

## DISCOURSE.

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The Rhode Island Historical Society having requested me to prepare a discourse for this their anniversary public meeting, I have chosen for my subject a history of the Battle of Lake Erie.

I have made this choice, first because this battle is a part of Rhode-Island History, and therefore appropriate to the occasion; secondly, because I could speak of it from personal knowledge; and thirdly, because a very inaccurate and perverted account of it has been written and imposed upon the public by the late J. Fenimore Cooper, Esquire. I am aware that this gentleman's mistakes and misrepresentations should have been noticed and corrected before his decease, and my apology for the delay is, that I never saw the pamphlet containing them, nor knew of its existence, until within a few days past, and after commencing this discourse.

My aim will be to give an account of the origin of the fleet or squadron on the lake; of its conflict with the British squadron, of the consequences, immediate and remote, and in conclusion notice some of Mr. Cooper's erroneous positions and false inferences.

At the commencement of the war of 1812, Government undertook the conquest of Upper Canada. General Hull was at the head of an army at Detroit, and General Van Rensselaer of another on the Niagara river. The former was captured, and the latter defeated. At this time the British held possession of Lake Erie, with five armed vessels, and had captured the Adams, the only armed vessel we owned upon the Lake. Their vessels, carrying sailors and Indians, could at any moment strike a fatal blow upon any defenceless settlements on the South side of