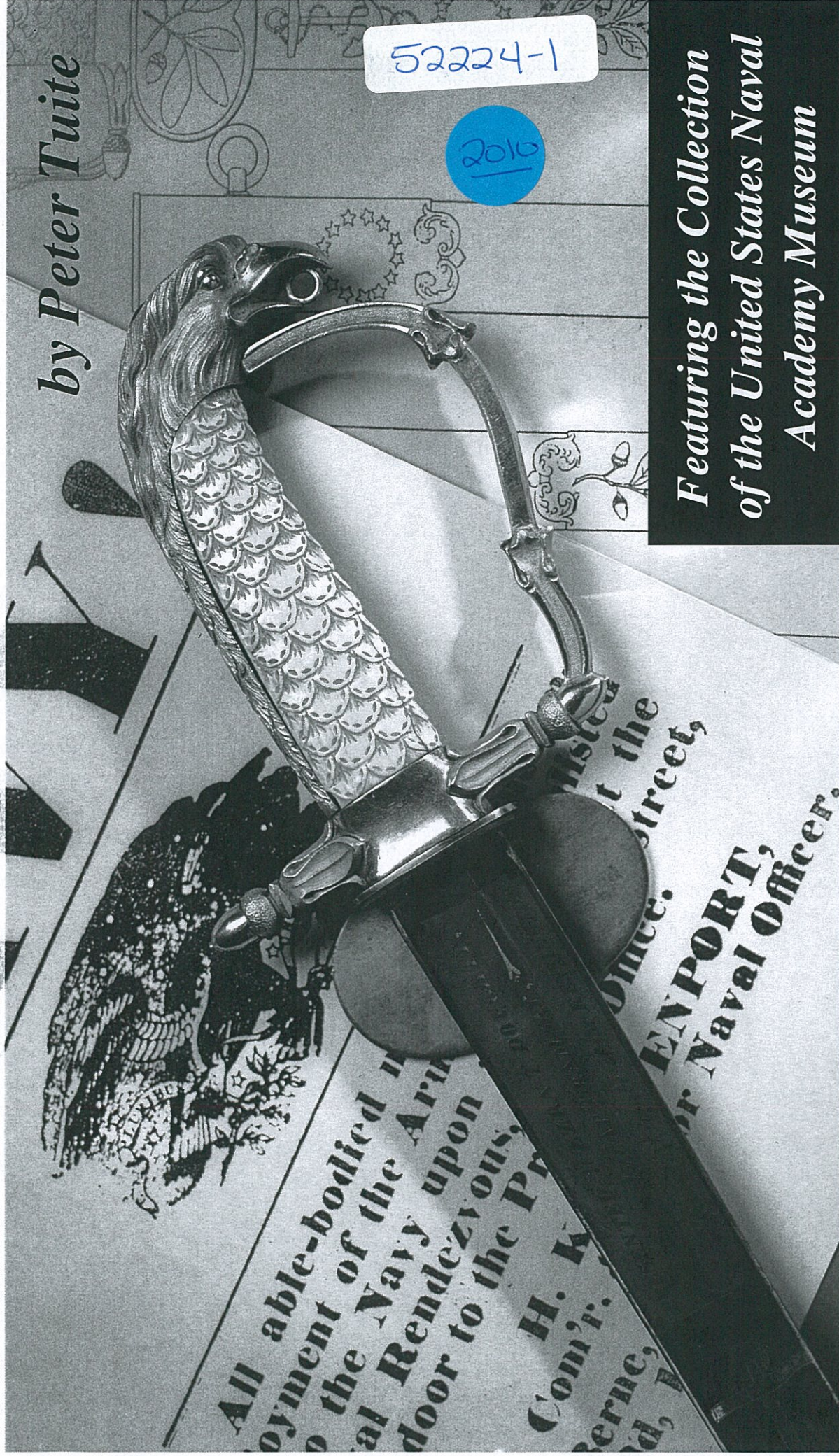


U.S. Naval Officers

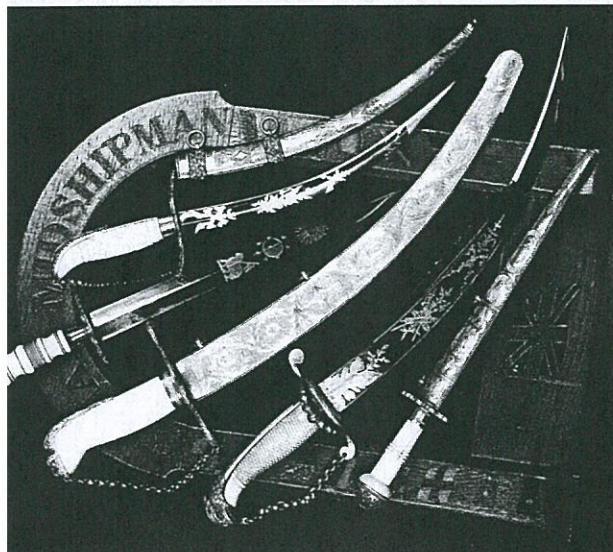
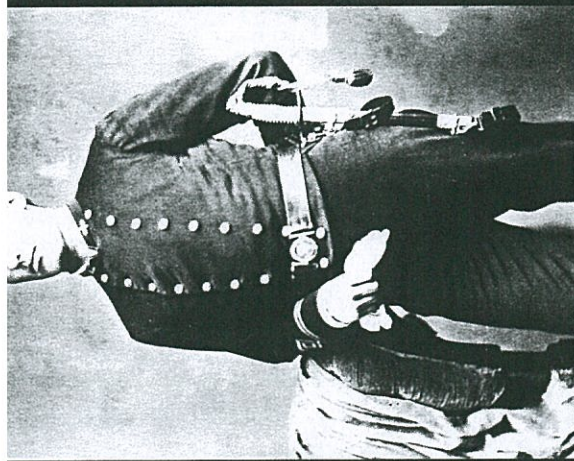
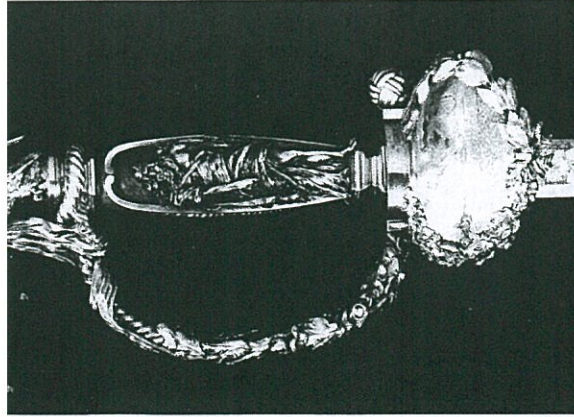
# Their Swords and Dirks

by Peter Tuite

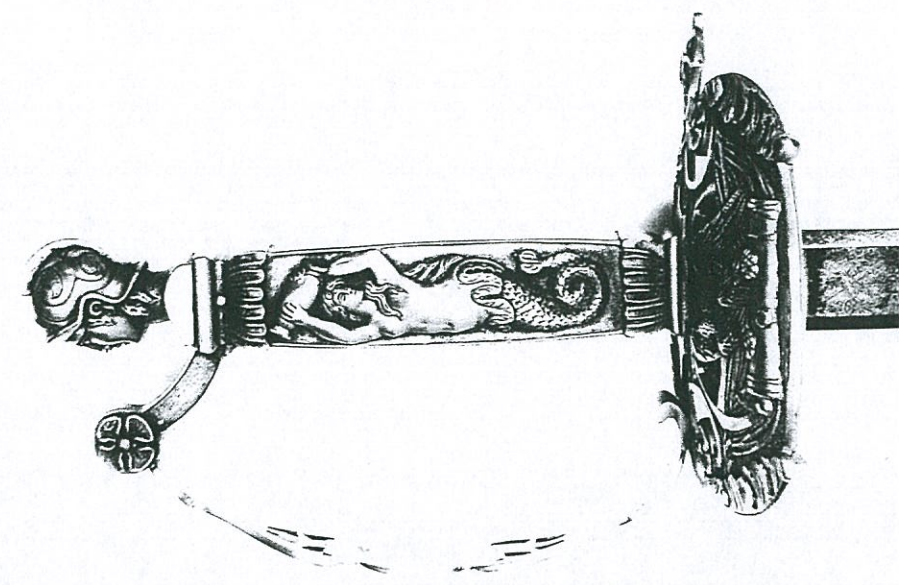


Featuring the Collection  
of the United States Naval  
Academy Museum





service for U.S. naval officers has been the sword. Presented as badges of honor, surrendered as tokens of defeat, these beautiful yet deadly weapons survive today in tribute to such legendary heroes as John Paul Jones, Stephen Decatur, David Farragut and David Porter. They also serve as reminders of lesser known officers who served gallantly yet are almost lost to the pages of history. In cooperation with the U.S. Naval Academy Museum, this exciting book not only shows you the swords and dirks that are our nation's naval heritage, but recounts the timeless deeds of honor that are forever tied to them.



ISBN 1-931464-16-2  
A. MOWBRAY INC., PUBLISHERS  
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**4.33** City of Philadelphia Silver Soup Tureen Presented to Jacob Jones. (NYHS Collection)

American shield, a floral spray with a sunburst, another fouled anchor within a floral spray, and a long double leafy spray. The reverse blade motifs include a seashell, a stand of arms, King Neptune with a trident and American flag, a stand of arms, an American eagle with an *e pluribus unum* banner above, a Victory figure with a laurel wreath, a six-pointed star and a long double leaf spray.

The brass scabbard is engraved over its entire obverse length and the reverse contains the above presentation. The throat has a raised leaf and grape with two hanging clips (one missing). The engraved motifs on the obverse scabbard include floral designs.

The City of Philadelphia also awarded Jones a cast silver soup tureen (4.33) that is engraved and adorned with nautical and military motifs. It is also inscribed around its periphery. The apron shown reads: *THE CITIZENS OF PHILADELPHIA TO CAPTAIN JACOB JONES*. The left apron reads: *WASP/ 18 guns Captn. Jones/ KILLED 5, WOUNDED 5*, while the left apron

reads: *FROLIC/22 guns\_ Captn, Whynates/KILLED 30/WOUNDED 45*. The reverse apron is engraved: *Presented by the Citizens of Philadelphia to Captn. Jacob Jones/ of the US Sloop of War WASP, in testimony of their appreciation /and admiration of his Skill & gallantry in Capturing, on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 1812, the British Brig of War FROLIC after a close action of 13 minutes.*

After the war, Jones commanding *Macedonian*, joined the Mediterranean Squadron under Commodore Decatur, and took part in securing lasting peace with the Barbary powers. Commodore Jones assumed command of the Mediterranean Squadron in 1821, and in 1824 he was appointed to the Board of Navy Commissioners. Two years later he became commander of the U.S. naval forces in the Pacific. At the time of his death on 3 August 1850, Jones was the Commandant of the Naval Asylum in Philadelphia.

