

## Commodores on the Lakes

by Gary M. Gibson

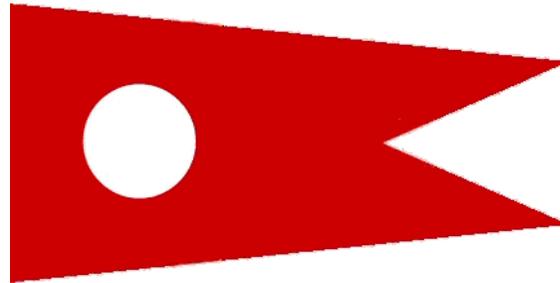
During the War of 1812 naval command on the Great Lakes was in the hands of two commodores, Sir James Lucas Yeo and Isaac Chauncey. Both men found themselves in similar situations but with significant differences due to the nature of their post, their reporting structure, and the meaning of the title of commodore.

In both the Royal Navy and the United States Navy a commodore was a post and not a permanent rank.<sup>1</sup> In both navies a commodore existed to fulfill the need for a temporary position higher than captain but below that of rear admiral.

### Commodores in the Royal Navy

In 1812 to be promoted to rear admiral in the Royal Navy you had to reach the top of the captain's list. To allow a meritorious junior captain to exercise squadron command he could be ordered to assume the title of commodore and to fly a "broad pendant" on the main mast of his ship.<sup>2</sup> While his pendant was flying he could command any captain not flying a broad pendant sometimes even if that captain was above him on the seniority list.<sup>3</sup>

The Royal Navy had two classes of commodore. A commodore of the second class commanded his own ship as well as his squadron. A first class commodore had a "captain under him" to command his ship. First class commodores were paid as rear admirals and could wear a rear admiral's uniform complete with an eight-point silver star on each epaulet.<sup>4</sup> A first class commodore could also appoint a "pendant lieutenant" with duties similar to those of an admiral's flag lieutenant.<sup>5</sup> Finally, a commodore received a daily allowance called "table money" to cover the official expenses of his position.



Royal Navy on Lake Ontario 1813 – A 2nd class commodore's broad pendant. A 1st class pendant was the same without the white ball.

When a Royal Navy commodore of either class was relieved and hauled down his broad pendant he was once again considered just a captain. He again wore a captain's uniform, resumed his place in the seniority list, and was thereafter addressed as captain by the Admiralty.

In the Royal Navy, once a captain received a commodore's appointment and performed creditably in that post, appointments as commodore often continued until his seniority entitled him to promotion to rear admiral. This continuation, however, was not an entitlement regardless of how well the captain performed as a commodore.

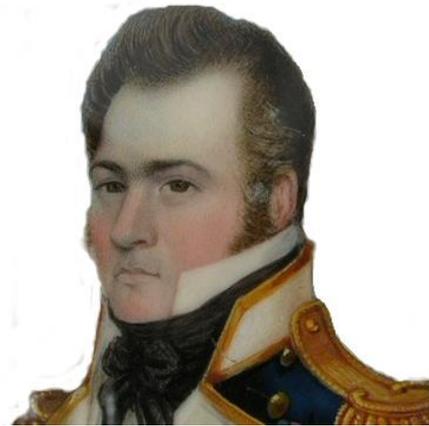
### Sir James Lucas Yeo

Captain Sir James Lucas Yeo was appointed a commodore second class in March 1813 at age 30.<sup>6</sup> A year later he was promoted to commodore first class and commander-in-chief. He was then required to pay the Admiralty the flag-officer's commissioning fee of five pounds, seven shillings and sixpence.<sup>7</sup>



When Commodore Yeo arrived at Kingston, Upper Canada, in mid-May 1813 he found himself in an unusual situation.<sup>8</sup> Yeo was subject to orders from the Admiralty as well as the orders of Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren, the naval commander-in-chief in North America.<sup>9</sup> In addition, and unique in Yeo's experience, he was also subordinate to Lieutenant General Sir George Prevost, the Governor General of Canada, as required by his orders from the Admiralty:

*We do hereby require and direct you ... to cooperate most cordially with [Prevost], not undertaking any operations without the full concurrence and approbation of him or of the Commander of the Forces employed under him; and in all occasions conforming yourself and employing the force under your command according to the requisitions which you may from time to time receive to this effect, from the said Governor or Commander of the Forces.*<sup>10</sup>



Commodore Sir James Lucas Yeo

Prevost himself was informed by Lord Bathurst, the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, that

*In order to remove any doubt which might otherwise exist respecting the nature and limits of the command to be exercised by the naval officers on the lakes, it is my ... confident expectation that as he is to be placed, by these instructions, as much under your command as is consistent with the rules of the Department under which he is more immediately acting, so you will find him always ready effectually to forward any objects which you may have in view for the defence of the Provinces under your charge.*<sup>11</sup>

These orders made Commodore Yeo subordinate to both the Admiralty, represented in North America by Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren at Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Sir George Prevost in Canada. Clearly Yeo was required to obtain Prevost's approval for any action he wanted to take, before he took it, but what about the other way around? Could Prevost issue Yeo an order and require that it be obeyed even if Yeo disagreed with it?

