

# The U.S. Brig *Oneida* A Design & Operational History

by Gary M. Gibson

*“A perfect slug, even going free, and could hardly  
be persuaded to beat to windward at all.”<sup>1</sup>*

*“A warm little brig, ... but as dull as a transport...  
and would not travel to windward.”<sup>2</sup>*



The U.S. Brig *Oneida* A Design & Operational History ..... 1

    Introduction ..... 2

    Origin ..... 2

    Design..... 4

    Development ..... 6

    Construction ..... 10

    Armament..... 13

    Out of Service..... 17

    Preparing for War ..... 28

    Mrs. McCormick’s Trunks..... 31

    Woolsey’s War ..... 33

    Press Wars - Oneida vs. Royal George ..... 38

    Fighting the Provincial Marine ..... 39

    The Oneida’s Impact on the War in 1812 ..... 45

    Operational History 1813 ..... 47

    Operational History 1814 ..... 59

    Post-War..... 63

    Acknowledgements ..... 66

    Reference Abbreviations ..... 67

    References ..... 68

## Introduction

The United States Navy brig *Oneida* saw more combat with the British than any other American warship during the War of 1812.<sup>3</sup> In 1808, following HMS *Leopard*'s attack on the frigate *Chesapeake* the previous year and the resulting laws prohibiting trade with the British, President Thomas Jefferson and Secretary of the Navy Richard Smith decided a small naval force was needed on lakes Ontario and Champlain. This led to the construction of an 18-gun brig, the *Oneida*, at Oswego, New York.

This was the start of a naval arms race on Lake Ontario between Great Britain and the United States that did not end until after the War of 1812. By 1815 both sides were building ships-of-the-line as large or larger than any on the Atlantic.

## Origin

In December 1807, reacting to the increased tensions between the United States and Great Britain and a fear that war may result, Congress authorized the president to

*Cause to be built, or purchased, armed and equipped, a number not exceeding one hundred and eighty-eight gun boats, for the better protection of the ports and harbors of the United States, and for such other purposes as in his opinion the public service may require.*<sup>4</sup>



*The Oneida as built, with 18, 24-pound carronades and no pivot gun, as it might have appeared sailing off Sackets Harbor in November 1812. Painting by Peter Rindlisbacher.*

This act was the result of a lengthy debate that the first session of the tenth Congress had been conducting since it convened in October.<sup>5</sup> Throughout the debate the need to expand the navy focused on the Atlantic and Gulf ports such as New York and New Orleans. The situation along the border with British Canada was referred to only twice, on 30 November, when Representative Gordon Mumford of New York told members of the House that the British in Canada had “the whole of their naval force on the

lakes prepared for war.” Later that same day, New York Representative Barent Gardenier, in response to a feeling that there was still hope war could be averted, asked

*Could gentlemen indulge in hope, when they heard that the British vessels on the Lakes had been armed? That the British forces in Canada were increased and concentrated? That the fortifications at Quebec were repairing?*<sup>6</sup>

On 18 November 1807 Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith presented Congress with a list of the number of gunboats needed at various ports, stating that a deficiency of 188 gunboats existed. None of the ports mentioned by the secretary were on the lakes.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, the act to authorize construction of these gunboats at a cost of up to \$852,500 passed both the Senate and the House of Representatives by wide margins.<sup>8</sup>

This act, however, failed to specify where these gunboats were to be built, where they were to be stationed afterwards, or even a definition of the term “gunboat.”

At the same time Congress was considering additional gunboats they were debating an embargo act, prohibiting commerce with foreign nations. Section 7 of the new act provided

*That the commanders of the public armed vessels and gunboats of the United States shall, as well as the commanders or masters of the revenue cutters, and revenue boats, be authorized, and they are hereby authorized, to stop and examine any vessel, flat or boat, belonging to any citizen of the United States, either on the high seas, or within the jurisdiction of the United states, or any foreign vessel within the jurisdiction of the United States, which there may be reason to suspect to be engaged in any traffic or commerce, or in the transportation of merchandise, of either domestic or foreign growth or manufacture, contrary to the provisions of this act.<sup>9</sup>*

This gave the United States Navy authority to enforce the embargo act everywhere, including on the lakes. In effect it required them to do so.

In the course of this debate, Representative William Kirkpatrick of New York, whose home was in Salina (present day Syracuse) read a petition from a citizens’ committee from Jefferson County, along the Canadian border, stating the dangers the petitioners would be exposed to in case of incursions by hostile Indians or troops from the British provinces of Canada, and asking that a military station be established “at some convenient place on the River St. Lawrence, and such other measures adopted for their protection and safety as, in the wisdom of Congress, the urgency of the case may require.”<sup>10</sup>

In addition, beginning in 1808 the customs collectors at ports on lakes Ontario and Champlain began complaining to Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin that the lack of revenue cutters or boats on those lakes was making it very difficult to prevent goods from being smuggled into or out of Canada in violation of the new embargo law. While some collectors, such as Augustus Sacket at Sackets Harbor, were authorized to purchase small boats which would suffice close to shore or on the St. Lawrence River, on the open lake something much larger was needed.<sup>11</sup>

By the spring of 1808 it was clear to President Jefferson and Navy Secretary Smith that some attention had to be given to the naval defense of the border with British Canada. If this was not done, war with Great Britain would leave the northern frontier too vulnerable to attack. The upper Great Lakes had one armed vessel, the army transport brig *Adams* built near Detroit in 1797, but lakes Ontario and Champlain had none.

Unfortunately, at this point the written record loses focus. Subsequent events make it clear that the Jefferson administration decided to use part of the money appropriated to build gunboats to provide for “public armed vessels” on lakes Ontario and Champlain. Lake Champlain, being long but very narrow, would be best served by building two small gunboats on that lake. Those gunboats, however, would have the same limitations on Lake Ontario as the small boats already authorized by the Treasury Department “on a lake as turbulent as the ocean.”<sup>12</sup> While Congress never specifically approved constructing a regular warship on Lake Ontario, President Jefferson and Secretary Smith concluded that the gunboat act was vague enough to allow it to be built and paid for.

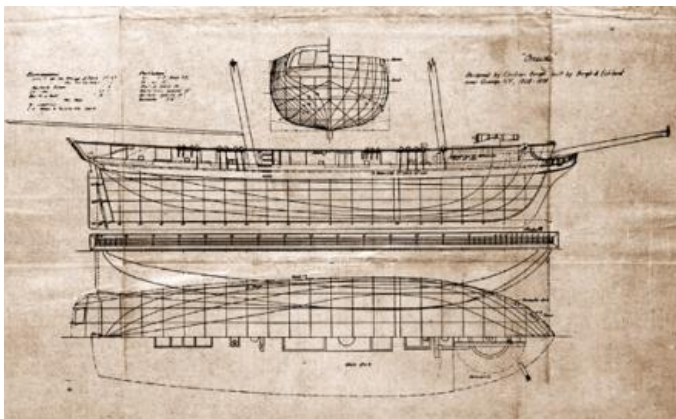
There is, however, nothing yet found in the written record that details how, or even exactly when, this decision was reached.

If Jefferson and Smith gave any thought to how the British in Canada would react to this shipbuilding plan, history has not recorded it. If Secretary of State James Madison's advice was solicited, that too is unrecorded. Lake Champlain was not an issue. Only a small part in the extreme north of that lake was British territory and, as the British had no intention of invading the United States, the presence of two small gunboats was not a concern. Even in the case of war, those gunboats by themselves posed no real threat to the British in Canada.

That, however, was most definitely not the case with building a real warship on Lake Ontario. There the British depended on lake transport to supply their western territories. A significant American naval presence on Lake Ontario was a real concern in Canada. The British rapidly became aware of the American plans, viewed it as provocative, and reacted by increasing the Provincial Marine's force on that lake.

## **Design**

With the decision made to build two gunboats on Lake Champlain and a warship on Lake Ontario, the nature of these vessels had to be determined. Lake Champlain was the easiest, gunboats number 169 and 170 would be similar to those on the Atlantic.



*The Oneida as designed, with 16, 24-pound carronades and a 32-pound pivot gun forward. Redrawn from the original plan by Howard Chapelle.*

On Lake Ontario it was decided to build a brig of about 220 tons and mounting between 16 and 20 guns. It is not known how the brig's detailed specifications were arrived at, whether Secretary Smith consulted with captains such as John Rodgers and Isaac Chauncey at New York or not. The final design, however, is known from the specifications on the subsequent contract and was done by shipwright Christian Bergh assisted by Henry Eckford.

The brig would be 85 feet six inches between perpendiculars, 77 feet six inches on the keel for tonnage, 22 feet six inches molded beam, 23 feet extreme beam, an eight foot depth of hold, draw about 16 feet of water and about 216 tons burthen.<sup>13</sup>

The brig would be built out of white oak, cedar, mulberry or locust except for her beams and topsides which would be made from yellow pine.<sup>14</sup>

The brig would be armed with 16, 24-pound broadside carronades and a 32-pound cannon on a pivot mount located on a forecastle platform. This would give a standard broadside of 224 pounds, approaching that of a British 32-gun frigate and a heavy weight of metal for a vessel of this size.<sup>15</sup>

Unlike a broadside gun, a pivot mounting allowed a cannon to be fired in (theoretically) any direction independent of the course the ship was steering. The potential advantage of such a mounting during a naval battle was considerable. However, in actual practice the presence of masts, rigging, bowsprit, boats and deck structures limited a pivot gun's firing arc.

The brig would be equipped with a set of sweeps and seven sweep ports on each side. Sweeps were long oars used to move a vessel slowly when there was no wind. A sweep port was a small rectangular hole in the vessel's bulwarks through which the sweep was managed.

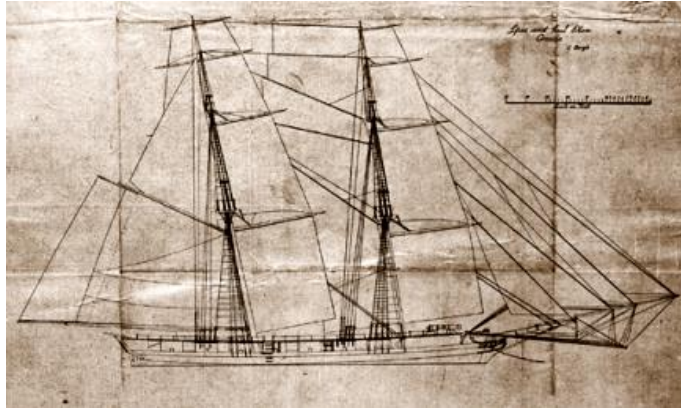
The brig would carry two boats, one of 30 feet (presumably a barge or longboat) and another of 20 feet (probably a cutter).

This was one less boat than was standard for a brig of this size on the Atlantic but the 30-footer was a size normally carried only by 32-gun frigates or larger.<sup>16</sup>

Five anchors would be carried: a 1,500 pound sheet anchor, two bower anchors of 1,300 and 800 pounds and two kedge anchors of 400 and 200 pounds. This five-anchor complement was similar to that of a same-size brig on the Atlantic, differing only in that it had one more light and one less heavy anchor, the lighter anchor being of more use in shallow water.<sup>17</sup>

The brig's 25 sails would be made from the "best quality" Russia Duck and consist of one foresail, one mainsail, one fore & aft mainsail, one jib, one flying jib, one fore topmast staysail, one fore topsail, one main topsail, one fore topgallant sail, one main topgallant sail, one fore royal, one main royal, one main staysail, one main topmast staysail, one middle staysail, one topgallant staysail, one gaff topsail, two lower studding sails, three topmast studding sails and three topgallant studding sails.<sup>18</sup>

The brig would be equipped with six large cables, one each of 13, 12, 11, nine, six and five inches in circumference. All cordage was to be made from the best quality American or Russian water rolled hemp.



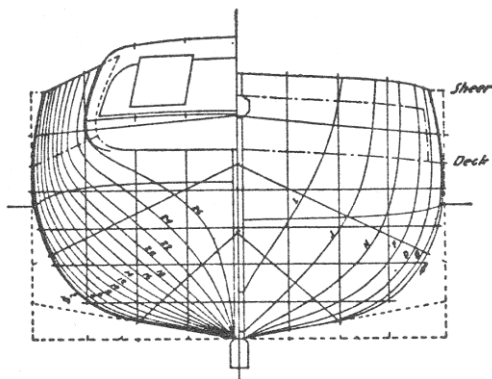
*The Oneida's sail and spar plan as designed, with 16 carronades and a pivot gun forward. The final sail plan was identical. Redrawn from the original by Howard Chapelle.*

The brig would be built at Oswego, New York. That location, though hardly ideal, would at least allow the necessary supplies to be transported by water, up the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers, across Oneida Lake and down the Oswego River to the village of Oswego on Lake Ontario. Transportation would be costly but building at any other location on the lake would be worse.

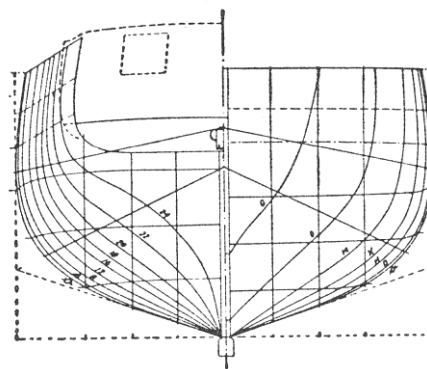
The brig's design was unremarkable and similar to that of brigs and sloops built for service on the Atlantic. There was apparently no special effort to model the hull for speed or to keep the draft as low as possible as would be the case later at Sackets Harbor during the War of 1812. It was, overall, a very conservative design. Its major flaw was that it required more water depth than was available at the entrance of most ports on Lake Ontario, something probably not realized when the design was finalized but quickly apparent once on the lake.

So far as is known, no one involved in the design and specifications for the new brig had ever visited Lake Ontario or had any familiarity with the ports or sailing conditions on that lake. At New York, shipwrights Christian Bergh and Henry Eckford designed what they were familiar with and what they knew worked, as did the British at Kingston, Upper Canada. No one wanted to take the risk of building a warship whose hull design was too unusual. Later, during the War of 1812, the Americans would take that risk on Lake Ontario, first with the *Sylph*, then with the *Jefferson* and *Jones*.

A comparison of the hull lines of the British *Royal George*, laid down at Kingston in



Hull lines of the *Oneida*, from Chappelle, *History of the American Sailing Navy*



Hull lines of the British *Royal George*, from Chappelle, *History of the American Sailing Navy*

1809 with the hull of what would become the *Oneida* (both shown above) makes things clear. Both hulls were designed to ocean and not lake standards.

## **Development**

In addition to designing the vessels on lakes Ontario and Champlain the navy had to select the shipwrights who would actually build them.

One excellent candidate for the job on Lake Ontario was 44 year old New York master shipwright Christian Bergh. There were, however, difficulties. Early in 1808 Navy Secretary Smith received a petition from a number of men at New York stating that Bergh was born in Canada, was not an American citizen and, being an alien, had refused



to take the oath of allegiance to the United States. Therefore, he was not a suitable candidate for employment by the government.

It took time, but Bergh managed to refute these accusations. He presented Secretary Smith with documents attesting that while his family had travelled to Nova Scotia when he was a child, he had been born in Dutchess County, New York and he had returned to the United States as soon as he was “of age.” Furthermore he was a foreman of shipwrights when the frigate *President* was built, had helped to repair the frigate *Constitution*, and most recently had built five gunboats for the navy at New York.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, Captain Isaac Chauncey, commandant at the New York Navy Yard, provided Smith with information that settled the matter. Chauncey completely dismissed the charges against Bergh, calling them “aspersions of foulmouthed calumny.” Chauncey believed that

*The whole of the persicution [sic] against Mr Bergh has arose from my reducing the carpenters wages and turning some worthless fellows out of the Yard which they have conceived was owing to the influence of M<sup>r</sup> B — but which is void of foundation.<sup>20</sup>*

Furthermore, Chauncey told Smith that

*The petition itself was wrote by a man that makes a trade of writing and would prostitute his pen in any cause that he could gain any thing by it. He would write me a petition tomorrow on any subject for five dollars.<sup>21</sup>*



*Henry Eckford from a painting at Flower Library, Watertown NY. Photograph by the author.*

Bergh’s difficulties were also political: he was a well-known Federalist applying for work in Thomas Jefferson’s Democratic-Republican administration. Chauncey knew this but he did not “employ him for his politicks but for his intrinsic value as a workman and as a man.”

Another candidate was 33 year old Henry Eckford. Eckford had been born in Scotland in 1775, studied shipbuilding at Quebec and relocated to New York in 1796. There he established himself as a master shipwright, known for designing ships that possessed both strength and speed. Like Bergh, he had built five gunboats for the navy in 1807.