### 1812 Congressional Presentation Swords

That our relatively small Navy could consistently defeat the Royal Navy in both single ship and fleet engagements during the War of 1812 was a remarkable feat and attests to the skill of our naval officers and their crews. In recognition of their accomplishments, Congress made fourteen awards to commissioned officers for different naval victories. Only one of these officers, Lieutenant Jesse D. Elliott, received a sword, costing \$800,<sup>24</sup> for an action on Lake Erie. Other commanding officers received gold medals and commissioned officers received silver medals.

Congress also awarded swords to the junior warrant officers that participated in some of these engagements. These swords, usually referred to as Congressional War of 1812 swords, were awarded to sailing-masters and midshipmen, for the following four engagements:

- Battle of Lake Erie – 10 September 1813, Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry commanding
- Battle of Lake Champlain – 11 September 1814, Commodore Thomas Macdonough, commanding
- Sloop *Peacock* and HMS Brig *Epervier* – 29 April 1814, Master Commandant Lewis Warrington commanding
- Sloop *Wasp* and HMS Sloop *Reindeer* – 28 June 1814, Master Commandant Johnston Blakely commanding

This was the first, and last, time that Congress awarded swords to warrant officers. The swords cost \$250 each<sup>25</sup> and were ordered to be of the highest quality that could be made by American makers of the period. The blades were made by Rose and engraved by John Meer of Philadelphia and some are so marked. A belt with gilded buckle depicting Neptune's face accompanied the swords. Few of these belts survive.

All the swords have the same basic hilt (4.34).



**4.34** Hilt of Augustus Swartwout's 1812 Congressional Sword. (D. Arsenault Collection)

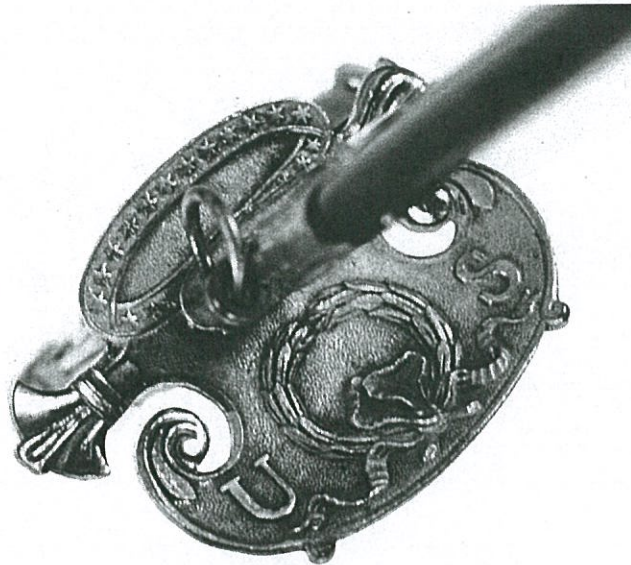


**4.35** Obverse Guard of Augustus Swartwout's 1812 Congressional Sword.



The pommel is a Roman soldier with helmet facing left with an upswept knucklebow that has a center medallion with a woman's bust and cutouts above and below. The grip is rectangular and slightly tapered at its ends with a high relief mermaid holding a vase over her head on both sides. The guard usually terminates in fluted florals. The large counterguard is almost straight out on most swords and turned down on others. The guard is chased with a raised spread winged eagle sitting on a cannon with anchors and flags in the background (4.35). The underside of the reverse guard has one row of twelve stars and one row of six stars while the underside of the obverse guard has the raised letters US separated by a laurel wreath (4.36). The blades are 31 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches long and double-edged blade with a spear point. They are engraved on both sides up to its edges. Typically,

**4.36** Guard Underside of Augustus Swartwout's 1812 Congressional Sword.



the obverse is engraved with the battle presentation and the reverse has the motto: *ALTUS IBUNT QUI AD/SUMMA NITUNTUR* (HE WHO AIMS HIGHEST, RISES HIGHEST). The other engraved motifs differ for each engagement as described below.

The scabbard is leather with gilded mounts with carrying rings on the top and middle mounts. The top mount has a raised trident that passes through a plant while the middle mount has a raised floral spray. The bottom mount has a raised dolphin entwined around an anchor surrounded by a border of oak leaves and ocean waves.

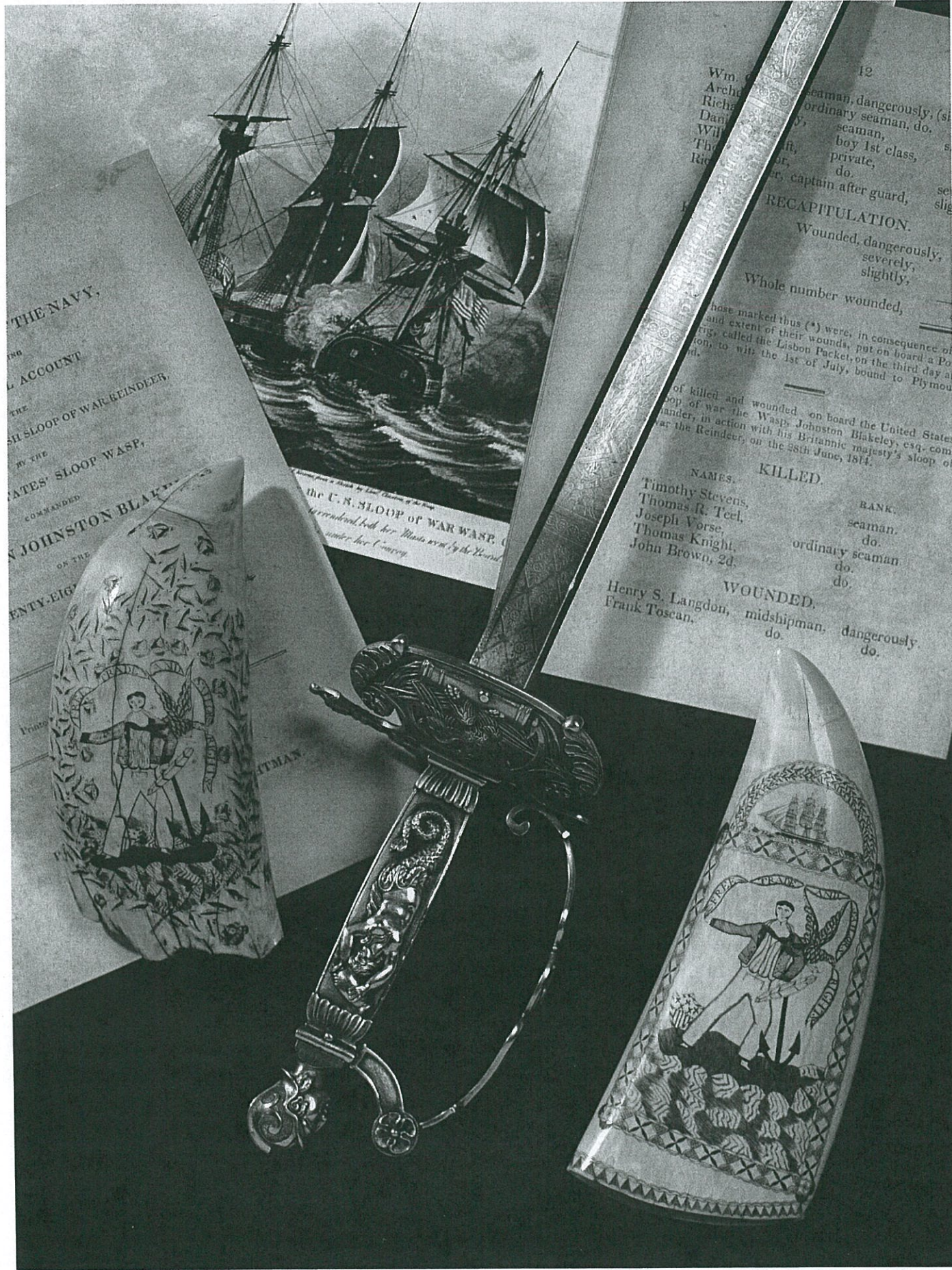
The medals received by commissioned officers were designed by Moritz Furst and are so marked. Furst had worked at the mints in Vienna and Lombardy and upon arrival in the United States in

1808, he was employed as diesinker at the U.S. Mint. There is some question as to who designed and made the unique hilts and Furst could have also done these. There is also some evidence<sup>26</sup> that Frederick Widmann worked on these swords.

What is not commonly known is that two different types of swords were made. The first group of swords ordered in 1817<sup>27</sup> were constructed of gilded brass and went to those involved in the Lake Erie and Lake Champlain actions. The swords ordered later for the *Peacock-Epervier* engagement also had brass hilts. About sixty-seven swords were awarded for these three engagements. A fourth group was constructed of gilded silver and only went to those involved in the *Wasp-Reindeer* engagement.<sup>28</sup> The *Wasp* was lost at sea with all hands and nine swords went to the *Wasp* personnel. The reason for the use of silver mounted swords as opposed to brass is being researched. It is not known if the two surviving midshipmen, Geisinger and Bonneville, received the silver or brass hilted swords since their swords are not known to be extant. The four known *Wasp* swords have silver hilts and their narrower leather scabbards have silver mounts. These mounts are identical in design to the brass ones except they are smaller, are more deeply chased, have different ring mount attachments, and are attached to the scabbards with screws.

A comparison illustrates the differences in hilts and blades of each type of sword with the silver hilted sword on the left (4.37). A cursory examination shows that the brass-hilted sword has a wider blade — 1 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inch versus <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inch. The knucklebow configurations are also slightly different, and on close examination, the details of the mermaid's hair and the pommel helmet also differ. A side view of the hilts (4.38) illustrates some other differences. The brass-mounted sword on the right has a wider grip (<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inch versus <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inch) that is also ribbed as opposed to smooth. The flowered





THE NAVY,  
ACCOUNT  
THE  
U.S. SLOOP OF WAR REINDEER,  
BY THE  
U.S. SLOOP WASP,  
COMMANDED  
BY JOHNSTON BLAKELEY,  
ON THE  
TWENTY-EIGHTH

the U.S. SLOOP OF WAR WASP,  
under her command.

12  
Wm. O. ... seaman, dangerously, (s  
Archd ... ordinary seaman, do.  
Rich ... seaman, do.  
Dan ... boy 1st class,  
Will ... private,  
Th ... do.  
Ric ... captain after guard, se

### RECAPITULATION.

Wounded, dangerously,  
severely,  
slightly,  
Whole number wounded,

These marked thus (\*) were, in consequence of  
and extent of their wounds, put on board a Por  
tuguese vessel, called the Lisbon Packet, on the third day af  
ter the Reindeer, on the 1st of July, bound to Plymou  
th.

### KILLED.

NAMES.	RANK.
Timothy Stevens,	seaman.
Thomas R. Teel,	do.
Joseph Vorse,	ordinary seaman
Thomas Knight,	do.
John Brown, 2d.	do.

### WOUNDED.

Henry S. Langdon,	midshipman, dangerously.
Frank Toscan,	do.

