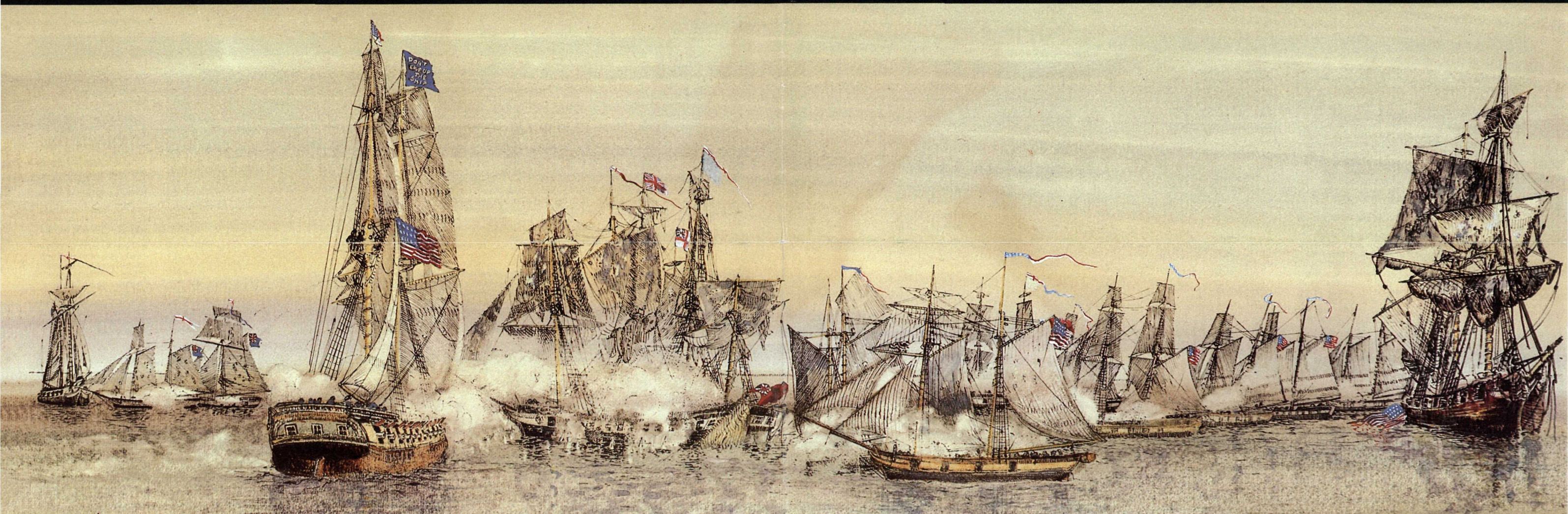


Perry's Victory

Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial
Ohio

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Metropolitan Toronto Library

At the decisive moment of the battle of Lake Erie, Perry transferred from the crippled *Lawrence* to the relatively undamaged *Niagara* and broke through the British line. The two largest British ships, *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte*, became entangled and took the *Niagara's* raking fire for 15 minutes before striking their colors.

- Lady Prevost
Chippawa
- Little Belt
- Niagara
- Queen Charlotte
- Detroit
- Scorpion
- Ariel
General Hunter
- Trippe
Caledonia
- Tigress
- Porcupine
- Somers
- Lawrence

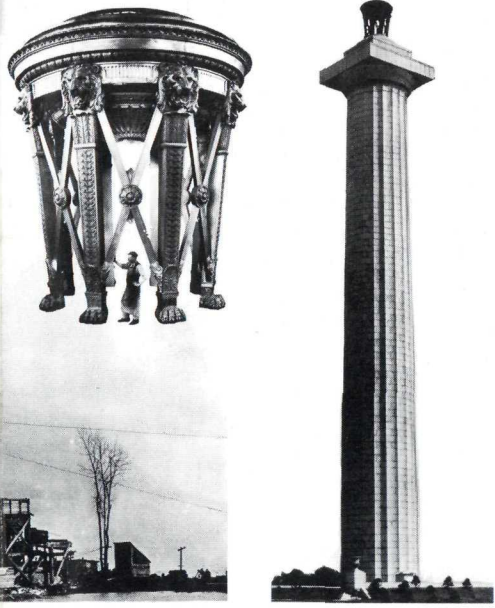
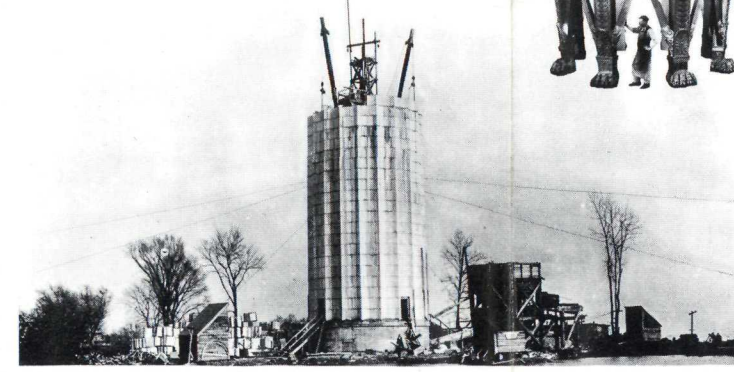
While monuments to peace are rarely associated with military victories, Oliver Hazard Perry's victory over a British fleet in the War of 1812 so contributed to a lasting peace that the Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial on Lake Erie is a fitting tribute to both.