Secretary Smith now turned to the task of selecting a naval officer to superintend the shipbuilding effort. This person he discovered by accident.

In late December 1807, Representative Jacob Crowninshield of Massachusetts, concerned that delays in communication between Washington DC and the various Atlantic ports would leave those ports too exposed to an attack by a foreign power, proposed that Congress resolve

*That it is expedient to authorize the President of the United States to establish such telegraphs, along the coasts and in other situations in the United States as he may deem proper.<sup>22</sup>*

President Jefferson passed this task to Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith. By early February 1808 Smith had imported 100 “of the best telescopes for telegraphic

communications.” For a reason not yet known he believed that Lieutenant Melancthon Taylor Woolsey was an expert on the subject of telegraphs and he ordered Woolsey to report to him at the Navy Department.<sup>23</sup>

Lieutenant Woolsey began his naval service as a midshipman in 1800, was promoted an acting lieutenant in 1804 and commissioned a lieutenant in 1807. After service in the Caribbean he served for several years in the Mediterranean on board the frigate *Essex* and later as second lieutenant of the frigate *Constitution* (“Old Ironsides”).<sup>24</sup>

Believing Woolsey to be in New York, Smith sent the letter to the New York navy yard expecting Commandant Isaac Chauncey to deliver it. Unfortunately Woolsey was not there; he had received a two-month furlough the previous December. Therefore Chauncey forwarded the letter to Woolsey’s home at Plattsburgh, New York.<sup>25</sup>

Smith’s letter did not reach Woolsey until mid-March. By the time he was on his way to Washington Secretary Smith had changed his mind. He sent Woolsey another letter, care of Captain John Rodgers at New York, ordering him not to report to Washington.<sup>26</sup>



*Melancthon Taylor Woolsey  
as a captain after April 1816*

Unfortunately Woolsey had already passed through New York, as Rodgers informed the secretary a few days later.<sup>27</sup> Woolsey’s unexpected arrival at the Navy Department, however, turned out to be a fortuitous event for Secretary Smith. Smith retained Woolsey in Washington for some time working on naval signals.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, when Smith needed an experienced lieutenant to supervise building the warships on lakes Ontario and Champlain, Woolsey was close at hand.<sup>29</sup> With Woolsey meeting the experience criterion, lacking a permanent assignment and being familiar with upstate New York, he was the perfect candidate.

At the beginning of July 1808, Secretary Smith ordered Captain John Rodgers, the ranking naval officer at New York, to prepare the materials necessary to build two small gunboats on Lake Champlain and one large one on Lake Ontario.<sup>30</sup> The reference to building a gunboat on Lake Ontario was probably to keep the documentation for the effort within the scope implied by the title of the act used to authorize its construction. This effort later caused some confusion as to exactly what was being built and for whom. Joseph Rosseel, a merchant and land agent at Ogdensburg, New York, reported to his employer, financier David Parish, that some men were “employed in the building of the revenue cutter at Oswego.”<sup>31</sup>

At the same time Smith ordered Lieutenant Woolsey to supervise the construction of the brig on Lake Ontario and the two gunboats on Lake Champlain. Under Woolsey’s orders were Lieutenant John M. Haswell and Midshipmen John Hall and William Walker who would supervise building the gunboats on Champlain, and Midshipmen Thomas Gamble and James Fenimore Cooper who would go with Woolsey to Lake Ontario. At the same time Secretary Smith informed Rodgers that these officers would be transferred to the lakes under Woolsey’s command.<sup>32</sup>



By mid-July Lieutenant Woolsey was at New York working with Rodgers to arrange contracts to build the brig and the two gunboats. The contract to build the two gunboats



Midshipman James Fenimore Cooper later in life.

on Lake Champlain was given to John Winans, perhaps the only applicant. Woolsey had known Winans “from my childhood and he has always been esteemed a good workman and honest man.” Woolsey hoped that Winans would also agree to build the brig on Lake Ontario as the financial terms proposed by Christian Bergh and Henry Eckford, who had combined their resources under Bergh’s lead, “far exceed my first calculations.”<sup>33</sup>

Woolsey also knew that a lot of workmen would be needed to build the vessels and they would have to come from New York as he informed Secretary Smith:

*It will be impossible to procure good workmen on the Lakes, as I have to inform that the carpenters who built the British twenty gun sloop on Lake Ontario were from this place.*<sup>34</sup>

As Winans was unwilling to take on simultaneous shipbuilding projects on two separate lakes, Woolsey had to deal with Bergh and Eckford. There is no indication that anyone else applied or was even considered for the job. On 24 July 1808 Woolsey informed Secretary Smith that Bergh and Eckford had agreed to build the brig on Lake Ontario for \$20,505 and 110 gallons of spirits, “the lowest possible terms that can be procured here.” The early nineteenth century was a hard-drinking era in American history. As most workmen expected alcohol to be provided, it was not unusual for a contract to include it. On 26 July a contract was signed on those terms, providing for payment to be made in three parts, each part amounting to \$6,835 and  $36\frac{2}{3}$  gallons of spirits.<sup>35</sup>

Woolsey forwarded the contract to the Navy Department for approval and everyone agreed to delay starting work until it was ratified by Secretary Smith. In the meantime Woolsey dispatched Lieutenant Haswell and Midshipman Walker along with two 12-pound cannon and 400 shot for the two gunboats to Lake Champlain. The very next day Woolsey received \$1,900 from New York Navy Agent John Bullus to pay for the start of construction of the “Gunboats to be built on Lakes Ontario and Champlain.”<sup>36</sup>

Since there was no navy agent responsible for either Lake Champlain or Lake Ontario, Woolsey would be acting as his own navy agent and receive the commissions due for all expenditures made on those lakes. By the time the brig and gunboats were finished those commission payments to Woolsey amounted to \$292.90 on expenditures of \$23,272.86.<sup>37</sup> This amount was more than seven months’ salary for a navy lieutenant. It also began a series of record keeping problems for Woolsey that would surface in the 1820s.<sup>38</sup>

On 30 July Secretary Smith approved the contract with Bergh and Eckford and that approval was in Woolsey’s hands on 3 August. Three days later Woolsey and Midshipman Thomas Gamble left New York for Albany. Eckford and his workmen would follow “some time next week.”<sup>39</sup>

Among the men in Eckford’s crew was 24 year old shipwright Henry Eagle. Eagle, a native of Prussia, had been employed by Henry Eckford at his ship yard at New York.<sup>40</sup> Eagle would go with Eckford to Oswego and later, during the War of 1812, join Eckford to supervise the building of additional warships at Sackets Harbor.

At this time travel was much faster by water than by land. Woolsey took six days to go by land carriage from New York to Albany, arriving on the evening of 12 August. Henry Eckford and his workmen left New York several days later but arrived at Albany by water the following morning.

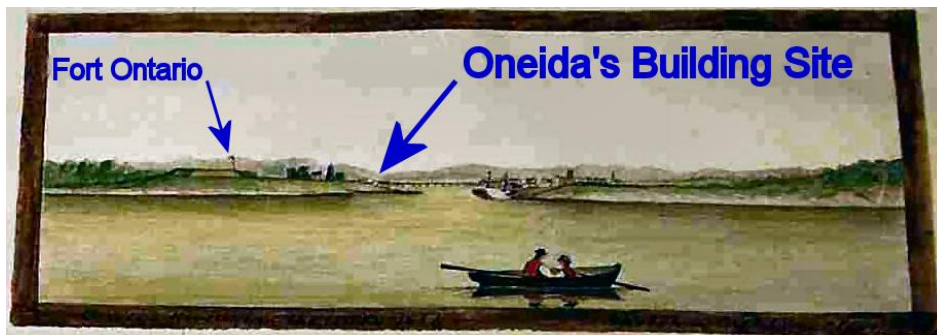
Woolsey knew from personal experience the “turbulent spirit” prevalent in northern New York and that a large number of the citizens “persist in impuning the Embargo laws.” He feared the arrival of the navy on Lake Ontario would result in some unpleasantness and he was counting on the army’s garrison at Oswego’s Fort Ontario to aid him in protecting the shipyard. However, on his arrival at Albany he had “the mortification to find that there is no garrison at present at Oswego.” Woolsey asked Secretary Smith to provide him with a small detachment of Marine guards but this was not approved. Woolsey and his men were on their own.<sup>41</sup>

At the end of July, Woolsey had ordered Midshipman James Cooper from New York to his home in Cooperstown to await further orders. Those orders were given on 17 August when Cooper was directed to join Woolsey at Oswego.<sup>42</sup>

### **Construction**

By the end of August, Woolsey with Midshipmen Gamble and Cooper along with Henry Eckford and his workmen had arrived at Oswego, New York on the south shore of Lake Ontario. What these men found there was a

*Mere hamlet of some twenty, or five-and-twenty, houses, that stood on a very irregular sort of a line, near the water, the surrounding country, for thirty or forty miles, being very little more than a wilderness. On the eastern bank of the [Oswego] river, and opposite to the village, or on the side of the stream where the Oneida was built, there was but a solitary log house, and the ruins of the last English fort.<sup>43</sup>*



*View of Oswego from Lake Ontario in 1826, showing the site on the east bank of the mouth of the Oswego River where the Oneida was built. Van Cleave manuscript, p.129.*

Supported almost completely by the seasonal trade in salt from Salina (now Syracuse NY), the port employed “eight or ten” small schooners and the inhabitants, according to Cooper,

*Consisted of some four or five traders, who were mostly ship owners, the masters and people of the vessels, boatmen who brought the salt down the river, a few mechanics, and a quarter-educated personage who called himself doctor.<sup>44</sup>*

Oswego was hardly an ideal location to build a warship, but it had been done before during the French and Indian War. In 1755 and 1756 the British built seven small warships at Oswego at a time when the area provided even fewer resources to aid the builders.<sup>45</sup>

Recognizing that they would be working through the winter months, Eckford and his men took the time to build themselves a house “to shelter him and his workmen from the approaching season.”<sup>46</sup> Woolsey himself rented a former tavern as a home for himself and the midshipmen, converting the bar into a larder. Although Woolsey was unhappy with the rustic nature of Oswego society, he felt he was “tolerably well quartered.”<sup>47</sup>



*The Oneida as designed, with 16, 24-pound carronades and a 32-pound pivot gun forward, as it would have appeared sailing off Sackets Harbor. Painting by Peter Rindlisbacher.*

Matters progressed quickly. Eckford “went into the forest, marked his trees, had them cut, trimmed and hauled.”<sup>48</sup> They were fortunate enough to discover a quantity of seasoned wood in the neighborhood that could be used to build the brig’s “upper works.”<sup>49</sup> Less than two weeks later Woolsey reported to Secretary Smith that Eckford’s men had finished cutting most of the timbers required, and some of the white oak to be used for the keelson and top timbers was “tolerably well seasoned.”<sup>50</sup> By 19 September all the timber had been cut and most had been hauled to the shipyard located on the east bank at the mouth of the Oswego River.

That same day Woolsey left Oswego for Lake Champlain to receive and pay for the two gunboats that Winans was expected to have completed by 16 October. Woolsey expected to be back at Oswego sometime in November. In his absence, construction would be supervised by Midshipman Thomas Gamble who was senior to Midshipman Cooper.<sup>51</sup>

While Woolsey was absent, Thomas Gamble’s relative William Gamble submitted a report to the Navy Department recommending that the new brig at Oswego have salt packed between the inner and outer hull planking as a preservative.<sup>52</sup> Gamble stated that the army brig *Adams* on Lake Erie, launched in 1797 at Detroit, had this done and that a recent inspection showed that “her frame is as sound as the day she was launched and without any appearance of decay.” He also commented that the American schooners on Lake Ontario used to transport salt “last much longer than those built in Canada” that carry other types of cargo. Gamble estimated that “250 barrels [of] salt would be sufficient to fill her whole frame” at a cost of \$625.00. On his return from Lake Champlain Woolsey discussed this with Henry Eckford. The men agreed it was a good idea, the Navy Department approved, and 25 barrels plus 218 pounds of salt were ordered from Salina (now Syracuse NY) and applied to the brig.<sup>53</sup>

By 4 December the brig’s frame was complete, planking was underway, and all the required sails, rigging, anchors and cables had arrived from New York. Woolsey informed Secretary Smith that the brig would be “ready to receive her armament and crew by the middle of April—perhaps sooner.”

Woolsey’s concern about the lack of shipyard guards was addressed when a detachment from the Sixth Regiment of Infantry arrived at Oswego. The detachment’s commander, First Lieutenant John Christie, agreed to guard the brig until the spring when the brig’s marine complement was expected to arrive.<sup>54</sup>

On a more disturbing note, in the same letter Woolsey reported that the British force on Lake Ontario consisted of one ship, one brig and two schooners, mounting 42 guns total. Furthermore, reacting to the new American brig, the British were building “one ship of twenty guns and one large brig probably calculated to mount sixteen or eighteen guns” across the lake at Kingston, Upper Canada. This was a very pessimistic picture – too pessimistic. The British force was only three vessels, not four, and the “large brig” did not exist. The new ship, however, was indeed under construction and would be launched in 1809 as the 20-gun corvette *Royal George*.<sup>55</sup> This was the beginning of the war of ship carpenters on Lake Ontario that would not end until after the War of 1812.

From the operational record it appears that Henry Eckford built the brig slightly larger than was specified by his and Bergh’s contract with the Navy Department. The contract called for a brig of 220 tons burthen. The measurements specified in that contract, using the standard American “Builder’s Old Measurement” formula, yields a tonnage value of 216.<sup>56</sup> However, in June 1813 a report from Isaac Chauncey to Secretary of the Navy William Jones specified a tonnage value of 243.<sup>57</sup> This is a difference of 27 tons, almost the size of one of the small merchant schooners on the lake and it needs some explanation. This difference could be accounted for if Eckford had built the brig with a keel six inches longer and a beam 16 inches wider than the contract required. Given the very basic building conditions at Oswego at the time this could easily happen and, as it resulted in a vessel slightly larger than expected, the navy had no grounds for complaint. The new dimensions of the brig would then be

Keel for tonnage	78 feet
Length between perpendiculars	86 feet
Moulded beam	23 feet ten inches
Extreme beam	24 feet four inches

On Christmas Day 1808 Woolsey reported that the brig was fully planked and her deck laid. He asked Secretary Smith to inform him what the brig should be named but received no reply. Three weeks later Woolsey reported the brig was fully caulked and nearly ready to be launched. He also informed the Navy Department that a number of needed items, mostly pertaining to the brig’s armament, had not yet arrived.<sup>58</sup>

That winter passed as pleasantly as possible given the limited resources of the area. Food was plentiful, including salmon, bass, venison, rabbits, squirrels, wild geese and ducks. Evenings at the fireside found Woolsey to be “the life of the mess, in conversation,

anecdote and amusement.” “Balls, dinners, and suppers were given to the better portion of the inhabitants” and Woolsey and his officers “made a most merry winter of it.”<sup>59</sup>

By the end of February 1809 the brig was finished on the outside except for hanging the rudder. The berth deck was also laid and Eckford’s workmen were finishing the bulkheads and other parts of the brig’s interior. By now Woolsey knew that his report on British shipbuilding at Kingston was wrong – only single ship was being built as he informed Washington on 26 February.<sup>60</sup>

That spring a British “Lieut. R — from Kingston” arrived unannounced at Oswego, reportedly “in disguise,” and went on board the *Oneida* to examine her.<sup>61</sup> Woolsey greeted the man politely and expressed a regret that had he known in advance of his visit he would have invited him to dinner.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless the incident was a warning for the future. The British were paying careful attention to the American navy’s doings on Lake Ontario.

On 31 March 1809 the new brig was successfully launched at Oswego. As the Navy Department had never given Woolsey a name for the brig, he “named her the *Oneida* after the county in which she was built, or Lake in the vicinity of this place & a nation of Indians that inhabit the borders of it.” This name was accepted by the Navy Department without comment, probably because it was so appropriate. At the same time Woolsey told the Navy Department that “She is (I think) the handsomest vessel in the Navy,” a sentiment not entirely accurate but understandable on the part of a young officer viewing his first major command.<sup>63</sup>

It is likely that the *Oneida* drew less water than the 16 feet she was originally designed for. In December 1813, during Master Commandant James T. Leonard’s court martial, Isaac Chauncey testified that the *Oneida* “drew upwards of nine feet water.”<sup>64</sup>

The *Oneida* took seven months to build, about the time it would have taken at an Atlantic shipyard but exceptional considering that no vessel of that size had ever been built at Oswego and the many difficulties that had to be overcome in obtaining the necessary materials. This effort was a learning experience for Henry Eckford. He would use the knowledge he gained to greatly reduce the building times for the warships he would later construct at Sackets Harbor.

