as to the situation of our naval force on this Lake— In my letter accompanying that Report I suggested the propriety of having one hundred & fifty men detached from the army to do duty as marines— I have now Sir addressed a Letter to the commanding military officer at Pittsburgh, a copy of which is enclosed together with one to the officer on the retreat, the commanding militia officer present and Majr. Genl. Meade, commg. Division— The bearer of the despatch has informed me verbally that the Troops retreated on without ammunition, and as this will be the most proper place for meeting the Enemy I have advised him to move on—when on his arrival such arrangements as our means will admit of will be made— Impressed with the idea that the Enemy will make any sacrifice to regain the command of this Lake I have collected what Provisions I could obtain and placed them on board the shipping— I shall detach an officer with a sufficient number of men to attend four pieces of state artillery and shall command in person— Respectfully I have the Hon. to be yr.

Jesse D. Elliott

LS, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 198 (M147, Roll No. 5).

[Enclosure]

"Copy"

To the Commandant of Erie or to whom it concerns—

The British this morning landed about three thousand Regulars, militia, and Indians at Black Rock and after a severe engagement with our militia under command of Majr. Genl. Hall forced them to retreat to the Village of Buffalo and about sun rise to surrender themselves prisoners of war. The houses in the Village were immediately committed to flames and about three oclock this afternoon almost entirely consumed—at the same time two large Vessels lying above Black Rock were set on fire, and consumed. It is the avowed object of the British (as received by good authority) to proceed in a short time to Erie, for the purpose of burning the vessels in that Port, and as an inducement to the Indians to aid and assist them in this nefarious plan, full liberty is given them to plunder for their own benefit, wherever they may go, as the communication from this

place to the Eastward is entirely interrupted by the said Indians &c. and as it is important for you to have the earliest information of the above, we recommend to you every exertion, for to be in readiness in case of an attempt to burn as aforesaid and request of you some assistance of men, arms and ammunition as we have but few arms and no amunition— The time is alarming! Distruction is the order of the day—

On the retreat from Buffalo, 30th. December 1813,

Isaac Barnes, Majr.
Comdg. Militia near Buffalo

N.B. Information is just received that the Enemy have advanced up Lake Erie 8 or 10 miles and destroy every thing as they pass—

Copy, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 198, enclosure (M147, Roll No. 5).

[Enclosure]

Erie, Decr. 31, 1813.
11 o'clock P.M.

Sir,

I have this moment received a Despatch by Express, of which the enclosed is a copy, & request you to order out the militia as soon as possible for the defense of this place—

Should the Ice make so as to bear Troops I shall not be able to afford any protection to the Town. I have the honour to be, yr. obt. servt.

(signed) Jesse D Elliott
commg. force on Lake Erie

Major Genl. Meade
Meadville

Copy, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 198, enclosure (M147, Roll No. 5).

[Enclosure]

"Copy"

U.S.S. *Niagara*
Erie 31st. December 1813—

Sir

A few days since, I addressed the Honl. the Secy. of the Navy, on the subject of the defense of the vessels at this place. I then suggested to him the propriety of requiring from the war depart. a force of One hundred and fifty men, and that they could be received more readily from Pittsburg than any other place. I herewith enclose you a Copy of a Dispatch this moment received from the Commanding and surviving officer of a force that has been in action with the Enemys* fleet have arrived at Niagara with a large number of men, and from present appearances, are destined for this Place, for the distruction of the Fleet as well as the Town of Erie, I would therefore suggest to you Sir the necessity of using all possible dispatch in repairing to this place with what Regular force, you may have, under your command, a Copy of this communication, I have for-

warded to the Genl. Government. With Great Respect I have the honor to be
Sir your &c—

signed Jesse D. Elliott
Comdg. Naval officer
Lake Erie

Commanding Military Officer
Pittsburg

*This must be a mistake the enemy's fleet cannot have arrived at Niagara—The sentence is ambiguous.

Copy, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 198, enclosure (M147, Roll No 5). The footnote denoted by an asterisk was added by William Jones.

[Enclosure]
"Copy"

Erie 31st December 1813

Sir,

Enclosed you have the copy of a Dispatch this moment received from Majr. Isaac Barnes on his retreat before the Enemy from Buffalo, and I have the honor to suggest to you the propriety of calling out the Regiment of Militia under your command— Very respectfully your obd. sert,

Signed Jesse D. Elliott

Col. Wallace
Erie

Copy, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 198, enclosure (M147, Roll No. 5).

Chapter Four

The Gulf Coast Theater: January–December 1813

Captain John Shaw, commander of the New Orleans Station, was an old hand on the Gulf Coast. He had been appointed to the post soon after the Louisiana Purchase, was stationed there from 1803 to 1805, and returned in 1811. Although he was familiar with the geography and environment of the Mississippi Delta, he disliked serving under the military officers usually given overall command of U.S. troops in the Louisiana Territory. He especially disliked Major General James Wilkinson, who had held that post since 1803. Wilkinson had earned a strange reputation among regular army officers. He was given to intrigue and had been involved in the Aaron Burr conspiracy before betraying Burr. Investigated by courts-martial, Wilkinson managed to gain acquittal each time. He returned to New Orleans at the beginning of the War of 1812 having cleared his name once again. As soon as he was back in Wilkinson's grasp, Shaw began to communicate his distaste for the unsatisfactory command relationship. All the same, Wilkinson was the senior officer and the navy secretary ordered Shaw to cooperate.

The naval force available at New Orleans was unusually weak for an area so dominated by water approaches. A glance at a chart indicates at least five possible routes an enemy force could use to assault the city. All, save the Mississippi River, are shallow-water estuaries and bays, suggesting that the ideal defensive vessel would be a gunboat of the type admired by Thomas Jefferson. Yet, there were only ten operable gunboats out of fourteen assigned in late 1812. Of heavier vessels the station commenced the war with the brigs Siren, 16 guns, commanded by Lieutenant Michael B. Carroll; Viper, 12 guns, commanded by Lieutenant Daniel S. Dexter; and Enterprise, 12 guns, commanded by Lieutenant Johnston Blakeley. Lieutenant Joseph Bainbridge, Commodore William Bainbridge's younger brother, succeeded Carroll as commander of Siren in November 1812. Two other vessels remain to be mentioned: Shaw had purchased and renamed a ship Louisiana, formerly the merchantman Remittance, on the account of the navy, and had begun to convert her into an armed cruiser. Criticized for her rotten condition, Louisiana would one day give a good account of herself at the Battle of New Orleans. Shaw, an energetic officer, pressed hard to use the meager resources at his disposal to prepare for the enemy. He was, however, bedeviled by higher costs than those at other naval stations, a lack of willing recruits, and a disease-ridden, enervating climate.

Although unknown to Shaw for many months, he lost the brig Viper, now commanded by Lieutenant John Henley, to the frigate H.M.S. Narcissus, 32