

# CHAPTER 8. MILITARY HISTORY

## —SHEFFIELD’S INVOLVEMENT WITH WARFARE

### CHRONOLOGY OF AMERICAN WARS (1600 TO 2000)

Wars have had a deciding influence on our nation and our communities. Even before the first pioneers arrived in Sheffield from New England, Indian wars had affected the Native American population that greeted these settlers. The following capsules of American Wars highlight the impacts of these military conflicts on our communities and recognize some of the brave warriors who have served in these conflicts. The accompanying Honor Role (pages 348 and 349) lists the known service men and women whose graves are located in Sheffield’s five cemeteries—Garfield (Detroit Road), Pioneer (East River Road), Salem (North Ridge Road), St. Mark (Lake Breeze Road), and St. Teresa (Colorado Avenue).

#### ***Iroquois War (1654)***

Warfare between the Iroquois and Erie Indians that took place along eastern Lake Erie. Marauding warriors from the potent Iroquois League, which united five tribes from the Finger Lakes region of New York, destroyed the Erie Indians who lived along the Lake Erie shore. The Eries were the likely descendents of the Woodland Indians who had occupied the land in prehistoric times. After the Eries were annihilated, the Iroquois only occupied a small portion of the area between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, reserving the hinterlands of Ohio as hunting grounds. Thus, very few Indians were living along the south shore of Lake Erie when the first settlers of European stock established their farms in Sheffield and the surrounding communities. However, early pioneer records mention abandoned cornfields along the Black River floodplain and maple trees that had been already tapped for sap, presumably by Indians.

#### ***French and Indian War (1754-1763)***

War between Great Britain and France over colonial territory in North America that was part of the larger Seven Years War in Europe. Fighting began in the Ohio Valley, then extended into Canada. British victories at the Plains of Abraham near Quebec (1759) and Montreal (1760) led to France conceding control of its North American

holdings to Great Britain. The lands of the Great Lakes region that would eventually become known as the Northwest Territory, including Ohio, came under British control. During this conflict, Captain William Day, commander of a ship in the service of Great Britain, captured a French admiral and his four ships off the coast of France and brought them into Plymouth Harbor, England. William later settled in Sheffield, Massachusetts, from which his son, Capt. John Day, and daughter, Mary [Day] Root, later ventured west to found Sheffield, Ohio.



*Iroquois brave brandishing a war club (detail below) for close combat. The Iroquois annihilated the resident Erie Indians of northeastern Ohio about 150 years before New England settlers arrived (James Maxwell).*



*Indian tribal groups of the Great Lakes region in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Note that Ohio was devoid of tribal groups, especially after the Iroquoian War (James Maxwell).*

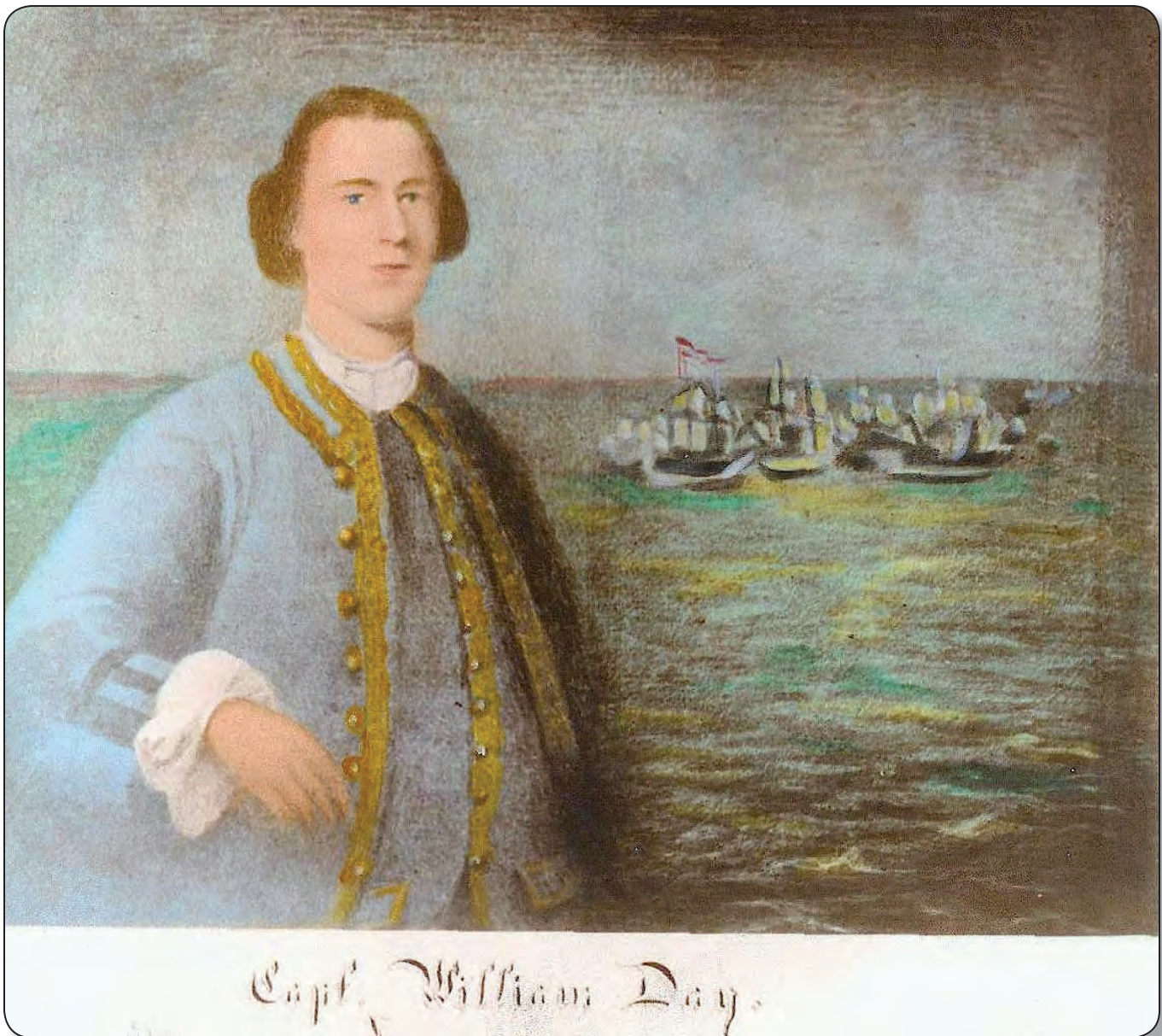
**Seafaring War Heroes of Sheffield's Day Family.** A walk through Garfield Cemetery or a visit to Pioneer Cemetery on East River Road can be a peaceful way to learn more about those who founded Sheffield. One of the prominent family names you will encounter is DAY. Members of the Day family were among the first pioneers to settle here nearly 200 years ago.

Today, there are a few descendants of this hardy family who make their home in Sheffield and in nearby Avon. The following is a brief history of the first 10 generations of the Day family to live in America, focused on the lineage of Day descendants still in our community.

The saga of the Day family in America commences with the emigration of Robert Day (1604-1648), and his wife Mary (1606-1635), from Ipswich, England to Boston in 1634 aboard the barque *Elizabeth*. By 1639 Robert was a resident of Hartford, Connecticut and had married his second wife, Editha Stebbins. Their first son, Thomas Day (~1639-1712), married Sarah Cooper in 1659. Thomas and Sarah resided in Springfield, Massachusetts where they had seven sons and three daughters. Their fourth son, John

(1673-1742), lived in West Springfield and married Mary Smith in 1697; they had four sons and five daughters. Their fourth son, William (1715-1797), who spent his latter years in Sheffield, Massachusetts, was for many years engaged in seafaring and had the command of several vessels. As such, his life was filled with stirring events and thrilling adventures.

During the French and Indian War (1752-1763), the American phase of the worldwide war fought between France and Great Britain for control of the vast colonial territory of North America, William Day commanded naval vessels



*Painting of Capt. William Day depicting the French frigates he captured during the French and Indian War (Meredith Williams). William's son, Capt. John Day, fought in the War of 1812 and was one of the founding proprietors of Sheffield along with Capt. Jabez Burrell.*

in the service of the British Crown—he held his commission as Captain under the King of England. His ship was captured at one point and he was taken as prisoner to France where he was detained for two years. When released, he pleaded for the privilege of taking his old boots with him, which was granted—unknown to the grantors, the boot heels were filled with gold guineas.

On his return to England in 1760, William Day was given command of another warship. He hand-picked a fine crew to sail against the enemy. In the Bay of Biscay his frigate encountered a fleet of five French ships. The lead ship, commanded by an Admiral, was larger than the Day's frigate and considerably in advance of the other vessels in the fleet. Capt. Day engaged and captured the Admiral's ship before the others caught up. With neither vessel being much injured, Capt. Day divided his force with the captured ship. He attacked the remaining ships of the French fleet with such spirit that they all surrendered and he was able to bring them safely into Plymouth Harbor. The British Admiralty honored Capt. Day for his bravery and achievement in capturing the French fleet by commissioning a painting of him on the deck of his ship by noted Boston artist, John Singleton Copley (1737-1815). Copley spent much of his life in London and some of his most celebrated portraits are of the English Royal family. His *Siege of Gibraltar* hangs in Guildhall, London's historic council hall, the foundation of which was laid in 1411.

As another sidelight, it is interesting to note that while Capt. William Day was fighting the French in Europe, Capt. James Cook, the famed explorer/navigator of the South Pacific a decade later, was using his cartographic skills to map the boulder-strewn bed of the St. Lawrence River in preparation for General James Wolfe's successful invasion of French Quebec and capture of Montreal. Working under the range of French guns, often at night, Cook charted and buoyed a safe passage through the treacherous maze of rocks, shoals, and shifting sandbars. In June 1759, the entire British armada of over 200 ships made the crossing without a single casualty,

earning Cook the designation as "Master Surveyor" which greatly influenced his selection as commander of the Pacific Expedition in 1768.

When ashore, William Day made his home at Sheffield in Berkshire County, Massachusetts. Soon after the War, he retired from the sea and settled in Sheffield with his third wife, Rhoda Hubbell of Litchfield, Connecticut. Captain Day was an active patriot in the American Revolution and participated in town affairs until his death in 1797 at age 82. William and Rhoda had five children there, two of which—Mary [Day] Root (1772-1856) and Capt. John Day (1774-1827)—journeyed to Ohio with their families in 1816, founding the community of Sheffield in the Black River valley.

In January 1815, Capt. John Day and Capt. Jabez Burrell purchased a tract of land now known as Sheffield, in Lorain County, Ohio (Township 7, Range 17 of the Connecticut Western Reserve) from General William Hart, who had purchased the tract from the Connecticut Land Company three years earlier, but had never visited Ohio. After persuading several other Berkshire friends to share in the purchase with them, in June of that year they came by horseback to

explore the Township and select lots for themselves and friends, returning home before autumn. A year later, on July 27, 1816 Capt. John Day and his family arrived at their destination in Ohio after a journey in covered wagons for more than three weeks. Henry and Mary [Day] Root had arrived several months earlier (April 3, 1816) and settled on French Creek near the present Abbe Road bridge. However, Capt. Joshua Smith, with his 17-year-old son Douglas, was the first family to arrive (November 13, 1815), selecting land and building a log cabin where the Sheffield Village Municipal Complex now stands. Within a year the New Englanders had settled 1,600 acres and named their community Sheffield. True to their traditions, the Day family and their friends immediately set up educational and religious institutions. A school, church, and town hall were built on East River Road near the mouth of French Creek, while about a half mile upstream on the Black River, a dam, raceway tunnel, sawmill, and gristmill were constructed.