## **Armament**

In July 1808, while Woolsey was still at New York, he reported to the Navy Department that the brig’s 32-pound pivot gun was available but that there were no 24-pound carronades at the New York Navy Yard. They would have to be shipped to New York and then forwarded to Albany and he asked Secretary Smith to order them. Smith complied and so informed Woolsey, who made arrangements to have them shipped from Albany to Oswego by the Schenectady, New York forwarding firm of Jonathan Walton & Co.<sup>65</sup>

A few weeks later Woolsey asked Secretary Smith “for a model of the carronades that will be furnished with the loops and slide without which the carriages cannot be made.” Woolsey planned to have the wooden carronade carriages made at Oswego by Eckford’s workmen to avoid the trouble and expense of having them shipped from New York.<sup>66</sup> Once at Oswego, however, he changed his mind. He discovered that “there is no stuff



sufficiently seasoned for them in this part of the country” and that it was “indispensably necessary to have the carriages made in New York.”<sup>67</sup> This would add time and expense but there was no option, this being one of the consequences of attempting a major



*Model of the Oneida showing the as-designed 32-pound pivot gun on the forecastle platform. The carronades are incorrectly mounted on truck (wheeled) carriages instead of slides. Model at the Sackets Harbor Battlefield State Historic Site, Sackets Harbor, NY; photograph by the author.*

shipbuilding effort on the frontier. The carronades themselves arrived at New York from the Washington Navy Yard on 12 September.<sup>68</sup>

After Woolsey returned from his trip to Lake Champlain in December 1808 he addressed the issue of ammunition for the *Oneida*'s cannon. He reported to Secretary Smith that beyond the actual expense of the iron shot it would cost \$50.00 per ton to ship it from New York to Oswego. Woolsey recommended trying to obtain them from a local iron furnace as that would save much of the shipping expense. Woolsey

received one proposal from Philander Forbes of the Onondaga Furnace (where Syracuse NY is today) to deliver 200, 32-pound and 3,500, 24-pound round shot at \$110.00 per ton by 15 May 1809 but no approval was received from the Navy Department. Woolsey repeated his request on 26 February 1809, arguing that the savings in transportation costs would offset the greater local cost of the shot and also the kentledge needed for ballast. Again, he received no approval from the Navy Department.<sup>69</sup>

With the brig nearing completion it was now clear to Woolsey that installing a 32-pound pivot gun on the *Oneida*'s forecastle was not a good idea. He recommended to the Navy Department that this cannon be eliminated and two additional carronades be



*Another model of the Oneida showing the as-designed 32-pound pivot gun on the forecastle platform. Model by Patrick Wilder; photograph by the author.*

installed in its place, making the brig's total armament 18, 24-pound carronades. The pivot gun was designed to be mounted on a platform about two feet above the deck and “so great a weight so much elevated if it does not make the vessel crank will make her

extremely laboursome.”<sup>70</sup> Furthermore Eckford had already provided two spare gun ports and there was “plenty of room [on deck] for the additional carronades.”<sup>71</sup>

In addition, the carronades’ carriages continued to be a problem. Secretary Smith had ordered Captain Isaac Chauncey, the commandant of the New York Navy Yard, to have the gun carriages built and all the cannon provided, but Woolsey heard from Christian Bergh at New York that the carriages were ready but the “loops and elevating screws” were not. He asked Secretary Smith to have them made if necessary as “the carriages cannot be fitted without them.” At the same time, Smith ordered Woolsey to report any deficiencies remaining in the brig’s “military equipment” so he may take measures to supply them. Woolsey did so on 15 January 1809, providing Smith with two lists relating to armament, one including the 32-pound pivot gun and one with the two additional 24-pound carronades.<sup>72</sup>

At the same time, having received no response to his earlier request, Woolsey again asked to be allowed to replace the pivot gun with two 24-pound carronades, this time explaining that “the brig will certainly make better weather and fight a much better action for it.”<sup>73</sup> Secretary Smith replied asking Woolsey to better explain his reasons for abandoning the pivot gun. Woolsey did so, emphasizing that the change was necessary to prevent the brig from “rolling and pitching heavily” due to too much weight being too far forward. Woolsey stressed that this was especially important on Lake Ontario because

*There is not sea room sufficient to scud before the frequent gales and on the United States’ side of the Lake, there are only two harbours (Sacket’s & Niagara) which the brig can possibly enter after the month of May.<sup>74</sup>*

Fearing his argument lacked documentation, Woolsey asked Henry Eckford to prepare a plan of the brig’s deck, including the forecandle platform, and present it to Commodore John Rodgers at New York.<sup>75</sup> Woolsey asked Commodore Rodgers to review the plan and

*If you should give the carronades the preference I will esteem it a great favour sir if you will obtain the Honorable the Secretary’s permission for me to mount them.<sup>76</sup>*

A week later Woolsey again wrote Secretary Smith enclosing his own plan of the brig’s deck and forecandle platform. It was clear from the plans that the presence of the pivot gun would cause some serious problems. In particular, the forecandle deck was 16 feet long and “there is not room for a man to crawl under” to manage the anchor cables. Furthermore

*That part of the deck which extends under the topgallant forecandle will scarcely ever be dry and will consequently be more liable to rot than any other part and notwithstanding every possible attention in the officers it will be a constant receptacle for all the filth which is naturally created in a single decked vessel.<sup>77</sup>*

Despite Woolsey’s efforts, no approval for this change was received before Navy Secretary Robert Smith was replaced by Paul Hamilton at the start of James Madison’s presidency. Approval to replace the 32-pound pivot gun with two carronades was finally received but not until 27 March 1810.<sup>78</sup>

Woolsey then asked what he should do with the 32-pound cannon and “its carriage, circle and slide.” Secretary Hamilton ordered Woolsey to leave the items at Oswego but to take

care of the cannon: “it ought to be placed on skids.”<sup>79</sup> Later tales have this gun left in the mud like a pig hence gaining it the name of “the old sow.” It is extremely unlikely that



*Model of the Oneida as armed in 1813, without the pivot gun or platform and showing the two foremost gun ports, originally occupied by 24-pound carronades, now with 6-pound cannon. The location of the windlass is probable but not confirmed. Model by Clayton Nans; photograph by the author.*

Woolsey would have failed to comply with the secretary’s orders and left such an expensive piece of ordnance abandoned in the mud.

Six weeks later Secretary Hamilton authorized Woolsey to move the 32-pound cannon to Sackets Harbor but only “when it can be done without expense.” As that was impossible until the *Oneida* was in service to handle the transport, the cannon remained at Oswego.<sup>80</sup>

At the start of the War of 1812 the *Oneida* was armed with 18, 24-pound carronades with a standard broadside of 216 pounds.

## Celebrating

After the *Oneida*’s successful launch, Woolsey and his midshipmen with Eckford and his shipwrights reportedly decided to celebrate by having a ball. However, the unsettled nature of the country around Oswego presented some problems, as *Harper’s Weekly* reported many years later:

*Officers were on hand and a fiddle: but where were the ladies to come from here in the wilderness? The officers declared they would not dance with each other. Ladies must be found. By dint of sending boats miles in one direction, and carts miles in another, the feat was accomplished; ladies were invited, and ladies accepted. As the hour for the ball approached, however, a delicate feature presented itself. How, and by what rule, were the honors of the evening to be allotted among the different claimants? After a prolonged council of war Lieutenant Woolsey took upon himself to decide the question. He issued his orders to the master of ceremonies. “All ladies Sir, provided with shoes and stockings are to be led to the head of the Virginia reel; ladies without shoes and with stockings are considered in the second rank; ladies without either shoes or stockings you will lead, gentlemen, to the foot of the country dance.”<sup>81</sup>*

Following the festivities, Eckford and most of his workmen returned to New York and Woolsey began to address the problem of maintaining the brig at Oswego. One of Eckford’s men, shipwright Henry Eagle, remained at Oswego to build the merchant schooners *Diana* in 1809, *America* in 1810 and *Julia* in 1811, all for merchant Matthew McNair. In the fall of 1811 Eagle was sailing the lake as master of the *Julia*.<sup>82</sup> He would move to Sackets Harbor in 1812.

## ***Out of Service***

Even before she was launched, Woolsey needed to prepare the facilities necessary to maintain the *Oneida* at Oswego. This included renting wharf space to moor the brig and a storehouse to contain her sails and equipment when she was not in service. With no orders to prepare the *Oneida* for service he also needed ship keepers to watch over her. However, despite the embargo the demand for seamen on the lake and the pay for that work was so great that Woolsey initially could find no one who wanted the job despite offering sixteen dollars per month plus rations, more than the pay of an able seaman in the navy. Later Woolsey managed to hire two men but for only a month and he had to pay one, an old seaman, eighteen dollars before he would agree to serve.<sup>83</sup>

Even wharf space was limited and expensive. At the beginning of April 1809 Woolsey rented a wharf and a storehouse from the collector of the customs but for only one month and at a cost of five dollars. Woolsey informed the new Secretary of the Navy, Paul Hamilton, that after the first of May “when the salt carrying will have commenced, it will be difficult to get a good berth for the brig under (perhaps) twenty dollars per month for the remaining part of the season.” Furthermore, by July it would be difficult to get the brig over the sand bar at the mouth of Oswego harbor.<sup>84</sup> While Oswego might have been the best place to build the brig, there were major problems involved in maintaining her there.

Woolsey expected that the *Oneida* would be quickly placed in service but this did not happen. While the brig was being built, negotiations were underway between the Jefferson administration and David Erskine, the British minister in Washington, to resolve the points of conflict between the two nations. In April 1809 what was known as the Erskine agreement was signed between the two parties and it appeared to the new administration of President James Madison that there was now no immediate need for the *Oneida*. Woolsey, therefore, was never ordered to recruit a crew and commission the brig. Later that summer it was learned that the British government had repudiated Erskine’s agreement as Erskine had no authority to agree to the terms he did. The *Oneida*, however, remained inactive and crewless at Oswego.

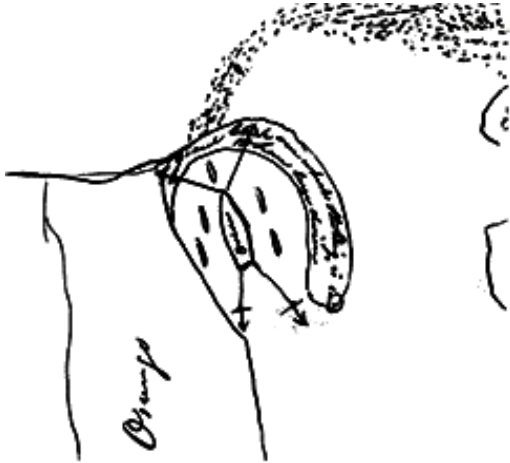
At the end of July Woolsey left for Plattsburgh to deal with issues relating to gunboats 169 and 170, leaving Midshipman James Cooper in charge of the *Oneida*. Woolsey would not return to Oswego until September 1810.<sup>85</sup>

With no immediate prospect of seeing any service afloat on the lake, Midshipman James Cooper applied to the Navy Department for a transfer away from Oswego to some place “affording an opportunity of acquiring experience.”<sup>86</sup> This was the beginning of a practice that would be continued by officers serving on Lake Ontario, especially at the onset of winter, throughout the War of 1812. This request was not approved but Cooper tried again in September 1809, this time requesting a furlough to make a voyage to Europe. This request was approved and Cooper left Oswego for New York at the end of October 1809, leaving Sailing Master Augustus Ford in charge. Once at New York he informed Secretary Hamilton that “the difficulty of procuring a berth on board of any ship bound to Europe as well as the advice of several officers of rank in the navy” had changed his mind and now asked to be attached to the *Wasp*. Were these the real reasons or did Cooper use the European voyage as a means to leave Oswego and, once away, find



himself a more agreeable situation?<sup>87</sup> What is clear is that Woolsey now had one less officer on Lake Ontario. Midshipman Thomas Gamble also left Oswego some time before he was promoted to lieutenant on 27 April 1810.

At the end of November 1809 Woolsey himself was ordered to New York from



*Oswego, November 1809, showing the Oneida secured for the winter in a small cove at the mouth of the Oswego River. NAUS, RG45, SNLRO, 1810 vol 1 item 40, M148 roll 7.*

Plattsburgh to attend Lieutenant Haswell's court martial.<sup>88</sup> Before he left, Woolsey, following Secretary Hamilton's instructions, ordered that the *Oneida* be securely anchored and protected during the oncoming winter. The brig was placed in a small cove to the west of the outlet of the Oswego River, secured by two cables leading to the bank and two anchors upstream. A number of small merchant schooners were also anchored in that cove. Woolsey was in New York in mid-February 1810 when he received some bad news. Midshipman Cooper, now at New York, had received a letter from Oswego which told Woolsey that the winter preparations were inadequate, as

*During the late severe cold the ice had formed in such immense bodies at the mouth of Oswego river as to dam the river so high that the Oneida, together with all the merchant vessels laid up with her in the cove had been driven out on the gravel bank forming the basin where she was moored.*

This was not a good thing. The hull of a wooden warship could be severely damaged if left out of the water, unsupported, for any length of time. Woolsey informed Secretary Hamilton that he had written to Augustus Ford at Oswego for more details.<sup>89</sup>

Two weeks later Woolsey was in Washington where he received orders to place the *Oneida* in commission for the 1810 sailing season. With the abrogation of the Erskine agreement and the restrictions on trade with Britain again in place, the warship would be useful. Secretary Hamilton ordered Woolsey to recruit 15 men and three boys at New York which, with Woolsey, another lieutenant, a sailing master, surgeon's mate and purser, would be sufficient to navigate the *Oneida* "with safety on the lake." This crew would not be sufficient to fight the ship but adequate for her to "show the flag" and to enforce the revenue laws.<sup>90</sup>

The officers appointed by Hamilton were Lieutenant Nathaniel Haradan, Purser George S. Wise, Sailing Master Augustus Ford, and Surgeon's Mate William Caton. Two midshipmen would be added later.

As ordered, Woolsey opened a rendezvous (recruiting station) at New York and ordered Purser Wise to report to him there.<sup>91</sup> Woolsey then complained to Secretary Hamilton that



*The wages are so high in the merchant service that I am fearful I shall not be able to get my pick of the seamen in this port. And on the terms contained in your order sir I apprehend some difficulty in obtaining security for monies I may advance them.*<sup>92</sup>

Secretary Hamilton had authorized only \$12.00 per month for able seamen with two months pay in advance, but that only with good security that the men would not take the advance and desert. At that time in New York an able seaman could get \$20.00 per month and in some cases more serving on a merchant ship for only one voyage and not the two year term wanted by Secretary Hamilton.

This was not a problem for very long. When Secretary Hamilton received Woolsey's letter he replied ordering him to stop recruiting men and to consider all previous orders suspended until further notice.<sup>93</sup> President Madison saw no justification for the *Oneida* being in service nor for the resulting expense. As yet unaware of this decision, that same day Woolsey reported to Hamilton that he had engaged a boatswain, gunner and carpenter to serve on the brig.<sup>94</sup> Three days later Woolsey received Hamilton's letter and, as ordered, he stopped recruiting but he was left wondering what to do with the men he had already enlisted.