The Admiralty's instructions speak only of Prevost's "requisitions" and not orders, but from Yeo's perspective there was no difference. In addition, Prevost was informed by Bathurst that he could expect that Yeo was under Prevost's command as far as the Admiralty's rules allowed but that he would always be ready to forward any "objects" that Prevost desired. This combination made it clear to both men that Commodore Yeo was operationally subordinate to both Prevost and Admiral Warren. Given the communications delay between Kingston and Halifax, whatever the legal niceties of the situation, Yeo was under Prevost's command and required to follow his orders..

While Yeo and Prevost both agreed that the Royal Navy's goal was to defend "His Majesty's Provinces of North America,"<sup>12</sup> they did not always agree on how to achieve that goal. Yeo had been on Lake Ontario less than two weeks when he and Prevost had their first major disagreement. On May 28, 1813 Commodore Yeo objected to Prevost's order delaying the attack on the Americans at Sackets Harbor. Although the navy was solely responsible for transporting, landing and recovering the troops, as expected Prevost prevailed and the attack was postponed until the next day, much to Yeo's annoyance.<sup>13</sup>

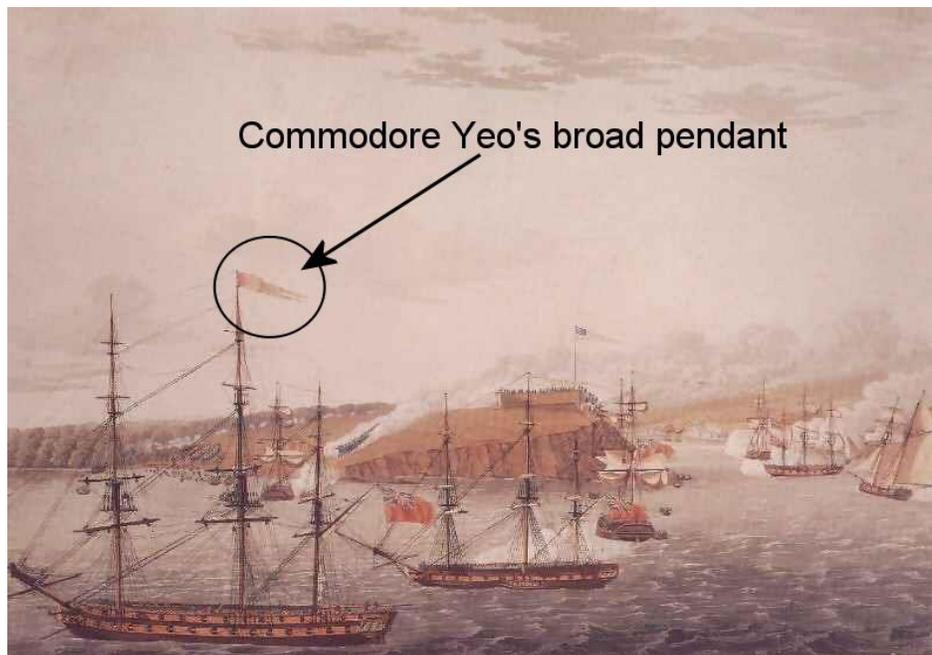
Although awkward, in 1813 Yeo's reporting structure was workable. This changed, however, in January 1814 when the Admiralty promoted Yeo to commodore first class and commander-in-chief of all Royal Navy forces on the Canadian lakes.

*Their lordships have been pleased to sign a commission appointing you Commander in Chief of all His Majesty's ships & vessels on the lakes, intending that you shall have a captain under you.*<sup>14</sup>

In the Royal Navy, a commander-in-chief reported to and took his orders directly from the Admiralty. By rule and convention, he was no longer subordinate to Prevost, Admiral Warren, or any other person outside of the Admiralty in London. Warren was not a problem, but Yeo's promotion to commander-in-chief was something Prevost was not expecting and he did not react well to the news. As Yeo wrote in a letter to Commissary General William Robinson,

*His Excellency has the power of acting graciously or otherwise & I lament he has taken the wrong side.*<sup>15</sup>

Despite his promotion Yeo recognized that the successful defense of Canada required him to cooperate with Prevost, especially as the Royal Navy on the lakes was completely dependent on the army's quartermaster department for supplies.<sup>16</sup> On salt water the Royal Navy supplied its own naval stations and navy yards but the presence of the rapids in the St. Lawrence River made this impossible at Kingston. Although there were occasional plans discussed to change this, the army continued to supply the logistical needs of the Royal Navy on the lakes throughout the war.<sup>17</sup> Fortunately for Yeo, during 1814 he received fewer direct orders from Prevost. Instead he worked closely with Lieutenant General Gordon Drummond, the army commander in Upper Canada.<sup>18</sup>