Mary Day married Henry Root (1767-1829) a son of Revolutionary War veteran Col. Aaron Root, in Sheffield, Massachusetts in 1800, where they had three sons and three daughters—all of



Captain James Day (~1812), naval hero of the War of 1812 (painting by Daniel Huntington).



Lydia [Austin] Day (1770-1854), wife of Captain John Day. Lydia and her husband are buried in Sheffield's Pioneer Cemetery.

whom made the journey to Ohio through the wilderness as children. Their eldest son, Aaron (1801-1865), became a Great Lakes and Atlantic Ocean ship captain who is credited with using his boats to carry runaway slaves to freedom in Canada before the Civil War. Frederic O. Day (1840-1921), a grandson of Capt. John Day and cousin of Capt. Aaron Root, would often tell of his most exciting experience—a voyage across the Atlantic Ocean in 1859 with Capt. Root, sailing from Lorain harbor via an early Welland Canal to Liverpool, England aboard the barque *Wm. S. Pierson*. The trip over was prosperous and successful, carrying a cargo of gunstocks and barrel staves, but the return trip was a very stormy one. The ship's navigator had elected to stay in England and in mid-ocean the ship sprung a leak. They had a lot of difficulty in mending it and bringing the ship safely the American shore, very much delayed. Meanwhile the provisions had run low, so hunger and thirst were added to the hardships of the crew. Fortunately, the return cargo included British cheese that helped sustain the crew.

Capt. Aaron Root married Esther Buck (1811-1872) in 1828 and they had five sons and four daughters. Their third son, Edward (1834-1897), was a sergeant with the 87<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Indiana Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War. After the War, Edward married Julia Garfield (1843-1922), youngest daughter of the first settler on North Ridge—Milton Garfield. They had two sons and a daughter. Their youngest son, Henry Garfield Root (1885-1971) married Ada Isabel Rider (1889-1977) in 1912 and had two daughters and a son. Their daughters, Ruth Tempe (1913-2007) and Esther Kathryn (1917-1998), had children—two of which still live in Sheffield Village—Donald J. Hammer and Charles E. Herdendorf. Henry and Ada Root's son, Frank (1914-2006), made his home in neighboring Avon, Ohio where his son, Frank A. Root, Jr., still resides.

### ***American Revolution (1775-1783)***

War between the Continental Army of America and Great Britain to gain independence for thirteen British colonies. Col. Aaron Root, of Sheffield, Massachusetts trained local militia for military conflict. Later (1816) his son Henry and daughter-in-law Mary [Day] Root joined in establishing the town of Sheffield, Ohio in the Connecticut Western Reserve. In neighboring Avon, Revolutionary War soldier John Prentiss Calkins (1752-1836) is buried in Avon Mound Cemetery. Calkins served with the New Hampshire Regiment and later settled in Avon. For over a century his grave was unmarked until a descendent of Calkins, Edward Brown, Jr. of Sheffield Village, who was then superintendent of Garfield Cemetery in Sheffield, arranged for a military marker to be placed on Calkins' grave in Avon.

***Sheffield Family in the American Revolution.*** Sheffield Village's first mayor, Clyde B. McAllister, has family roots that extend back to the War for Independence. Clyde's parents were James and Katherine (Lindersmith) McAllister. The Lindersmith family name has been traced back to the mid-1700s and the War for Independence.

Katherine Lindersmith (1865-1922) married James McAllister on October 30, 1883. They had five children: Clyde,

Viola, Margaret, Jeanette, and Bernice. Katherine's parents were Isaac Lindersmith (1827-1894) and Martha Whittaker (1832-?). Isaac's parents were Peter Lindersmith (1785-1845) and Susanna Ehehart (1787-1850) and Peter's parents were Joseph Lindersmith (1751-1817) and Nancy Anna Bauman (1754-1836) of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Joseph Lindersmith is of particular interest because he was a soldier in Washington's Continental Army throughout the Revolutionary War. Joseph was born in Switzerland on March 19, 1751 and settled in Pennsylvania before the start of the War. He joined the Pennsylvania troops and served as bugler and fifer during the entire War. He participated in the battle of Yorktown and was present at the surrender of British General Cornwallis in 1781, which ended the War. After the War, Joseph settled in Hanover Township, Columbiana County, Ohio where he and his wife Nancy Anna raised five children: Daniel (b. 1773), Elizabeth, Jacob (b. 1779), John, and Peter (b. 1785).

Joseph Lindersmith died in Hanover Township on June 10, 1817. His great granddaughter, Katherine, married James McAllister in nearby Millport in Franklin Township, Columbiana County. Here, their son Clyde was born on March 2, 1885.

In 1895 the McAllister family moved to Avon Township in Lorain County and in 1928 Clyde settled on North Ridge in Sheffield Township. Margaret married Herbert Peter Kriebel and the couple also settled on North Ridge.



*Katherine [Lindersmith] McAllister (1865-1922), wife of James McAllister and great granddaughter of Revolutionary War hero James Lindersmith (Donald Kriebel). Detail of watch on page 299.*



*Fifer and drummers in the Spirit of '76 (painting by Archibald Willard).*

Today, three descendants of Katherine and James McAllister still live in Sheffield Village, Eleanor Pavlish and Donald Kriebel, grandchildren (children of Margaret) and Patricia Riegelsberger, a great granddaughter (granddaughter of Clyde). Thomas Smith, a great grandson of Katherine and James McAllister, lives in nearby Elyria.



*Patriot troops, led by Col. Alexander Hamilton, storm redoubt protecting British garrison at Yorktown on October 14, 1781. The defeat of the British in this battle ended the Revolutionary War (painting by Howard Pyle, Wilmington Society of Fine Arts).*



*Watch worn in portrait of Katherine [Lindersmith] McAllister (Donald Kriebel).*



*Grave markers for Revolutionary War soldier John Prentiss Calkins, buried in Avon Mound Cemetery situated on North Ridge.*

### **Tripolian War (1801-1805)**

Conflict between the United States and the Bashaw of Tripoli over Tripoli's demand for tribute to insure merchant vessels protection and immunity from attack by Barbary Coast pirates. The Mediterranean Squadron of American warships was formed by President Thomas Jefferson and dispatched to the North African coast. In response the Bashaw declared war on the United States.

At first the U.S. squadron fought several indecisive battles in waters around Tripoli under the command of Commodore Edward Preble; then in 1803, he boldly sailed into Tangiers to rescue American prisoners held there. The next year Commodore Preble ordered Lt. Stephen Decatur to undertake a daring raid in Tripoli harbor to destroy the captured frigate *Philadelphia* so as to prevent it from being used against the U.S. Navy.



*Woodcut illustrating the burning of captured U.S. frigate Philadelphia in Tripoli harbor to keep her from the Barbary Pirates (Hubbard Brother).*

The combination of a strong naval blockade and an invasion of American marines overland from Egypt brought the war to a close, with a peace treaty favorable to the United States, including the release of American prisoners. As a young lieutenant in the U.S. Navy, Oliver Hazard Perry commanded a schooner in the Mediterranean during the war with Tripoli and later served aboard the USS *Constitution*. A decade later Perry was to serve as commander of the United States fleet in the Battle of Lake Erie.

### **War of 1812 (1812-1815)**

War between United States and Great Britain, sparked by British harassment of American shipping during the British embargo of Napoleonic France. The Battle of Lake Erie near Put-in-Bay, Ohio resulted in the defeat and capture of the British fleet by Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, facilitated the invasion of Canada by General William Henry Harrison, and the eventual defeat of the British and Indian alliance at the Battle of the Thames. Sheffield's first permanent settler, Capt. Joshua Smith was a veteran of the War of 1812 and fought in the battle of Sackets Harbor on Lake Ontario. Capt. Smith (1771-1817) is buried in Garfield Cemetery. Capt. John Day and Capt. Jabez Burrell of the Massachusetts Militia also fought in the War of 1812 and later founded



*U.S. Navy Lt. Stephen Decatur; under cover of night, sailed a small ketch into Tripoli harbor and set fire to the Philadelphia (U.S. Navy).*

Sheffield, Ohio, selling land to the Austin, Garfield, Root, Smith, and several other New England families. Capt. Day is buried in Sheffield's Pioneer Cemetery and Capt. Burrell in Garfield Cemetery. Other Sheffield men who fought against the British include Arthur Caley, Erastus Hecock, and William Lewis.



*Gravestone of William Lewis (1782-1847) in Garfield Cemetery, veteran of the War of 1812.*

## THE WAR OF 1812 ON THE GREAT LAKES

Two hundred years ago, the Battle of Lake Erie had been won by Commodore Perry in September of 1813, but the war would still rage on for another year across the Great Lakes. Hostilities along the frontier with Canada retarded efforts to settle the Connecticut Western Reserve and it was not until the war ended in early 1815 that Sheffield had its beginning. Here we will explore the war strategies and battles that took place along our northern border.

### Prelude to the War

Why was the United States willing to go to war again with Great Britain, less than three decades after the American Revolution ended? Often called *The Second War for Independence*, the War of 1812 had a number of causative factors. Emotional feelings against British impressment of American seamen and interference with American neutrality rights on the high seas—particularly blockades at U.S. ports—were notable factors, but more personal to inhabitants of the Great Lakes region, and those desiring to settle in Ohio and beyond, was the British influence behind Indian hostilities. In fact, once war broke out, more battles were fought on our northern border—especially the Niagara Frontier—with British forces and their Indian allies than in any other part of the United States.

Leading up to the war, in August 1794 President George Washington ordered Brig. General “Mad” Anthony Wayne (1745-1796) to Ohio to subdue Indian raids that were suspected of being supported by the British—it was well documented that British agents supplied the Indians with “gifts” of muskets and axes. Previous attempts by Brig. General Josiah Harmar (October 1790) and Maj. General Arthur St. Clair (November 1791) to dislodge the Miami Indians ended in disaster as Chief Little Turtle soundly defeated American troops. On August 20, 1794, General Wayne’s forces defeated an Indian confederation at the Battle of Fallen Timbers on the banks of the Maumee River in northwestern Ohio. Lt. William Henry Harrison (aide-de-camp), Capt. Solomon Van Rensselaer (promoted to major for gallantry), and Brig. General James Wilkinson (commander of a wing in the attack) served with General Wayne in the battle. These three men figured prominently in the war to come.

On November 7, 1811 an American force of 900 troops commanded by Brig. General William Henry Harrison defeated the Western Indian Confederation of 700 warriors (Chippewa, Huron, Kickapoo, Ottawa, Potawatomi, Shawnee, Winnebago, and Wyandot) at the Battle of Tippecanoe in Indiana Territory. Again the British denied they guided and supplied the Indians, but strong evidence of their complicity was



Depiction of General Wayne’s decisive victory over the Western Indian Confederacy at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in northwestern Ohio on August 20, 1794 (*Harpers Magazine*, 1896).

uncovered. The victory at Tippecanoe did not end Indian raids on the frontier and is often considered the opening battle of the War of 1812.

