

and many of these are totally unfit for active service. And the nature of the ground is so peculiarly circumstanced that the garrison and dockyard are separated from each other by the strait which forms the harbour of Kingston. The high ground from which alone the dockyard can be defended is also separated from it by the inlet called Navy Bay. Thus the garrison occupies one situation, the dockyard another, and the ground commanding it remains unoccupied."¹

As York was the seat of government and the headquarters of the commanding officer, the removal of the naval station would facilitate supervision. The harbour was larger, naturally more secure from surprise, and could be more easily fortified. Timber for ship building could be readily obtained from the neighbouring forests. The main disadvantage was the great distance from Montreal, the advanced base of supply and this fact ultimately prevailed over all other considerations and kept the naval station at Kingston throughout the war.

When the declaration of war became known, some batteries for the defence of the harbour were hastily constructed and armed with any guns which happened to be at hand. These fortifications were gradually strengthened and their armament increased. Semaphore telegraph stations were established for communication, and furnaces built for heating shot. A considerable force of militia was assembled from the adjacent country and kept in service until relieved by regular troops from Montreal.

The merchant shipping on the lake consisted of about thirty small sloops and schooners. Only about one third of these flew the British flag, the largest being the *Governor Simcoe*, a schooner of 130 tons. The remainder varied in size from twenty to ninety tons.

Sackett's Harbour had been selected as the American naval base. The roadstead there was commodious, safe and easily fortified. All kinds of timber were abundant in the vicinity. The town was small but the country near by was well settled. The brig *Oneida*, of 250 tons, and armed with sixteen twenty-four pounder carronades, was the only ship of war maintained by the United States government with the exception of several small craft employed as revenue cutters. She was a dull sailer of very light draught. An energetic effort had been made just before the opening of navigation to augment her crew, recruiting officers having even been sent into Canada for that purpose. Early in June, her commander, Captain Woolsey, began a vigorous campaign against smuggling and other alleged infractions of the customs and navigation laws. Three British schooners, the

¹ Report, March 9, 1812.