British attack on Oswego, May 1814 with Yeo's pendant flying on HMS Prince Regent

In addition Yeo occasionally found himself hampered operationally by Prevost's desire to use the Royal Navy as an army transport service or to provide escorts for army troop and supply convoys.<sup>19</sup> This climaxed in October and November 1814 when Prevost asked Yeo to use his squadron, including the brand-new 102-gun first rate ship-of-the-line *St. Lawrence*, as stores transports to reprovision the British army on the Niagara peninsula. Instead of challenging the Americans on the lake, Yeo reluctantly made two voyages from Kingston to Niagara carrying thousands of pounds of beef, pork, bread, flour, sugar, coffee and other provisions plus troops from the 90th and 37th Regiments. When he finally returned to Kingston in mid-November it was time to suspend operations for the winter.<sup>20</sup>

The command issue reached a climax in September 1814 when Prevost ordered an unwilling Captain George Downie to take the incomplete frigate HMS *Confiance* onto Lake Champlain and engage the American fleet. The result was a British disaster and the death of Downie. Yeo, believing Prevost exceeded his authority, demanded his arrest and court martial. In early 1815 both Yeo and Prevost were ordered back to London but Prevost died before his court could be convened.<sup>21</sup>

### Commodores in the United States Navy

In 1812 the United States Navy had no rank higher than captain. This led to the creation of the post of commodore for the same reasons as in the Royal Navy but with significant differences in application.

Like the Royal Navy, the title of commodore was reserved by the Navy Department for those officers commanding squadrons who held the rank of captain. Unlike the Royal Navy, the United States Navy allowed a commissioned officer of any rank who was senior officer on board in a squadron of warships to hoist a broad pendant.<sup>22</sup> However, common usage by the newspapers and the public in general called anyone commanding a squadron of warships a commodore regardless of their rank. Therefore Master Commandants Oliver Hazard Perry on Lake Erie in 1813 and Thomas MacDonough on Lake Champlain in 1814 were called commodore by the newspapers and even by members of Congress.



US Navy 1812 – Senior officer's broad pendant.

A captain appointed to squadron command could wear a silver star on the epaulets of his captain's uniform.<sup>23</sup> There was only one class of commodore in the U. S. Navy. A commodore was free to command his own flagship or to appoint a suitable officer to do so, the choice was his.<sup>24</sup>

Once a captain had been appointed to squadron command he was called commodore and could wear the silver star on his epaulets for the remainder of his naval career. He was often addressed as commodore in official Navy Department correspondence (although not in official lists of officers submitted to Congress) even if he held a shore command, a single ship command, or no command at all.<sup>25</sup>

In the case of Perry and MacDonough, however, their unofficial title of commodore did stick, though they were both master commandants when appointed. Both men received an immediate promotion to captain following their victories on lakes Erie and Champlain and were addressed as commodore for the rest of their life.<sup>26</sup>

Unlike the Royal Navy, in the U.S. Navy a commodore received no additional base pay. Congress had never authorized a salary greater than that received by a captain. The problem was solved to some extent by doubling the ration allowance for captains commanding squadrons of warships. Instead of the usual eight rations a day a captain acting as commodore received 16.

Even with this increase, a first class commodore in the Royal Navy was paid much more than a commodore in the U. S. Navy, as shown by the following table.

Commodore's Pay 1814 <sup>27</sup>	Royal Navy <sup>28</sup>	U. S. Navy <sup>29</sup>
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Commodore's Pay 1814 <sup>27</sup>	Royal Navy <sup>28</sup>	U. S. Navy <sup>29</sup>
Monthly Salary	\$260.00 <sup>30</sup>	\$125.00 <sup>31</sup>
Rations/Table Money	\$202.50 <sup>32</sup>	\$120.00 <sup>33</sup>
Total Monthly	\$462.50	\$245.00

This table does not include prize money. A commodore in both navies received a portion of the value of enemy property, including warships, taken or destroyed by forces under his command, even when he was not present. In the U. S. Navy, the commodore received 5% of the value awarded the captors.<sup>34</sup> In the Royal Navy the rules were more complex but a commodore acting as commander-in-chief could expect to receive at least 8% of the value of the prize(s).<sup>35</sup>

While the post of commodore in the Royal Navy was backed by over 100 years of tradition, this was not the case in the U. S. Navy. There, exactly what circumstances permitted an officer to fly a commodore's broad pendant and the limits on that commodore's authority often depended on precedent or even the whim of the current navy secretary as much as it did on the law. As commodore was not a rank there was no corresponding official seniority list which created issues of how the relative rank between two or more commodores were to be resolved.