By defeating the British—the first time an entire British fleet was captured—the Americans took control of Lake Erie and with it most of the old Northwest. The victory helped persuade the British to cease hostilities and enabled the United States to claim the Northwest at the peace talks in Ghent a year later. Washington Irving put it concisely: "The last roar of cannon which died along the shores of Erie was the expiring note of British domination."

The battle was one of the few American successes in a war that was far from popular. The end of the fighting produced no clear winner, but for the United States, the Northwest was secure and its boundaries undisputed, giving Americans room to expand. Ironically, the British embargo on shipping, meant to cripple American com-

merce, became a spur to America's infant industries, which faced no foreign imports during the blockade. Just as important were the less tangible benefits. Both parties at the talks sensed that the United States had emerged from the conflict full of confidence, with a stronger sense of nationhood and rid of the last vestiges of dependence on Europe. The Treaty of Ghent was signed not in bitterness but with a newfound respect between Britain and the United States. Both sides gained from the Rush-Bagot Agreement signed 2 years later, which limited the number of warships on Lake Erie. That agreement, though strained several times in the following years, paved the way for the permanent disarmament of the 4,000-mile border between the United States and Canada in 1871. For over a century, the two nations have shared a continent with little more than a line on a map to separate them. This memorial is therefore no contradiction. It honors not only the principle of settling differences between nations by negotiation but also the naval battle that helped create the mutual confidence and trust necessary to the success of that principle in North America.

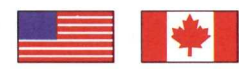
The Memorial
The Doric column rising 352 feet over Lake Erie was built between 1912 and 1915 with money raised by a commission formed by nine States, with matching funds from the Federal Government. The column, designed by Joseph Freedlander, consists of 78 courses of pink Milford, Mass., granite topped by an 11-ton bronze urn. At the 1913 dedication on the centennial of the victory, the three British and three U.S. officers killed in the battle were reinterred beneath the memorial floor.



About Your Visit
Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial was designated a national monument in 1936. The 25-acre site is on South Bass Island in Lake Erie about 3 miles from the mainland. Ferries operate daily from April through November from Catawba Point (3 miles) and Port Clinton (10 miles), making frequent roundtrips in summer. There is year-round air service from Port Clinton and Sandusky airports. The memorial is open daily from late April to late October and by appointment the rest of the year.

After a 37-step climb, an elevator (fee) takes you to an observation platform 317 feet above the lake. On clear days you can see 10 miles northwest to the battle site.

More Information
Write: Superintendent, P.O. Box 549, Put-in-Bay, OH 43456-0549; or call 419-285-2184. More information is available at www.nps.gov/pevi/ on the Internet.



For Your Safety
The historic nature of the memorial poses many hazards. Stairways are steep and floors can be slippery when wet. Keep both feet on the observation deck and do not throw objects over the side. Exercise care at all times. Eating, drinking, or smoking in the memorial are not allowed.



The Battle of Lake Erie

War in the Northwest

"Free Trade and Sailors' Rights" was the cry that rallied public support for the War of 1812. Behind this slogan were the British attacks on American neutral shipping and impressment of American sailors during the Napoleonic Wars. These were the official reasons for declaring war on Britain in June 1812, but the struggle over the old Northwest Territory on the Great Lakes was just as important an incentive to war.

The rapid and unorganized settlement of the Northwest was meeting fierce resistance from Indians, led by the Shawnee chief Tecumseh. Congress accused the British army in Canada of supplying the Indians and

encouraging them to harass Americans in order to preserve the wilderness for the British fur trade. The expansionist-minded Congressional War Hawks, seeing their chance to rid the continent of the British and take possession of all of Canada, whipped up national sentiment to a fighting pitch and cast the deciding votes for war.