Isaac Chauncey, commandant of the New York Navy Yard, told Woolsey that it was not likely he would be able to get sufficient security from the men to prevent them taking their advance pay and then deserting on the way to Oswego. This turned out to be the case. In the three days since his previous letter to Secretary Hamilton, Carpenter John Carling, having received an advance in pay, had already deserted. While the gunner was willing to be "let off from his engagement," Woolsey still needed to know what he was to do with the boatswain and the one ordinary seaman he had enlisted.<sup>95</sup> Hamilton told Woolsey to retain them for the time being.<sup>96</sup>

A month later, on 20 May 1810, Woolsey was still in New York awaiting orders from the Navy Department and the *Oneida* was still on the beach at Oswego. Since his last letter Purser Wise had joined him at New York, as had Midshipmen William Peabody and Cadwallader Billings. Woolsey wrote Secretary Hamilton telling him that he and his officers were anxious to know if the secretary planned to order the *Oneida* into service that summer, noting that

*There are now only four months left to recruit men, move them to Oswego, launch & fit out the brig, and remove her to a place of safety.*<sup>97</sup>

For some reason Secretary Hamilton did not respond to Woolsey's question. Without further orders, Woolsey remained in New York until early August when he received his first communication from the Navy Department since the previous April, but addressed to him at Oswego. Secretary Hamilton, apparently annoyed with the lack of any report from Woolsey regarding the *Oneida*, asked

*What is the situation at this time of the Oneida? You have, I presume, long since got her off the banks — Report immediately upon the subject.*<sup>98</sup>

Hamilton had lost track of where Woolsey was, or recalled that by suspending all previous orders but never issuing new ones, Woolsey was left at New York on active duty but with nothing to do. Woolsey's reply made it clear that he had been awaiting the secretary's orders to proceed to Oswego and relaunch the *Oneida* for almost four

months.<sup>99</sup> On 10 August 1810 Secretary Hamilton tersely ordered Woolsey to “proceed to the Lake & have the *Oneida* relaunched & placed in a state of safety & preservation.”<sup>100</sup>

Hamilton’s order left Woolsey a bit confused. Was he to relaunch and then place the *Oneida* in service or just get her back in the water? After discussing the matter with Captain Chauncey, Woolsey decided to “obey strictly the letter of your last order” and just relaunch the *Oneida*. On the morning of 15 August 1810 Woolsey left for Oswego along with Doctor William Caton, Midshipman William Peabody and one carpenter which Woolsey believed would be sufficient to “caulk, pay & launch her.” He informed Secretary Hamilton that after the *Oneida* was afloat she must be sailed to Sackets Harbor before winter as remaining at Oswego was now clearly unsafe. To do that, however, Woolsey told Hamilton he would need the men he was ordered to recruit the previous March.<sup>101</sup>

Woolsey made a fast trip, reaching Oswego on the afternoon of 22 August, only seven days after leaving New York. He found that “the *Oneida* is almost entirely out of water but lies in such a situation that there will not be as much difficulty in relaunching her as I at first apprehended.”<sup>102</sup>

Getting the *Oneida* afloat and ready for sea turned out to be more difficult than Woolsey anticipated. Due to the brig’s “awkward situation” Woolsey required a strong white rope purchase to “heave her off” and he wrote to Isaac Chauncey and Navy Agent John Bullus at New York requesting one. None was available, however, and Woolsey had to borrow a purchase from Porter, Barton & Co.’s facility at Black Rock on Lake Erie.<sup>103</sup>

After the purchase arrived it took Woolsey almost a month to relaunch the *Oneida*. He reported to Secretary Hamilton that afterwards the brig needed her lower rigging overhauled and her bottom caulked but that she should be ready by the end of September. That was optimistic. Woolsey reported on 6 October that work on her bottom would not begin until at least 12 October.<sup>104</sup>

At the beginning of September Purser Wise and Midshipman Billings arrived at Oswego. Woolsey now had most of the brig’s officers but no crew.

On 4 November 1810 and after a total expense of over \$3,000, the *Oneida* was completely overhauled and ready for sea.<sup>105</sup> With all her anchors, cables, seven tons of iron ballast and 16 carronade carriages on board, Woolsey was concerned about the low water level in the lake:

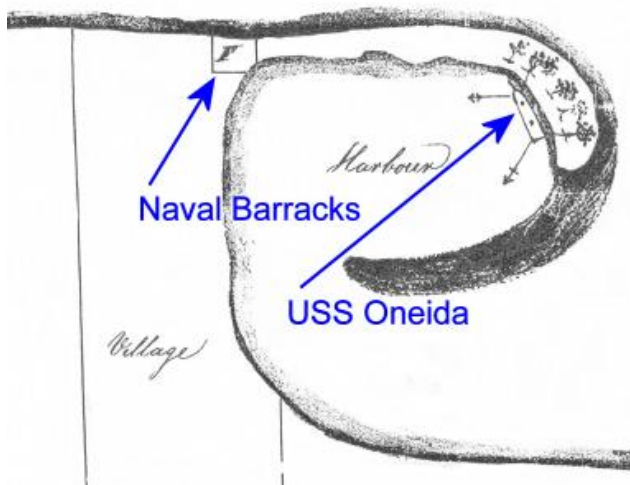
*It is a fact that the Lake was never known to be so low as at present (5 feet at least lower than when the Oneida was launched).*<sup>106</sup>

Perhaps the *Oneida* would now be unable to get over the sand bar at the mouth of the Oswego River. This was probably the reason the *Oneida* had only eight of her (then) 16 carronades on board. Woolsey was waiting for a favorable wind to help her over the bar before sailing her from Oswego to Sackets Harbor. He was anxious to proceed as the weather had been extremely cold with every prospect of an early winter.<sup>107</sup>

Fortunately Woolsey only had to wait five days for that wind. On 9 November 1810 he and his small crew sailed the *Oneida* from Oswego to Sackets Harbor in less than five hours. Woolsey reported to Secretary Hamilton that

*The Oneida is as good a sailer and as good a seaboat as I have ever seen and I do not exaggerate Sir when I tell you she steers as easy and works as well as a pilot-boat.*<sup>108</sup>

As the brig spent at least seven months out of the water and unsupported, there must have been some hull damage, probably warping, which would have changed her sailing



*Sackets Harbor, December 1810, showing the Oneida secured to Navy Point for the winter and the small barracks used by the shipkeepers. NAUS, RG45, SNLRO, 1810 vol 2 item 205, M148 roll 8.*

qualities. Woolsey reported to Navy Agent John Bullus that he had the *Oneida* relaunched “without sustaining any damage” but nothing was said about damage she suffered while on shore.<sup>109</sup> Certainly the *Oneida* failed to live up to her reported performance on this occasion at any time thereafter.

Nevertheless, Secretary Hamilton was pleased. He wrote Woolsey on 19 November and again on 7 December thanking him for his exertions in refitting the *Oneida* and that he was happy to learn that “the *Oneida* possesses so many valuable properties.”<sup>110</sup>

Woolsey now prepared the *Oneida* for her first winter at Sackets Harbor. The brig’s last two carronades arrived at Sackets Harbor from Oswego in early December.<sup>111</sup> Wood to build a guard house on the hill above Navy Point and a roof over the brig’s deck was provided locally by Samuel F. Hooker.<sup>112</sup> On 16 December 1810 Woolsey reported to Secretary Hamilton that

*The Oneida is completely dismantled, covered with a roof of boards and her rigging & stored. The greater part of her military equipment has been received and is safely stored.*<sup>113</sup>

Woolsey was also afraid that the brig would be seen by the local residents as a threat to their smuggling activities. To protect her over the winter, Woolsey employed “three or four shipkeepers more than I have usually had on board the brig.” Woolsey told the secretary that if the navy planned to have the *Oneida* placed in service in 1811 arrangements to transport the required supplies and to recruit a crew must start soon. He also informed Hamilton that as the brig was without a galley he would have to build a small guard room or barracks with a fireplace somewhere nearby. Secretary Hamilton approved the additional shipkeepers but ignored Woolsey’s request for information about the navy’s plans for the brig in 1811.<sup>114</sup>

Woolsey now prepared the *Oneida*

Rank	Number
Lieutenant (Woolsey)	1
Sailing Master (Ford)	1
Midshipmen (Billings & Peabody)	2
Purser (Wise)	1
Surgeon’s Mate (Caton)	1
Purser’s Steward (Green)	1
Armorer (McMullin)	1
Ordinary Seamen	7
Boys	1
Total	16

**Table 1** – *Oneida*’s Crew as of 30 April 1811 Muster Roll, NAUS, RG45, T829, roll 17 p.322

In early March 1811, the *Oneida*'s purser, George S. Wise, applied for a four month furlough. This was approved by Secretary Hamilton but only for three months and that pending approval by Woolsey which was granted on 16 April. The *Oneida* would be without a purser for two months until Alexander P. Darragh arrived at Sackets Harbor on 17 June.<sup>115</sup>

In early April the agreed upon term of employment for two of the four shipkeepers was up and Woolsey had to discharge them. The total number of men now attached to the *Oneida* exclusive of officers was seven plus an armourer, a steward and one boy. Woolsey asked Secretary Hamilton if he should "engage more men or not?"<sup>116</sup> Hamilton replied on 23 April approving the discharge of the two "marines" and ordering Woolsey to "enter three others, which will complete the number necessary for the *Oneida*."<sup>117</sup> This is puzzling as the records show that the brig had never received any Marines from New York, nor did Woolsey have any authority to recruit them locally. It appears that Secretary Hamilton was confusing shipkeepers with members of the Marine Corps. Woolsey, in response, ignored the mis-reference but simply reported that "agreeably to your order I have entered two of the three men for the *Oneida*."<sup>118</sup>

In the same letter Woolsey reported receiving the final bill from the Schenectady, New York forwarding firm of Jonathan Walton & Company for transporting the brig's military and other equipment from Albany to Oswego. The cost was \$1,147.80 and was in addition to the amount paid Bergh and Eckford. This firm would go on to make a fortune transporting naval and military supplies from Albany to Oswego and Sackets Harbor during the War of 1812. Unfortunately the Navy Department failed to pay the bill promptly and Woolsey had to repeat his request that payment be made.<sup>119</sup>

Woolsey then dealt with a few personnel matters. Midshipman William Peabody was transferred to Norfolk and Woolsey asked Secretary Hamilton for a replacement. Hamilton took his time responding but on 25 August Midshipman Richard Caton, Doctor Caton's younger brother, arrived at Sackets Harbor. Doctor Caton himself, on the *Oneida*'s books as a surgeon's mate, had been acting as the brig's surgeon and he now asked to be paid according to that rank. Receiving no response from Hamilton, Caton repeated his request three months later. He finally received his acting surgeon's appointment, but not until 7 January 1812.<sup>120</sup>

Towards the end of July 1811 Woolsey reported to the Navy Department that the British force on Lake Ontario amounted to seven warships, including the new 22-gun *Royal George*, plus one or two additional vessels that could be armed, for a possible total of 86 guns. The *Oneida* was badly outnumbered and outgunned. In an attempt to compensate for that, Woolsey informed Secretary Hamilton that "we have a number of fine schooners which in the event of a war might be taken into the service." His report identified eight plus one additional schooner recently launched at Oswego which was almost certainly the *Julia*. Woolsey believed that this new schooner could be armed with the 32-pound cannon left at Oswego.<sup>121</sup>

On 10 September 1811 Woolsey reported a troubling development. Purser Darragh visited Oswego where he heard that the British were attempting to purchase the new schooner *Julia* as an addition to their naval force. Woolsey feared that this sale had

already gone through and the British might purchase some of the other American merchant schooners. To prevent this he suggested to Secretary Hamilton

*The propriety of engaging on any terms all the vessels owned on this side of the Lake capable of carrying guns on condition that the government of the upper province should make overtures for the purchase of them, which it certainly would do should a rupture between the two countries be expected with any degree of certainty.*

At the same time Woolsey reminded Hamilton that the *Oneida* was undermanned and extremely vulnerable should war break out:

*There are but seven men attached to the Oneida, besides officers. She is perfectly accessible and within thirty five miles of the Navy Yard at Kingston, a distance that can be got round by a batteaux carrying fifty or sixty men in less than eight hours.*<sup>122</sup>

Hamilton responded to Woolsey's letter by informing him that "we have no authority to purchase or hire merchant vessels to convert them into armed vessels." However, Hamilton did authorize Woolsey to enlist twenty able seamen at \$12.00 per month and 30 ordinary seaman and boys at from \$5.00 to \$10.00 per month "according to merit." In addition Woolsey was authorized to complete the brig's complement of warrant and petty officers. These included a boatswain, gunner, sailmaker, carpenter, master's mate, a clerk for Woolsey, boatswain's and carpenter's mates, a coxswain, cooper, steward, armorer, a yeoman of the gun room, four quarter gunners, two quartermasters, a master at arms and a cook. All told about 80 men, including officers. This would be enough men to allow the *Oneida* to fight if necessary.<sup>123</sup>

While Hamilton's letter was on its way to Sackets Harbor, Purser Darragh, fearing that the oncoming winter would mean six months of idleness at an isolated and frigid station, applied to Secretary Hamilton for a transfer "to a more active station" believing that the small number of men now on board the *Oneida* "can be easily paid by the commanding officer."<sup>124</sup>

The arrival of Hamilton's orders to Woolsey caused Darragh to be disappointed. Woolsey dispatched him to New York to "obtain every thing necessary for equipping the *Oneida* for service, clothing the men &c." Woolsey knew he had no chance of obtaining the number of men required at Sackets Harbor so he sent Sailing Master Augustus Ford to Oswego and Doctor Caton to Ogdensburg to recruit and he asked Captain Isaac Chauncey to do what he could to enlist men at New York.

At the same time Woolsey asked Hamilton to assign another lieutenant to the brig. Hamilton did so and promoted Midshipman Henry Wells to acting lieutenant and ordered him from the *Argus* to New York to conduct the recruiting business as Purser Darragh had complained that he was "not sufficiently acquainted with the qualifications necessary for a seaman, and therefore not capable of superintending a rendezvous."<sup>125</sup> Henry Wells had received his midshipman's warrant in June 1806. Before he was ordered to the *Oneida* he served on gunboats, the schooner *Enterprise*, the frigate *Essex* and the brig *Argus*.



Woolsey also believed that it was important to keep his recruiting efforts

*As secret as possible until I can enter all the men I can on the Lake — Without this precaution our neighbors on the opposite side of the Lake (who are extremely zealous and ever on the alert) would get the start on us.*<sup>126</sup>

Woolsey informed Secretary Hamilton that he wanted to encourage as many of the American merchant vessels as possible to spend the winter at Sackets Harbor so they “would on an emergency place them at the command of the Government.” Hamilton, realizing the importance of this effort, approved Woolsey’s plan but stressed that Woolsey must “be careful not to commit the government by any assurances not expressly warranted by your instructions.” Woolsey was to be disappointed. He sent Doctor Caton to Ogdensburg and Sailing Master Ford to Oswego to engage the merchant schooners at those ports to be laid up for the winter at Sackets Harbor.<sup>127</sup> In addition he wrote Captain Nathaniel Leonard who commanded at Fort Niagara asking him to engage the schooners *Niagara* and *Ontario* to winter at Sackets Harbor. All these efforts were unsuccessful. Worse, Woolsey received word that the schooners *Charles and Ann* and possibly the *Ontario* would be spending the winter at Niagara, on British territory.<sup>128</sup>

Desertion was also a concern. Woolsey told Hamilton that providing the brig with its complement of Marines as soon as possible was critical to

*Prevent desertion, particularly on this station, where the crew must be quartered on shore during the winter — And should they remain on board during the season the brig being frozen in it will be just as practicable for the men to escape from her as from barracks on shore.*<sup>129</sup>

Woolsey’s fears were quickly realized. On the night of 8 November, while he was on guard duty only 11 days after he enlisted at Ogdensburg and just a week after he arrived at Sackets Harbor, Ordinary Seaman Owen McGrath disappeared taking with him his musket, bayonet, cartridge box and watch coat. Woolsey offered a \$50.00 reward for his apprehension but without any immediate result. Woolsey then repeated his request that a detachment of Marines be sent to Sackets Harbor as soon as possible. Later, in February 1812, Woolsey heard that McGrath “is at present at Prescott on the Canada side of the S<sup>t</sup> Lawrence and opposite to Ogdensburgh.” Woolsey ordered Lieutenant Wells and Midshipman Caton to proceed immediately to Ogdensburg and try to apprehend him “but on no account are you to go yourself or suffer Mid<sup>n</sup> Caton to go on the Canada side.” McGrath was found on the American side of the river, returned to Sackets Harbor and placed in “double irons” but it cost the navy over \$70.00 to get him back.<sup>130</sup> On being informed that McGrath was in custody, Secretary Hamilton lamented that

*It is unfortunate that we cannot without great inconvenience & expense, not warranted by the case, convene a court martial for his trial. So far as your authority extends, he ought to be punished he ought to be retained in the service until he shall have worked out all the expenses attending his apprehension & the amo. of the arms & accoutrements stolen by him: after he shall have done this, you may discharge him or not, as may appear to you expedient for the service.*<sup>131</sup>

The record shows that McGrath remained in service as an ordinary seaman on board the *Oneida* and later, in 1813, on board the *Sylph* until his term of service expired and he was discharged in March 1814.<sup>132</sup>

Recruiting on Lake Ontario was also not going well. Doctor Caton managed to enlist only two able seaman, one ordinary seaman and one boy at Ogdensburg. Sailing Master Ford had less success, enlisting only one man at Oswego. Ford proceeded on to Black Rock on Lake Erie to recruit there but that effort too had little success. By the end of November recruiting efforts at Sackets Harbor, Ogdensburg, Oswego and Black Rock had enlisted only 16 men for service on the *Oneida*. The *Oneida*'s crew was still incomplete as late as May 1812.<sup>133</sup>

Woolsey was also busy arranging suitable quarters for his men over the coming winter. He informed Secretary Hamilton that he had a guardroom twenty feet square built the previous year and he was building a boat house and "messroom" about sixty by twenty feet at a cost to the navy of less than \$200.00. He also recommended that the navy purchase the land occupied by those buildings at a cost of \$3,000.00, as otherwise it was likely the navy would have to pay rent to the owners for their use.<sup>134</sup>

Anticipating approval, Woolsey hired a carpenter and set the crew to work gathering wood and timber to build the "messroom" or barracks. Another carpenter was employed on 5 November. Some 1,500 boards were also purchased from local merchant Samuel F. Hooker. Towards the end of November Woolsey's crew was also gathering stone for the chimney and the building's "underpinning." By the end of November the building's frame was complete and the carpenters were putting on the siding. On 2 December Woolsey hired a mason to start building the chimney and fireplace which were finished four days later. The building was complete by 15 December 1811 except for fitting the rooms for the Marines which was done by the end of the month.<sup>135</sup>

While the crew was busy gathering wood, Woolsey discovered that one local resident, the former Deputy Collector Abel Franklin, was busy stealing it. Woolsey discovered Franklin taking wood from a pile "under the brig's bows." Woolsey had Franklin arrested but two days later he "was tried and cleared not because the law would clear him but because it was a pity to convict a man who had a family."<sup>136</sup> This served as a reminder to Woolsey that not everyone at Sackets Harbor was sympathetic to the navy's presence.