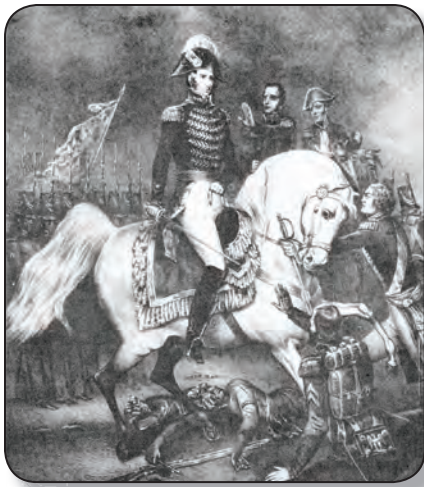
The settlers throughout the Midwest were “jumpy” about the threat of Indian hostilities. When the New Madrid Earthquake struck in the Missouri Territory on December 16, 1811—the most powerful earthquake to hit the eastern United States in recorded history—some of the pioneers thought it was an Indian attack.

John Reynolds (1788-1865), 4<sup>th</sup> governor of Illinois wrote of it, “Our family all were sleeping in a log cabin, and my father leapt out of bed crying aloud, ‘the Indians are on the house.’ We laughed at the mistake of my father but soon found out it was worse than the Indians. Our house cracked and quivered, so we were fearful it would fall to the ground.”

Many of the Indians of the Northwest Territory took the earthquake as a sign that predictions of doom for their tribes were coming true, leading many to support Chief Tecumseh, an ally of the British. Attacks against American settlers by Indians quickly increased in the aftermath of the earthquake.



General Anthony Wayne His military exploits in the Revolutionary War and fiery personality earned him the sobriquet “Mad” (*Library of Congress*).



General Harrison at the Battle of Tippecanoe, November 7, 1811 (Library of Congress). Generals Wayne and Harrison learned much from General St. Clair's defeat, and spent months training militia and regular troops in Indian warfare strategies before going to battle.



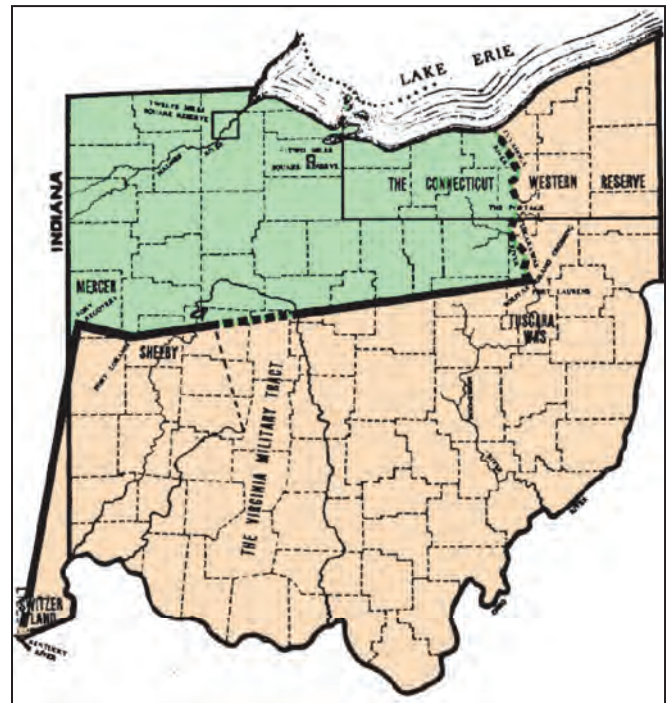
General Arthur St. Clair (1737-1818), first governor of the Northwest Territory (Library of Congress). His forces suffered a major defeat on November 3, 1791 in a surprise attack led by Chief Little Turtle at present-day Fort Recovery, Ohio. Hundreds of soldiers and scores of women and children were killed in the battle, which has since borne the name St. Clair's Defeat. It remains the greatest defeat of the U.S. Army by Native Americans, with 623 American soldiers and about 50 Native Americans killed.



General William Henry Harrison (1773-1841), commander of United States forces at the Battle of Tippecanoe and later the Western Army (Library of Congress).



Signing of the Treaty of Greenville on August 3, 1795 at Fort Greenville, Ohio. Victory in the Battle of Fallen Timbers resulted this treaty that established Indian territory in northwestern Ohio. Chief Little Turtle is the prominent figure to the left and General Wayne to the right. Lt. William Henry Harrison is the officer without a hat to the right of General Wayne (painting by Howard Chandler Christy).



Greenville Treaty Line defined Indian territory [green shading] west of the Cuyahoga River and north of Fort Recovery in present-day Mercer County (Office of Ohio Auditor).

### War Declared

On June 1, 1812, President James Madison asked Congress to declare war against Great Britain, citing: (1) impressment of American sailors, (2) interference with trade, (3) blockades of the American coast, and (4) aiding and inciting Native tribes to raid American settlements and forts in the Great Lakes region. On June 18<sup>th</sup>, Congress voted to go to war and the President signed a war proclamation.

In preparation for the ensuing battles, Col. Jacob Brown was promoted to brigadier general and placed in command of the New York Militia with responsibility for protecting the Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River shorelines from Oswego to Massena, New York. During the War of 1812, the term "militia" refers to a citizen fighting force composed of non-professional troops that could be called upon to enter in combat situations, as opposed to a professional force of regular, full-time soldiers.





### **Attempt to Capture Fort Malden and British Navy Yards at Amherstburg**

Due to a lag in communications on the U.S. side, British Lt. Rolette of the Provincial Marine captured the schooner *Cuyahoga* in the Detroit River before the American crew was aware war had been declared. On July 12, 1812, General Hull crossed the Detroit River and invaded Upper Canada at Sandwich [now Windsor, Ontario] with the objective of marching 20 miles south along the Detroit River to capture Fort Malden and the British navy yards at Amherstburg. The American advance stalled for three reasons: (1) American militiamen at Fort Detroit refused to cross the river with the regular troops, (2) Indians loyal to the British disrupted the American supply lines, and (3) strong British resistance at the River Canard between Sandwich and Fort Malden. General Hull retreated back across the Detroit River with British General Isaac Brock and Shawnee Chief Tecumseh in pursuit.

### **Surrender of Fort Detroit**

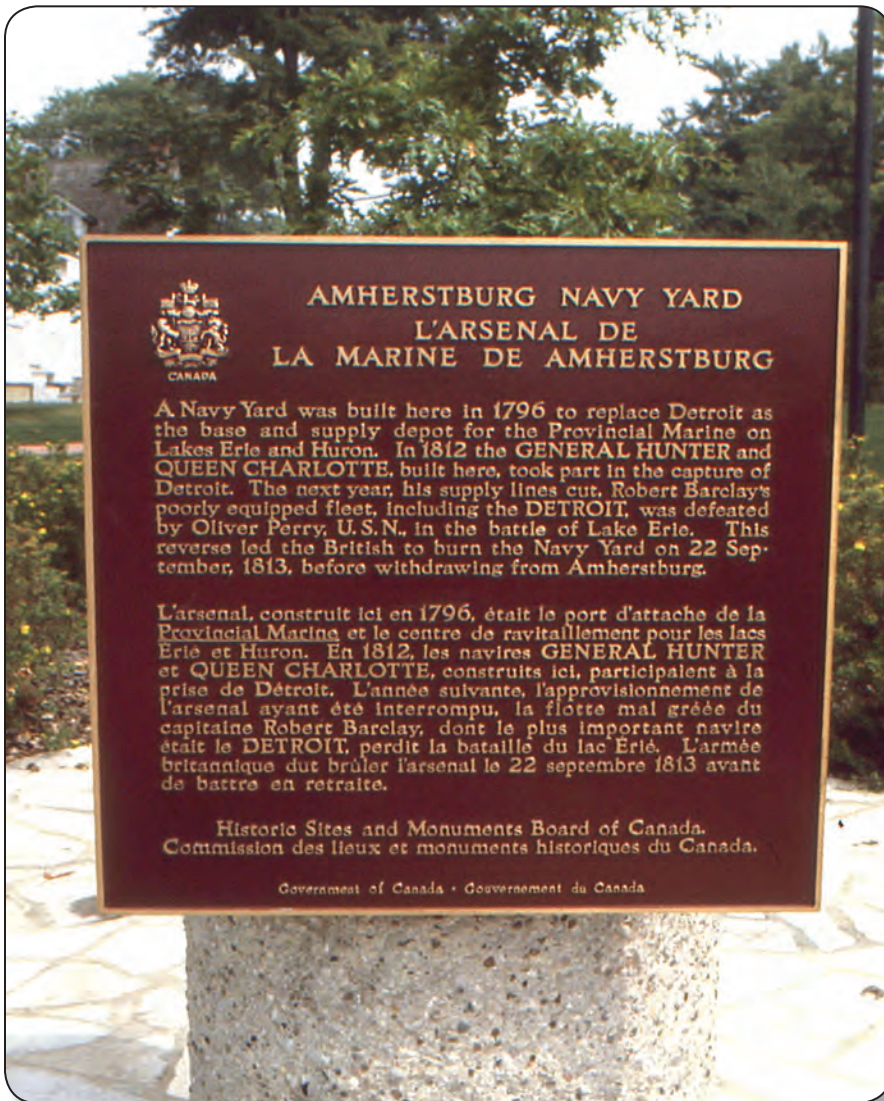
On August 16, 1812, General Isaac Brock crossed the Detroit River with British forces and Tecumseh-led Indian warriors to attack Fort Detroit. Fearing an Indian massacre, General William Hull surrendered his 400 regular troops without firing a shot—the British had created an impression of a having a large regular force by dressing militiamen in surplus red coats.



*Painting of Amherstburg, Upper Canada in 1813 (Parks Canada).*

Brock paroled the American militiamen in the fort, but the regulars were marched to Quebec where they were paraded through the streets. American forces across the Niagara River at Lewiston, New York watched helplessly as the column of prisoners were marched northward. Upon his release from captivity, General Hull was sentenced to death by a court martial for his cowardly behavior at Fort Detroit, but was given a reprieve by President Madison due to his honorable service in the Revolutionary War.

The British also captured the U.S. brig *Adams* at Detroit, leaving no American navy vessels on Lake Erie. At that time, the British had a fleet of four warships on the lake and they were in the process of building more at the Amherstburg navy yards.



*Historic marker for the Amherstburg Naval Yard, construction site for the British fleet on Lake Erie.*



*Restored Fort Malden, built in 1796 by the British at Amherstburg, Upper Canada (present-day Ontario).*



*Surrender of Fort Detroit by General William Hull (right) to British General Isaac Brock in August 1812, while Indian Chief Tecumseh observes the ceremony (Library of Congress).*

### **President Madison's War Strategy**

On September 17, 1812, President Madison appointed Brig. General William Henry Harrison commander of all American forces in the Northwest Territory and the new state of Ohio. Harrison's command was given the name Second Northwest Army. He was ordered to retake Fort Detroit and defend the frontier against the menace of Indian raids on settlers. Originally Harrison refused the appointment because he would have to serve under Brig. General James Winchester, an officer extremely unpopular with the officers and troops, as well as western settlers. The reporting relationship was partially solved when the Kentucky caucus elected and promoted Harrison as major general in the Kentucky Militia in August 1812. In March 1813 Congress approved the promotion of Harrison to major general in the regular army.

