

the lake, and while the militia were gathering to oppose them they could pounce upon another and another. The surrender of Hull exposed the territory at the head of the lake to incursions by land, and an attempt to oppose them resulted in the capture of General Winchester's army. These three fruitless and disastrous expeditions taught the necessity of creating a fleet on Lake Erie, that should command it, and co-operate with General Harrison, who then commanded the North-Western army. Accordingly in the winter of 1812—13, the keels of five vessels were laid at Erie; at the same time four or five merchant-schooners, being all that were then owned by us on the lake, were purchased and armed with two or three guns each.

There are good reasons, I may here remark, for considering the operations on Lake Erie as part of Rhode-Island history. At the commencement of the war, there was a flotilla of gun-boats stationed at Newport for the protection of Narragansett Bay, which was commanded by Oliver H. Perry, a native of this State, then 27 years of age. The interruption of commerce by the war had thrown many captains, mates and seamen out of employ, who entered the public service in this flotilla. The service here being inactive, Perry volunteered for the lakes, and was ordered to superintend the out-fitting of the fleet at Lake Erie. He took with him many of the officers and seamen from Newport, and arrived at Erie in March, 1813. This accounts for there being so many Rhode-Islanders in the expedition. Four of the nine commanders, Perry, Turner, Champlin and Almy were from this State, also a majority of the sailing-masters and mates, and several other officers, with a large number of sailors. Besides this, Commodore Perry, Lieutenant Turner, late a post-captain, sailing-master Taylor, now a post-captain in Newport, superintended the rigging and equipping and arming of the fleet. There has never been an expedition set on foot in this country, where so large a portion of the officers hailed from one State, or accomplished so much work as was done by Rhode Islanders on Lake Erie.

In May 1813, Perry left Erie in a four-oared boat for Buffalo, where he arrived in twenty-four hours, the distance being 100 miles. From thence he proceeded to Lake Ontario, and there