During this time there were many details that required Woolsey's personal attention. One such involved cooking. Since her launch the *Oneida* had been without a galley stove but now, with a full crew coming on board, one was badly needed. Woolsey wrote Isaac Chauncey, commandant at the New York Navy Yard, urging him deliver the one bought for the *Oneida*. Chauncey informed Woolsey that the *Oneida*'s stove had gone to the *Hornet* to replace a stove needing repairs "as that ship was under orders for foreign service." Chauncey informed Woolsey that the *Hornet*'s old stove had been repaired, it was now on its way to Sackets Harbor and that he believed the repaired stove "you will find to answer all the purposes of the one made for her."<sup>137</sup>

With the approval of Secretary Hamilton, Chauncey also arranged to deliver the stores accumulated by Purser Darragh. To save the \$300 expense of transporting them by merchant sloops, on 30 November Chauncey dispatched Sailing Master James Trant in Gunboat No. 6 to Albany along with those stores. Also on board were Acting Lieutenant Henry Wells, men recruited for the *Oneida* at New York and the *Oneida*'s Marine detachment.<sup>138</sup> While the men could get through, the stores would have to wait for the

roads to freeze and would not arrive at Sackets Harbor until January. Trant himself would be ordered to Sackets Harbor in September 1812.

On his arrival at Albany, Wells informed Secretary Hamilton that the Marines were “without either arms ammunition or cloathing [sic]” and were “greatly in want.” Furthermore, as they were all new recruits they could not be depended upon to prevent desertion and, in fact, they might well desert themselves.<sup>139</sup>

On 21 December Wells arrived at Sackets Harbor along with Midshipman William Peabody (who was rejoining the *Oneida* after running out of money at New York on his way to Norfolk), Boatswain Thomas Hall, Gunner John Hill, Master’s Mate James H. Dunn and the seamen, ordinary seaman and boys recruited at New York. The brig’s Marines also arrived, two corporals and twelve privates commanded by Sergeant William Hale.<sup>140</sup> Dunn, Hall and Hill were all transferred to the *Oneida* from Gunboat No. 6 when it arrived at Albany.

The onset of winter made the crew’s daily routine more difficult. A regular activity was collecting firewood. Periodically Woolsey allowed the “wooding” crew an extra ration of spirits, known as “splicing the main brace.” Every Sunday the crew listened to Woolsey read the *Articles of War* – the rules governing the naval service. This was necessary as many of the men could not read. Afterwards, Woolsey allowed the crew to attend church services in the village.<sup>141</sup>

The winter of 1811-1812 was cold and snowy. It snowed 18 days in January and it was bitter cold most of the rest of the time. On 18 January it was minus 32°C at Sackets Harbor and Woolsey called in the wooding party, “all were frost-bitten.” Even on warmer days the heavy snow made gathering wood difficult. On the morning of 21 January Woolsey marched “all hands, three abreast to the woods to make a road.” The snow continued to accumulate and the road building effort had to be repeated two days later. That was apparently not too successful as that afternoon Woolsey, concluding that the woods close to shore across Black River Bay would be more accessible, ordered all hands to “break a road across the ice for wood.”<sup>142</sup>

Throughout the winter supplies continued to arrive for the *Oneida* and her crew. On 17 December the schooner *Dolphin* risked a late fall voyage to deliver several coils of new rigging from Augustus Porter's rope walk at Lewiston on the Niagara River. On 7 January 1812 the first of the stores from Albany, the brig's galley, arrived by sleigh from Schenectady, beginning a steady stream of arrivals from the east. Twenty-two sleigh loads of supplies arrived from Schenectady between 7 and 14 January and a final load on 27 January 1812.<sup>143</sup>

It wasn't all work. On Saturday, 25 January, the crew was allowed the morning off to wash and mend clothes. That afternoon the crew and Marines had a shooting contest. The two best shots received prizes: a pair of shoes and a pair of stockings. This proved to be so popular that the contest was repeated the following Saturday. That day first prize was taken by Master's Mate James H. Dunn, beating Marine Sergeant William Hale who came in second.<sup>144</sup>

While you would expect the heavy snow and frigid temperatures to discourage desertion, not everyone agreed. One dissenting opinion was expressed by Ordinary Seaman George W. Venian. Venian, after only two weeks at Sackets Harbor, elected to desert at about 10 p.m. on 3 January during a heavy snowstorm. His absence was quickly detected and Sailing Master Augustus Ford, Surgeon William Caton, two midshipmen and Woolsey himself set off in pursuit. They were joined by local resident James Shields, probably employed by Woolsey as he later received \$2.00 from the navy for his efforts. The next day all but Ford had given up the chase. Ford persisted until 7 January when he too gave up and returned to Sackets Harbor. Later Woolsey received word that Venian had reached Cornwall in Canada. He was never apprehended.<sup>145</sup> Woolsey was forced to report to the Navy Department that

*Every exertion has been made for his apprehension by the officers of the Oneida and I also obtained civil process from the Justices of the Peace in this county, and every road has been perfectly ransacked by constables but all to no purpose.*<sup>146</sup>

Venian was not alone. Five weeks later, while Woolsey was absent and Lieutenant Wells was in charge, another man who arrived at Sackets Harbor from Gunboat No. 6, Ordinary Seaman John Waters, also successfully deserted. This time Wells hired a horse to aid in

Rank	Number
Armorer (McMullin)	1
Boatswain (Hall)	1
Boatswain's Mate	1
Boys	6
Captain's Clerk	1
Carpenter's Mate	1
Cooper	1
Gunner (Hill)	1
Gunner's Yeoman	1
Lieutenants (Woolsey, Wells)	1
Marine Corporals	2
Marine Privates	12
Marine Sergeant	1
Master at Arms	1
Master's Mate (Dunn)	1
Midshipmen (Caton, Billings & Peabody)	3
Ordinary Seamen	23
Purser (Darragh)	1
Purser's Steward (Handy)	1
Quarter Gunners	2
Quartermasters	2
Sailing Master (Ford)	1
Sailmaker (Burr)	1
Seamen	20
Surgeon's Mate (Caton)	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>

**Table 2** – *Oneida's Crew as of 26 January 1812 Muster Roll and Marine Report, NAUS, RG45, T829, roll 17 pp.323-325*

the pursuit but, as with Venian, his efforts were in vain, Waters had crossed into Canada and reportedly joined the British army.<sup>147</sup>

### ***Preparing for War***

In December 1811, Woolsey recognized that starting in the spring the *Oneida* might be called upon to enforce the revenue laws on the lake. He wrote to Secretary Hamilton for guidance, asking him “how far my duties in enforcing [sic] those laws extend?” He also asked Hamilton how he should respond if any of the customs collectors should apply to him for aid and how that application should be made.<sup>148</sup> Hamilton replied, but not until April 1812 as he was awaiting passage of the new embargo law by Congress. Hamilton sent Woolsey a copy of that law and ordered him to “advise & cooperate with the collectors of the customs” and also that

*The proper objects of seizure are: all vessels acting or found under such circumstances as may justify a strong suspicion of their intention to act in violation of this law.*<sup>149</sup>

This last order was to have some very long term effects starting in June 1812. Woolsey was also ordered “not to violate the territorial jurisdiction of a foreign state,” meaning, of course, Canadian waters, a restriction that would also play a role in subsequent events. Woolsey acknowledged those orders at the end of April and informed Hamilton that

*On the 20<sup>th</sup> May there will be a meeting of the collectors of the different districts on this Lake at Oswego at which time I will endeavour to be off that place to meet and advise with them.*<sup>150</sup>

In January Woolsey reported to the Navy Department that the crew of the *Oneida* was still not complete. To be fully prepared for action on the lake the brig needed a crew of 117 men, including Marines. He had only 88 men on board plus one Indian boy (see Table 2). He asked for authority to enlist an additional 21 men: “one boatswains mate, one carpenters mate, two quartermasters, six seamen and the remainder ordinary seaman and boys.” Furthermore, Woolsey complained that

*The Marines are destitute of arms, accoutrements & clothing — I will thank you for the honor of your instructions how to equip them — Out of the whole number there are but nine effectives, one of them is superannuated and the other two infirm.*<sup>151</sup>

At the end of January 1812 Woolsey reported the disturbing news that the British corvette *Royal George*, at Kingston, had been re-armed with 32 pound carronades.<sup>152</sup> Two weeks later Woolsey also informed the Navy Department that the *Earl of Moira* was reportedly undergoing a through repair at Kingston and, when complete, she would probably mount 16 guns.<sup>153</sup> All this further increased the disparity in naval force between the British squadron on Lake Ontario and the *Oneida*.

Recognizing the fiscal advantage to do so, in mid-February Secretary Hamilton authorized Woolsey to purchase “as much provisions as will be required for the *Oneida* during the present year.” Hamilton recommended that Woolsey purchase all the salted meat and the whiskey immediately but purchase the others “from time to time as they may be required.”<sup>154</sup> Woolsey replied on 15 March that he was planning for a crew of 120 men for the rest of 1812. As Table 3 shows, even after deducting the provisions on hand or already contracted for, the *Oneida*’s crew needed over 25 tons of provisions before the end of the year.



Woolsey reported that he would contract for “all the unperishable articles to be delivered as soon as possible” but that flour was in very short supply and would be very expensive. The price of many of the other articles would also increase “after the navigation opens in the spring.”<sup>155</sup> Providing provisions for the navy at Sackets Harbor would remain a serious and growing problem until the end of the War of 1812 reduced the demand.

At the same time the sergeant commanding the *Oneida*’s marine detachment, William Hale, was authorized by the Marine Corps Commandant Franklin Wharton to enlist Marines at Sackets Harbor to replace those present who were not fit to serve. Woolsey asked Secretary Hamilton for instructions on how to recruit and provide rations for those new Marines. Hamilton’s reply referred only to provisioning the Marines and not to recruiting them. Woolsey wrote again on 21 March to clarify the matter. He wanted to

Item	Required	Deficient
Barrels of beef	110	74
Barrels of pork	94	70
Barrels of flour	33	24
Pounds of bread	38,220	27,500
Pounds of butter	780	650
Pounds of Rice	6,240	5760
Pounds of cheese	2,340	1,600
Bushels of beans	98	72
Gallons of molasses	390	360
Gallons of vinegar and	390	286
Gallons of whiskey	2,730	2,064

**Table 3** – Provisions for 120 men for nine months from 1 April to 31 December 1812. Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 14 February 1812, SNLSO, vol 9 p.565, M149 roll 9; Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 15 March 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 1 item 115, M148 roll 9.

*Whatever is necessary for the Marines ... should be sent on by the Navy Agent at New York as soon as the frost breaks up in the Spring.*<sup>157</sup>

Unfortunately for Hale and his detachment it would take much longer for those necessities to arrive.

Woolsey planned to have the *Oneida* completely ready for service by the time the ice broke up, which would be, as he told Secretary Hamilton, about 20 April. Perhaps as a result of Woolsey’s report the secretary concluded that Woolsey still needed ammunition for the *Oneida*’s 24 pound carronades. On 22 January 1812, a contract was signed between the Navy Department in Washington and Joshua Forman of the Onondaga Furnace at Onondaga NY for 3,200 iron round shot and 2,000 “stools” of grape shot with 12 balls per stool to Oswego, half to be delivered at Oswego by 10 May and the remainder by 1 September 1812. The contract also provided for the delivery of 120 tons of kentledge for ballast. The cost was \$85.00 per ton for round shot and \$135.00 per ton for grape shot, higher than at New York but offset by the much lower cost of transportation to Sackets Harbor.<sup>158</sup>

know what he was to do if more men applied to join the Marines than the number needed to complete the brig’s complement. As the future would prove, this was a very unlikely possibility. Later Woolsey reported to Secretary Hamilton that he discharged two of the *Oneida*’s 12 Marines “both superannuated and so infirm as never to be of any service to the United States.” Lacking new recruits he believed he could “easily make up my complement from the militia stationed at this port and Oswego but their commanding officers will not permit it.”<sup>156</sup>

Commandant Wharton also reassured Sergeant Hale that

On 15 April Forman reported to Secretary Hamilton that the shot was ready and would be delivered “as soon as the ice is out of the Onondaga Lake.” Hamilton ordered Woolsey to proceed to Oswego to inspect and give Forman a receipt for them. Woolsey, however, reported that the *Oneida* already had “an abundant supply of twenty four pound shot of both round and grape on hand” and he had asked Forman to defer delivery of the second half of the contracted-for shot until further notice. Woolsey also reminded Hamilton that the 32-pound pivot gun left at Oswego was without ammunition. He recommended obtaining “about three hundred round shot and a proportionate quantity of grape shot” but this request was not given a high priority by the Navy Department.<sup>159</sup>

With the ice now out of the lake, Woolsey faced his first major embargo enforcement issue. The previous year a ten-ton, schooner rigged, open boat sailed as a packet carrying passengers between Sackets Harbor and Kingston. The owners wanted to continue doing so in 1812 and asked Woolsey’s permission. Woolsey reported the request to Secretary Hamilton, giving his opinion that

*It would be a great convenience to the inhabitants of this part of the country — but the inducement to smuggle would be so great that they would doubtless forfeit their bonds if they were only given for twice the value of the boat.*<sup>160</sup>

The reference to bonds refers to the requirement of the embargo law that boat owners post a cash bond equal to twice the value of the boat and cargo to be forfeit if they are caught smuggling that cargo. As the packet would carry only passengers and their personal baggage, the bond would only need to cover the value of the boat itself. However, as prices for some goods such as potash were so high at Montreal, Woolsey feared that the money received from even one cargo smuggled by this boat would, if necessary, cover the forfeiture of the bond, building a new boat, and still leave a profit for the smugglers.

On 18 May Woolsey and the *Oneida* sailed from Sackets Harbor for Oswego along with Hart Massey, the collector of the customs for the District of Sackets Harbor, to attend the collector’s meeting. They were off Oswego on the 20<sup>th</sup> but the weather was so bad that day they could not land and were forced to return to Sackets Harbor. Five days later the weather was better and Woolsey returned to Oswego, this time to inspect Forman’s shot for the 24 pound carronades and the kentledge. He was pleased with the kentledge but thought that the shot might be too small for the brig’s carronades.

On 3 June the *Oneida* sailed again, this time on a cruise to the westward. The next day, off Pultneyville NY, Woolsey “discovered three sail to windward apparently standing in for [the] Genesee River.” He gave chase but night fell before he could close with them. The following morning only two of the schooners were visible. Woolsey, following the rules for enforcing the embargo he received from Hamilton in April, closed with the British schooner *Lord Nelson*, compelled her to stop by fired a shot across her bow and sent a party on board to inspect her cargo.<sup>161</sup>

Woolsey discovered that the *Lord Nelson*, which claimed to be sailing from the British village of Prescott on the St. Lawrence River to Niagara (or Newark) on the Canadian side of the mouth of the Niagara River, “had no papers on board other than a loose journal and a bill of lading for a part of her cargo, but no register, licence or clearance.”