At about the same time plans were being laid to attack Canada at the Niagara Frontier to support General Hull's ill-fated northwest campaign—the one that had ended in disaster at Detroit. The Niagara invasion plan suffered from lack of defined leadership and chain of command. General Dearborn ordered Militia General Stephen Van Rensselaer to move his army from Sackets Harbor to Lewiston and prepare to attack Upper Canada

by crossing the Niagara River. Brig. General Alexander Smyth, in command of some 3,000 troops in the Niagara area, decided not to cooperate. Smyth refused to accept a subordinate position under a militia general and wanted the invasion to start at Black Rock by crossing the river to Fort Erie. He moved about 1,700 regulars to Buffalo, leaving only 1,300 at Fort Niagara to support Van Rensselaer's plan for a two-pronged attack across the river: (1) Lewiston to Queenston and (2) Fort Niagara to Fort George. A month was wasted sorting out an invasion plan, plenty of time for British General Brock to return to the Niagara Frontier.

Also in September, three men called upon President Madison in Washington: Secretary of War William Eustis, Col. Lewis Cass [one of the officers who had been with General Hull at Detroit, but was away meeting a supply caravan when Hull surrendered], and Daniel Dobbins, a veteran captain of merchant ships on the Great Lakes. They advised the President that the United States must build a fleet on Lake Erie in order to arrest control of the lake from the British. As long as the British controlled the lake they could deploy their troops anywhere they wished along the American shore, with no force to stop them. Dobbins recommended Presque Isle Bay at the town of Erie, Pennsylvania as the best and safest place to build the ships. President Madison decided the men were right. He gave Dobbins a warrant as a sailing master in the navy and directed him to build four vessels of war at Erie.

### **Early Engagements in the Lake Erie Islands Region**

The Lake Erie Islands lie at the extreme northwestern edge of the Connecticut Western Reserve, but were not included in the Firelands, as was Marblehead Peninsula. The Firelands consisted of the western region of the Western Reserve awarded to residents who were burned out of their homes by the British during the Revolutionary War.

The original proprietor of the Bass Islands was Revolutionary War veteran Judge Pierpont Edwards of Hartford, Connecticut. Judge Edwards was one of 59 stockholders in The Connecticut

Land Company, a syndicate formed in 1796 to purchase 3,840,000 acres of land—which came to be known as the Connecticut Western Reserve—in what would become northeastern Ohio. The land was distributed to the stockholders in a series of drawings. On April 4, 1807, Judge Edwards drew Township 7 of Range 16 on the shore of Lake Erie, which later became Avon Township in Lorain County. The three Bass Islands were awarded to Edwards as a supplement because the Avon tract was irregular due to the lake's shore. Also the land north of the ancient beach ridge [Detroit Road] was swampy and thought to be unusable for settlement.

Judge Edwards never visited his Ohio property, but in 1810 he deeded the Bass Islands to his sons, John Stark Edwards and Ogden Edwards. In 1811, John sent Seth Doan of Chatham, Connecticut to the islands to establish a homestead. Doan's first task was to dispose of a group of French Canadian squatters, then clear a woodland tract of 100 acres on South



*Judge Pierpont Edwards (1750-1826), original proprietor of Lake Erie's Bass Islands (New York Public Library).*

Bass Island, which he planted to fall wheat. Next he brought 400 sheep and 150 hogs onto the island to graze and forage on the acorns and hickory nuts, planning to slaughter the animals the following year. By the spring of 1812 there was considerable tension along the boundary line with British Canada that led to open warfare with the declaration of war by the United States on June 18<sup>th</sup>. John Edwards assembled a crew on South Bass Island to harvest the wheat as soon as it was ripe.

The entire crop of 2,000 bushels was transported to a new log shed Edwards had built on the mainland at Catawba Peninsula. After the fall of Fort Detroit, the British invaded the islands region, tracing the wheat to the mainland. On September 22<sup>nd</sup>, the British and their Indian allies fought a skirmish with the Firelands militia, led by Benajah Wolcott, on the Sandusky Bay shore of Marblehead Peninsula. As the British withdrew from the area, they destroyed John Edward's storehouse and its contents on Catawba [Wolcott would later become the first keeper of the Marblehead Lighthouse, when it was built in 1822].

This incident emboldened the Indians of northwestern Ohio. Fearing further attacks, many of the New England settlers fled the area until the war ended. News of British victories fanned

rumors of further invasions of Ohio. The threat was felt as far east as the Black River in present-day Lorain County where a militia post was established to ensure the citizenry that they were safe in their cabins.

To protect his property, General William Hart, first proprietor by virtue of the land drawing of what later became Sheffield Township, sent frontiersman Timothy Wallace to commence settlement of his property. Wallace selected a tract of land near the mouth of French Creek on the Black River where he constructed a small log house. He started to clear the land for planting, but as rumors persisted, he soon abandoned the property for fear of Indian reprisal. It was not until the war was over that Capt. Burrell and Capt. Day purchased the township from General Hart and established the permanent settlement of Sheffield.

Meanwhile, in an attempt to retaliate for his loss to the British, John Edwards organized a company of militia in Warren, Ohio and marched toward the Bass Islands. When his forces reached Cleveland the authorities appointed Edwards a colonel, but inexplicably ordered him to dismiss his company. That winter Col. Edwards became impatient to see the damage that his



Lake Erie fleet being built at Erie, Pennsylvania during the winter of 1812-1813 (Pennsylvania Bureau of State Parks).



*American gunboats at the Black Rock Naval Base during the winter of 1812-1813 (painting by Peter Rindlisbacher).*

property had suffered. With two friends, George Parsons and William Bell, Col. Edwards again set off for the Bass Islands on horseback. A January thaw flooded the Sandusky River and they were unable to cross to Fort Stephenson [now Fremont, Ohio]. They turned back, but had difficulty crossing the Huron River.

John became ill with pneumonia and took refuge in a log cabin. Bell headed back to Warren to fetch Dr. Seeley, while Parsons stayed with the sick man. On January 29, 1813, Col. John Stark Edwards died and Parsons put his body on his horse for the long trail back to Warren, meeting Bell, Dr. Seeley, and Mrs. Edwards along the way.

John's widow and his brother Judge Ogden Edwards, then became co-owners of the Bass Islands, but neither showed any further interest in the islands while the war waged on.

The British developed a naval force on the Great Lakes that was unchallenged by the Americans until Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry was ordered to build a squadron of warships at Erie, Pennsylvania. At the suggestion of General William Henry Harrison, Perry anchored his ships in Put-in-Bay Harbor awaiting a challenge from the British squadron under the command of Capt. Robert Barclay. Perry's victory at the Battle of Lake Erie on September 10, 1813, freed the Bass Islands from further threat by the British.

### ***Americans Establish a Naval Force on the Great Lakes***

The British developed a naval force on the Great Lakes that was unchallenged by the Americans until Daniel Dobbins, and later joined by Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, were ordered to build a squadron of warships at Erie, Pennsylvania. Once the American fleet was assembled, General William Henry Harrison, recommended that Perry anchor his ships in Put-in-Bay Harbor to await a challenge from the British squadron under the command of Captain Robert Barclay. Perry's eventual victory freed the Bass Islands from further threat by the British, but that is getting ahead of events that would need to unfold before the battle.

In October 1812, Commodore Isaac Chauncey, American commander of naval forces on Lakes Ontario and Erie, arrived at Sackets Harbor to build or otherwise acquire ships. The Americans viewed control of these two lakes and the St. Lawrence River to be of paramount importance. In December, Lt. Jesse Elliott, then commander of naval forces on Lake Erie at Buffalo, submitted a recommendation to Chauncey to build a Lake Erie fleet at the Black Rock shipyard on the Niagara River. Under strong opposition from Daniel Dobbins, Elliott's plan was rejected because British gun installations were deployed immediately across the river. Also, rapid downstream currents in the Niagara River would have to be overcome to reach Lake Erie.

The following month (January 1813), Master Commandant Oliver Hazard Perry was selected to command the Lake Erie fleet being built by Sailing Master Daniel Dobbins in Presque Isle Bay. Perry was also assigned the task of transferring several small gunboats stationed at the Black Rock shipyard to Presque Isle.

Perry's second assignment proved to be difficult because the British cannons at Fort Erie [at the head of the Niagara River] prevented American ships at Black Rock from moving out into Lake Erie. Also, the British fleet under Capt. Robert Heriot Barclay was patrolling Lake Erie and monitoring American progress at Presque Isle.



*Sailing Master Daniel Dobbins (1776-1856). His vision initiated construction of the American fleet at Erie, Pennsylvania in 1812 (Erie Public Museum).*



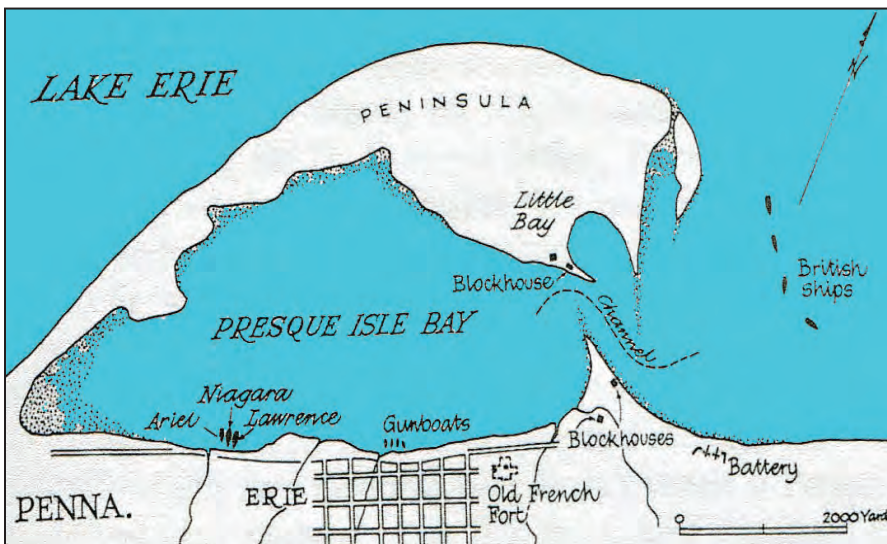
*Commodore Isaac Chauncey (1779-1840), commander of the American fleet on Lake Ontario (painting by Gilbert Stuart, 1818; U.S. Naval Academy Museum).*

Unable to cross the shallow sandbar at the entrance to Presque Isle Bay, Barclay had to wait for the American fleet to emerge and for his flagship, the brig *Detroit*, to be completed at Amherstburg, near the mouth of the Detroit River before he felt confident to engage the Americans. Obtaining the materials necessary to build the vessels and transporting armaments through the wilderness to Erie, Pennsylvania were the biggest problems facing Dobbins and Perry. Some of the cannons came from New York City via the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers, along Lake Ontario,

and over rough roads that ran along the Niagara River between Lakes Erie and Ontario to the America naval yard at Black Rock. From there Dobbins had to take over and move the guns to Erie. During the winter months, teams of oxen and horses pulled wagons and sleds to Presque Isle. Frequently the teams came over the ice of frozen Lake Erie, pulling their loads of big guns, anchors, and other critical supplies. Other supplies and armament came overland from foundries in Pittsburgh.



*Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry (1785-1819), commander of the American fleet on Lake Erie (painting by Gilbert Stuart 1818; U.S. Naval Academy Museum).*



*British fleet patrolling Lake Erie and monitoring Perry's progress at Presque Isle, but prevented by the sandbar from entering the bay (U.S. National Park Service).*

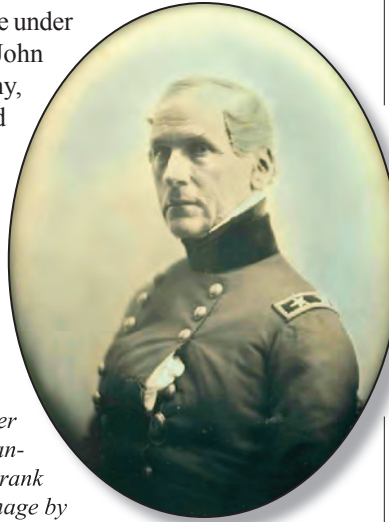


*Captain Robert Heriot Barclay commander of the British fleet on Lake Erie (Public Archives of Canada).*

## Battle of Queenston Heights

Meanwhile on October 13, 1812, the Americans launched an attack across the Niagara River at Queenston Heights, Upper Canada. General Stephen Van Rensselaer ordered Col. Solomon Van Rensselaer to launch the attack with a force of 1,300 men. Lt. Col. Winfield Scott refused to serve under Col. Van Rensselaer, a militia officer, but Lt. Col. John Christie and Lt. Col. John Fenwick, regular army, agreed to serve. The attack became disorganized due to lack of a central command, poor weather, insufficient boats, and little knowledge of the terrain. To make matters worse, Van Rensselaer was wounded in the first wave, Christie's boat was swept down river, and Fenwick was wounded and later captured. With the Americans pinned down and taking casualties, Lt. John Gansevoort learned of a fisherman's path up the cliff.

*Captain John Ellis Wool (1784-1869) served as an officer in three consecutive U.S. wars—War of 1812, Mexican-American War, and American Civil War—attaining the rank of Brigadier General as shown in this daguerreotype image by Southworth & Hawes (Library of Congress).*



Gansevoort led Capt. John Wool up the escarpment, where the Americans overran the British battery and chased the enemy back to Queenston. General Sir Isaac Brock and Lt. Col. John Macdonell mounted a British counterattack. Both British officers were killed in the engagement, a severe loss to their command.

Taking charge, British Maj. General Roger Sheaffe, outflanked the Americans and attacked from the rear. When American reinforcements, under General Smyth, refused to cross the Niagara River, the invading Americans at Queenston were forced to surrender with 300 killed or wounded and 1,000 captured.



*Battle of Queenston Heights, October 1812. Mortally wounded General Isaac Brock urges Canadian militiamen forward (painting by John Davis Kelley, 1896).*



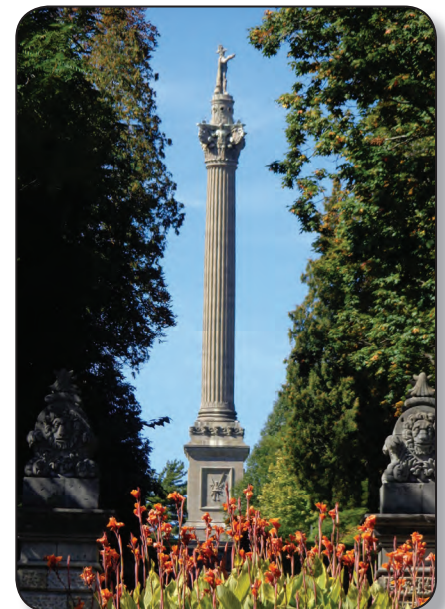
*Fisherman's path up the cliff at Queenston Heights. Discovered by Lt. John Gansevoort, Captain John Ellis Wool used the path to lead American forces up the Niagara Escarpment and overrun the British battery.*



*Plaque commemorating the battery position where Lt. Colonel Macdonell was killed at Queenston Heights.*



*War of 1812 cannon marks the position where General Isaac Brock and Lt. Colonel John Macdonell fell at the Battle of Queenston Heights.*



*Monument to General Isaac Brock at the crest of the Niagara Escarpment, near where he fell during the Battle of Queenston Heights.*

### ***Battle of Frenchtown and the Raisin River Massacre***

In January 1813, Brig. General James Winchester established a fortified camp on the rapids of the Maumee River in northwestern Ohio. The fort was to function as a staging post where General Harrison's army of 6,500 men could converge and launch an attack to recapture Fort Detroit.

On January 22, 1813, General Winchester received an urgent request for help from American settlers at Frenchtown on the River Raisin [now Monroe, Michigan], about 35 miles north of the fort, where 160 Canadians and Indians were holding the village. General Winchester dispatched Col. William Lewis and Col. John Allen with 660 men to rescue the settlers. They recaptured the town, killing 12 British soldiers and wounding 55.

Soon after, General Winchester learned that British Col. Henry Procter (General Brock's replacement as commander at Fort Malden) was approaching Frenchtown with 1,400 troops from Fort Malden. Winchester marched north with 300 men to reinforce his troops at the River Raisin. The American force that was holding Frenchtown had its back to the river and suffered an intense artillery bombardment from the British and an attack on their west flank by 600 Indians led by Tecumseh. This caused a chaotic retreat of over 400 men that ended in disaster with heavy casualties of 220 killed, 40 wounded, 147 captured, and only 33 escaped.

Being poorly situated, outnumbered, and lacking artillery support, General Winchester, whose main troops were pinned down on the opposite side of the River Raisin, surrendered his army to Col. Procter as did Col. George Madison whose 400 men were farther upstream. The American officers negotiated protection for their troops from the Indians that was accepted by Col. Procter. However, British guards soon left the area and marauding Indians returned to kill 60 wounded men left in British care as Procter marched the uninjured American troops back toward Detroit. As the prisoners were marched northward, those unable to keep up were murdered by Indians as well. An account by a survivor read, "The road was for miles strewn with mangled bodies." The needless slaughter of the American wounded, which became known as the River Raisin Massacre, so horrified contemporary Americans that it overshadowed the actual battle and word of it spread throughout the country.

The massacre was particularly devastating for the state of Kentucky, which supplied many of the soldiers that fell during the battle and the following massacre. "Remember the Raisin" became the rallying battle cry used in subsequent American engagements and ultimately sealed the fate of Tecumseh for not being able to control his warriors. The loss of this large segment of his army, with no replacements on the way, resulted in



*Colonel Henry Procter (1763-1822), later promoted to general, commander of Fort Malden after the death of General Brock (Parks Canada).*



*Frenchtown on Lake Erie at the mouth of the River Raisin, Michigan Territory, site of the Indian massacre in January 1813. Remember the Raisin became the battle cry of the Americans (Monroe County Historical Society).*



*Shawnee Indian Chief Tecumseh (1768-1813), allied with the British, he was unable to control his warriors at the River Raisin Massacre (drawing by Benson Lossing).*



General Harrison calling off his planned winter campaign to retake Fort Detroit. Harrison selected an elevated position on the east bank of the Maumee River and Capt. Eleazer Wood designed and supervised the building of a defensive fortification, named Fort Meigs, for the reduced American force of 1,000 men.

### Sieges of Fort Meigs

On May 1, 1813 and again in July, British General Procter, commander of Fort Malden on the Detroit River after General Brock was killed in a battle on the Niagara Frontier, attempted to capture Fort Meigs on the Maumee River in northwestern Ohio. During the first siege, General William Henry Harrison defended the fort with a small force of about 1,000 men. Aware of Procter's plan, General Harrison requested reinforcements from Kentucky Governor Isaac Shelby, who dispatched Brig. General Green Clay with 1,270 Kentucky militiamen.



*Fort Meigs on the Maumee River in northwestern Ohio was originally constructed in January and February 1813 under the supervision of Captain Eleazer Wood. Dressed for the period, these guides give tours of the reconstructed fort. The lady is dressed in clothing typical of Ohio in the early 19th century and the soldier wears an Artillery uniform denoted by the red facings that continued as a distinction until after World War II (Lake Erie Coastal Ohio).*

When Procter arrived at a point immediately across the Maumee River from the fort, the Kentuckians were still a few days distant. Procter with 1,000 regular and Canadian militiamen under his command, as well as 1,500 Indians led by Tecumseh, began to bombard the fort. On May 4<sup>th</sup>, after withstanding three days of heavy artillery barrage, Harrison received word that Clay's troops were only hours away. Harrison directed Clay to attack the two British batteries on the opposite side of the river, north of the fort, while his troops concentrated on the batteries the British had deployed on the fort's side of the river. Col. John Miller, of Clay's column overran one battery, took 40 prisoners, and returned to the fort with the 400 men in his command.

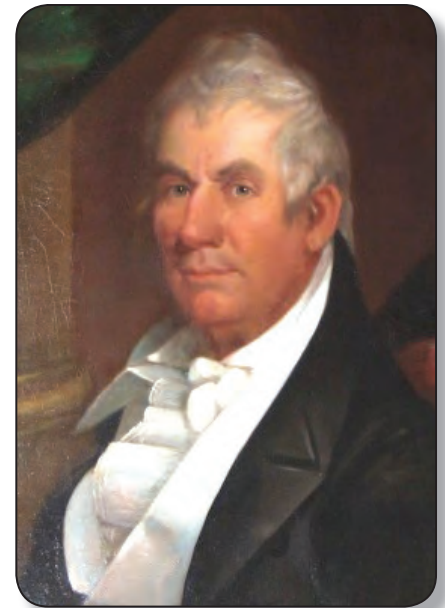
Col. William Dudley, with a force of 870 men, attacked the other battery and managed to hastily spike the British cannons and render them temporarily useless before being surrounded and trapped by Indians. He and 200 others were killed, 500 captured, and only 170 escaped to the fort.

Procter retrieved his artillery, rehabilitated the cannons that had not been adequately spiked, and resumed the bombardment. Fort Meigs proved to be impregnable. On May 9<sup>th</sup> Procter abandoned the siege when his Indian allies left with their plunder and prisoners and his militiamen returned home to plant their crops. General Harrison promoted Capt. Eleazer Wood to brevet major for his exceptional service in constructing the fort.