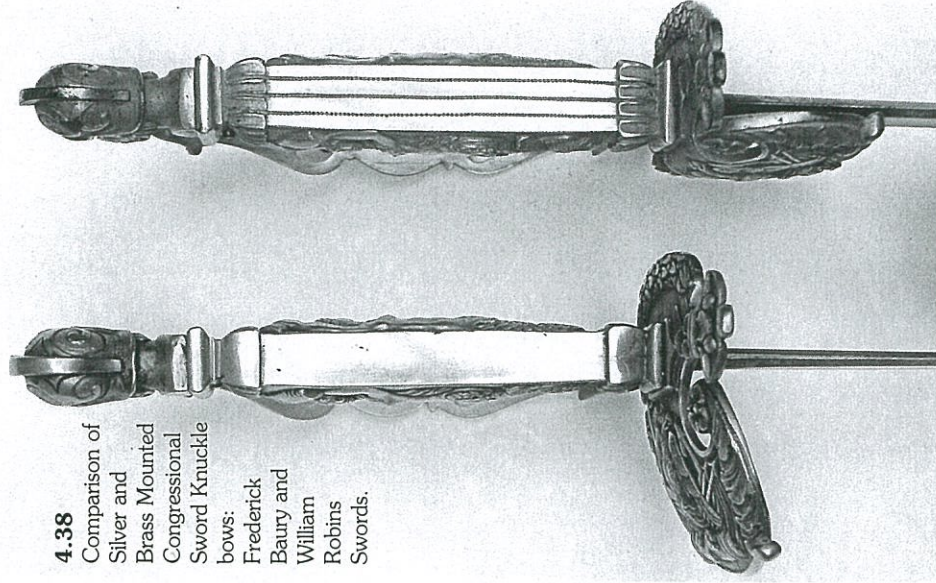




**4.37** Comparison of Silver and Brass Mounted Congressional Sword Hilt: Frederick Baur and William Robins Swords. (P. Tuitt Collection)



**4.38** Comparison of Silver and Brass Mounted Congressional Sword Knuckle bows: Frederick Baur and William Robins Swords.

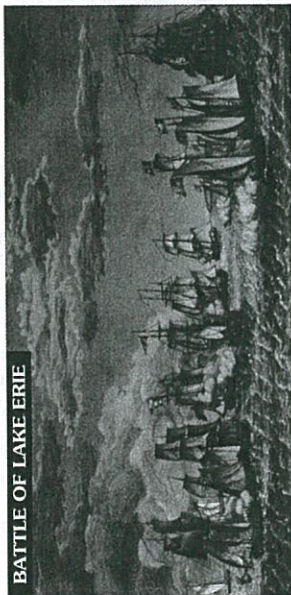


arrangement at the base and top of the grip is also omitted on the side panels of the silver-hilted sword. A less obvious difference is the width of the knucklebow where it connects to the guard and pommel (4.39). The silver hilted sword is narrower to mate with the narrower grip. Like the brass-mounted swords, one of the four extant silver mounted swords has a turned down guard (4.40). The blades on both groups of swords were made by Rose and engraved by Meer but the blades are not the same. Meer used different background motifs for different engagements and

**4.40** Silver Mounted 1812 Congressional Sword of Frank Toscan with Turned Down Guard. (K. Hoffman Collection)



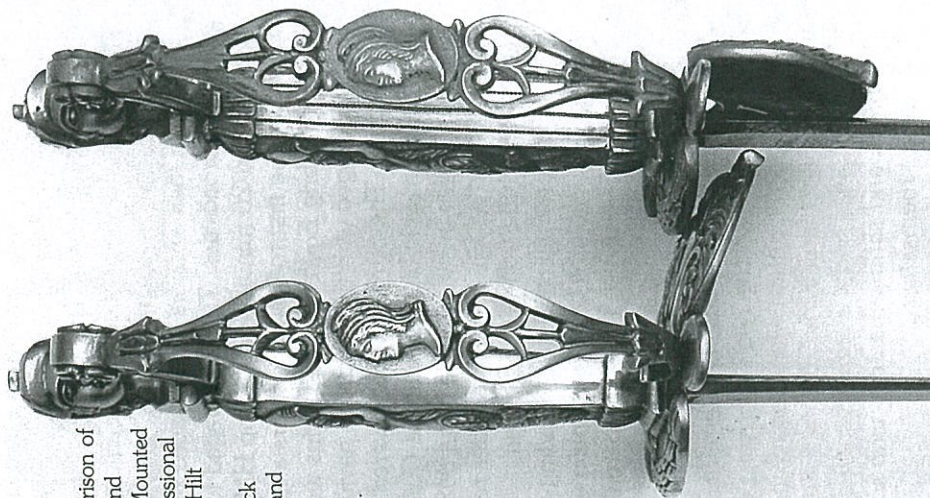




BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE

#### 4.39

Comparison of  
Silver and  
Brass Mounted  
Congressional  
Sword Hilt  
Backs:  
Frederick  
Baurly and  
William  
Robins  
Swords.



between sailing-masters and midshipmen. This is discussed below where some of the blade motifs associated with each engagement are described.

#### Battle of Lake Erie – September 10, 1813

The battle began at long range about noon with Oliver Hazard Perry on the brig *Lawrence* with eight other American ships carrying a total of 56 guns. Barclay, the British commander, was on the *Detroit* with five other ships carrying 63 guns. The *Lawrence* and two other ships, the *Ariel* and the *Scorpion*, initially engaged the three larger

British ships. After two hours, the *Lawrence* was badly damaged and most of its crew was lost or wounded. Perry changed his flagship to the *Niagara* commanded by Elliot and continued the battle. Perry broke the remainder of the British line by 3 PM and the *Detroit* struck its colors.

The Congressional resolution<sup>29</sup> leading to the awards for the Battle of Lake Erie was approved on 6 January 1814 and partially reads:

*That the President of the United States be requested to cause gold medals to be struck, emblematical of the actions between the two squadrons and to present them to Captain Perry and Lieutenant Jesse D. Elliott, in such a manner as will be most honorable to them...a silver medal to each of the commissioned officers...and a sword to each of the midshipmen and sailing-masters, who so nobly distinguished themselves on that memorable day... That three months pay be allowed...to all petty officers, seamen, marines and infantry.*

This resolution led to the award of about twenty-seven brass hilted swords as per the following roster. Note that underlining indicates a sword that is known to exist.

#### Sailing-Masters

William Taylor  
Nelson Webster  
James McDonald

#### Daniel Dobbins

Thomas Brounell  
Stephen Champlin  
Thomas Almy

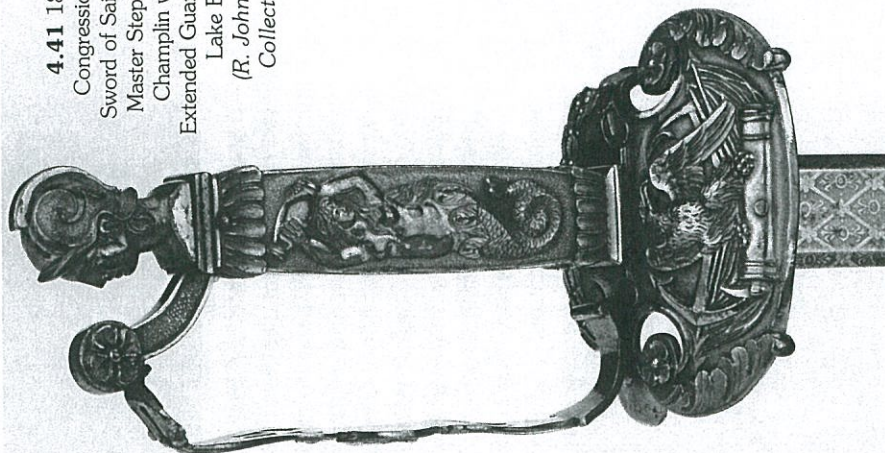
#### Midshipmen

Augustus Swartwout  
Peleg Dunham  
James A. Perry  
George Senat  
John L. Cummings  
Samuel Adams  
Simeon Warr  
John Clark  
James Bliss  
Alexander Stout

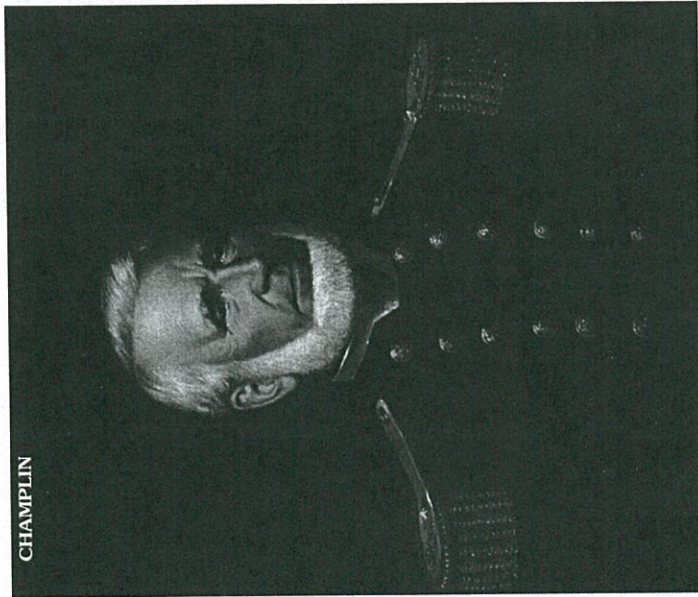
Henry Laub  
Thomas Claxton Jr.  
Dulaney Forrest  
John B. Montgomery  
Charles Smith  
Robert S. Tatem  
John W. Wendell  
David Nichols  
John W. Palmer  
Hugh N. Page

Sailing-Master Stephen Champlin's sword is illustrated (4.41). The obverse blade motifs

4.41 1812  
Congressional  
Sword of Sailing  
Master Stephen  
Champlin with  
Extended Guard –  
Lake Erie.  
(R. Johnson  
Collection)







CHAMPLIN

include: W. Rose on the ricasso, a Greek symbol band, a long geometric of triangles and floral motifs, another band, a pike's head inscribed by a wreath, a ship's battle scene, another pike's head inscribed by a wreath, another band, the Latin motto upside down, another band, a vine that extends for about 10 inches with leaves and bunches of grapes. The reverse blade motifs include: MEER/Philadelphia, a Greek symbol band, a long geometric of triangles and floral motifs, another band, the presentation that reads: STEPHEN CHAMPLIN, ACT'SAILING MASTER/ Lake Erie, September 10, 1813, and a vine that extends for about 10 inches with leaves and bunches of grapes.

The sword for Augustus Swartwout for the Battle of Lake Erie (see above) was also examined. It not only has different blade motifs but the motto and presentation are on different sides of the blade compared to the Champlin sword. As

we will see below, there is inconsistency among the brass hilted sword blades and due to the sheer volume of swords ordered, it is doubtful that this was by design.