Furthermore she had an American captain, John Johnston. Woolsey became convinced that

*Whether it was intended to smuggle her cargo on our shores, or whether she was hovering along our shores to take on board property for the Canada market in violation of the Embargo law I was not able to determine — But appearances were such as to warrant a suspicion of an intention to smuggle both ways.*

As Hamilton's rules only required a "strong suspicion" of the intention to act in violation of the embargo law before seizing a vessel, Woolsey took the *Lord Nelson's* crew on board the *Oneida* and ordered Gunner John Hill and a few members of the *Oneida's* crew to sail her to Sackets Harbor. He then set off in pursuit of the second schooner, the *Mary Hatt*, but she managed to cross the boundary line that ran down the middle of the lake and escape, as Woolsey was prohibited from interfering with vessels in Canadian waters. The *Oneida* then returned to Sackets Harbor.<sup>162</sup> The newspapers reported that she was worth \$4,100 and her cargo \$3,500.<sup>163</sup> She was purchased from the prize court by the navy, but for only \$2,999.25, and renamed *Scourge*.<sup>164</sup>

### **Mrs. McCormick's Trunks**

After he arrived at Sackets Harbor, Lieutenant Woolsey ordered Purser Darragh to take an inventory of the *Lord Nelson's* cargo. To his "astonishment and mortification" the cargo included a group of seven trunks containing

*The private ward robe of Mrs McCormick of Queenston in Upper Canada which said trunks were forwarded to her by her father, a respectable gentleman of Montreal.*<sup>165</sup>

Clearly there was no intent to smuggle this cargo, it was private property. Worse, it was the property of a respectable British lady. Shortly afterwards, war was declared which complicated matters. Woolsey wrote to Lieutenant Colonel John Fenwick at Fort Niagara and asked him to send a letter to Mrs. McCormick's husband across the Niagara River under a flag of truce and reassure him "that the effects of Mrs McCormick were in safe keeping, and should be kept so subject to his order." Woolsey planned to return the trunks to the lady as quickly as possible.

He should have known better. The prize regulations included in the *Articles of War*, under which the *Lord Nelson* and her entire cargo now were governed, required that the vessel, her equipment and her cargo be sold at auction with a portion of the proceeds belonging to the captors: the crew of the *Oneida*. To dispose of a part of the cargo before court proceedings were complete was known as "breaking bulk" and was not allowed.<sup>166</sup> Shortly after Woolsey wrote to Colonel Fenwick, Peter Curtenius, the U. S. District Marshal, arrived at Sackets Harbor and informed Woolsey that the lady's trunks must be included in the auction. Curtenius told Woolsey that he expected he could "bid them off for a nominal price 'for form sake.'" Both Woolsey and Curtenius assumed that when the circumstances became known, no one would contest Woolsey's five dollar bid to allow him to return the lady's property promptly and intact.

Once again, Woolsey should have known better. As the trunks were available for public inspection, the women of the village grew attached to their contents and encouraged their men folk to acquire them. As Woolsey wrote to Secretary Hamilton,

*To my great astonishment I found a party of men who having no regard for either their own or their country's honor, were determined to oppose me and to run the effects before mentioned up to a high price. In order to silence them I bid five thousand dollars, at which price they were struck off to me.<sup>167</sup>*

Woolsey now owed Marshal Curtenius \$5,000 for goods whose “real value could certainly not exceed five hundred dollars.” Woolsey didn’t have the money. Furthermore, any solution he would propose involved the rights of his crew to their share of the prize money, now including the \$5,000 bid. Woolsey must have been persuasive as he obtained a letter, signed by his entire crew, relinquishing all their claims to the value of the clothes, bedding and other household items belonging to Mrs. Margaret McCormick.

With that settled, Marshal Curtenius agreed to have the trunks and their contents appraised and to re-auction them provided Woolsey promised to pay at least the appraised value. That value turned out to be \$380 which was as hard for Woolsey to pay as was his original bid. When the second auction took place Woolsey and the *Oneida* were at sea, but Woolsey had some of his friends handle the bidding. This time the auction went as expected and Woolsey was now relieved of his \$5,000 obligation under the original bid. The marshal agreed to wait some weeks for payment while Woolsey applied to the Treasury Department or to Congress for “relief.”

By late February 1813 Woolsey still lacked the money to pay for the trunks. He then wrote new Navy Secretary William Jones asking for his support, as did Colonel Alexander Macomb to Secretary of War John Armstrong.<sup>168</sup> Jones discussed the matter with the Treasury Department, but concluded it must wait until the next session of Congress convened in May. Jones, however, promised to give the matter his support.<sup>169</sup>

Woolsey replied to Jones providing additional details of the affair and affidavits supporting his wish to be “exonerated” from this latest obligation. There is no record that Woolsey ever paid the money, nor does it appear that the amount was charged against him on his accounts with the navy department. Happily for Woolsey, it appears the matter was settled somehow. Unhappily for Margaret McCormick, when she finally received her trunks after the war, most of their contents had disappeared, probably into the homes of the residents of Sackets Harbor.

There the matter would have ended save for a chance encounter 14 years later. In the fall of 1826 retired U. S. Army Major Henry Lee was travelling on board ship from Niagara to Kingston. One of his fellow passengers was Mrs. Margaret McCormick, on her way to Montreal. Also on board were a number of British officers who commented favorably on some American officers they had met. Mrs. McCormick agreed in general, but, as Lee wrote to Secretary of the Navy Samuel L. Southard, she

*Would name one officer who she thought could have no pretensions to the character of a gentleman. She then named Capt Woolsey — and said that during the last war he had taken a quantity of her wearing apparel & had not returned it to her though applied to.<sup>170</sup>*

Mrs. McCormick provided Major Lee with papers she claimed proved that Woolsey was “justly accountable to her for the property she lost.” She insisted that Lee forward those letters to the Secretary of the Navy for action.

Secretary Southard received the letters and investigated the matter, but his reply to Mrs. McCormick consisted of one line, announcing the return of her papers and there the

matter ended.<sup>171</sup> Southard realized that the entire affair was the result of Woolsey's gallant but ill-advised promise to do something the law would not allow. However, given the immediacy of war, there was little chance that Mrs. McCormick would have had her property returned intact whatever Woolsey did.

### ***Woolsey's War***

On 18 June 1812 the United States declared war on Great Britain. Six days later the *Oneida* was at Oswego when Lieutenant Woolsey heard of the war, although unofficially and probably from a newspaper. Convinced of the correctness of the news he ordered the *Oneida* to return immediately to Sackets Harbor. Once there Woolsey received official notice of the war from Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Bellinger, commanding the detachment of New York militia stationed at Sackets Harbor.

Now at war, Woolsey was concerned that the *Oneida's* crew was still incomplete. Colonel Bellinger permitted Lieutenant Daniel Stanton and a number of militia men to volunteer to serve as marines on board the *Oneida* for one cruise "or until they should be demanded by the colonel." Woolsey completed his crew by accepting the lieutenant and 30 of the volunteers and asked Secretary Hamilton for permission to pay each man a bounty of five dollars for his service, a request later approved by Hamilton. Clearly this was not a long term solution and these men would not be as useful on board as regular seamen or Marines. Nevertheless, Woolsey informed Secretary Hamilton that the *Oneida* would "be off in quest of the enemy" as soon as the weather permitted.<sup>172</sup>

Two days later the *Oneida* was back off Oswego in company with the merchant schooner *Julia*. Woolsey wanted to take the *Julia* into naval service as a gunboat and planned to arm her with the 32 pound pivot gun he left at Oswego on 1810. He also found three six pound cannon at Oswego and he wrote Joshua Forman at Onondaga to order a supply of six pound shot. Woolsey recognized that he was taking actions without prior approval from the Navy Department, but he excused this because he believed it was "absolutely necessary to bring all our resources in this quarter into action as soon as possible."<sup>173</sup> In this Woolsey was correct and well in advance of most of the army officers charged with conducting the war. Circumstances and orders, however, were to delay that action for some time.

A week later the *Oneida* returned to Sackets Harbor from an uneventful cruise on the lake to report to Secretary Hamilton that

*The Royal George twenty two guns and Earl of Moira of fourteen guns are now nearly ready for service and moored off Kingston. Some suppose that all their naval resources will be directed to these two ships and that they will be kept at Kingston for the purpose of defending that place — but I have no doubt but that an attempt will be made by them on the Oneida.*<sup>174</sup>

The *Oneida* left Sackets Harbor shortly thereafter on another uneventful cruise. While the ships of the Provincial Marine were sailing the lake at this time, the *Oneida* never encountered them. On 10 July, while visiting Oswego in the *Oneida*, Woolsey reported to Secretary Hamilton that he believed the British had seven armed vessels on the lake and were arming more at Kingston for a total of 11 warships mounting 95 guns. Consequently Woolsey was trying to augment the *Oneida's* 18 guns by mounting the 32 pound pivot gun and the three six-pounders on board the *Lord Nelson* and *Julia* but was having

difficulty doing it.<sup>175</sup> Even augmented he knew his force was badly outnumbered and outgunned. Woolsey, however, was overestimating the British force on the lake, which at that time numbered only four warships mounting 52 guns.<sup>176</sup>

On Saturday, 18 July, the *Julia* arrived from Oswego with the 32 pound pivot gun and mount as well as the three six-pounders aboard. The pivot gun was quickly emplaced in a battery built on the bluff overlooking the harbor, a site later known as Fort Tompkins. This was none too soon.

Early the next morning, Sunday, 19 July 1812, the crew of the *Oneida* awoke to see five vessels sailing slowly towards the harbor. The Provincial Marine was paying the village a visit. These vessels were the ships *Royal George* and *Earl of Moira* and the schooners *Prince Regent*, *Governor Simcoe* and *Seneca*. The latter two were merchantmen and very likely unarmed. The Provincial Marine's commander, Hugh Earl, brought them along to make his force appear more formidable. Even without them, however, on paper the British force was far superior to that of the *Oneida*.

When they appeared, Woolsey's first instinct was to sail the *Oneida* out to meet them. The wind was blowing from the east which was slowing the British and giving the *Oneida* time to get out of Black River Bay and into a favorable position on the lake. No sooner had the *Oneida* sailed, about 8 a.m. that morning, than the wind shifted to the north, allowing the British to increase their speed, concentrate their force and block the *Oneida*'s path to the lake.

Lieutenant Woolsey now believed he no longer had "sea room or wind enough to work to advantage." He ordered the *Oneida* to come about and return to the harbor. There he "let go my stream anchor with a spring upon the cable dismantled all the starboard guns and had them mounted on the battery." The "battery" referred to the location on the bluff overlooking the harbor that now contained the 32-pound pivot gun.<sup>177</sup>



*The Provincial Marine sails towards Sackets Harbor on 19 July 1812. The rig of the leftmost vessel should be a schooner, not a brig. Painting at Flower Memorial Library, Watertown NY. Photograph by the author.*

It took time, probably some hours, to dismount nine 24-pound carronades and their slides, move them on shore, take them uphill and mount them securely on the battery. Each carronade and slide weighted about a ton and Woolsey needed help. Village resident Hezekiah Wing received \$3.00 that day for the use of

his boat and his time helping to dismount and land the guns.<sup>178</sup> By the time the carronades were in place the British had departed, having done no damage to the *Oneida* or the village and suffering little damage themselves.



Based on what he knew at the time, Woolsey's decision not to fight the British on the lake is understandable. From the viewpoint of later events, however, this was a mistake. While it appeared the *Oneida* was badly outmatched it was almost certain that she would have faced only the *Royal George*. The *Governor Simcoe* and *Seneca* were almost certainly unarmed, and the *Earl of Moira* and *Prince Regent* had small crews. There were a number of men from the Royal Newfoundland Fencibles on board acting as marines, but they had little if any training for and no experience with naval combat. So long as the *Oneida* did not attempt to board, they would be of little value in a fight. Furthermore, the rest of Commander Earl's crew were basically merchant seamen who had agreed to take the King's shilling to transport goods around the lake, not to fight a naval battle with the Americans. There is also no record that the Provincial Marine had regularly scheduled gunnery practice before the war, or any gunnery practice at all. Firing a 32-pound carronade would likely have been a new experience for almost every member of the British crew. It is also questionable how far discipline would hold up after the *Royal George* began to suffer damage and casualties in a fight.

The *Oneida*, on the other hand, had a regular navy crew as well as a Marine complement, both under naval discipline. They, unlike the British crews, were trained for and could be expected to follow orders in a fight. There were some volunteer citizens on board as marines but they were augmenting a crew itself adequate to fight the brig.

Had Woolsey elected to fight, based on the timidity shown by the Provincial Marine later in 1812 and assuming the British did not run away, it is likely that the *Oneida* would have taken the *Royal George* and perhaps the *Earl of Moira* as well. That victory, occurring a month before the U. S. frigate *Constitution* overcame HMS *Guerriere*, and in a situation where the apparent force ratio was so much more in favor of the British, would have made the *Oneida* famous, probably gained Woolsey a two-step promotion from lieutenant to captain, and greatly distressed the British for the remainder of the war.<sup>179</sup> It was a lost opportunity.



Model of the *Oneida* showing four of her starboard 24-pound carronades as well as two carronades on the port side.  
Model by Clayton Nans. Photograph by the author.

Two weeks later, on 3 August, Woolsey and the *Oneida* had another opportunity. Late that day the *Royal George* appeared, alone, off Sackets Harbor. Unfortunately, fearing another attack by the British, Woolsey had left all of the *Oneida*'s starboard carronades on shore. This was understandable as he had taken the 32-pound pivot gun and two of the six pounders and mounted them on board the schooner *Julia*. He then dispatched that vessel down the St. Lawrence River to Ogdensburg at the beginning of August, under the



command of Acting Lieutenant Henry Wells, to protect the merchant schooners which had been trapped there at the outbreak of war. Without the *Oneida*'s carronades, Sackets Harbor's shore battery would have only one six and two nine pounders. Nevertheless, keeping those carronades on shore was a mistake as a fully armed *Oneida* would have been more effective in defending Sackets Harbor than a shore battery. Woolsey reported to Secretary Hamilton that as the *Oneida* was only half armed it was impossible for him to challenge the *Royal George*. Recognizing his mistake he then informed Hamilton that "I have them [the nine carronades] now all on board and shall sail with the first wind on a cruise." Woolsey, however, warned Hamilton that he was "about to sail without a single officer that has seen any service in the navy—Not one of my midshipmen have ever been at sea—against a greatly superior force."<sup>180</sup>

There is no record that the *Oneida* actually sailed that day and it is doubtful that she sailed at all. Woolsey reported to Secretary Hamilton five days later that Lieutenant Wells did not return from Ogdensburg until 5 August. That same day Woolsey sent orders for the rest of the *Julia*'s crew that came from the *Oneida* to return promptly to Sackets Harbor. Without his only lieutenant and many of his crew, Woolsey and the *Oneida* would have remained at Sackets Harbor.<sup>181</sup>

At the end of August Woolsey was reassured that his actions over the past two months were correct. Navy Secretary Hamilton wrote Woolsey on 22 August informing him that he had "the pleasure to say that your conduct & that of the officers & men under your command, is highly approved by the President." Despite this approval, Woolsey was still worried that the *Oneida* alone was not adequate to defend Sackets Harbor. With a temporary truce now in effect, the merchant schooners at Ogdensburg were now free and on their way up the St. Lawrence River. Woolsey wanted 64 more cannon to arm those vessels, plus 30 more "heavy pieces" for the shore battery. Secretary Hamilton had informed him that Isaac Chauncey at New York had been ordered to send twenty, 32-pound carronades to Sackets Harbor, but they had not yet arrived. Woolsey promised Hamilton that if he received all he had asked for "I promise you the mastery on this Lake and the consequent reduction of Upper Canada."<sup>182</sup>

This task would not be Woolsey's. Despite the applause from Hamilton and President Madison, Woolsey and the *Oneida* had not been as successful in opposing the British as they could have been. This was the time to take risks. Woolsey, however, as a lieutenant holding a command normally the province of a master commandant, never felt justified in taking a risk. At the end of August 1812, both the *Oneida* and Sackets Harbor remained operational and undamaged, but so was the British Provincial Marine. On Lake Ontario the first two and a half months of war ended in a draw, which was not the way for the Americans to conquer Canada.