This was addressed by Commodore John Rodgers in a letter to Navy Secretary Paul Hamilton in early June 1812. Rodgers believed it was vital to have a "due regard to the most minute distinctions of the relative rank of Officers" and recommended that when "two or more squadrons, under the command of different Officers meet" either only the most senior be allowed to fly a broad pendant, or that, as in the Royal Navy, the U. S. Navy establish three grades of broad pendant: blue, red and white (the latter with blue stars) to be flown in order of seniority.<sup>36</sup> This plan was actually implemented in 1817.<sup>37</sup>

The right to fly a broad pendant was jealously guarded by U.S. Navy officers. With no rank higher than captain, a squadron command appointment that carried with it the permanent title of commodore was eagerly sought after. Captains not ever having a squadron command could, and did, get extremely upset if they discovered a junior officer flying a broad pendant in their presence.

### Isaac Chauncey

One such case occurred in July 1812 when then-Lieutenant James T. Leonard sailed his gunboat squadron into New York harbor flying a broad pendant. One look was all it took for 40-year-old Captain Isaac Chauncey, then commandant of the New York Navy Yard and senior officer present, to complain to Secretary Hamilton that there appeared to be a "misconception."<sup>38</sup> He understood Leonard to be under his orders with no right to fly a broad pendant. As Chauncey explained, "I must confess that I should feel mortified to see a Lieutenant with a broad Pendant while I wave a narrow one." To Chauncey's satisfaction, Hamilton agreed with him and was "not a little surprized [sic] at the pretensions set up by Capt. Leonard."<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately this was not the last time these two men came into conflict. That fall Leonard was ordered to Sackets Harbor as Chauncey's second in



Commodore Isaac Chauncey

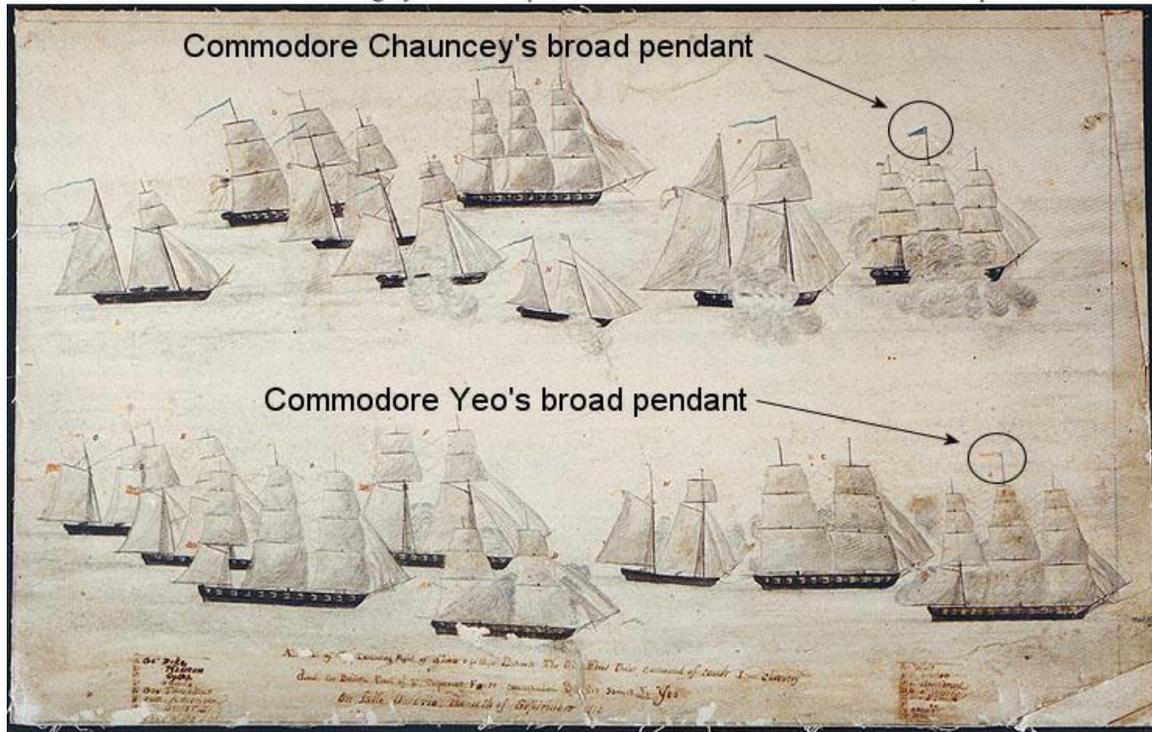
command and he was later court martialed on charges of disobedience of orders, neglect of duty and dissolute and immoral practices brought by Chauncey himself.<sup>40</sup>

Even after Chauncey was appointed commodore commanding the navy on the Great Lakes he remained sensitive to any attempt to dilute his authority.<sup>41</sup> When Chauncey rejoined his squadron at York, Upper Canada, after a brief trip to Niagara in early May 1813, he discovered Lieutenant Melancthon Taylor Woolsey, in the brig *Oneida*, flying a broad pendant as senior officer. Chauncey immediately dashed off a letter to Woolsey: “As I have not been officially informed of my being superseded in the command upon the Lakes, I wish to know by what authority you have assumed the command of the Squadron at this anchorage?”<sup>42</sup> The matter was settled to Chauncey’s satisfaction but it demonstrated how the unofficial nature of commodores and the rules for flying broad pendants caused problems.