Champlin was born in Rhode Island on November 1789 and was a first cousin to Oliver Hazard Perry. He went to sea, as a sailor, at age 16 and at age 22 was captain of a merchant ship in the West Indies. On 22 May 1812, he was appointed a sailing-master in the Navy and was given command of the *Scorpion* on Lake Erie. He fired the first and last shots of the battle. He had several commands during the War of 1812, and was severely wounded while in command of the *Tigress* and was taken prisoner. He was promoted to lieutenant in December 1814, and was later attached to Perry's flagship *Java*. He then commanded the schooner *Porcupine*. While impeded by his wounds, he continued to serve, receiving promotions through captain in 1855. He was placed on the retired list in 1855 and raised to commodore on July 1862. He died in Buffalo, New York on 20 February 1870.



BATTLE OF LAKE CHAMPLAIN

### Battle of Lake Champlain - September 11, 1814

Commodore Thomas Macdonough was on the *Saratoga*, with three other ships and ten gunboats. This force of about 880 men, had ships with 86 guns. The British force was under the command of Commodore George Downie on the

HMS *Confiance*, with three other ships and twelve gunboats. This force of about 1,000 men had ships with 95 guns. The American fleet lay at anchor when the British fleet was seen approaching at about 8 in the morning. The American ships slipped their anchors and engaged the British with broadsides. The battle raged for about two hours and 20 minutes. The sloop HMS *Chubb* was the first to strike its colors after engaging the brig *Eagle*. Both flagships were severely damaged with the *Saratoga* having no larboard guns. The *Saratoga* maneuvered and fired a starboard side broadside at the *Confiance*, which then struck its colors. The brig HMS *Linnet* followed within 15 minutes after receiving a second broadside from the *Saratoga*.

The Congressional resolution<sup>30</sup> leading to the awards for the Battle of Lake Champlain was approved on 20 October 1814 and partially reads:

...gold medals to be struck, emblematical of the actions between the two squadrons and to present them to Captain Macdonough and Captain Robert Henley and also to Lieutenant Stephen Cassin... and a sword to each of the midshipmen and sailing-masters, who so nobly distinguished themselves...

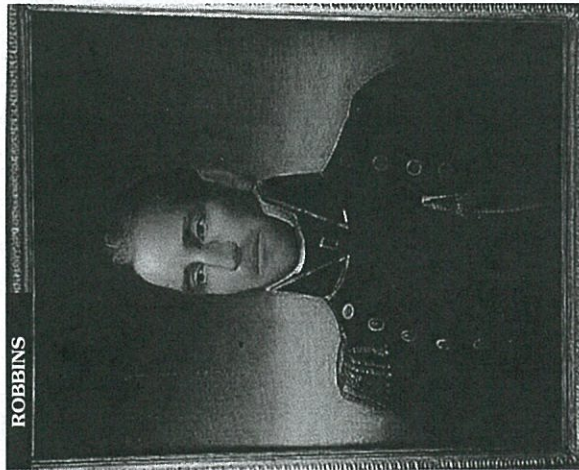
This resolution led to the award of about thirty-one brass hilted swords as per the following roster:

### Sailing-Masters

Daniel Hazard  
Joseph Lindsay  
Jarius Loomis  
Samuel Keteltas  
Henry Tew  
Roger Carter

William Robins  
Phillip Brum  
Henry Bancroft  
Daniel Stellwagen  
Horace Marcellin





ROBBINS

The sword awarded to Sailing-Master William Robbins with turned down guard is shown (4.42). The presentation on the obverse blade reads: *WILLIAM S. ROBBINS (sic), SAILING MASTER / Lake Champlain, 11 September 1814* (Note that Robbins' name is misspelled). This blade is not stamped or marked with maker names. The obverse motifs include: a geometric of triangles and floral motifs, a Greek symbol band (see inset), a stand of arms with crossed cannon and anchor and flags and pikes, another band, the above presentation along the blade, another band and a long oak leaf and acorn spray. The reverse motifs include the Greek symbol band, an array of diamonds with circles with dots at their center and leaves, another band, a pike's head inscribed by a wreath, a three ship battle scene, another slightly different pike's head inscribed by a wreath, another band, the Latin motto upside down, another band, and a vine that extends for about 10 inches with leaves and bunches of grapes. Note that while these motifs are similar to those on the Champlain sword above, they are on opposite sides of the blade.

William McClenachan Robbins was born on a plantation in Worchester County, Maryland on 12 May 1774. He initially studied law in Philadelphia but gave it up for a career in the Navy. He was appointed a sailing-master from the State of New York on 18 June 1812 and reported to the New York Station. He was 36 years old at the time. In 1813, he was assigned to the *Alert* but requested transfer for more action. During the Battle of Lake Champlain, he commanded the galley *Allen* and the 2nd Division of galleys. In his report to Macdonough, he cites the bravery of two other midshipmen under his command manning galleys — Messrs Hazard and Keteltas. His actions during the battle were also cited in Macdonough's report. In 1815, he served again with Macdonough and was promoted to lieutenant in April 1816. From 1819 through 1824, he served at Sackets Harbor. He was then assigned to the Florida Squadron under David Porter. In 1826, he served under Captain Arthur Sinclair on the *Alert*, now a receiving ship. He died at age 60 on 19 May 1828 after a long illness.

above, they are on opposite sides of the blade.

## US Sloop *Peacock* and

### HMS Brig *Epervier* – 29 April 1814

The *Peacock* sighted three sail under convoy by a large brig later known to be the *Epervier*, under command of a Captain Richard W. Wales. The ships engaged at close range and the first broadside from the *Epervier* crippled the *Peacock*'s rigging, inhibiting her ability to maneuver. The battle became a contest of gunnery. The *Peacock*'s gunnery proved superior and after 40



PEACOCK VS. EPERVIER

#### 4.42 1812

Congressional Sword of  
Sailing Master William  
Robbins with Turned  
Down Guard – Lake  
Champlain. (P. Tuite  
Collection)

## Midshipmen

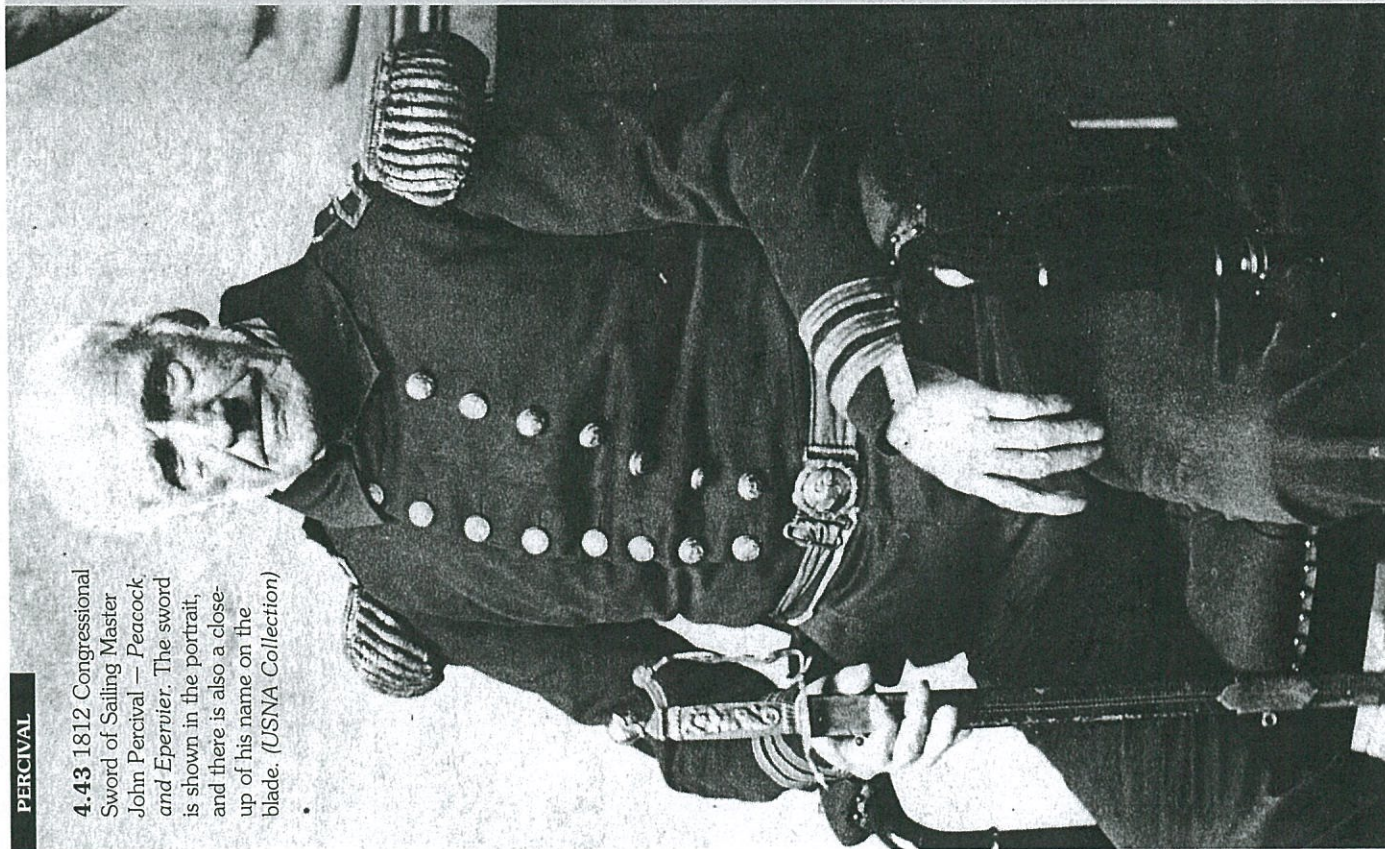
Charles Platt  
Hiram Paulding  
William Boden  
William Chamberlain  
John Kilburn  
Silas Duncan  
Samuel Thwing  
Samuel Breese  
James Freeman  
Charles Williamson  
Frank Ellery

Thomas Conover  
Joseph Cannon  
N. Montgomery  
William Machesney  
Walter Monteath  
William Spencer  
Henry Tardy  
James Baldwin  
John Graham  
Joel Abbot  
Elie LaVallette



## PERCIVAL

**4.43** 1812 Congressional Sword of Sailing Master John Percival — Peacock, and Epervier. The sword is shown in the portrait, and there is also a close-up of his name on the blade. (USNA Collection)



minutes the *Epervier* struck her colors. The prize money for the *Epervier* was \$55,000 and she had an additional \$118,000 in her holds.