But by late 1813 the war was going badly for the young Nation taking on a world power. The U.S. armies in the Northwest were continually foiled. Poor leadership undermined the attempted invasion of Canada, when Gen. William Hull, cut off from his supply lines and intimidated by reports of

massed Indians and British troops, surrendered Fort Detroit (1 on the map at the right) in August 1812. At the River Raisin 2 five months later, a British and Indian force

Painting of the *Lawrence* by Karl Kutttruff, from *Ships of the Great Lakes*, Wayne State University Press.



compelled the surrender of a small American army under the inept leadership of Gen. James Winchester, resulting in the massacre of over 50 wounded American prisoners. Gen. William H. Harrison, now commanding the American Army, constructed Fort Meigs 3 as an advance base at the strategic rapids of the Maumee River. In May 1813, after most of the American militia had gone home, the British laid siege to the fort. This attempt was frustrated after a determined stand by Harrison, as was another siege in July. After the second reversal, the British needed a victory to assuage their Indian allies. So rather than withdraw, British Gen. Henry Proctor attempted to capture Fort Stephen-



son. 4 The fort, garrisoned by 160 men under Maj. George Croghan,

bloodily repulsed a British bayonet charge. General Proctor was then

forced to retreat across the lake to his naval and military base at Fort Malden. 5

A stalemate now existed. It became clear early in the war that Lake Erie was vital to control of the Northwest. For either army to advance very far into enemy territory, free passage on Lake Erie was essential for secure lines of supply and communications. The British held that advantage from the outset of the war. By mid-August, General Harrison's army in Ohio was ready to move into Canada, but was ordered not to advance without naval support. While the army struggled through invasion and counterinvasion, plans to wrest control of the lake from the British had already begun.

Building the Fleet

Soon after President James Madison gave the go-ahead in September 1812, construction of the fleet began at Erie, Pa. Work was hampered by a shortage of materials, too few craftsmen, and poor transportation. Perry's arrival in early 1813 was the boost the operation needed. There was no time for craftsmanship; the ships, hastily built of green wood, were meant to fight one battle. By mid-July the fleet was finished and afloat in

Presque Isle Bay: two brigs and four schooners built at Erie, and five more small vessels brought from Black Rock. But Perry's problems were not over. Plagued by a shortage of seamen, Perry had to recruit soldiers to fill his crews. One in four of his professional seamen was black, normal for U.S. naval vessels in the War of 1812. Also, a British blockade prevented him from getting his vessels over the sand bar which had kept the

British out of the harbor. When the British fleet mysteriously left on August 1, the operation began. The smaller ships were stripped and the heavier brigs buoyed up by "camels," airtight barges lashed to the hulls. After 5 days of continuous effort, the fleet was finally on the lake.

Lawrence was a 260-ton brig, armed with eighteen 32-pound carronades and two 12-pound long guns.



Oliver Hazard Perry's combination of organizational ability and tactical brilliance won him acclaim at home and the lasting respect of the British. "More than any other battle of the time," wrote historian Henry Adams, "the victory on Lake Erie was won by the courage and obstinacy of a single man." Only 27 when named commander of the Lake Erie fleet, Perry died at 34 of a fever contracted while on a diplomatic mission to Venezuela.

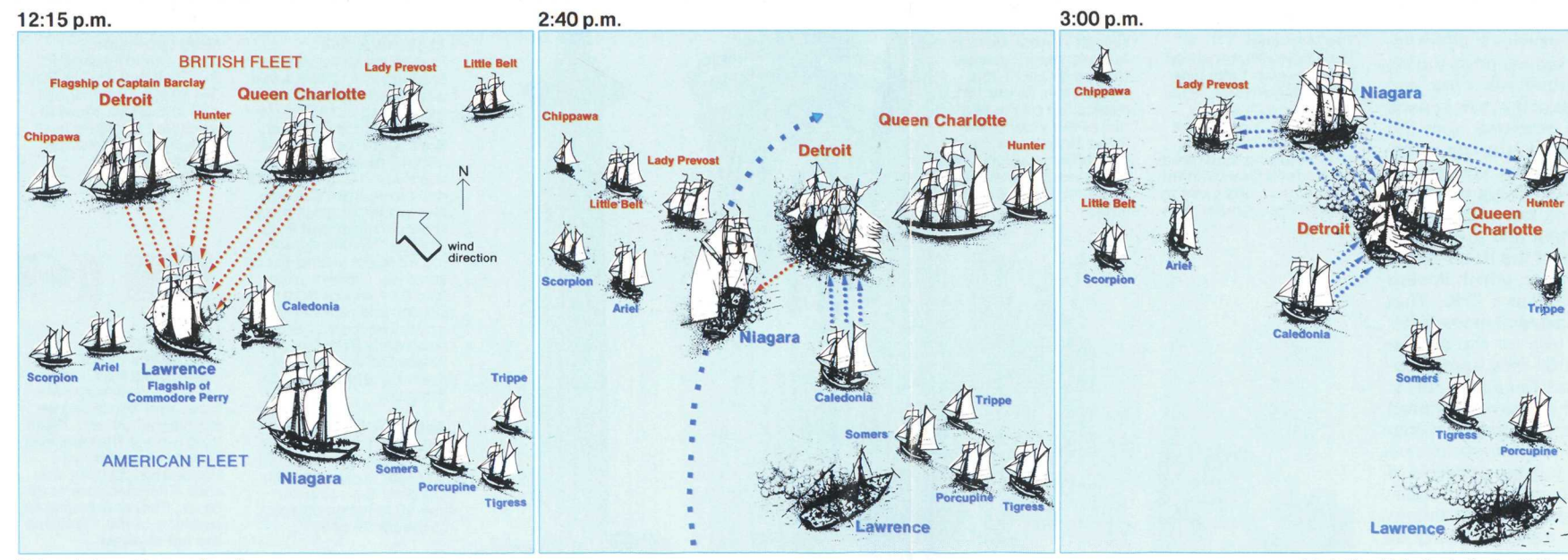
"We have met the enemy and they are ours . . ."

