

PERRY'S VICTORY
AND
INTERNATIONAL
PEACE
MEMORIAL



From the painting "Battle of Lake Erie" by Thomas Birch (1779-1851).
Courtesy of Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

In the Battle of Lake Erie, September 10, 1813, Oliver Hazard Perry won a decisive victory over a British naval squadron commanded by Capt. Robert H. Barclay. That action (see the other side of this folder for the story) had far-reaching effects on the War of 1812 and the future of the United States, for it gave the Americans control of Lake Erie and made possible a successful advance into Canada by an American army under the command of Gen. William Henry Harrison.

The combined land and naval successes enabled the United States to hold the Old Northwest upon the conclusion of peace by the Treaty of Ghent in 1814. Just 3 years later, the Rush-Bagot Agreement was signed, limiting the number of warships to be retained on the Great Lakes. It was the first step toward permanent disarmament of the 4,000-mile boundary between the United States and Canada.

This area and its great Doric column commemorate not only the great naval victory about which Perry made his famous report ("We have met the enemy and they are ours"), but they also memorialize the principle of maintaining peace among nations by arbitration and disarmament, a principle now long symbolized by the unfortified boundary between two great North American neighbors.

For Your Safety

During your visit to the Memorial, be alert to all hazards and observe all safety precautions. When on the Observation Platform, keep your feet on the floor or benches and closely supervise your children. While walking on the seawalls, sidewalks, or in the Memorial, be cautious of wet spots which may be slippery and hazardous.

The Memorial

The memorial is constructed of pink Milford, Mass., granite. In large mass this stone gives the appearance of purest white. The shaft, built of 78 courses of granite, is a Greek Doric fluted column 352 feet high and 45 feet in diameter at its base. Its cap, reached by elevator, serves as an observation platform. Above this is a bronze urn, 23 feet high, 18 feet wide, and weighing 11 tons. When floodlit at night, the column presents a surpassingly brilliant spectacle to both yachtsman and landsman. One of the world's greatest battle monuments, the memorial is the most massive Doric column ever built.

The rotunda is made of Tennessee and Italian marble, Indiana limestone, and granite. Carved on the walls are the names of the American vessels and the killed and wounded in the Battle of Lake Erie. Beneath the floor, in a crypt, lie the remains of the three American and three British officers killed in the action. (The enlisted men were buried at sea.) For a century the officers had lain where they were interred on the shore of Put-in-Bay after the battle. They were removed and placed in the memorial with impressive services on September 11, 1913. In the west doorway of the rotunda is a bronze tablet containing the 150-word Rush-Bagot Agreement of 1817. By this simple device, naval armaments on the Great Lakes were limited. With some modifications, the spirit of the agreement is followed today between the United States and Canada.

The movement for Perry's Victory Memorial was started in 1908 by the State of Ohio. By 1911, eight more States—Pennsylvania, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, New York, Rhode Island, Kentucky, and Massachusetts—and the Federal Government had joined the enterprise.

Constructed between 1912 and 1915 under the direction of the Perry's Victory Centennial Commission, the memorial cost nearly \$1 million, which was shared by the participating States and the Federal

Government. The memorial became Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial National Monument on July 6, 1936, and on October 26, 1972, it was redesignated Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial. The grounds cover more than 25 acres on South Bass Island in Lake Erie.

About Your Visit

South Bass Island is about 4 miles from the mainland. From April through November, automobile ferries operate from Catawba Point (4 miles) and Port Clinton (14 miles). In summer, ferries make frequent round trips daily from both Catawba Point and Port Clinton. There is year-round air service from the Port Clinton airport. The memorial is open daily from early April until late October; it is closed the rest of the year.

On a clear day from the observation platform, you can see many points of interest, including nearby islands and the area, 10 miles west-northwest on the lake, where the battle took place. The boundary between the United States and Canada is 5 miles distant.