The Congressional resolution<sup>31</sup> for this action was passed on October 21 1814 and reads:

*That the President of the United States be requested to present to Captain Lewis Warrington of the sloop of war Peacock, a gold medal, with suitable emblems and devices, and a silver medal with like devices, to each of the commissioned officers, and a sword to each of the midshipmen, and to the sailing-master, of the aforesaid vessel, in testimony of the high sense entertained by Congress of the gallantry and good conduct of officers and crew in the action with the British Brig Epervier, on the twenty-ninth day of April in the year one thousand eight hundred and fourteen, in which action the decisive effect and great superiority of the American gunnery were so signally displayed.*

This resolution led to the award of about nine brass hilted swords as per the following roster:

### Sailing-Master John Percival

#### Midshipmen

<u>William Jenkins</u>	Richardson Buck
<u>Hill Carter</u>	John M. Dale
William T. Rogers	Israel Israel
Thomas Greeves	Nehemiah Tilton

The Peacock's Sailing-Master was John (Mad Jack) Percival. The sword awarded to him (4.43) has the presentation on the obverse blade that reads: *JOHN PERCIVAL, SAILING-MASTER, EPERVIER CAPTURED 29 APR 1814*.

The obverse blade is stamped *I. Rose* and its motifs include: a geometric of triangles and floral motifs, a Greek symbol band, a double ended pike inscribed by a wreath, another band, a ship engagement, another band, a pike within a wreath, another band, the above presentation along the blade flanked by bands with circles, and a vine with leaves and bunches of grapes.

John Percival was born in Barnstable, Massachusetts, and



went to sea early as a cabin boy and cook. He acquired the nickname "Mad Jack" based on his daring exploits as a young man. He quickly rose to the rank of officer in the merchant service and while sailing as second mate on the *Thetis* he was impressed and served aboard the *HMS Victory*. He eventually escaped and on his return to America enlisted as a masters mate in the Navy at age 21. He was quickly promoted to master in 1809 and was awarded the above sword while sailing master of the *Peacock*. After the war, he commanded the sloop *Dolphin* and sailed to the Sandwich Islands, where he remained until 1826. For his successes in the Sandwich Islands, he was promoted to captain in 1841 and given command of *Cyane*. While commanding *Cyane*, he was sent to quell the pirate activities in the West Indies and his actions were considered exemplary. He is best known for commanding *Constitution* (1843-1846) during its round-the-world cruise, visiting 26 ports over two years. He was placed on the reserve list on 13 September 1855 and died in 1862 at age 83.



## US Sloop Wasp and

### HMS Sloop Reindeer – 28 June 1814

The *Wasp* was being chased by three British vessels and cut one out for single ship battle. The action commenced about half past three in the afternoon with about 60 yards separating the two vessels. *Wasp* opened fire, and despite several boarding attempts by the British, severely dam-



**4.44** Silver Mounted 1812 Congressional Sword of Midshipman Frederick Baurly – *Wasp* and *Reindeer*. (P. Tuite Collection)

aged the other vessel that turned out to be HMS *Reindeer*, commanded by a Captain William Manners. Although the *Wasp* was hulled six times the damage was not severe. The British fought valiantly in the 28-minute action, but the *Wasp* was superior in number of guns and crew size.

On 3 November 1814, Congress approved a resolution<sup>32</sup> that partially reads:

*That the President of the United States be requested to present to Captain Johnston Blakely of the sloop Wasp, a gold medal... good conduct of officers and crew in the action with the British sloop of war Reindeer...on the twenty-eight day of June in the year one thou-*

*sand eight hundred and fourteen, in which action determined bravery and cool trepidity, in nineteen minutes, obtained a decisive victory, by boarding.*

This resolution led to the award of nine silver hilted swords as per the following roster:

#### Sailing-Master James E. Carr

#### Midshipmen

Henry S. Langdon  
Hale S. Lovell  
William House  
Frederick Baurly

Thomas Bonneville  
William Randolph  
Ashton S. Hall  
Frank Toscan  
David Geisinger



Acting Third Lieutenant Frederick Baury received a silver mounted sword (4.44) with the presentation on the reverse blade that reads: *FREDERICK BAURY, MIDSHIPMAN, /Reindeer Captured 28th June, 1814*. The obverse blade includes the engraver's name: *MEER/ Philadelphia*, a geometric of triangles circles and florals, a band with circles and dots (see inset), a stand of arms with an anchor crossed over a cannon backed by flags and pikes with cannon balls below, another band, the Latin motto, another band and a long spray of oak leaves and grapes. The reverse includes the *ROSE* stamp, a geometric like the obverse, a band with circles and dots, a pike within a wreath, a battle scene with two ships, a pike within a holder in a wreath, another band, the above presentation, another band, and a long spray of oak leaves and large acorns.

The four extant silver hilted midshipmen swords were examined and their blade motifs are identical, which was not the case for the brass hilted swords. Whether the sword awarded to sail-master Carr differed from those awarded to midshipmen is an indeterminate in the absence of Carr's sword.

Although not yet commissioned, Frederick Baury was the acting third lieutenant aboard the *Wasp* while a midshipman. He was the second son of Major Louis Baury de Bellerive, who commanded a corps of French volunteers during the Revolutionary War.<sup>33</sup> Frederick received his midshipman's warrant on 18 May 1809 with the backing of then Secretary of War, William Eustis. Baury's first commander was Isaac Hull, a friend of the family. His initial sea assignment was on the *Essex*. After the first year, at age 19, he became disenchanted with the lack of action in the Navy and wrote to both Eustis and to the then Secretary Hamilton for a transfer to the Marines. His request was denied and he sailed on *Essex* for



4.45 State of Maryland Presentation Sword to Isaac Mayo. (S. Handelsman Collection)

Mayo for his service during the War of 1812.

Similar swords were presented to two other native sons: George W. Rodgers<sup>34</sup> and Henry C. Ballard.<sup>35</sup> The presentation along the reverse blade reads: *Presented by the State of Maryland, to/Lieut. Isaac Mayo, March 1828/as the reward of patriotism and valor*. This sword was designed by Harvey Lewis with a Rose blade that was etched by John Meer. The blade is stamped *W. Rose* on the obverse ricasso. The hilt was made by Thomas Fletcher in 1829.

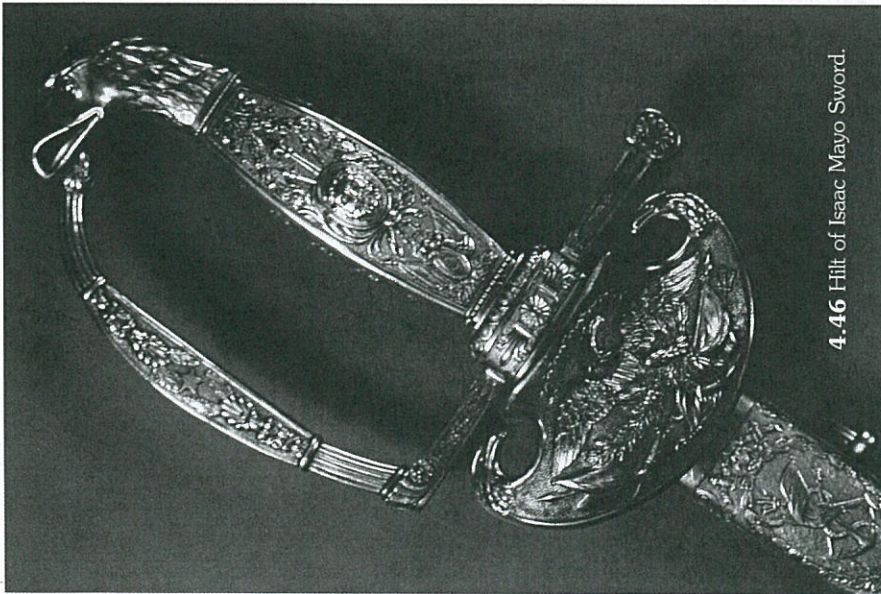
Isaac Mayo was born in 1795 on the eastern shore of Maryland and joined the Navy at age 14 on 15 November 1809. He first went to sea on *Wasp* under James Lawrence in July 1810 and remained with Lawrence when he was given command of *Aegus* and then *Hornet*. He served on *Hornet* under Lawrence when she took HMS *Peacock* on 14 February 1813 and then under James Biddle when she took HMS *Penguin* on 23 March 1815. On 10 February 1820, he received a Congressional silver medal for the *Penguin* engagement. President Madison had appointed him lieutenant on 1 February 1815.

another year before being assigned to *Constitution* under Commodore William Bainbridge. He went on board on 6 July 1811 and saw considerable action. He was commended by Bainbridge on several occasions and was appointed to acting lieutenant and was aboard when *Constitution* defeated HMS *Java* on 29 December 1812. He was next assigned to the *Wasp* and was its senior midshipman and was aboard the *Wasp* for all its engagements from early 1814 on. During this period, the *Wasp* defeated or captured 15 British ships including its engagements with the *Reindeer* and the *Avon*. He was promoted to lieutenant on 9 December 1814 shortly before the *Wasp* was lost at sea with all hands. The only surviving officers were the two midshipmen, Geisinger and Bonneville, who took the captured ship *Atlanta* to Savannah as a prize.

#### State of Maryland to Commodore Isaac Mayo (1795–1861)

In 1828, the State of Maryland presented a gold hilted sword (4.45) to then lieutenant Isaac





4.46 Hilt of Isaac Mayo Sword.

As shown, the hilt (4.46) is solid gold with an ornate eagle pommel and turned down guard. The grip is relatively flat and tapered at its ends. The obverse and reverse motifs are the same consisting of a central face of Hercules within a long laurel wreath with a stand of arms below. The grip is separated from the pommel and guard by finely beaded bands. The knucklebow is of the period and chased with floral designs and a star within a wreath at its center. The turned down guard has a winged eagle above a stand of arms and eagle heads at its ends.

The 27-inch long by 1-inch wide double-edged spear point blade has battle scenes on both sides.

The drawing used to design the sword is shown (4.47) and illustrates the blade motifs. The obverse motifs include a geometric band, a battle scene between the *Hornet* and *Penguin* inscribed below *Peacock and Hornet 1814*, another band, a double ended harpoon within a wreath, an eagle and shield with an *e pluribus unum* banner, a harpoon point within a laurel wreath, a geometric band, a depiction of the *Hornet* escaping the 74 gun *Cornwallis* inscribed below *Escape of the Hornet from the Cornwallis, 1815*, and a spray of floral designs. The reverse motifs include a floral, a geometric band, a stand of arms with a carriage on a wheeled carriage with flags and pikes, another geometric band, the above presentation, another geometric band, a battle scene between the *Hornet* and *Penguin*, ending with a geometric band.

The leather scabbard has three chased gold mounts with the top two having carrying rings. The top mount has a fouled anchor, flag, trident and pike within a laurel wreath. The middle mount has Neptune with a trident on a horse drawn sleigh. These mount motifs are identical to those on the scabbard mounts of the Geisinger and Smoot swords shown below. The bottom mount has a series of oak leaf and scroll motifs.