On 25 August Woolsey received word that Brigadier General William Hull had surrendered his entire army at Detroit to the British. This news put an end to any thought Woolsey had of risking an action with the British on the lake. As he reported to Washington, he now focused on arming the merchant schooners as gunboats.<sup>183</sup>

On 31 August 1812, Captain Isaac Chauncey, commandant of the New York Navy Yard, received orders from the Navy Department to take the command on the lakes. When war broke out Chauncey wrote Secretary Hamilton offering his services afloat. Hamilton took over a month to reply and then only to thank Chauncey for his willingness to serve but telling him that no such command was available.<sup>184</sup> That changed once word of Hull's surrender reached Washington. President Madison quickly became convinced that taking and holding the command of lakes Ontario and Erie was absolutely essential, and Isaac Chauncey was the man to do it. He was appointed commodore and commander-in-chief of American naval forces on those lakes with as broad and unrestricted a set of orders as were ever sent to any officer in the history of the United States Navy:

*The President of the United States has determined to obtain command of the Lakes Ontario & Erie, with the least possible delay — and the execution of this highly important object is committed to you.*

*With respect to the means to be employed, you will consider yourself unrestrained, minor interests must yield to the greater. The object must be accomplished; and all the means which you may judge essential, must be employed.*

*In addition to the public vessels now on the Lakes — you are at liberty to purchase, hire or build, in your discretion, such others and of such form & armament, as may in your opinion be necessary.*<sup>185</sup>

The letter went on to cover a broad range of additional topics and to make it clear to Chauncey that in obtaining naval superiority on the lakes he had “unlimited authority.” In the same letter Chauncey was ordered to inform Lieutenant Woolsey that he was being superseded in command but, as Hamilton stressed to Chauncey, this action by the president

*Arises from no want of confidence in him, that on the contrary his conduct has in all respects, been highly approved, and that if the sphere of command had not been extended, no officer would be appointed over him.*

If Woolsey had been successful fighting the Provincial Marine and been promoted to captain, it is almost certain that he would have been left in command on Lake Ontario and probably gained the command on Lake Erie as well. Now, however, Woolsey would lose his command entirely; the *Oneida* would become Chauncey's flagship.

Chauncey wrote to Woolsey on 3 September. To his credit, Chauncey was candid about his feelings regarding his promotion:

*This service altho' extremely honorable and flattering to my feelings has given me pain on account of superceding a worthy and meritorious officer whose intrepidity and valor I have witnessed on more than one occasion.*<sup>186</sup>

Woolsey received Chauncey's letter four days later and he was gracious in his reply to Secretary Hamilton:



*Commodore Isaac Chauncey, from a painting at Flower Memorial Library, Watertown NY. Photograph by the author.*

*The delicacy you feel at superceding me and the manner you are pleased to express yourself of my past conduct Sir let me assure you I feel much flattered with*

Still, it must have been a bitter pill to swallow. With the naval force on Lake Ontario likely to expand it would only be natural for Woolsey to expect that lieutenants with more seniority and even masters commandant would eventually appear on the lake. Instead of commanding the 18-gun *Oneida*, Woolsey might be just one more lieutenant, commanding, if he was lucky, a small schooner.

### **Press Wars - Oneida vs. Royal George**

During the first few months of the war American newspapers, eager for news, printed pretty much any “fact” that came their way. On Lake Ontario, this often involved actions between the *Oneida* and the Provincial Marine’s 20-gun *Royal George*. One of the first such reports appeared less than three weeks after the declaration of war, “direct from Sackets Harbor,” when the New York *Mercantile Advertiser* reported

*The brig Oneida, capt. Woolsey, had captured the British sloop of war Royal George, the largest vessel the English had upon the lake.*<sup>187</sup>

Of course this never happened. The report originated in Geneva NY, about 150 miles from Sackets Harbor and well inland, where “some guns were heard from the northward” and a conclusion reached that the two warships “had an engagement on Lake Ontario.”

On 13 July, newspapers spread the word that the *Oneida*, after a “desperate action of 4 hours” had captured the *Royal George* and brought her into Ogdensburg.<sup>188</sup> This rumor was apparently, but incorrectly, confirmed a day later in the *Mercantile Advertiser*:

*A gentleman arrived in town on Sunday evening from Aurora ... he informs that ... two gentlemen of respectability came in from Sacket’s Harbor and told the company that they saw the British brig Royal George brought into that port, in shattered condition, having been captured by the U. States brig Oneida.*<sup>189</sup>

Sometimes the same newspaper printed contradictory articles. The *National Intelligencer* did so when it reported that the *Royal George* had been captured by the *Oneida* and that the *Oneida* had been captured by the *Royal George*, both in the same edition of the paper.<sup>190</sup> Choose the news you prefer.

Some newspaper reports were optimistic. The *Boston Gazette* credited the *Oneida* with 20, 32-pound carronades, a broadside almost 50% greater than it actually was.<sup>191</sup> Some reports were pessimistic. The *Buffalo Gazette* reported that the ships of the Provincial Marine outgunned the *Oneida* 70 to 18 and that she “will be hauled up, should there be no prospect of gaining any advantage of the British.”<sup>192</sup>

Incorrect reports of the *Oneida* and *Royal George* fighting persisted throughout the summer of 1812 and were widespread. An article in the *Connecticut Gazette* had the *Royal George* brought into Sackets Harbor in a “very shattered condition” after a “desperate action.”<sup>193</sup>

Even the Canadian newspapers succumbed to early-war “news fever” over the two warships. The *Montreal Gazette* informed its readers that the *Oneida* was “in pursuit of” the *Royal George* on 1 July.<sup>194</sup> However, the paper’s next issue reassured the public by calling that report “a mere fabrication,” the *Royal George* being “safe at Kingston.”<sup>195</sup>

American newspapers also began to print retractions. The *Geneva Gazette* did so on 29 July when it informed its readers that

*The report of the Royal George having been captured by the Oneida, like most rumors of the day, proves to be unfounded.*<sup>196</sup>

Later in the war American newspapers prefaced reports that seemed a bit too optimistic with headlines such as “Good News! – If true.”<sup>197</sup>

### ***Fighting the Provincial Marine***

Isaac Chauncey arrived at Sackets Harbor on 6 October 1812 accompanied by New York Governor Daniel D. Tompkins. The afternoon of their arrival they, along with New York Militia Brigadier General Richard Dodge, were received on board the *Oneida* with a “salute of 15 guns and three cheers from the sailors on the round top dressed in white pantaloons.”<sup>198</sup>

Chauncey “found the *Oneida* in good order, and completely prepared for service.” After consulting with Woolsey, he concluded that the *Oneida* alone would not be sufficient to contest command of the lake with the Provincial Marine. He made arrangements to purchase and arm most of the American merchant schooners, expecting to “be ready to proceed on service by the first of November; in which case I shall seek the enemy on the lake, and if not to be found there I will look for him within his own waters.”<sup>199</sup>

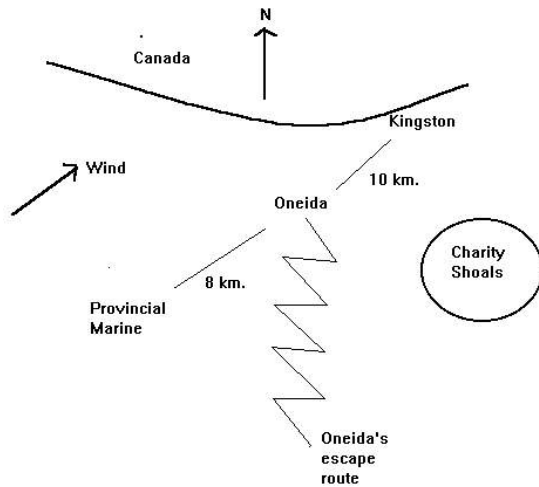
For Chauncey to meet his self-imposed schedule, however, a large quantity of ordnance and naval stores would have to arrive at Sackets Harbor. Knowing the poor condition of the roads leading to the harbor (“the worst roads I ever saw, particularly near this place”) Chauncey ordered everything delivered to Oswego where it could be forwarded by water to Sackets Harbor. As late as 21 October, however, nothing had arrived. To discover the reason for the delay, Chauncey himself went to Oswego and then upriver to Oswego Falls<sup>200</sup> “in hopes I should hear something of them but not a word.” This was a serious problem; winter was fast approaching as Chauncey recognized in a letter to Secretary Hamilton:

*This delay is mortifying beyond description particularly at this advanced season of the year. I trust that you will not blame me if I should not be able to accomplish the wishes of the government this fall. I cannot do it without the means and I have exerted myself to the utmost to get these means forward but have been frustrated in all my endeavours.*<sup>201</sup>

This was the first of a lengthy series of letters explaining his inaction which Isaac Chauncey would write to the Navy Department over the next two and a half years. Chauncey’s approach was to make a decision, then become rigidly attached to it. In this case he decided that he needed those armed schooners and he would not change his mind and act until they were ready. Chauncey focused on the material opposing him on the lake, the ships and guns, instead of the men. In this case, without prior personal experience with the Provincial Marine, his caution was understandable, if regrettable based on future events.

Chauncey’s mind was eased when he heard that seven boats with ordnance and supplies had arrived at Oswego Falls and he dispatched Woolsey to make sure they were forwarded to Sackets Harbor as fast as possible. This delay, however, had pushed his readiness date back well into November.

Chauncey returned to Sackets Harbor on 25 October on board the schooner *Charles and Ann* along with the first of the ordnance and stores. In Woolsey's absence, he then ordered the crew of the *Oneida* to prepare her "for heaving down to clean her bottom" which was expected to take three days. Chauncey also wrote the Navy Department asking to be sent a number of copies of the current signal books.<sup>202</sup>



*Oneida's Encounter with the Provincial Marine,  
3 November 1812*

On the evening of 2 November the guard on Horse Island, off Sackets Harbor, reported sighting a British schooner. Chauncey immediately sailed with the *Oneida* towards Kingston "determined to cut her off if possible." The night was "very dark and rainy with Squalls." This was Chauncey's first experience sailing the lake and he was without Woolsey's guidance – Woolsey was still at Oswego. When the morning haze cleared the *Oneida* was unexpectedly just four miles off the Canadian shore and just six miles from Kingston. Worse, at anchor five miles southwest and to windward Chauncey saw the Provincial Marine warships *Royal George*, *Duke of Gloucester* and *Prince Regent*.

Chauncey knew he was in trouble. The *Oneida* was boxed in – the Canadian shore northwest, Kingston northeast, the Charity Shoal southeast and the enemy southwest. The British had the weather gauge and "it was out of our power to avoid an action." The *Oneida* prepared for a fight and sailed south in an attempt to escape, coming as close as four miles to the British squadron. The *Oneida* remained visible to the British for four hours, during which time the enemy "took no notice of us whatever."<sup>203</sup>

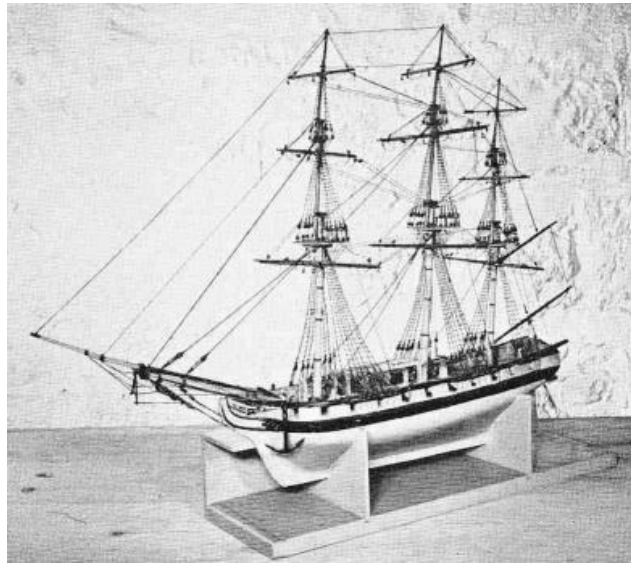
In a letter to Secretary Hamilton, Chauncey explained that as the *Oneida* would have appeared to be coming from Kingston, the enemy "must have supposed us one of his own vessels."<sup>204</sup> This was absurd and Chauncey had to know it because the *Oneida* was the only brig-rigged vessel on the lake at the time, a fact well known to both the British and the *Oneida*'s crew. It is not reasonable to assume that every lookout on board the three Provincial Marine warships failed to sight the *Oneida* less than five miles away on a clear day and give the alarm. The British inactivity was deliberate – they did not want an engagement with the *Oneida* and probably heaved a sigh of relief when she just sailed past. It is possible that Provincial Marine Commander Hugh Earl was not even on board.

Chauncey's initial fears were completely understandable. He was outnumbered, outgunned and in a very bad tactical situation. Once he passed to the south of the Provincial Marine without any action on their part, however, he should have realized that the enemy clearly did not want to fight. Consequently this was a good opportunity to force them to do so. Had the *Oneida* come about and closed with the British it would likely have been the Provincial Marine and not the *Oneida* that would have been in trouble. A likely victory over the *Royal George* would have accomplished President

Madison's orders and Chauncey's objective: American control of Lake Ontario in 1812. It would also have made defending Canada in 1813 much more difficult.

In his letters Chauncey gave no indication that he ever considered fighting the Provincial Marine. Instead, he "thought with Falstaff that 'the better part of valor was discretion,' & so I left them until a more convenient time."<sup>205</sup> He had previously concluded that the *Oneida* alone was not up to the task and he persisted in that opinion even when it was clear that while the material he was facing was superior the men were not. This was yet another lost opportunity.

Once back at Sackets Harbor, Chauncey informed Secretary Hamilton that he believed the three Provincial Marine warships he encountered off Kingston had since proceeded to Niagara with supplies. Therefore he intended to proceed with the *Oneida* and six armed schooners to a point near the False Ducks Islands where he could intercept the British vessels on their return to Kingston. Chauncey continued to mix optimistic pronouncements with pessimistic observations: "I hope to give a good account of the Enemy although he is more than double our force in guns and men."<sup>206</sup> If he succeeded in intercepting and defeating the Provincial Marine on the lake, he would then "make an attack upon Kingston for the purpose of destroying the guns and publick [sic] stores at that station" although Chauncey failed to explain how that could be accomplished without the strong landing force he did not have.<sup>207</sup>



Model of the Royal George at Fort Henry, Kingston, Ontario.

On the evening of 7 November 1812, Isaac Chauncey left Sackets Harbor in the *Oneida* along with six armed schooners and sailed for Kingston.<sup>208</sup> The next day, as hoped, he found the *Royal George* sailing towards Kingston. This time it was the British who tried to escape by running west into the Bay of Quinte. Night fell and Chauncey lost sight of her.

While in the Bay of Quinte the *Oneida* discovered the schooner *Two Brothers* being repaired at Ernesttown.<sup>209</sup> Her sails and rigging had been removed and, unable to take her away, Chauncey ordered her set on fire.



*Flight of the Royal George, 9 November 1812*  
*Painting by Peter Rindlisbacher, used with permission*

During the night the *Royal George* slipped past Chauncey's squadron and reached Kingston channel where the *Oneida* spotted her the following morning, 9 November. During the chase the *Oneida* encountered the British merchant schooner *Mary Hatt* on her way from Niagara to Kingston, took her as a prize and ordered the schooner *Growler* to escort her part way to Sackets Harbor. The *Oneida* and the rest of the schooners then pursued the *Royal George* into Kingston harbor.

For almost two hours late that afternoon the *Oneida* and the schooners exchanged shots with the *Royal George* and the Kingston shore batteries without much success. As Chauncey himself reported afterwards

*I had made up my mind to board her, but she was so well protected by the batteries and wind blowing directly in, it was deemed imprudent to make the attempt at that time: the pilots also refused to take charge of the vessels.*<sup>210</sup>

On board the *Oneida* as a volunteer to "record its incidents" was Surgeon Walter W. Buchanan who had joined Chauncey at Sackets Harbor to manage the affairs of the naval hospital on shore. Buchanan recorded what he observed until "professional calls to attend the wounded rendered it necessary for him to quit the Deck."<sup>211</sup>

As night fell Chauncey broke off the action, the *Oneida* having had Seaman Thomas Garnet killed and three wounded in the affair along with "one gun dismantled and one strand of the sheet cable cut" plus "a few shot through our sails." The *Oneida* spent the night anchored off Four Mile Point, close to Kingston. Chauncey planned to resume the action in the morning but it was not to be. That night the weather deteriorated, with near gale-force winds. Chauncey "(very reluctantly) deferred renewing the attack upon the ship and forts until a more favorable opportunity." That opportunity never occurred.



At 7 a.m. the next morning the *Oneida* and her gaggle of schooners sailed west into the open lake. Three hours later Chauncey sighted the British merchant schooner *Governor Simcoe* heading for Kingston. Chauncey dispatched the schooners to capture her but, once again, he was disappointed. The *Governor Simcoe*, with knowledge of the area, led her pursuers into shallow water and escaped.<sup>212</sup> The *Oneida* and all the schooners except *Growler* then returned to Sackets Harbor, arriving on the evening of 12 November.

*Growler* herself was delayed. After escorting the prize *Mary Hatt*, she encountered the British schooner *Elizabeth* and took her as a prize before returning to Sackets Harbor.