At daybreak on September 10, Perry's lookout sighted Capt. Robert H. Barclay's fleet of six vessels northwest of Put-in-Bay. Barclay's hand had been forced. With the American fleet on the lake, the British supply line was cut, and Barclay had to fight or abandon Fort Malden and all the Northwest.

When preparing for battle, both commanders had two critical factors to consider: guns and the wind. Barclay was armed mostly with long guns; Perry used mostly carronades. Carronades needed few men, could be loaded and fired faster, and their heavier caliber gave Perry a 2-to-1 firepower edge at close range, but they had less than half the range of long guns. To use his advantage, Perry would need the "weather gauge"—that is, have the

wind at his back so he could choose the distance of battle. Perry's plan was for his two brigs *Lawrence* and *Niagara* to engage the two largest British ships, the *Detroit* and the *Queen Charlotte*, and the smaller American gunboats to take on the smaller British ships. Barclay's strategy was to soften up the American brigs with his longer guns before Perry could get close enough to use his carronades.

The *Detroit* opened the battle at 11:45 a.m. (6 on the map above). Even with the weather gauge, it took Perry half an hour to close within range, suffering severe damage during that time. At 12:30, when Perry opened fire, he thought he had the advantage, but Jesse D. Elliott mysteriously kept the *Niagara* out of the battle. The now un-

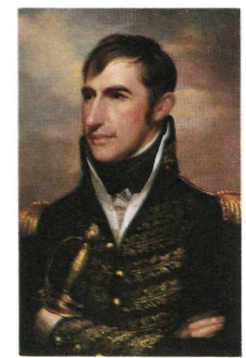


Distances between ships are not to scale.

Adapted from illustrations by Geoffrey Matthews

challenged *Queen Charlotte* also pounded the *Lawrence*, and by 2:30 four of every five men on the ship were killed or wounded, and all of her guns were out of action. Perry then took a small boat to the undamaged *Niagara* and sailed toward the British line, which was also in trouble. The *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte* had been badly damaged by American carronades. Captain Barclay was wounded and every other British commander was killed or wounded. When they saw the *Niagara* coming, the *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte* tried to maneuver into better firing position, rammed, and locked together. Perry broke through the British line, raking ships on both sides with his heavy guns. It was over in only 15 more minutes; the British struck their colors.

Aftermath It was an important but costly victory. The *Lawrence* had borne the worst of the fighting: 22 of the 27 American men killed were from her decks, as were two-thirds of the 96 wounded. Perry was miraculously untouched. The British lost 41 killed and 92 wounded. Perry's compassion for the British wounded and treatment of the prisoners earned him the respect of the British. Soon after the battle he penned his famous note to Harrison: "We have met the enemy and they are ours: two ships, two brigs, one schooner, and one sloop." The lake now was in American hands, and by September 27, Perry's fleet had ferried Harrison's army to the Canadian mainland. The British army abandoned Fort Malden and retreated up the Thames River (7 on



Gen. William H. Harrison's army followed, brought the British to bay at Moravian Town, and defeated them on October 5. The great Indian leader Tecumseh was killed in that battle, and with him died the last Indian and British hopes for domination in the old Northwest.

National Portrait Gallery, Gift of Mrs. Herbert Lee Pratt