Following the War of 1812, Mayo continued on *Hornet* and cruised to the West Indies and Europe. He then served as first lieutenant under Charles Stewart on *Ohio*. In 1824, he was ordered to *North Carolina* but was chosen for a special mission on *Brandywine*. He later rejoined *North Carolina* and remained with her in the Mediterranean until 1827. In 1830, he was given command of *Grampus* and cruised to the West Indies. He was promoted to master commandant on 20 December 1832. He fought on gunboats



4.47 (right) Line Drawing of Mayo Sword Design.  
(S. Handelsman Collection)



52224-1

Coordinates: 44.6804°N 73.3756°W

# Battle of Plattsburgh

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **Battle of Plattsburgh**, also known as the **Battle of Lake Champlain**, ended the final invasion of the northern states of the United States during the War of 1812. A British army under Lieutenant General Sir George Prévost and a naval squadron under Captain George Downie converged on the lakeside town of Plattsburgh, which was defended by New York and Vermont militia and detachments of regular troops of the United States Army, all under the command of Brigadier General Alexander Macomb, and ships commanded by Master Commandant Thomas Macdonough. Downie's squadron attacked shortly after dawn on 11 September 1814, but was defeated after a hard fight in which Downie was killed. Prévost then abandoned the attack by land against Macomb's defences and retreated to Canada, stating that even if Plattsburgh was captured, any British troops there could not be supplied without control of the lake.

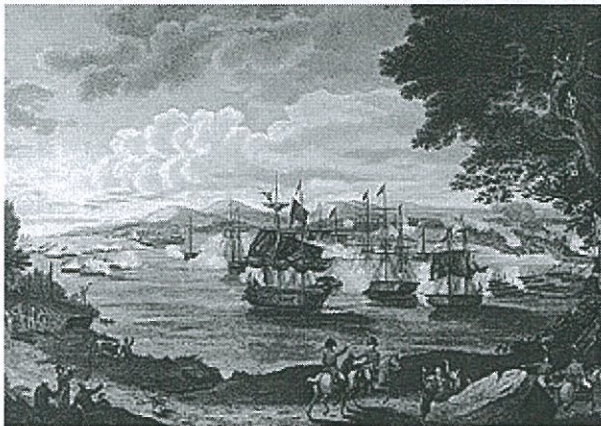
When the battle took place, American and British delegates were meeting at Ghent in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, attempting to negotiate a treaty acceptable to both sides to end the war. The American victory at Plattsburgh, and the successful defense at the Battle of Baltimore which began the next day and halted British advances in the Mid-Atlantic states, denied the British negotiators leverage to demand any territorial claims against the United States on the basis of *Uti possidetis*, i.e. retaining territory they held at the end of hostilities.<sup>[6]</sup> The Treaty of Ghent, in which captured or occupied territories were restored on the basis of *Status quo ante bellum*, was signed three months after the battle.

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  - 1.1 British plans
  - 1.2 American defenses
  - 1.3 Naval background
- 2 Invasion

## Battle of Plattsburgh




Part of the War of 1812



Naval battle on Lake Champlain. Engraving in 1816 by B. Tanner

<b>Date</b>	6–11 September 1814
<b>Location</b>	Plattsburgh, New York
<b>Result</b>	American victory; <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ British invasions of the northern United States ended</li></ul>

### Belligerents

 United States	 United Kingdom
	 Lower Canada

### Commanders and leaders

Thomas Macdonough	George Prevost
Alexander Macomb	George Downie †

### Strength

1,500 regulars	≤14,000 <sup>[2]</sup>
1,900 militia	
1 corvette	1 frigate
1 brig	1 brig
1 schooner	2 sloops
1 sloop	12 gunboats <sup>[1]</sup>
10 gunboats <sup>[1]</sup>	

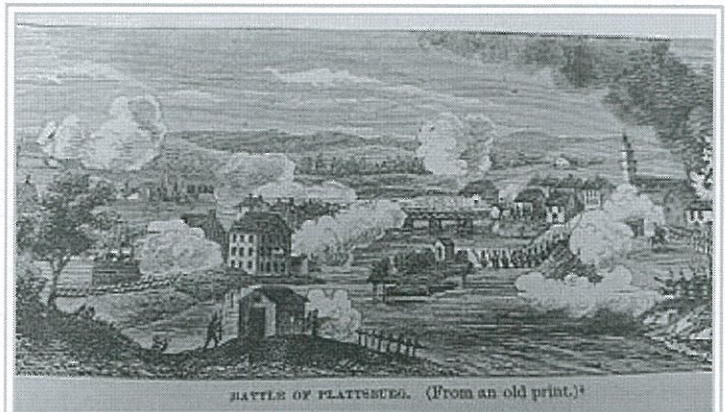
### Casualties and losses



- 3 Naval battle
  - 3.1 Prelude
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- 7 Memorials
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104 killed  
116 wounded<sup>[3]</sup>

168 killed  
220 wounded<sup>[3]</sup>  
317 captured  
1 frigate captured  
1 brig captured  
2 sloops captured<sup>[4]</sup>



Battle of Plattsburgh<sup>[5]</sup>:873

## Background

### British plans

In 1814, most of Britain's army was engaged in the Peninsular War. Then in April, Napoleon I abdicated the throne of France. This provided Britain the opportunity to send 16,000 veteran troops from the Peninsula and other garrisons to North America. Several experienced Major-Generals were also detached from the Duke of Wellington's army to command them. The Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, the Earl of Bathurst, sent instructions to Lieutenant-General Sir George Prevost, the Commander-in-Chief in Canada and Governor General of the Canadas, authorizing him to launch offensives into American territory, but cautioning him against advancing too far and thereby risking being cut off.<sup>[7]</sup>

Bathurst suggested that Prevost should give first priority to attacking Sackett's Harbor on Lake Ontario, where the American fleet on the lake was based, and seize control of Lake Champlain as a secondary objective. Prevost lacked the means to transport the troops necessary for an attack on Sackett's Harbor and the supplies for them up the Saint Lawrence River. Furthermore, the American ships controlled Lake Ontario, making an attack impossible until the British launched the first-rate ship of the line HMS *St. Lawrence* on 15 October, too late in the year for major operations to be undertaken.<sup>[8]</sup>

Prevost therefore prepared to launch his major offensive to Lake Champlain, up the Richelieu River. (Since the Richelieu was the only waterway connecting Lake Champlain to the ocean, trade on the lake naturally went through Canada.) Prevost's choice of route on reaching the lake was influenced by the attitude of the American state of Vermont, on the eastern side of the lake. The state had shown itself to be less than wholeheartedly behind the war and its inhabitants readily traded with the British, supplying them with all the cattle consumed by the British army, and even military stores such as masts and spars for the British warships on Lake Champlain. To spare Vermont from becoming a seat of war, Prevost therefore determined to advance down the western, New York State, side of the lake.<sup>[8]</sup> The main American position on this side was at Plattsburgh.

Prevost organized the troops which were to carry out the invasion into a division commanded by Major



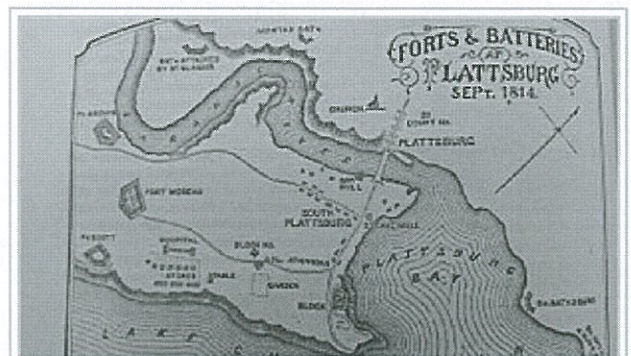
General Sir Francis de Rottenburg, the Lieutenant Governor of Lower Canada. The division consisted of the 1st Brigade of veterans of the Peninsular War under Major General Frederick Philipse Robinson (the 3/27th, 39th, 76th and 88th Regiments of Foot); the 2nd Brigade of troops already serving in Canada under Major General Thomas Brisbane (the 2/8th, 13th, and 49th Regiments of Foot, the Regiment de Meuron, the Canadian Voltigeurs, and the Canadian Chasseurs); and the 3rd Brigade of troops from the Peninsula and various garrisons under Major General Manley Power (the 3rd, 5th, 1/27th, and 58th Regiments of Foot). Each brigade was supported by a battery of five 6-pounder guns and one 5.5-inch howitzer of the Royal Artillery. A squadron of the 19th Light Dragoons was attached to the force.<sup>[8]</sup> There was also a small "siege train" of artillery, consisting of two 24-pounder brass field guns, an 8-inch brass howitzer, and three 24-pounder naval carronades mounted on field carriages, and a Congreve rocket detachment.<sup>[9]</sup> The force numbered 11,000 in total. However, some units were detached and some sick men did not take part, so the actual number of troops present at Plattsburgh was just over 8,000.<sup>[10]</sup>

There was some tension within the force between the brigade and regimental commanders who were veterans of the Peninsular War or of earlier fighting in Upper Canada, and Prévost and his staff. Prévost had not endeared himself by complaining about the standards of dress of the troops from the Peninsular Army, where the Duke of Wellington had emphasized musketry and efficiency above turnout. Furthermore, neither Prévost, nor de Rottenburg, nor Prévost's Adjutant General (Major General Edward Baynes) had the extensive experience of battle gained by their brigade commanders, and had already gained a reputation for caution and hesitancy.<sup>[11]</sup> Prévost's Quartermaster General, Major General Thomas Sydney Beckwith, was a veteran of the early part of the Peninsular campaign and of operations in Chesapeake Bay in 1813, but even he was to be criticized, mainly for failures in intelligence.<sup>[11]</sup>

## American defenses

On the American side of the frontier, Major General George Izard was the commander of the Northern Army, deployed along the Northeast frontier. In late August, Secretary of War John Armstrong ordered Izard to take the majority of his force, about 4,000 troops, to reinforce Sackett's Harbor. Izard's force departed on 23 August, leaving Brigadier General Alexander Macomb in command at Plattsburgh with only 1,500 American regulars. Most of these troops were recruits, invalids or detachments of odds and ends.<sup>[12]</sup> Macomb ordered General Benjamin Mooers to call out the New York militia and appealed to the governor of Vermont for militia volunteers. Up to 2,000 militia eventually reported to Plattsburgh.<sup>[13]</sup> However, the militia units were mostly untrained, and hundreds of them were unfit for duty. Macomb put the militiamen to use digging trenches and building fortifications.

Macomb's main position was a ridge on the south bank of the Saranac River. Its fortifications had been laid out by Major Joseph Gilbert Totten, Izard's senior Engineer officer, and consisted of three redoubts and two blockhouses, linked by other fieldworks. The position was reckoned to be well enough supplied and fortified to withstand a siege for three weeks, even if the American ships on the lake were defeated and Plattsburgh was cut off.<sup>[12]</sup> After Izard's division departed, Macomb continued to improve his defences. He even created an invalid battery on Crab Island, where his hospital was sited, that was to be manned by sick



Plattsburgh fortifications<sup>[5]</sup>



or wounded soldiers who were at least fit to fire the cannon. The townspeople of Plattsburgh had so little faith in Macomb's efforts to repulse the invasion that by September nearly all 3,000 inhabitants had fled the city. Plattsburgh was left occupied only by the American army.