*Six-inch cannon ball recovered from the site of the Fort Meigs siege (William Cutcher).*

After the first siege, General Harrison left Fort Meigs to recruit volunteers for his plan to retake Fort Detroit and invade Upper Canada, General Green Clay was placed in command of the fort and set about preparing for an anticipated second British attack. On July 27, 1813, General Procter returned and staged a mock battle with an imaginary American force using his 500 regulars and 1,000 Indians in an



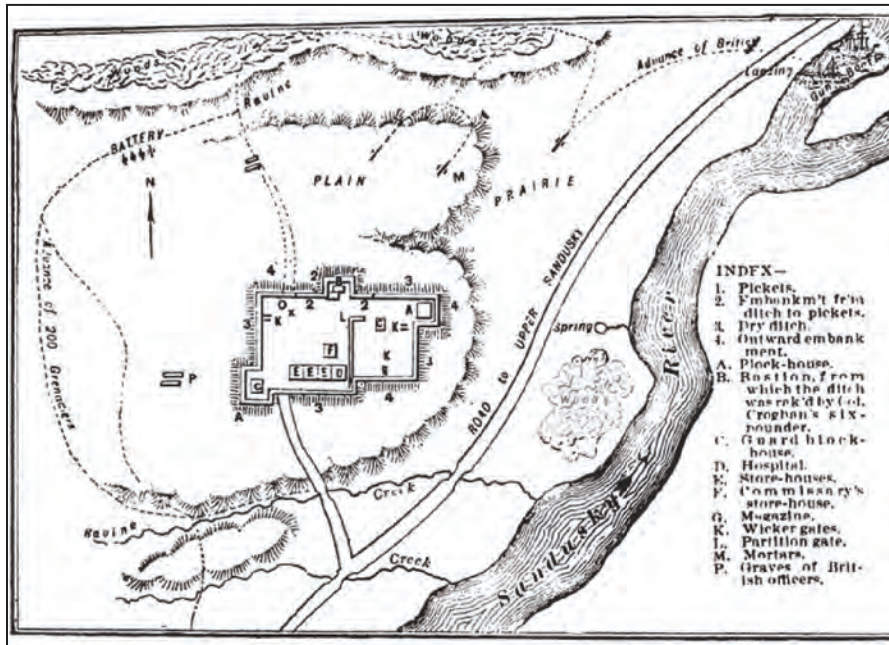
*General Green Clay (1757-1828) of the Kentucky Militia and 1,200 militiamen arrived at Fort Meigs in time to partially destroy General Procter's artillery, causing the British to abandon the siege when their remaining cannons proved to be ineffective (painting by Matthew Harris Jouett).*

attempt to draw the defenders from the fort. General Clay was not fooled knowing there was no American detachment expected and refused General Procter's surrender demands. Once again the British artillery was not effective against the well-built fort, and since the Indians had wasted their ammunition on the ruse, Procter decided to withdraw and attack elsewhere.

### Siege of Fort Stephenson

Failing to get the Americans to capitulate at Fort Meigs, Procter, now a general, marched eastward to Fort Stephenson near the mouth of the Sandusky River at Sandusky Bay and attacked on August 2<sup>nd</sup>. He was aided in the attack by three gunboats that sailed through the bay to within less than a mile of the fort. Maj. George Croghan, commander of the fort with only 160 soldiers (mainly Kentucky sharpshooters) and one cannon "Old Betsy," refused to surrender, even though General Harrison had sent a message to evacuate. Fortunately, Capt. Eleazer Wood, who had designed and supervised the building of Fort Meigs, had also made improvements to the breastwork of Fort Stephenson.

Procter soon found that the fort was too well constructed to destroy. His repeated attacks were useless against the volleys of expert marksmen and the grapeshot from Old Betsy. This left him with no option but to withdraw and return to Fort Malden on the Canadian side of the Detroit River. For his bravery at Fort Stephenson, Maj. Croghan was promoted to lieutenant colonel and awarded a Congressional Medal.



Siege of Fort Stephenson on the Sandusky River in August 1813 (Ohio Historical Society). Note the British gunboats on the Sandusky River (upper right) landing artillery and firing on the fort.

The amphibious landing was planned by Col. Winfield Scott, Chief of Staff to General Dearborn, with the assistance of Master Commandant Oliver Hazard Perry. Perry and Sailing Master Daniel Dobbins had made a fast trip from Presque Isle to Lake Ontario, traveling by boat, on foot, and horseback to take part in the attack of Fort George. With the guns at Fort Erie no longer preventing American gunboats at Black Rock from leaving, Perry immediately decided to sail these vessels to Presque Isle. He ordered the defensive cannons from the navy yard at Black Rock to be mounted on the gunboats and on June 6<sup>th</sup> he was ready to sail. He reasoned that as long as part of the U.S. Lake Erie fleet was a one place and part at another, there was always the opportunity for the British to destroy each part separately.

Unfortunately, Black Rock is located on the upper part of the Niagara River and the current is too swift for a sailing vessel to move against it. Perry needed a week to haul the vessels to Buffalo at the head of Lake Erie using teams of oxen and 200 sailors and soldiers struggling along the riverbank, heaving towropes. On the evening of June 14<sup>th</sup>, he sailed with difficult winds. Perry knew the superior British force was on the lake, but he could only move slowly against the wind. Off Dunkirk, New York a heavy fog came in



Congressional medal awarded by Congress on February 13, 1835. Obverse side: Presented by Congress to Colonel George Croghan, 1835; bust of Colonel Croghan. Reverse side: Pars Magna Fuit [His share was great]; Fort Stephenson with three gunboats in background.

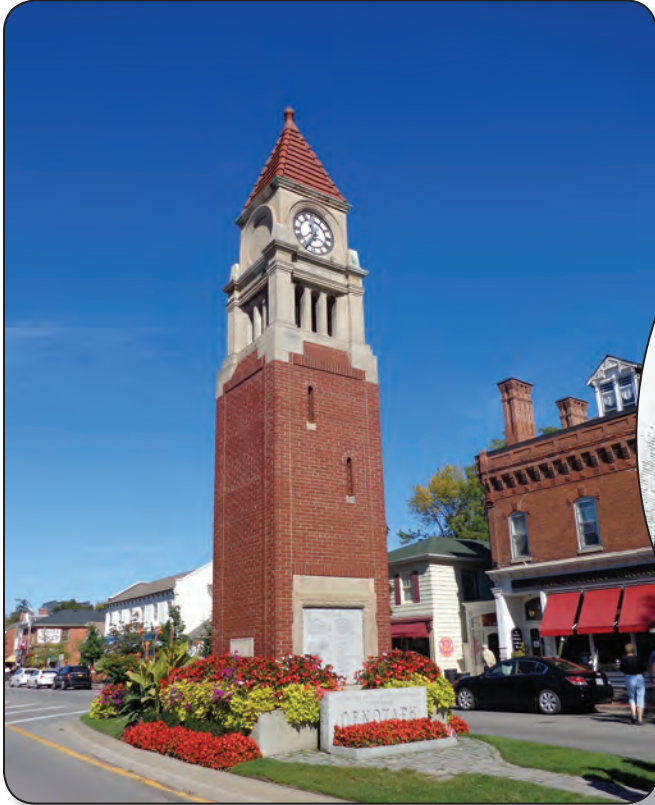
### Capture of Fort George

Meanwhile, on May 27, 1813, a combined army and navy action at the mouth of the Niagara River resulted in the capture of the British Fort George. The amphibious landing of 4,000 troops was executed by Commodore Isaac Chauncey while the assault of the fort was led by General Henry Dearborn. The British not only withdrew from the fort leaving it to the Americans, but all their forces along the entire Niagara River were pulled back at the same time, including the troops that garrisoned Fort Erie, opposite the Black Rock shipyards.



War of 1812 carronade at Fort George, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario.

and he anchored close to shore, using the fog as a curtain to hide his ships from the enemy. While at anchor a local seaman came aboard, who had been able to observe both squadrons from the lake bluff, and advised Perry of the course taken by the British. Armed with this intelligence, Perry was able to take evasive action and safely entered Presque Isle Bay on June 19<sup>th</sup>, easing the shallow draft gunboats over the protective sandbar.



Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario (formerly Newark, Upper Canada), location of Fort George at the Niagara River mouth. The clock tower is a cenotaph—an empty tomb monument erected in honor soldiers and sailors whose remains are elsewhere.



British Fort George (restored) at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario (Parks Canada). Originally built in 1802, the fort was captured by American forces in May 1813.

### Naval Battle of Lake Erie

At Presque Isle, Perry had managed to get his major vessels, the brigs *Lawrence* and *Niagara*, over the sandbar at the entrance to Presque Isle Bay while the British were obtaining provisions across the lake at Port Dover. Dr. Usher Parson, surgeon on Commodore Perry's fleet, recorded this account of the final days at Erie, Pennsylvania. "The fleet was manned by sailors partly from Newport [Rhode Island] and partly from Lake Ontario. The two larger vessels, *Lawrence* and *Niagara*, were built and rigged precisely alike, and carried 132 officers and men each. By the 10th of July [1813], the guns were mounted on board all vessels, and the men were exercised at them several times a day."



Dr. Usher Parson, surgeon with Commodore Perry's fleet, recorded the ingenious method of using camel scows to extricate the American's large ships from Presque Isle Bay over the sand barrier at the harbor entrance and on to Put-in-Bay (U.S. National Park Service).

"On Sunday the 18th of July, two respectable missionaries who were passing through Erie, were invited by the Commodore on board one of the large ships, where as many officers and men as could be spared from all vessels were assembled to hear prayers that were offered up for the success of the expedition. I shall never forget their fervent pleadings in our behalf, that we might subdue the hostile fleet, and thereby wrest from savage hands the tomahawk and scalping-knife, that had been so cruelly wielded against the defenseless settlers on the frontier, and that in the event of a victory, mercy and kindness might be shown to the vanquished."

"The bar of Erie had thus far served as a fortification to prevent the enemy from entering the harbor where our fleet was preparing, but now presented a serious obstacle to our egress. The two large brigs drew 3 feet of water more than there was on the bar."

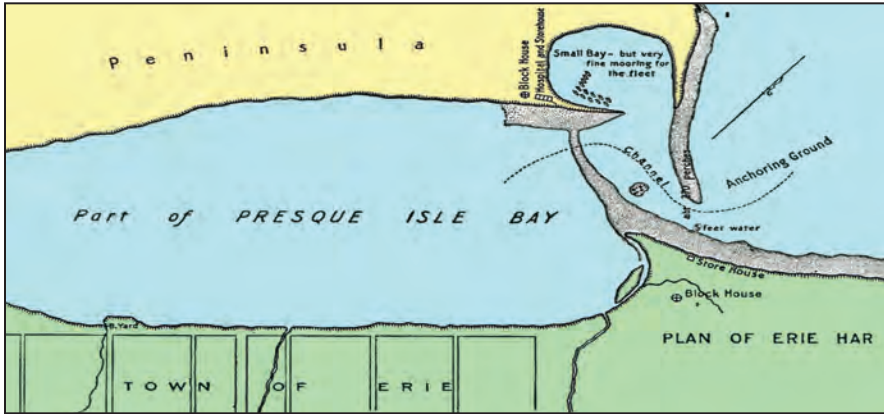
"On Sunday evening, 1st of August, work began of clearing the *Lawrence* of cannon and balls, to lighten her; and immense scows called *camels* were placed under her sides, and being sunk to the water's edge, timbers were passed through from side to side of the ship, the ends of which were blocked up, resting on these floating foundations. Plugs were now put into the scows, and the water bailed out, and as they rose they lifted the ship 2 feet, and this not being enough, the ballast and other heavy articles were taken out, till she was raised another foot, when she was able to pass over the bar. The *Niagara* was served in a like manner, but the smaller vessels had previously passed over without aid of camels. Before the large vessels were fairly over, the enemy hove in sight, and fired a few balls which did not reach us."