Even the commodore himself was often unaware of the limits of his authority. In September 1814, becoming increasingly annoyed at having to frequently write to the Navy Department for permission to convene court martials, Commodore Chauncey asked the secretary of the navy “Would it not be a saving of much time to give me a General authority to bring to trial all offenders against the rules and regulations of the Service?”<sup>43</sup> Secretary William Jones replied that he would be happy to do so except that federal law prohibited a squadron commander from convening courts martial on his own authority while “acting within the territory of the United States.”<sup>44</sup> Despite serving for over two years as a commodore, Chauncey was apparently unaware of this restriction.

The U. S. Navy did resolve one wartime issue promptly – the rank of a commodore relative to officers in the army. In late September 1812, before he left New York City for Sackets Harbor and concerned about having to work closely with the army, Chauncey asked Secretary Hamilton to resolve “the relative rank of the officers of the two services.”<sup>45</sup> Two weeks later Chauncey was informed that “as Commodore your relative rank with Officers of the Army is that of a Brigadier General.”<sup>46</sup> Unfortunately it appears that this equality was not widely known in the army. Colonel Alexander Macomb, commanding the 3<sup>rd</sup> Artillery Regiment, established that equivalence after his arrival at Sackets Harbor in November 1812 but only because he thought “proper to shew [sic] them that respect which their high character entitle them to & to conform to the custom & usage of other Nations” and not because of any guidance from the War Department.<sup>47</sup>

Photo # NH 75734-KN Drawing by Peter W. Spicer of Naval Action on Lake Ontario, 11 September 1813



Chauncey's broad pendant flying on USS General Pike with Yeo's on HMS Wolfe, 11 September 1813

Fortunately, Chauncey did not have the same reporting issues that caused Yeo so much trouble. Chauncey always reported directly to and took his orders from the secretary of the navy and his relationship with those men was generally cordial, even friendly.<sup>48</sup> However, his relationship with the army, good in 1813, deteriorated badly in the summer of 1814 when the American army expected Chauncey's support at Niagara while Chauncey believed his priority was to stay close to Yeo's squadron at Kingston. This led to an acrimonious exchange of letters between Chauncey and Major General Jacob Brown that found their way into the newspapers.<sup>49</sup> The difficulty lay in that the only person able to give orders to both Chauncey and Brown to create a coordinated plan was President James Madison, and this he never did.

### Aftermath

When Commodore Yeo hauled down his broad pendant at Kingston on March 21, 1815,<sup>50</sup> his next appointment was as commodore commanding the West African anti-slavery patrol where he died at sea in 1818, aged 35.<sup>51</sup>

Commodore Chauncey relinquished his command on the lakes on 1 July 1815,<sup>52</sup> later serving as commodore of the Mediterranean Squadron, commandant of the New York Navy Yard, two terms on the Board of Navy Commissioners, and briefly as acting secretary of the navy. He died at Washington DC in 1840, aged 67.<sup>53</sup>

In the Royal Navy the two classes of commodore remained until 1958 when they were consolidated with the uniform being that previously worn by a commodore second class. Commodore remained a temporary rank in the Royal Navy until 1996 when it became a permanent rank between captain and rear admiral.

In the U. S. Navy, commodore remained a post for decades after the War of 1812. In 1822 Secretary of the Navy Smith Thompson issued a general order that no such title as commodore

will be recognized by the Navy Department until Congress creates that rank but the title continued in use.<sup>54</sup> In 1857 Congress replaced it with the actual rank of “flag officer.”<sup>55</sup> In 1862 the flag officer rank was abolished and replaced by commodore and rear admiral. The tremendous expansion of the U. S. Navy during the American Civil War made the creation of those ranks necessary.

The rank of commodore persisted in the U. S. Navy until 1899 when it was abolished, only to be revived during World War II then abandoned again shortly thereafter. Currently, a commodore in the Royal Navy is a rear admiral (lower half) in the U. S. Navy. There, the title of commodore is an honorific used to denote a captain acting as squadron senior officer, most often of destroyers, frigates or submarines, a usage not far from what it was in 1812.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1806 the Royal Navy officially established a commodore as a “temporary rank.” Before that time the legal status of a commodore was not well defined; Wilson, Timothy, Flags at Sea, Annapolis MD: Naval Institute Press, 1986, p.31.

<sup>2</sup> A broad pendant or pennant was similar to a narrow commissioning pendant used in the U. S. Navy with the same V-shaped tail but it was much wider. In the Royal Navy a commodore of the second class flew a blue, white or red pendant with a “large white ball near the staff.” A first class commodore’s pendant did not have the ball. In the United States Navy the pendant was blue with fifteen white stars. Wilson, Timothy, Flags at Sea. Annapolis MD: Naval Institute Press, 1986. pp.31, 54. Pendant image created by the author.