## Naval background

The British had gained naval superiority on Lake Champlain on 1 June 1813, when two American sloops pursued British gunboats into the Richelieu River, and were forced to surrender when the wind dropped and they were trapped by British artillery on the banks of the river. They were taken into the British naval establishment at Ile aux Noix, under Commander Daniel Pring. Their crews, and those of several gunboats, were temporarily reinforced by seamen drafted from ships of war lying at Quebec under Commander Thomas Everard who, being senior to Pring, took temporary command. They embarked 946 troops under Lieutenant Colonel John Murray of the 100th Regiment of Foot, and raided several settlements on both the New York and Vermont shores of Lake Champlain during the summer and autumn of 1813.<sup>[14]</sup> The losses they inflicted and the restriction they imposed on the movement of men and supplies to Plattsburgh contributed to the defeat of Major General Wade Hampton's advance against Montreal, which finally ended with the Battle of the Chateaugay.

Lieutenant Thomas Macdonough, commanding the American naval forces on the Lake, established a secure base at Otter Creek (Vermont), and constructed several gunboats. He had to compete with Commodore Isaac Chauncey, commanding on Lake Ontario, for seamen, shipwrights and supplies, and was not able to begin constructing larger fighting vessels until his second-in-command went to Washington to argue his case to the Secretary of the Navy, William Jones.<sup>[15]</sup> Naval architect Noah Brown was sent to Otter Creek to superintend construction. In April 1814, the Americans launched the corvette USS *Saratoga* of 26 guns and the schooner USS *Ticonderoga* of 14 guns (originally a part-completed steam vessel).<sup>[15]</sup> Together with the existing sloop-rigged USS *Preble* of 7 guns, they gave the Americans naval superiority, and this allowed them to establish and supply a substantial base at Plattsburgh.<sup>[16]</sup> Only a few days before the Battle of Plattsburgh, the Americans also completed the 20-gun brig USS *Eagle*.

The loss of their former supremacy on Lake Champlain prompted the British to construct the 36-gun frigate HMS *Confiance* at Ile aux Noix. Captain George Downie was appointed to command soon after the frigate was launched on 25 August, replacing Captain Peter Fisher, who in turn had superseded Pring.<sup>[17]</sup> Like Macdonough, Downie had difficulty obtaining men and materials from the senior officer on Lake Ontario (Commodore James Lucas Yeo) and Macdonough had intercepted several spars which had been sold to Britain by unpatriotic Vermonters.<sup>[18]</sup> (By tradition, Midshipman Joel Abbot destroyed several of these in a daring commando-type raid.) Downie could promise to complete *Confiance* only on 15 September, and even then the frigate's crew would not have been exercised.

Prévost was anxious to begin his campaign as early as possible, to avoid the bad weather of late autumn and winter, and continually pressed Downie to prepare *Confiance* for battle more quickly.

## Invasion

On 31 August, Prévost began marching south.<sup>[19]</sup> Macomb sent forward 450 regulars under Captain Sproul and Major John E. Wool, 110 riflemen under Major Daniel Appling, 700 New York militia under Major General Benjamin Mooers and two 6-pounder guns under Captain Leonard to fight a delaying action. At Chazy, New York, they first made contact with the British. Slowly falling back, the Americans set up road



blocks, burned bridges and mislabelled streets to slow down the British. The British nevertheless advanced steadily, not even deploying out of column of march or returning fire, except by flank guards.<sup>[20]</sup> When Prévost reached Plattsburgh on 6 September, the American rearguards retired across the Saranac, tearing up the planks from the bridges. Prévost did not immediately attack. On 7 September, he ordered Major General Robinson to cross the Saranac, but to Robinson's annoyance, Prévost had no intelligence on the American defences or even the local geography.<sup>[11]</sup> Some tentative attacks across the bridges were repulsed by Wool's regulars.

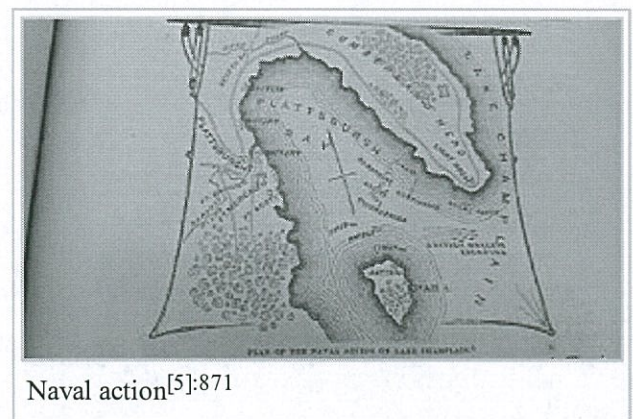
Prévost abandoned his efforts to cross the river for the time being and instead began constructing batteries. The Americans responded by using cannonballs heated red-hot to set fire to sixteen buildings in Plattsburgh which the British were using as cover, forcing the British to withdraw farther away. On 9 September, a night raid across the Saranac River by 50 Americans led by Captain George McGlassin destroyed a British Congreve rocket battery only 500 yards (460 m) from Fort Brown, one of the three main American fortifications.<sup>[21]</sup>

While skirmishing and exchanges of artillery fire continued, the British located a ford (Pike's Ford) across the Saranac 3 miles (4.8 km) above Macomb's defences. Prévost planned that, once Downie's ships arrived, they would attack the American ships in Plattsburgh Bay. Simultaneously, Major General Brisbane would make a feint attack across the bridges over the Saranac while Major General Robinson's brigade (less two of its battalions but reinforced by the light infantry companies of several other battalions) would cross the ford to make the main attack against the American left flank, supported by Major General Power's brigade. Once the American ships had been defeated, Brisbane would make his feint attack into a real one.

## Naval battle

### Prelude

Macdonough had sent some of his gunboats to harass Prévost's advance, but he knew that his fleet was outgunned, particularly in long guns.<sup>[21]</sup> He therefore withdrew into Plattsburgh Bay, where the British would be forced to engage at close range, at which the American and British squadrons would be roughly even in numbers and weight of short-range carronades.<sup>[22]</sup><sup>[nb 1]</sup> He used the time before Downie arrived to drill his sailors, and make preparations to fight at anchor. The ships were anchored in line from north to south in the order *Eagle*, *Saratoga*, *Ticonderoga* and *Preble*. They all had both bow and stern anchors, with "springs" attached to the anchor cables to allow the ships to be slewed through a wide arc. Macdonough also laid out extra kedge anchors from the quarters of his flagship *Saratoga*, which would allow him to spin the ship completely around.<sup>[23]</sup> The ten American gunboats were anchored in the intervals between the larger vessels.



Naval action<sup>[5]</sup>:871

Although the British sloops and gunboats under Commander Pring were already on the Lake and at anchor near Chazy, and had set up a battery on Isle La Motte, Vermont, it took two days to tow the frigate *Confiance* up the Sorel River from Ile aux Noix, against both wind and current. Downie finally joined the



squadron on 9 September. Carpenters and riggers were still at work on the frigate, and the incomplete crew was augmented by a company of the 39th Foot.<sup>[24]</sup> To Prévost's fury, Downie was unable to attack on 10 September because the wind was unfavourable. During the night the wind shifted to the north-east, making an attack feasible. The British squadron sailed in the early hours of 11 September, and announced their presence to Prévost's army by "scaling" the guns i.e. firing them without shot to clear scale or rust from the barrels.<sup>[25]</sup> Shortly after dawn, Downie reconnoitred the American dispositions from a rowing boat, before ordering the British squadron to attack. Addressing his crew, he told them that the British Army would storm Plattsburgh as soon as the ships engaged, "and mind don't let us be behind".<sup>[25]</sup>

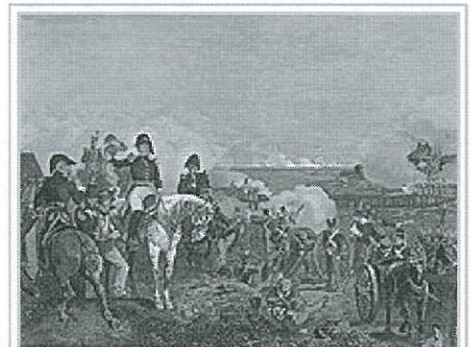
## Battle

At about 9 am, the British squadron rounded Cumberland Head close-hauled in line abreast, with the large ships to the north initially in the order *Chubb*, *Linnet*, *Confiance* and *Finch*, and the gunboats to the south. It was a fine autumn day, but the wind was light and variable, and Downie was unable to manoeuvre *Confiance* to the place he intended, across the head of Macdonough's line. As *Confiance* suffered increasing damage from the American ships, he was forced to drop anchor between 300<sup>[22]</sup> and 500<sup>[26]</sup> yards from Macdonough's flagship, the *Saratoga*. He then proceeded deliberately, securing everything before firing a broadside which killed or wounded one fifth of *Saratoga's* crew.<sup>[27]</sup> Macdonough was stunned but quickly recovered; and a few minutes later Downie was killed, crushed by a cannon flung from its carriage by a shot from *Saratoga*.

Elsewhere along the British line, the sloop *Chubb* was badly damaged and drifted into the American line, where her commander surrendered. The brig *Linnet*, commanded by Pring, reached the head of the American line and opened a raking fire against the *USS Eagle*. At the tail of the line, the sloop *Finch* failed to reach station and anchor, and although hardly hit at all, *Finch* drifted aground on Crab Island, and surrendered under fire from the 6-pounder gun of the battery manned by the invalids from Macomb's hospital.<sup>[22]</sup> Half the British gunboats were also hotly engaged at this end of the line. Their fire forced the weakest American vessel, the *Preble* to cut its anchors and drift out of the fight. The *Ticonderoga* was able to fight them off,<sup>[28]</sup> although it was engaged too heavily to support Macdonough's flagship. The rest of the British gunboats apparently held back from action, and their commander later deserted.<sup>[27]</sup>

After about an hour, the *USS Eagle* had the springs to one of her anchor cables shot away, and was unable to bear to reply to HMS *Linnet's* raking fire. *Eagle's* commander cut the remaining anchor cable and allowed the brig to drift down towards the tail of the line, before anchoring again astern of the *USS Saratoga* and engaging HMS *Confiance*, but allowing *Linnet* to rake *Saratoga*.<sup>[29]</sup> Both flagships had fought each other to a standstill. After Downie and several of the other officers had been killed or injured, *Confiance's* fire had become steadily less effective, but aboard *USS Saratoga*, almost all the starboard-side guns were dismounted or put out of action.<sup>[30]</sup>

Macdonough ordered the bow anchor cut, and hauled in the kedge anchors he had laid out earlier to spin *Saratoga* around. This allowed *Saratoga* to bring its undamaged port battery into action. *Confiance* was



Macomb watches the naval battle. Note that this painting is horizontally reversed; as shown it would mean that the American land forces were on the north side of the Saranac River, but were in fact on the south.



unable to return the fire. The frigate's surviving Lieutenant, James Robertson, tried to haul in on the springs to his only anchor to make a similar manoeuvre, but succeeded only in presenting the vulnerable stern to the American fire. Helpless, *Confiance* could only surrender. Macdonough hauled in further on his kedge anchors to bring his broadside to bear on HMS *Linnet*. Pring sent a boat to *Confiance*, to find that Downie was dead and the *Confiance* had struck its colours. The *Linnet* also could only surrender, after being battered almost into sinking.<sup>[31]</sup> The British gunboats withdrew, unmolested.