“The Pennsylvania regiment paraded and the small vessels that were out returned the enemy’s fire. Had they come near enough to do execution while we were struggling over the bar, they might have destroyed our fleet with little difficulty.”

“On the 6th of August we sailed, with the fleet not more than half officered and manned, across the lake, wishing to encounter the enemy before the large new ship [Detroit] joined his fleet, but they had sailed for Malden, and we returned to Erie the next

day, where we found Captain Elliot just arrived from Lake Ontario, with nearly 100 officers and men. A new arrangement was now made of officers throughout the fleet, and we soon sailed up the lake in pursuit of the enemy, and anchored on the 15th in Put-in-Bay, in a cluster of islands near the head of the lake.”

Discovering the American fleet was out in Lake Erie, the British fleet returned to Amherstburg to await the completion of the brig *Detroit*. On September 10, 1813, perhaps the most famous naval engagement of the War of 1812 took place near West Sister Island—The Battle of Lake Erie. Commodore Perry and General William Henry Harrison, commander-in-chief of all forces in Ohio and the Northwest Territory, had agreed that a base at Put-in-Bay [South Bass Island] would be best for naval operations to counter the Royal Navy’s base at Amherstburg.



*Presque Isle Bay at Erie Pennsylvania, site of the construction of the American’s Lake Erie fleet, showing the sandbar that protected the fleet from British attack (map by Captain Arthur Sinclair, 1814).*



*Camel scows used to float the brigs Lawrence and Niagara over the sandbar at Erie Harbor (drawing by Benson Lossing).*



*Put-in-Bay Harbor as it appeared in 1813 when Commodore Perry's fleet arrived (drawing by Benson Lossing). Gibraltar Island is shown at right center of the drawing.*



*Perry's Lookout on Gibraltar Island in Put-in-Bay Harbor; from which the approaching British fleet was first observed (drawing by Benson Lossing). Only the cornerstone of the monument to Perry shown in the drawing was ever constructed.*



*Perry's Lookout on Gibraltar Island as it appears today. The island is currently the home of The Ohio State University's Lake Erie Field Station—Franz Theodore Stone Laboratory. The turreted building is Cooke's Castle, built by Civil War financier Jay Cooke in 1865.*



Perry's crew aboard the brig Lawrence spot the British fleet and prepare for the engagement (drawing by Victor Mays).

The British fleet was spotted in the early morning from Gibraltar Island in Put-in-Bay Harbor heading toward the Bass Islands. Captain Robert Heriot Barclay, aboard the *Detroit*, commanded six vessels, while Perry aboard the *Lawrence*, had nine vessels in his command, including



British fleet, commanded by Captain Robert Heriot Barclay, as it approaches the Lake Erie Islands on the morning of September 10, 1813. The American fleet, led by Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry's flagship *Lawrence*, sails westward from Put-in-Bay Harbor to engage the British fleet (painting by Peter Rindlisbacher).

the *Niagara* captained by Jesse D. Elliott. Perry instructed each ship to engage the enemy once he raised his battle flag emblazoned "Dont Give Up The Ship" [sic]—the last word's of Perry's comrade, Capt. James Lawrence, who died battling the British off the Atlantic coast and namesake of Perry's flagship.

Armaments on both fleets consisted of smooth-bore muzzle-loading cannons. Long guns dominated the British fleet's

armament with a greater range and faster-moving shot that left a clean hole [at 5° elevation a long gun's range was 1,922 yards for a 32 lb. shot]. The American fleet's armament was primarily the carronade, a short cannon invented in 1779 at Carron, Scotland. The carronade fired a large size, slow-moving shot that fractured the planks of a ship [at 5° elevation a carronade's range was 1,087 yards for a 32 lb. shot]. The best firing strategy was to get a broadside position across the bow or stern of the enemy—this would allow the attacking vessel to rake or fire down the length of the enemy vessel, which was more destructive than firing across the width of the vessel.

In comparing broadside firepower—British long guns could fire 460 lbs. while the American carronades shot 925 lbs. at one time for one side of the vessel. However, at the early stages of the battle the British had the advantage in that their guns had a greater range. As the American fleet moved into closer range, they had the advantage.

A well-trained crew could fire one shot per minute for a short engagement. The American and British fleets were each capable of firing an estimated 25 shots broadside per minute during the nearly 3-hour battle—equivalent to total of some 9,000 shots.



Movements of the American and British fleets on the morning of September 10, 1813. Barclay initially held the weather gage [the position of a sailing vessel to windward of another] causing Perry to tack to depart Put-in-Bay Harbor, but the wind shifted and allowed Perry to close and attack (U.S. National Park Service).

For some mysterious reason the *Niagara* hung back and the *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte* concentrated fire with their long guns on the *Lawrence*, which was quickly rendered powerless, but not before Perry's carronades exacted damage to the enemy. Conditions on the *Lawrence* were grim. Over half of the officers and seamen on board were either killed or disabled by wounds. In spite of a layer of sand, the deck was slippery with blood. All but one cannon was disabled on the enemy side of the ship and Perry himself assisted with the firing of that last gun. All the sails were shot away and the vessel became unmanageable.

Perry looked back at the lagging *Niagara* and knew what his next move must be. Picking a few of the uninjured seamen, he was rowed in a longboat from the *Lawrence* to the *Niagara*, taking along his battle flag. Once aboard the *Niagara*, Perry dispatched Capt. Elliot in the longboat to bring up the gunboats.

Now, making the *Niagara* his flagship, Perry sailed directly between the British ships, firing broadsides in both directions. In an attempt to get in position to fire on the *Niagara*, the *Queen Charlotte* collided with the *Detroit* giving Perry the advantage he needed. With Capt. Barclay wounded and the commander of the *Queen Charlotte* killed, the British fleet surrendered.

The American armed schooner *Scorpion* also played an important role in the Battle of Lake Erie. Built in Erie, Pennsylvania earlier that year, she was commanded by Sailing Master Stephen Champlin, first cousin of Oliver Hazard Perry. The *Scorpion* had the distinction of firing the first and last shots in the battle. At the close of the action, she and the armed sloop *Trippe* pursued and captured the fleeing British schooners *Chippewa* and *Little Belt*.



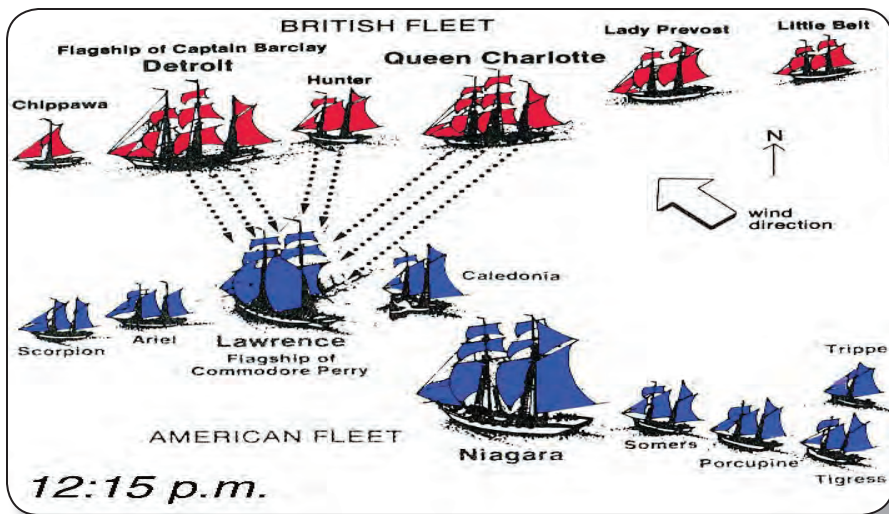
Commodore Perry transferring from the disabled brig *Lawrence* to the brig *Niagara* in a longboat (painting by William Henry Powell).



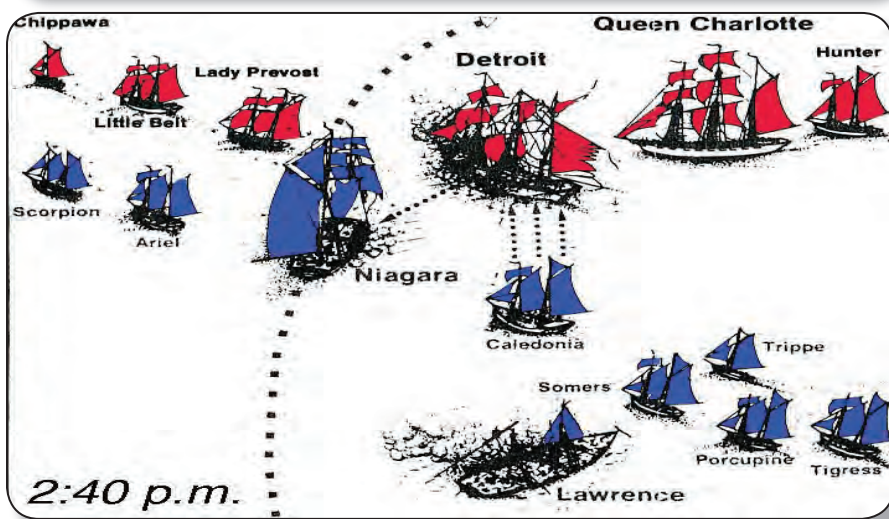
Commodore Perry safely arrives onboard the brig *Niagara* and is greeted by Captain Elliot with the question, "How goes the day?" Perry immediately dispatches Elliot in the longboat to bring up the gunboats that were apparently following orders not to move ahead of the *Niagara* (James Barry).



Commodore Perry brings the brig *Niagara* into position to join the battle and commences firing on the *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte* (right) and the *Lady Prevost* (left) as the disabled *Lawrence* drifts out of sight (U.S. Naval Academy).

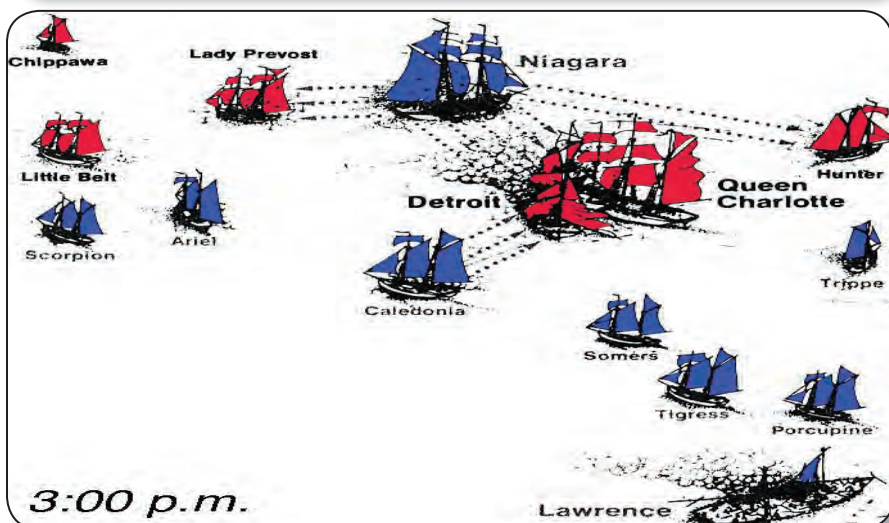


Perry sent his famous note to General Harrison, "We have met the enemy and they are ours: Two Ships, two Brigs, one Schooner & one Sloop." By defeating the British fleet, the United States secured control of Lake Erie and the Upper Great Lakes. Perry's victory on Lake Erie and American control of Fort George made the transport of supplies and reinforcements impossible for the British and forced them to abandon Detroit and Fort Malden. Perry was promoted to Captain and Congress awarded him a gold medal and appropriated \$225,000 in prize money to be distributed to those who took part in the battle, or to their heirs.