Administration

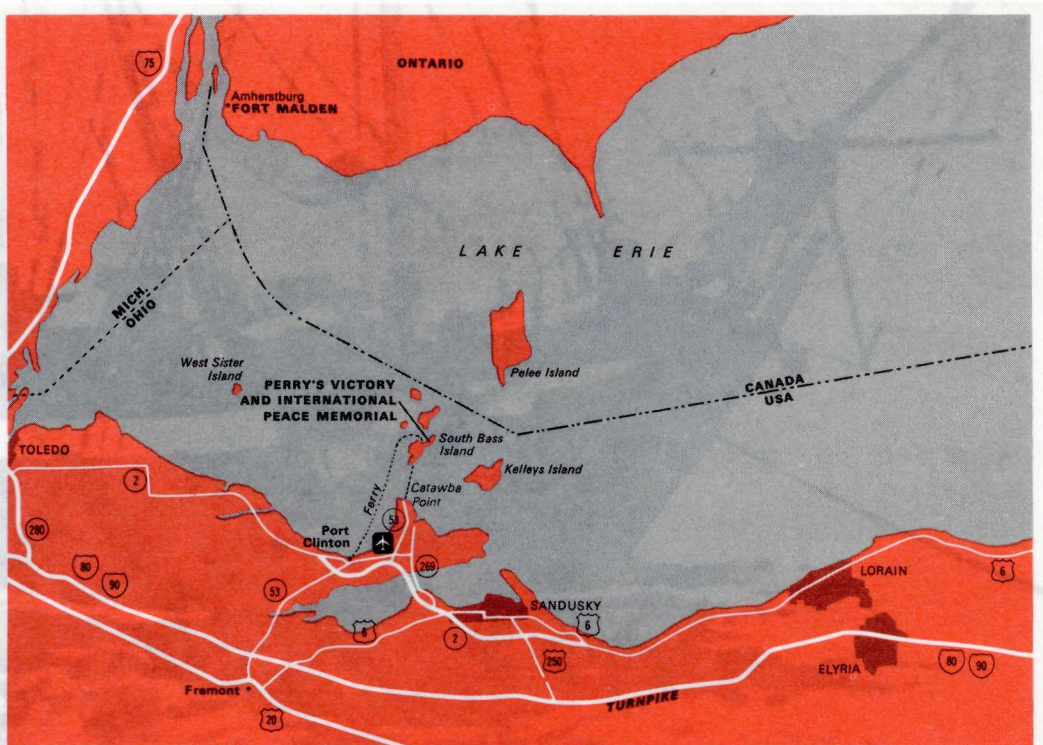
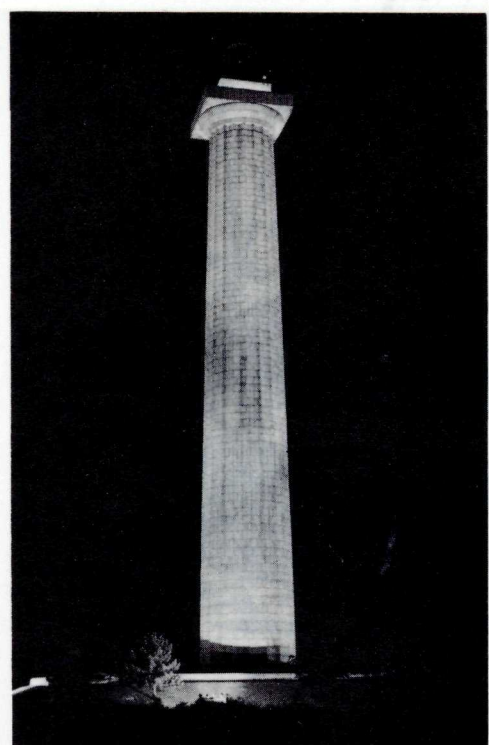
Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent whose address is P.O. Box 78, Put-in-Bay, OH 43456, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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THE BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE

During the epic struggle between France and Great Britain from 1793 to 1815, the youthful United States was caught between the hammer and the anvil of British and French commercial and naval policy. Her rights were violated by both countries. The forcing of American sailors into British service was one of the grievances of the United States against England that finally led to a declaration of war on June 18, 1812. On land, during the first part of the war, American military operations left much to be desired. Despite brilliant individual victories by American ships in duels with British vessels, the American coastline was placed under an effective blockade.