The surviving British officers boarded *Saratoga* to offer their swords (of surrender) to Macdonough. When he saw the officers, Macdonough replied, "Gentlemen, return your swords to your scabbards, you are worthy of them".<sup>[32]</sup> Commander Pring and the other surviving British officers later testified that Macdonough showed every consideration to the British wounded and prisoners.<sup>[33]</sup> Many of the British dead, not including the officers, were buried in an unmarked mass grave on nearby Crab Island, the site of the military hospital during the battle, where they remain today.<sup>[34][35]</sup>

## The False Nile

Both commanders would have seen the parallels of Macdonough's anchorage on Lake Champlain to that of the French under Vice Admiral Francois-Paul Brueys, opposing British Rear Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson, at the Battle of the Nile in Aboukir Bay on 1 August 1798. A study of Nelson's battles was part of the professional knowledge expected of naval commanders. But Macdonough did all that Brueys did not. He expected to take advantage of the prevailing winds on Lake Champlain that constrained Downie's axis of approach. "Because nearly every circumstance that worked to Nelson's advantage proved disadvantageous to Downie, the Battle of Lake Champlain is sometimes called the *False Nile* by the English."<sup>[36]</sup> The British naval historian William Laird Clowes regarded Macdonough's *False Nile* victory as "a most notable feat, one which, on the whole, surpassed that of any other captain of either navy in this war."<sup>[37]</sup>



## Land battle

Although Prévost's attack was supposed to coincide with the naval engagement, it was slow to get under way. Orders to move were not issued until 10 a.m, when the battle on the lake had been under way for over an hour. The American and British batteries settled down to a duel in which the Americans gained a slight advantage, while Brisbane's feint attack at the bridges was easily repulsed.<sup>[38]</sup>

When a messenger arrived and notified Prévost that Downie's ship had been defeated on the lake he realized that without the navy to supply and support his further advance, any military advantage gained by storming Plattsburgh would have been worthless. Prévost considered he therefore had no option but to retreat, and called off the assault. Bugle calls ordering the retreat sounded out along the British lines.

Robinson's brigade had been misdirected by some British staff officers and missed the ford which was their objective. Once they had retraced their steps, Robinson's brigade, led by eight companies of light infantry<sup>[25]</sup> soon drove the defenders back, and the British had crossed the ford and were preparing to



advance, when the orders arrived from Prévost to call off the attack.<sup>[39]</sup> The light company of the British 76th Regiment of Foot had been skirmishing in advance of the main body. When the bugle calls to retire were heard it was too late and they were surrounded and cut off by overwhelming numbers of American militia. Captain John Purchas, commanding the company, was killed in the act of waving a flag of truce (his white waistcoat). Three officers and 31 other ranks of the 76th were made prisoner. The 76th also suffered one dead and three wounded.<sup>[40]</sup>

Major General Brisbane protested the order to retreat<sup>[41][42]</sup> but complied. The British began their retreat to Canada after dark. Although the British soldiers were ordered to destroy ammunition and stores they could not easily remove, large quantities of these were left intact. There had been little or no desertion from the British army during the advance and the skirmishing along the Saranac, but during the retreat at least 234 soldiers deserted.<sup>[43]</sup> Very few of these desertions were from the Peninsular War veterans or the two Canadian units in Prévost's force; most were from the Regiment de Meuron, which was a mixed bag of several nationalities, the 2/8th Regiment, which was a second-rate unit decimated by sickness in the Walcheren Campaign, and the 1/27th Foot, which had been stationed in Malta and had seen action in the abortive Siege of Tarragona.<sup>[44]</sup>

The British casualties during the land engagement from 6–11 September were 37 killed, 150 wounded and 57 missing.<sup>[45]</sup> Macomb reported 37 killed, 62 wounded and 20 missing<sup>[45]</sup> but these losses were for the regular U.S. Army troops only.<sup>[46]</sup> Historian William James remarked that the "general return of loss among the militia and volunteers, no where appears".<sup>[47]</sup> General Macomb wrote to his father that the American loss "in the land battle" was 115 killed and 130 wounded,<sup>[48]</sup> a figure which suggests considerable casualties among the militia and volunteers.

## Results

Macdonough's victory had stopped the British offensive in its tracks. Also, Prévost had achieved what the U.S. government had been unable to do for the entire war up to that point: to bring the state of Vermont into the war.

The British had used their victories at the Battle of Bladensburg and the Burning of Washington to counter any American demands during the peace negotiations up to this point, despite the Americans' successful defense at the Battle of Baltimore in the days after this battle, and which ended British activities in the Mid-Atlantic region. American negotiators used the repulse at Plattsburgh to demand exclusive rights to Lake Champlain and denied Britain's claim of exclusive rights to the Great Lakes. Thus, American actions at Plattsburgh and Baltimore denied the British any advantage they could use to make demands for territorial gains in the Treaty of Ghent.

The failure at Plattsburgh, with other complaints about his conduct of active operations, resulted in Sir George Prévost being relieved of command in Canada. When he returned to Britain his version of events was accepted at first. As was customary after the loss of a ship or a defeat, Commander Pring and the surviving officers and men of the squadron faced a court martial, which



**Macomb's Congressional Gold Medal**

(obverse),

Marshall Davies Lloyd Collection



was held aboard HMS *Gladiator* at Portsmouth, between 18 and 21 August 1815. The court commended Pring and honorably acquitted all of those charged. The dispatches of Sir James Yeo were published about the same time, and emphatically placed the blame for the defeat on Prévost for forcing the British squadron into action prematurely. Prévost in turn demanded a court martial to clear his name, but died in 1816 before it could be held.

Alexander Macomb was promoted to Major General and became commanding general of the United States Army in 1828. Thomas Macdonough was promoted to Captain (and given the honorary rank of Commodore for his command of multiple ships in the battle) and is remembered as the "Hero of Lake Champlain". To honor the American commanders, Congress struck four Congressional Gold Medals, a record number for the time. These were awarded to Captain Thomas Macdonough, Captain Robert Henley, and Lieutenant Stephen Cassin of the U.S. Navy, and to Alexander Macomb (20 October 1814 3 Stat. 245–247).<sup>[49]</sup> Macomb and his men were also formally given the thanks of Congress.<sup>[50]</sup>

Seven currently active regular battalions of the United States Army (4-1 FA, 1-2 Inf, 2-2 Inf, 1-5 Inf, 2-5 Inf, 1-6 Inf and 2-6 Inf) perpetuate the lineages of American units that were present at the battle (Brooks's Company, Corps of Artillery, and the 6th, 13th and 29th Infantry Regiments).



## Order of battle

Large vessels listed from north to south in order of sailing, or in which initially anchored



**Macomb's Congressional Medal**  
(reverse),  
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Navy	Name	Rig	Tonnage	Crew	Armament	Notes <sup>[51]</sup>
 United States Navy	<i>Eagle</i>	Brig	500 tons	150	8 × 18-pounder long guns 12 × 32-pounder carronades	Commanded by Robert Henley
do.	<i>Saratoga</i>	Corvette / Frigate	734 tons	212	8 × 24-pounder long guns 6 × 42-pounder carronades 12 × 32-pounder carronades	Flagship of Thomas Macdonough Classed as a frigate in some accounts
do.	<i>Ticonderoga</i>	Schooner	350 tons	112	4 × 18-pounder long guns 8 × 12-pounder long guns 5 × 32-pounder carronades	Commanded by Lieutenant Stephen Cassin
do.	<i>Preble</i>	Sloop	80 tons	30	7 × 9-pounder long guns	
do.	Six gunboats	Galley	70 tons	average 40	1 × 24-pounder long gun 1 × 18-pounder carronade	Named <i>Borer</i> , <i>Centipede</i> , <i>Nettle</i> , <i>Allen</i> , <i>Viper</i> and <i>Burrows</i>
do.	Four gunboats	Galley	40 tons	average 26	1 × 12-pounder long gun	Named <i>Wilmer</i> , <i>Ludlow</i> , <i>Aylwin</i> and <i>Ballard</i>
Total	14 warships		2,264 tons	882	779 lb shot from long guns 1,128 lb shot from carronades	
 Royal Navy	<i>Chubb</i>	Sloop	112 tons	50	1 × 6-pounder long gun 10 × 18-pounder carronades	captured
do.	<i>Linnet</i>	Brig	350 tons	125	16 × 18-pounder long guns	Commanded by Commander Daniel Pring; captured
do.	<i>Confiance</i>	Fifth-rate Frigate	1200 tons	325	1 × 24-pounder long gun (on pivot mount)	Flagship of Captain



					30 × 24-pounder long gun 6 × 32-pounder carronade	George Downie (killed); captured Fitted with a furnace for heating shot
do.	<i>Finch</i>	Sloop	110 tons	50	4 × 6-pounder long gun 7 × 18-pounder carronades	captured
do.	Three gunboats	Galley	70 tons	Average 41	1 × 24-pounder long gun 1 × 32-pounder carronade	
do.	One gunboat	Galley	70 tons	41	1 × 18-pounder long gun 1 × 32-pounder carronade	
do.	One gunboat	Galley	70 tons	41	1 × 18-pounder long gun 1 × 18-pounder carronade	
do.	Three gunboats	Galley	40 tons	Average 26	1 × 18-pounder long gun	
do.	Four gunboats	Galley	40 tons	Average 26	1 × 32-pounder carronade	
Total	16 warships		2,402 tons	937	1,224 lb shot from long guns 922 lb shot from carronades	

Memorials

Three US naval ships have been named for this battle:

- 1. USS *Lake Champlain* (1917), a cargo ship during WWII. Later sold
- 2. USS *Lake Champlain* (CV-39)
- 3. USS *Lake Champlain* (CG-57)

See also

- Ile aux Noix
- War of 1812 Museum (Plattsburgh)
- List of conflicts in the United States

Footnotes

- 1. Some of the American guns were "columbiads", with a barrel length and range midway between those of a long



gun and those of a carronade. Roosevelt, who provided the most detailed order of battle of both squadrons, did not list the columbiads as a separate weapon type, nor did he state whether they were included in the lists for long guns or for carronades.<sup>[15]</sup>

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49. Picture of Alexander Macomb medal.  
(<https://www.flickr.com/photos/8839607%40N02/2573801199>) See also "Liquid pixels" photographs of bronze medal. ([http://coins.ha.com/common/view\\_item.php?Sale\\_No=1100&LotIdNo=60006](http://coins.ha.com/common/view_item.php?Sale_No=1100&LotIdNo=60006)) See also List of Congressional Gold Medal recipients. See also Loubat, J. F. and Jacquemart, Jules, Illustrator, *The Medallic History of the United States of America 1776–1876*. N. Flayderman & Co. (<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/21880>)
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