<sup>3</sup> In 1812 a commodore’s authority over a senior captain was not well defined. By World War I the Kings Regulations and Admiralty Instructions for the government of His Majesty’s naval service, 1913 Article 170, p.47 provided that “Commodores, when in the presence of Captains senior to them, shall rank and command according to their seniority as Captains.”

<sup>4</sup> Second class commodores were paid as a captain.

<sup>5</sup> In 1814 Lieutenant John Scott acted as Commodore James Lucas Yeo’s pendant lieutenant. Before that appointment Scott served as Yeo’s first lieutenant on board HMS Prince Regent; Homfray, Irving, L., Officers of the British Forces in Canada During the War of 1812-15. Welland ON: Welland Tribune Press, 1908, p.225.

<sup>6</sup> Yeo was born at Southampton, England, on 7 October 1782.

<sup>7</sup> When Yeo was promoted to commodore first class and commander-in-chief on 25 January 1814 his acknowledgement letter to the Admiralty expressed his thanks and noted that he had “directed my agent to pay the customary fee;” Commissioners of the Admiralty to Yeo, 19 March 1813, National Archives (Canada), RG8, C.729 pp.132-134 and Yeo to John Wilson Croker, 4 May 1814, National Archives (UK), ADM 1/2737. The schedule of commissioning fees was set by the Admiralty in 1800 and varied according to the rank. The last fee paid by Yeo, on his appointment as post captain, was £2 3s; Clowes, William Laird, The Royal Navy, 1899, repr. London: Chatham Publishing, 1997, v.4 p.188. There was no comparable fee in the U. S. Navy.

<sup>8</sup> Portrait edited by the author from an image of a miniature pin from [www.napoleon-series.org/Military/Warof1812/2010/Issue13](http://www.napoleon-series.org/Military/Warof1812/2010/Issue13)

<sup>9</sup> “You are further required and directed to pay particular attention and obedience to the Instructions herewith transmitted & to all other Instructions or Directions which you may hereafter receive from us or from Our Secretary”, Commissioners of the Admiralty to Yeo, 19 March 1813, National Archives (Canada), RG8, C.729 pp.132-134.

<sup>10</sup> Commissioners of the Admiralty to Yeo, 19 March 1813, National Archives (Canada), RG8, C.729 pp.132-134.

<sup>11</sup> Lord Bathurst to George Prevost, 12 March 1813, National Archives (Canada), RG8, C.678 pp.123-126.

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<sup>12</sup> Commissioners of the Admiralty to Yeo, 19 March 1813, National Archives (Canada), RG8, C.729 pp.132-134.

<sup>13</sup> Several participants commented on this discord at the time, including Midshipman David Wingfield. Wingfield, David, *Four Years on the Lakes of Canada*, National Archives (Canada), MG 24, F18.

<sup>14</sup> John Wilson Croker to James Lucas Yeo, 29 January 1814, National Archives (UK), ADM 1/4350 pp.24-28.

<sup>15</sup> Yeo to William H. Robinson, 12 June 1814, National Archives (Canada), RG8, C.1709 pp.74.75. This is a copy of Yeo's letter included in the papers of Prevost's military secretary, Noah Freer. How a copy of a private letter to the commissary general ended up with Freer is not known, but if Prevost saw the letter, as is likely, it is certain it did not improve his attitude towards Yeo.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, John Wilson Croker to Yeo, 19 March 1813, National Archives (Canada), RG8, C.729, pp.135-145. Provisions and stores were "to be furnished as heretofore by the Army Department under the orders of the Governor in Chief." Yeo's predecessor, Commander Robert Barclay, had to deal with this situation immediately after his arrival at Kingston, transmitting to Prevost "lists of Stores &c which are required to supply the immediate wants of the Squadron, and have to beg His Excellency will be pleased to cause them to be sent up with all convenient dispatch", Barclay to Noah Freer, 9 May 1813, National Archives (Canada), RG8, C.729 pp.183-192.

<sup>17</sup> This issue arose more frequently as the war progressed. See, for example, William H. Robinson to Noah Freer, 26 May 1814, National Archives (Canada), RG8, C.732 p.175 and the exchange of letters regarding the purchase of hay for the dockyard cattle that began with Richard O'Connor to Gordon Drummond, 10 September 1814, National Archives (Canada), RG8, C.733 p.77. For discussions between the Admiralty and the Victualing Office in London, see Commissioners of Victualing to John Wilson Croker, 29 January 1814, National Archives (Canada), RG8, C.732 pp.182-190.

<sup>18</sup> This was particularly apparent during the British raid on Oswego in May 1814. Yeo later commented to the Admiralty that he had "on this and all other occasions received from Lieutenant General Drummond that support and attention, which never fail in securing perfect coordination between the two services," something he never quite managed with Prevost. National Archives (UK), ADM 1/2737.