At the start of the War of 1812 the British had control of Lake Erie, a vital lifeline for troops and supplies. A British squadron under Barclay blockaded Erie, Pa., where Oliver Hazard Perry was building ships to contest British domination of the lake. A low sandbar protected Erie harbor. The long-awaited opportunity came early in August 1813 when Barclay relaxed his watchfulness for a few days. Perry floated his ships across the bar, and the fleet was free for action. After Jesse D. Elliot arrived with additional reinforcements, Perry sailed to western Lake Erie. The British fleet retreated to Fort Malden (Amherstburg), on the Detroit River. Perry made the harbor on South Bass Island his headquarters. From this island base he could watch Barclay and establish contact with Harrison, who was then in northern Ohio.

On September 9, Barclay left his base and sailed into the lake. The next morning, the two fleets met about 10 miles west-northwest of South Bass Island. Perry had nine vessels, the largest being the brigs *Lawrence* and *Niagara*, each about 110 feet long. Six warships made up the British fleet. The *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte* were about the same size as the American brigs. At close range Perry had twice the firepower of the enemy, and even at long range he had the edge. Each fleet had about 440 men. About 25 percent of the American force was black.

Perry had assigned to each of his captains an enemy vessel to fight. His flagship, the *Lawrence*, was to close with the *Detroit*, the enemy's flagship; the *Niagara*, under

When the Lawrence was riddled by British fire, Perry transferred to the Niagara. Both ships were scuttled after the battle, but a century later the Niagara was raised and rebuilt. The ship is shown here in 1913 after her reconstruction. Today a replica of the Niagara, containing a 78-foot section of the original black keel, rests in Niagara Park, Erie, Pa.

*We have met the enemy and they are ours:
Two Ships, two Brigs one
Schooner & one Sloop.*

*Yours, with great respect and esteem
O.H. Perry.*



Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, by Gilbert Stuart (1818). Courtesy of Toledo Museum of Art

Elliot, with the *Queen Charlotte*; and so on. At 10 a.m. the battle flag of the *Lawrence* was raised. Upon it had been inscribed the memorable words of Capt. James Lawrence, the American naval hero for whom the ship was named: "Don't give up the ship." Hampered by a light wind, Perry got into action at 11:45 a.m. The *Lawrence* bore the brunt of the fight, as Perry took his flagship with its short-range carronades to close quarters with the enemy. The *Niagara*, ordered to support him, held back, probably because of the light wind. The *Lawrence*, with four-fifths of its crew casualties, became a floating wreck by 2:30 p.m. But the *Niagara* had at last come up. Seeing a chance to snatch victory from apparent defeat, Perry transferred in an open rowboat to Elliott's ship and continued the desperate fight.

In another 15 minutes the battle was over. Finding the *Niagara* "very little injured," Perry gave orders to drive through the British line. The *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte* ran into each other trying to avoid the raking fire of the American gunboats. With his flagship now a "perfect wreck," his other ships badly disabled, and himself wounded, Barclay surrendered at 3 p.m. From the deck of the *Niagara*, Perry wrote to Harrison: "We have met the enemy and they are ours: Two Ships, two Brigs, one Schooner & one Sloop." Thus, modestly and concisely, was this great victory announced to the world and an immortal sentence in American naval history given to the Nation.

The American squadron had lost 27 men killed and 96 wounded, two-thirds of these on board the *Lawrence*. Barclay lost 41 men killed and 92 wounded. The Battle of Lake Erie turned the tide of events in the Old Northwest in favor of the Americans. With control of the lake regained, Perry transported General Harrison's army to Canada, where it went on to victory over the British and Indians at the Battle of the River Thames.