DONT GIVE UP  
THE SHIP

Commodore Perry's personal battle flag, adopted to commemorate his dead friend, Captain James Lawrence, who was killed while commanding the USS Chesapeake in a battle with the HMS Shannon off Boston Harbor.



Congressional Gold Medal presented to Perry for his victory in the Battle of Lake Erie.

Stages of the Battle of Lake Erie, September 10, 1813—American vessels shown in blue and British vessels in red (modified from drawings by Geoffrey Matthews). Engagement begins at 12:15 p.m. with the British ships concentrating fire on the Lawrence, while the Niagara hangs back. Commodore Perry transfers to the Niagara and by 2:40 p.m. he moves the Niagara into position to engage the Detroit. By 3:00 p.m. the Niagara is able to fire broadsides at four British vessels as the Detroit and Queen Charlotte collide. Unable to effectively return fire, the British surrender their entire fleet.



*Monuments to Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry*



*Put-in-Bay Harbor—Gibraltar Island in foreground and Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial at far left (Franz Theodore Stone Laboratory, 1967).*



*Cornerstone to a proposed Perry's Victory Monument on Gibraltar Island, Ohio.*



*The Perry Monument, Presque Isle, Erie Pennsylvania.*



*Perry Statue, Newport, Rhode Island.*



*Ceremony at Put-in-Bay after the battle—three American and three British officers being buried on the island (James P. Barry).*

The Battle of Lake Erie was anticipated and followed with great interest by the residents along the Black River in north central Ohio. Cannon fire from the battle was heard at the mouth of the river as well as all the way to Erie, Pennsylvania where Daniel Dobbins was securing supplies for the American fleet. Accounts by early settlers near the mouth of the Black River document how the tide of fighting shifted during the battle.

At first the alarming sounds of the British long guns prevailed—then suddenly the American’s shorter, but more powerful carronades dominated the vibrations. Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry’s defeat of the British fleet and capture of all of the enemy’s vessels gave the United States control of Lake Erie and more security for communities along the coast. They hoped the victory would make possible the successful invasion of Upper Canada by General William Henry Harrison. They knew of this plan by watching the construction of Harrison’s military highway that was cut through the dense forest and across bogs via corduroy roads from Ashland to Oak Point on Lake Erie, just a few miles west of the Black River where Beaver Creek harbor is located. The road was constructed by Col. Moonsinger’s command under orders from General Harrison as a precaution, so that troops could efficiently be moved to the lake in time of need to repulse British invaders.

A hundred years ago and a hundred years after the war, in October 1914, Professor George Frederick Wright of Oberlin College and President of the Ohio Historical Society located the old road and the Oberlin Chapter of the National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution placed a bronze tablet on a large granite boulder about

1.5 miles west of downtown Oberlin to commemorate its construction.

The lakeshore of present-day Lorain County has one other connection with the War of 1812 and the Battle of Lake Erie. Local tradition holds that bodies of two sailors who died in the battle washed ashore at Avon Point [now in the City of Avon Lake]. During the ferocious fighting, 27 Americans and 41 British seaman and officers were killed and another 188 men wounded. The six officers killed, three American and three British, were buried on South Bass Island and are now interred under the base of Perry’s Victory and International Peace Memorial at Put-in-Bay. Dead seamen, if they had not been lost overboard, were hastily sewn in their hammocks, a cannon ball placed at their feet, and committed to the lake at the battle site. Considering the dominant current patterns in Lake Erie, which rotate clockwise around the islands then flow south to the Ohio shore east of Cedar Point, it is conceivable that bodies could make their way to Avon Point.

The legend goes on that two bodies were buried in unmarked graves at the top of the low bluff where they came ashore. Over the years additional burials took place at this location, which since 1822 has been designated as Lake Shore Cemetery at the foot of Avon Belden Road. In September 2013, the Avon Lake Historical Society placed a memorial marker in the cemetery honoring the unknown seamen.



*Lake Shore Cemetery in Avon Lake, Ohio, where the bodies of two sailors killed in the Battle of Lake Erie are believed to have washed ashore and were buried there before the cemetery was established.*

**BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE****AMERICAN FLEET****Commander; Men; Displacement; Armament; Broadside Firepower; & Casualties of American Fleet**

**Lawrence**—Master Commandant Oliver Hazard Perry; 136 men; 260 tons; 18 carronades, 2 long guns; 300 lbs. firepower; 22 killed, 61 wounded  
**Niagara**—Lt. Jesse Duncan Elliott & Master Commandant Oliver Hazard Perry; 155 men; 260 tons; 18 carronades, 2 long guns; 300 lbs. firepower; 2 killed, 25 wounded  
**Caledonia**—Lt. Daniel Turner; 53 men; 88 tons; 1 carronade, 2 long pivot guns; 80 lbs. firepower; 0 killed, 3 wounded  
**Somers**—Lt. A.M.H. Conklin; 30 men; 65 tons; 1 pivot carronade, 1 long pivot gun; 56 lbs. firepower; 0 killed, 2 wounded  
**Ariel**—Lt. John H. Packet; 36 men; 60 tons; 4 long guns; 48 lbs. firepower; 1 killed, 3 wounded  
**Scorpion**—Sailing Master Stephen Champlin; 35 men; 60 tons; 1 pivot carronade, 1 long pivot gun; 56 lbs. firepower; 2 killed, 0 wounded  
**Porcupine**—Sailing Master G. Serrat; 25 men; 50 tons; 1 long pivot gun; 32 lbs. firepower; 0 killed, 0 wounded  
**Tigress**—Sailing Master T.C. Almy; 27 men; 50 tons; 1 long pivot gun; 32 lbs. firepower; 0 killed, 0 wounded  
**Trippe**—Lt. Thomas Holdup; 35 men; 50 tons; 1 long pivot gun; 24 lbs. firepower; 0 killed, 2 wounded  
**Ohio**—Sailing Master Daniel Dobbins; en route to Erie, Pennsylvania for provisions during battle

**Disposition of American Fleet after the Battle**

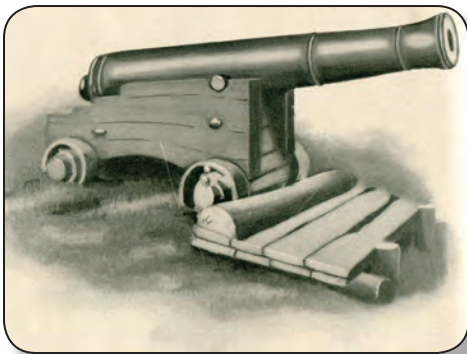
**Lawrence**—sunk for preservation Misery Bay, Erie, Pennsylvania in 1815; raised in 1875 for nation's Centennial Celebration; destroyed at Philadelphia by fire in 1876 while on display  
**Niagara**—sunk for preservation Misery Bay, Erie, Pennsylvania in 1815; raised and rebuilt in 1913 for Centennial Anniversary of battle and Dedication of Perry's Monument at Put-in-Bay; rebuilt in 1988  
**Caledonia**—sold commercial in 1815; converted to merchant vessel and renamed *General Wayne*  
**Somers**—captured by British in 1814 at Fort Erie, Upper Canada while fort occupied by Americans  
**Ariel**—trapped by British at Black Rock, New York and burned to prevent capture  
**Scorpion**—captured by British in 1814 on Lake Huron; sunk at moorings after war  
**Porcupine**—in U.S. Navy until 1821; sold commercial in 1825 and converted to merchant vessel; found to be unseaworthy in 1855; abandoned  
**Tigress**—captured by British in 1814; sunk at moorings after war  
**Trippe**—burned by British raiders at Black Rock, New York in October 1813  
**Ohio**—captured by British in 1814 at Fort Erie, Upper Canada while fort occupied by Americans  
**Amelia**—found to be unseaworthy; scuttled in Misery Bay, Erie, Pennsylvania before the battle in 1813

**BRITISH FLEET****Commander; Men; Displacement; Armament; Broadside Firepower; & Casualties of British Fleet**

**Detroit**—Capt. Robert Heriot Barclay & Lt. George Inglis; 150 men; 305 tons; 2 carronades, 16 long guns, 1 long pivot gun; 138 lbs. firepower; 11 killed, 39 wounded  
**Queen Charlotte**—Lt. Robert Finnis & Militia Lt. Robert Irvine; 126 men; 280 tons; 14 carronades, 2 long guns, 1 long pivot gun; 192 lbs. firepower; 18 killed, 24 wounded  
**Lady Prevost**—Lt. Edward Buchan; 86 men; 120 tons; 10 carronades, 2 long guns, 1 long pivot gun; 78 lbs. firepower; 8 killed, 20 wounded  
**General Hunter**—Lt. G. Bignell; 42 men; 75 tons; 2 carronades, 8 long guns; 78 lbs. firepower; 3 killed, 5 wounded  
**Chippewa**—Master Mate J. Campbell; 15 men; 35 tons; 1 long pivot gun; 1 killed, 4 wounded  
**Little Belt**—unknown; 18 men; 60 tons; 2 long guns, 1 long pivot gun; 0 killed, 0 wounded

**Disposition of Captured British Fleet after the Battle**

**Detroit**—sunk in Misery Bay, Erie, Pennsylvania; raised in 1835 and sold commercial; converted to merchant vessel; sent over Niagara Falls with live animals as a "tourist spectacle"  
**Queen Charlotte**—sunk in Misery Bay; sold commercial in 1835-1844; burned  
**Lady Prevost**—sold as merchant ship after war in 1815  
**General Hunter**—sunk in storm on Lake Huron on 1816 while in U.S. Navy; archaeologically excavated in 2001 on shoreline of Bruce Peninsula, Ontario  
**Chippewa**—burned by British raiders at Buffalo in December 1813  
**Little Belt**—burned by British raiders at Buffalo in December 1813



*Cannon from the brig Lawrence. At the end of the war, the artillery was removed from the Lake Erie fleet and the four large ships were sunk in Misery Bay at Presque Isle. A decade later, at the opening of the Erie Canal, the cannons from the battle were placed every 10 to 15 miles along the canal from Buffalo to New York City. The first being fired when the first boat left Buffalo and others being fired successively as the cannon crew heard the blast from the next gun upstream. Once the last cannon at the Battery in New York fired, the process was repeated in a reverse fashion all the way back to Lake Erie. The entire process was completed in slightly less than three hours.*



*The remains of the brig Lawrence being recovered from Misery Bay in 1875. The Lawrence was restored and taken to Philadelphia for display at the nation's centennial celebration. Unfortunately the exhibition building burned and the Lawrence was a total loss, except for some timbers that were made into walking canes (Erie Maritime Museum).*



*Remains of the brig Niagara, raised from the bottom of Misery Bay in 1913. The Niagara was restored and sailed to Put-in-Bay to celebrate the centennial of the Battle of Lake Erie and the dedication of Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial (Erie Maritime Museum).*