<sup>19</sup> For example, references to escorting army supply convoys on Lake Ontario in 1813 appear in Yeo to Prevost, 22 August 1813, National Archives (Canada), RG8, C.730 pp.96-99; Yeo to Prevost, 14 September 1813, *Ibid.*, C.730 pp.162-163; and Yeo to Prevost, 7 October 1813, *Ibid.*, C.731 pp.5-7.

<sup>20</sup> Master's Log of HMS St. Lawrence, entries from 5 to 31 October 1814, National Archives (UK), ADM 52/4599(5) also Yeo to John Wilson Croker, 24 October 1814, National Archives (UK), ADM 1/2737.

<sup>21</sup> Yeo's report to the Admiralty complained that "It appears very evident that Captain Downie was urged, and even goaded on, to his fate by His Excellency, who appears to have assumed the direction of the Naval Force." Yeo to John Wilson Croker #'s 30 and 31, 24 and 29 September 1814, National Archives (UK), ADM 1/2737. Issues regarding Yeo's charges against Prevost are discussed in Yeo to Croker, 5 September 1815, National Archives (UK), ADM 1/2738.

<sup>22</sup> Pendant image created by the author.

<sup>23</sup> Tily, James C., The Uniforms of the United States Navy, New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1964. p.64.

<sup>24</sup> That officer need not hold the rank of captain. During the war Chauncey often appointed a master commandant or even a lieutenant to act as captain of his flagship. Lieutenant Jesse Elliott was appointed by Chauncey to command USS Madison in April 1813; he was replaced by Master Commandant William M. Crane who was then ordered to command Chauncey's new flagship the USS General Pike three months later. Chauncey to Jesse D. Elliott, 17 April 1813 and to William M. Crane, 18 July 1813, Isaac Chauncey Letterbooks, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>25</sup> In Isaac Chauncey's case see Benjamin W. Crowninshield to Chauncey, 30 December 1815, National Archives (US), RG 45, Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy to Officers, volume 12 page 248 and

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Benjamin Homans to John Bullus, 30 September 1817, National Archives (US), RG 45, Letters sent by the Secretary of the Navy to Commandants and Navy Agents, Volume 3 p.84, M441 roll 2.

<sup>26</sup> Perry was promoted captain effective 10 September 1813, the date of his victory at the Battle of Lake Erie. Likewise, MacDonough was promoted captain effective 11 September 1814, the date of his victory at the Battle of Lake Champlain. Perry ranked just above MacDonough on the captain's list. United States, American State Papers, Class VI, Naval Affairs, Volume I, p.366.

<sup>27</sup> Based on one British pound sterling being worth \$4.50 in specie. There was no official currency conversion rate in 1812 so this tended to change by location and the type of dollars being considered. By 1814, the conversion factor for U.S. Treasury Notes was often \$5.00 per British pound or even more at frontier locations such as Sackets Harbor.

<sup>28</sup> Established by a resolution in parliament sponsored by First Lord of the Admiralty Charles Grey, Viscount Howick, 25 April 1806.

<sup>29</sup> Including a 25% increase in monthly pay and an increase in the value of a ration from 20 to 25 cents which the president could grant to "officers, petty officers, midshipmen, seamen and marines engaged in any service, the hardships or disadvantages of which shall, in his judgment, render such an addition necessary." Laws 13th Congress 2nd Session Chapter 84 enacted 18 April 1814.

<sup>30</sup> One pound, 18 shillings, six pence per day, calculated for a 30-day month for equivalence with the U. S. monthly pay.

<sup>31</sup> Paid per calendar month. United States, American State Papers, Class VI, Naval Affairs, Volume I, pp.182, 255.

<sup>32</sup> 30 shillings per day or 45 pounds per 30-day month. Yeo to John Wilson Croker, 2 June 1815, National Archives (UK), ADM 1/2738.

<sup>33</sup> Based on 16 rations per day, 25 cents per ration and a 30-day month. William Jones to William Bainbridge, 25 February 1814, National Archives (US), RG 45, Secretary of the Navy's Private Letter Book, pp.100-101 and Jones to Chauncey, 18 March 1814, Ibid, pp. 112-114.

<sup>34</sup> Of the \$255,000 awarded by Congress to the victors in the Battle of Lake Erie in September 1813, Commodore Isaac Chauncey received \$12,750 even though he was hundreds of miles away at the time and did not know a battle had been fought for several days afterwards. Master Commandant Oliver Hazard Perry, who was present and in command, was allocated only \$7,140. On Lake Champlain, Master Commandant Thomas MacDonough, acting as commodore, received \$22,807 as his share of the prizes taken in his victory in September 1814. As Chauncey's command did not extend to that lake, he did not share in the prize money awarded, thereby losing \$14,500 which he would have otherwise received. In addition to his share of the Battle of Lake Erie prize money, Chauncey received \$1,227.42 as his share of the prizes taken by his squadron on Lake Ontario; James Heard to Benjamin W. Crowninshield, 20 November 1815; United States, American State Papers, Class VI, Naval Affairs, Volume I, pp. 544, 572.

<sup>35</sup> Based on the prize regulations in effect beginning in 1808. See Lavery, Brian, Nelson's Navy: The Ships Men and Organization, Annapolis MD: Naval Institute Press, 1989, p.116.

<sup>36</sup> John Rodgers to Paul Hamilton, 6 June 1812, National Archives (US), RG 45, Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Captains, 1812 volume 2 item 4.

<sup>37</sup> Wilson, Timothy, Flags at Sea, Annapolis MD: Naval Institute Press, 1986. p.52.

<sup>38</sup> Chauncey was born at Black Rock, Fairfield County, Connecticut on 20 February 1772.

<sup>39</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Paul Hamilton, 14 July 1812, National Archives (US), RG 45, Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Captains, 1812 volume 2 item 125; Paul Hamilton to Isaac Chauncey, 20 July 1812, National Archives (US), RG 45, Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy to Commandants and Navy Agents.

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- <sup>40</sup> Isaac Chauncey to James T. Leonard, 13 April 1813, National Archives (US), RG 45, Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Captains, 1813 volume 2 item 176.
- <sup>41</sup> Chauncey was appointed at the end of August 1812 and he acknowledged receipt of those orders three days later; Charles W. Goldsborough to Isaac Chauncey, 31 August 1813, National Archives (US), RG 45, Letters From the Secretary of the Navy to Commandants and Navy Agents, microfilm T829 roll 175 pp. 325-327; Chauncey to Hamilton, 3 September 1812, National Archives (US), RG 45, Letters to the Secretary of the Navy From Captains, 1812 volume 3 item 14. Image of Chauncey from a mural on the wall of the Flower Memorial Library, Watertown NY, picture taken by the author.
- <sup>42</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Melancthon T. Woolsey, 4 May 1813, Isaac Chauncey Letterbooks, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.
- <sup>43</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones, 25 September 1814, National Archives (US), RG 45, Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Captains, 1814 Vol 6 Item 99, M125 Roll 39.
- <sup>44</sup> William Jones to Isaac Chauncey, 6 October 1814, National Archives (US), RG 45, Secretary of the Navy's Private Letter Book, p.187, T829 Roll 453.
- <sup>45</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Paul Hamilton, 24 September 1812, National Archives (US)G 45, Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Captains, 1812 Vol 3 Item 75, M125 Roll 25
- <sup>46</sup> Paul Hamilton to Isaac Chauncey, 5 October 1812, National Archives (US), RG 45, Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy to Commandants and Navy Agents, M441 Roll 1 Frame 192 also T829 Roll 175 Page 340.
- <sup>47</sup> Orderly Book 1812-1813, 3<sup>rd</sup> Artillery Regiment, entry for 24 November 1812, New York State Library, Albany NY. This equivalence was the same in British service.
- <sup>48</sup> The secretaries were Paul Hamilton (1812), William Jones (1813-1814) and Benjamin W. Crowninshield (1815).
- <sup>49</sup> Newspaper articles chastising Chauncey for his failure to support Brown began to appear in mid-August 1814. Even newspapers who usually supported the government were sharply critical of Chauncey. See, for instance, the Lexington Kentucky Kentucky Gazette for August 29, 1814 where an editorial stated "The incalculable injury our country has sustained by the failure of the fleet to co-operate with Gen. Brown, is now evident to every one. Why the fleet did not co-operate should instantly be explained to the nation, that public indignation and public vengeance, if they be due, should direct their operation to the proper quarter."
- <sup>50</sup> Yeo was replaced by Commodore Sir Edward Campbell Rich Owen who was senior to Yeo on the captain's list. Owen to Gordon Drummond, 21 March 1815, National Archives (Canada), RG8, C.734 pp.60-62.
- <sup>51</sup> Yeo died on August 21, 1818 of "general debility" on board the frigate HMS Semiramis, on the way from Jamaica to England. He never married.
- <sup>52</sup> Chauncey to Navy Commissioners, 1 July 1815, Isaac Chauncey Letterbooks, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.
- <sup>53</sup> Chauncey died at Washington DC on 27 January 1840 and is buried there in the Congressional Cemetery. His wife Catherine died 15 years later. He had four children.
- <sup>54</sup> Naval General Order,, 1 February 1821, National Archives (US), RG45, Miscellaneous Records of the Navy Department, T829 roll 459 p.185.
- <sup>55</sup> An Act to amend an act entitled "An Act to promote the efficiency of the Navy." 34th Congress, 3rd Session, Public Acts III, approved 16 January 1857, The Congressional Globe, pp.399-400, created the rank of "flag officer" for captains commanding squadrons.