In his report to Secretary Hamilton, Chauncey correctly stated that he had accomplished the president's objective:

*I think I can say with great propriety that we have now the command of the Lake and that we can transport troops and stores to any part of it without any risk of an attack from the enemy.*<sup>213</sup>

Chauncey, however, knew there was more to do. With the *Royal George* now at Kingston and presumably damaged there remained the 14-gun *Earl of Moira* and the schooners *Duke of Gloucester* and *Prince Regent* to dispose of. Chauncey was confident that, if necessary, the *Oneida* alone could accomplish that task. Chauncey planned to take the *Oneida* to Niagara in the hopes of finding the British vessels along the way and to "land some guns and stores that I have taken on board for that purpose".

This plan changed when the *Growler* returned with her prize and reported that on her way to Sackets Harbor she passed within two miles of the *Earl of Moira*. Despite the onset of a heavy snow storm, Chauncey immediately sailed with the *Oneida* and the other schooners to try to cut the *Earl* off from Kingston. The weather, however, became so bad that Chauncey was forced to quickly return to Sackets Harbor. He still planned to sail to Niagara, correctly believing that he was "completely master of this Lake."<sup>214</sup>

Chauncey sailed again on 19 November. However, as he reported to Secretary Hamilton,

*We had scarcely cleared the harbor before the wind shifted to the westward and increased to a gale accompanied with a severe snowstorm. The cold was so intense and the ice made so fast upon the small vessels that I was (from motives of humanity and prudence) obliged to return to port where we have remained ever since.*<sup>215</sup>

The following day Chauncey reported that

*From the advanced season of the year I think that any expedition by water would be attended with much difficulty and great danger of the loss of our little naval force, and of consequence, of the ascendancy that we have obtained on this Lake.*<sup>216</sup>

The war on Lake Ontario was over for 1812. Thanks to the *Oneida* and a few armed schooners but more so to the passivity of the Provincial Marine, the United States controlled Lake Ontario. That control, however, was reached much too late in the year to be useful. By mid-November it was winter on the lake and Canada was safe until spring. The *Oneida* and the rest of the squadron settled in for a long winter's idleness at Sackets Harbor.

Although there were missed opportunities that fall, these were not immediately recognized in Washington. President Madison was pleased, and Chauncey received a letter from Secretary Hamilton informing him that

*The patriotism, zeal, valor & ability which have marked the progress of your conduct, have been particularly noticed by the President who has desired me to express to you his highest approbation.*<sup>217</sup>

Forgotten in all this was the fact that it was Lieutenant Melancthon Woolsey's efforts between June and October 1812 that prepared the foundation for what little Chauncey accomplished in November. Woolsey, who had spent weeks at Oswego in October and early November accumulating ordnance and stores to arm the schooners, remained the senior lieutenant on the station. As such he resumed his command of the *Oneida* in late November.

Woolsey's efforts at Oswego, however, did not please Chauncey. The commodore wanted the supplies to arm three additional schooners and he wanted them immediately. He wrote letters to Woolsey at Oswego on 31 October and again on 5 November questioning Woolsey and stating he was "much disappointed" with his efforts. He informed Woolsey that because of his failure, Chauncey would now be "seeking the enemy" with only the *Oneida* and five schooners "and those not well armed or fitted."<sup>218</sup> Once again circumstances effected Woolsey's career. Unlike before, this time it was not his fault. He had no control over how fast supplies arrived at Oswego, he was only responsible in Chauncey's eyes when they did not arrive.

Had Woolsey been more fortunate and returned to Sackets Harbor with the supplies by the end of October, Chauncey, who was previously pleased with Woolsey's conduct, could have appointed him an acting master commandant and formally second in command of the navy at Sackets Harbor. He had that authority. Instead, in December that post was filled by Master Commandant James T. Leonard. Woolsey had to wait until July 1813 to receive his promotion.

While Master Commandant Leonard's arrival at Sackets Harbor in December 1812 meant that Woolsey was no longer Chauncey's second in command, thanks to the efforts of Henry Eckford, Woolsey remained captain of the *Oneida*. In September, Isaac Chauncey dispatched shipwright Henry Eckford from New York to Sackets Harbor to build a new warship. That warship, the 24-gun corvette *Madison*, was to become Commodore Chauncey's flagship at the start of the 1813 season and commanded by Leonard.

One matter at least, the ammunition for the *Oneida*'s 24-pound carronades, was no longer a problem. Chauncey had more than he needed. The second half of Onondaga Furnace's shot contract was due in September and the owner, Joshua Forman, had delivered it to Oswego, where it sat awaiting inspection by the navy. On 7 November Chauncey wrote to Forman that he would dispatch an officer to perform that inspection "as soon as one can be spared from more important duties" but that he was "not aware that we shall require any more shot this winter." Even after her attack on Kingston, the *Oneida* was not short of shot.<sup>219</sup>

One periodic task at Sackets Harbor was convening a court martial to try men whose offenses were more serious than could be punished by the captain of the man's ship. One such court was held on board the *Oneida* on 7 December 1812 under the presidency of Lieutenant Woolsey joined by Lieutenants Thomas Brown, Jesse Elliott, Joseph MacPherson and Henry Wells.<sup>220</sup>

One man, Seaman Elkanah Magoon of the *Oneida*, was accused of mutinous conduct for striking Midshipman Cadwallader Billings. Four other men were also tried for desertion and mutinous conduct, a typical agenda for a wartime court at Sackets Harbor.<sup>221</sup> All were convicted by the court, but Seaman Magoon had his sentence remitted by Commodore Chauncey who placed Midshipman Billings under arrest for "ungentlemanly and unofficerlike conduct, cruelty and oppression." Billings had first abused, then drawn his sword and stabbed Magoon, who was unarmed.

It was desertion, however, that really annoyed Chauncey:

*The Commodore is sorry and mortified to see a disposition manifested amongst the men under his command to desert, particularly as he believes there is not a man but what was a volunteer. The crime of desertion at all times of a most heinous character becomes doubly so in time of war, for the citizen who would basely desert the cause of his country at a time that she required his services, is both a Traitor & a Coward, and the Commodore most sincerely hopes that from the present example he shall not again have the mortification to sanction punishment for a crime so base.*<sup>222</sup>

Chauncey should not have been surprised. Compared with New York, new arrivals at Sackets Harbor found the village to be "a miserable cold place on the shore of Lake Ontario."<sup>223</sup>

In 1812 the navy agent at New York City, Dr. John Bullus, paid \$4,096.35 for repairs to the *Oneida*. Since beginning in October 1812 Commodore Chauncey acted as his own navy agent at Sackets Harbor, it is probable that these expenses were incurred before that time. This was a significant sum but unfortunately the details of this expenditure have not yet been found.<sup>224</sup>

### ***The Oneida's Impact on the War in 1812***

From mid-June 1812 until mid-November, when the onset of winter suspended operations, the United States Navy on Lake Ontario was primarily represented by the 18-gun brig *Oneida*. How much impact did that warship have on the War of 1812?

The first five months of the war were the best and perhaps the only time when the United States could have had a real chance to conquer Canada, or at least Upper Canada. That, however, had to be accomplished by the American army and it proved unequal to the task. Most histories explain that and ignore the navy's participation, especially on Lake Ontario. That is understandable as territory is conquered by boots on the ground not ships in the water. The American army had the lead role, the navy played a major but still only a supporting part. On Lake Ontario, that part was first played by the *Oneida*.

There was nothing about the *Oneida* itself that limited its impact on the war. It was a typical mid-sized navy gun-brig. It did not sail as well as it should have after spending months on shore in 1810, but that was a minor factor. Most of what was or wasn't done by the *Oneida* depended on the nature of and circumstances surrounding its commanders: Melancthon Woolsey and Isaac Chauncey.

For the first two and a half months what the *Oneida* did depended only on what its captain, Lieutenant Woolsey, wanted to do. Woolsey spent most of that time being all but ignored by the Navy Department. The feeling in Washington was that a major naval effort on the lakes was not needed to win the war. Consequently Woolsey lacked the resources, and especially the money, to accomplish very much. He had recognized for over a year that it was important to purchase and arm the American merchant schooners on the lake, but he lacked both the authority and the funds to do so. Woolsey limited



*The Oneida's deck. Model and photo by Clayton Nans.*

himself to actions he felt were safe to take or that he had to take.

Those actions maintained the *Oneida* in a state ready for action, provided for the defense of Sackets Harbor, augmented his incomplete crew by militia volunteers serving as marines, defeated what appeared at the time to be a major British attack on that harbor, armed one small schooner (*Julia*) and prepared another to receive

her armament (*Lord Nelson*), provided protection for the merchant schooners trapped at Ogdensburg by dispatching the *Julia* downriver with a part of the *Oneida*'s crew, and arranged the forwarding of additional supplies and ordnance from Albany to Sackets Harbor. Not a bad list for a mere lieutenant responsible for a major theatre of war with only one other (acting) lieutenant to aid him and with little help from Washington.

Woolsey was cautious and conservative. He passed up opportunities to fight the Provincial Marine and also avoided actions that likely would have provoked a fight, such as by blockading Kingston. Woolsey used the *Oneida* as a "fleet in being," preserving it as the only American naval force on the lake, hoping its presence would discourage the British from trying another attack on Sackets Harbor.

This was reasonable if unfortunate. Certainly no one then knew that Henry Eckford could build major warships at Sackets Harbor (where before the war nothing had been built larger than a small boat) not in the seven months it took to build the *Oneida* at Oswego, but in seven weeks or less. Woolsey did not accept that it was worth risking the *Oneida* in the summer of 1812 to destroy or capture the *Royal George*. Even if the *Oneida* had been lost in the attempt, she could have been replaced in time for the 1813 season. Losing the *Royal George* would have harmed the British cause much more than the loss of the *Oneida* would have hurt the Americans.

All this changed at the end of August 1812 when Hull's surrender at Detroit made the folks in Washington aware of the need to obtain and maintain naval mastery on the lakes. Isaac Chauncey, whose request for a wartime assignment two months before had been ignored, was suddenly given the command on the Great Lakes and unlimited authority to

go with it. Chauncey now had the resources and the support from Washington that Woolsey lacked. It was no longer too little but it was almost too late.

By the time Chauncey finished organizing and dispatching men and material to Sackets Harbor and Lake Erie, arrived at Sackets Harbor himself, and had six small schooners armed and ready to support the *Oneida*, it was early November. At that point, however, winter was as responsible for pushing the Provincial Marine off the lake as Chauncey was. Had Chauncey and the *Oneida* challenged the Provincial Marine in early October, instead of waiting for the schooners to be ready, he might have succeeded in doing what Woolsey was reluctant to try to do in July and August.

Chauncey remained at New York City for almost a month after he was informed of his new command on the lakes. There was no need for him to have delayed his departure for Sackets Harbor for that length of time. A week should have been sufficient for him to have arranged the shipments of men and material to Sackets Harbor. Then he could have left New York City leaving the actual supervision of the shipments in the hands of Master Commandant Charles Ludlow who replaced him as commandant at the New York Navy Yard. Had Chauncey arrived at Sackets Harbor in mid-September instead of at the end of the first week of October he could have been able to assemble his squadron and been on the lake to challenge the Provincial Marine weeks before he actually did. Chauncey, however, was apparently reluctant to delegate that responsibility, a situation that would reoccur in July 1814.<sup>225</sup>

However, there was no realistic chance of the Americans conquering Canada in 1812, even if Chauncey had been at Sackets Harbor in July with all the authority he had in September. Given the poor state of the American army, the ineptitude of its commanders and the reluctance of the militia that year, nothing the navy could have done would have helped. However, if the *Oneida* had dealt a heavy blow to the Provincial Marine in August or September, the American efforts in 1813 might have been much more successful.

### ***Operational History 1813***

For the *Oneida*, the winter of 1812-1813 passed uneventfully. In January Lieutenant John Temple Drury arrived on board. Drury received his midshipman's warrant in 1809, serving on the *Wasp* and *Hornet* before becoming an acting lieutenant and ordered to Sackets Harbor in October 1812.

As with other commissioned and warrant officers, Drury discovered that travel from the Atlantic coast to Sackets Harbor was both lengthy and expensive. Many of the costs involved were not addressed by the regulations. As more and more men arrived at Sackets Harbor, Chauncey realized that this problem had to be addressed, as he informed the accountant of the navy in February 1812:

*The officers of every grade have incurred very considerable expences in travelling to this place, for in many instances there were no stages to be got, and they were under the necessity of hiring horses and waggons &c &c. The pursers are at a loss how to settle these accounts.*<sup>226</sup>

Chauncey asked what expenses were permitted, how those expenses were to be charged in an officer's accounts and at what rate. As late as 1814 many of these issues remained unresolved.

Isaac Chauncey himself was absent for much of the winter, first on Lake Erie and then at New York and Albany. In his absence he ordered the *Oneida* and the crews of the other vessels to be ready to repel an attack at all times:

*All the guns are to be kept loaded with one stand of grape and one of cannister. The musket cartridges are to be made up with one ball and 3 buck shot. Matches are to be kept burning during the night and the powder horns and priming wires kept at hand.*<sup>227</sup>

In addition to being prepared to repel an actual attack, the navy was ever on the lookout for British spies lurking around Sackets Harbor hoping to pick up useful bits of information. One such man, James Livingston, was noticed by Woolsey and the officers of the *Oneida* to be "scanning the fleet at this place" and he was promptly arrested by them on 25 January 1813. Livingston claimed that he was innocent and that Captain Forsyth of the Rifle Regiment at Ogdensburg would vouch for him, as would Major General Henry Dearborn at Albany. Commodore Chauncey sent letters to both men but apparently their replies did not help Livingston's case as Chauncey asked the army to try him as a spy in March.<sup>228</sup>

On 3 March 1813 Chauncey returned to Sackets Harbor from his trip to New York and Albany to find a prevailing fear that the British were about to attack over the ice. Writing to the new Navy Secretary William Jones, Chauncey reported that Major General Dearborn "expects the enemy will certainly make an attack upon this place in the course of a day or two." At the time Chauncey considered this too pessimistic but he reassured Jones that his squadron, including the *Oneida*, was prepared and "shall not be given up without such a struggle to preserve it as will satisfy both yourself and my Country that it has not been basely surrendered." Two days later Chauncey changed his opinion, telling Jones that "We are still safe but hourly expect a visit from the other side." By 12 March, however, Chauncey's fears had diminished, now telling Jones that "I am more and more convinced that the Enemy does not intend an attack upon this place." Finally, on 16 March, Chauncey reported that "I consider the fleet here as perfectly safe from any attacks from the enemy."<sup>229</sup>

This was the first of a series of "the British are coming" alarms that would continue at Sackets Harbor throughout the war. This time, with all the vessels at Sackets Harbor locked in the ice there was little they could do to aid in the harbor's defense.

In March and April, Commodore Chauncey, Colonel (later Brigadier General) Zebulon Montgomery Pike, and Major General Henry Dearborn finalized their plans for the spring. The first target was to be York, followed by Fort George and Kingston. As Melancthon Woolsey was still the senior lieutenant at Sackets Harbor, he remained in command of the *Oneida*.

That spring the *Oneida* saw a few changes to her crew. Purser's Steward John Thomas, on loan to Purser Darragh from the *Julia*, returned to that schooner and Lieutenant Augustus H. M. Conkling reported on board the *Oneida*. Conkling received his midshipman's warrant in 1809 and was appointed an acting lieutenant and was ordered to Sackets Harbor in October 1812. While a midshipman he served on board the frigates

*John Adams* and *Constitution*. On his arrival at Sackets Harbor in January 1813 he was sent to the *Madison*, but while on board that ship he struck a quarter gunner on the head with a mallet, was court martialed and transferred to the *Oneida*. In mid-May Chauncey appointed David M. Hall an acting surgeon's mate and he too joined the *Oneida's* crew.<sup>230</sup>

At this time the *Oneida* had a small change made to her armament. The two foremost 24 pound carronades were replaced by two 6-pounder cannon. This change was almost certainly to give the *Oneida* a pair of "chase guns."<sup>231</sup>

In preparation for the raid on York, Chauncey ordered the *Oneida's* purser, Alexander Darragh, to be sure he had provisions on board sufficient for five weeks at sea.<sup>232</sup> On 22 April Chauncey issued the order for Pike's brigade to be taken on board the *Oneida* and the other vessels of the squadron. The next day Chauncey reported to Secretary Jones that the squadron had about 1,700 troops on board, several hundred of them on the *Oneida*. General Dearborn then insisted that Chauncey sail for York at once. Against his better judgment, Chauncey did so only to be turned back to Sackets Harbor by squalls and heavy rain. Three days later the weather had improved and the *Oneida* and the rest of Chauncey's squadron sailed for York.<sup>233</sup>

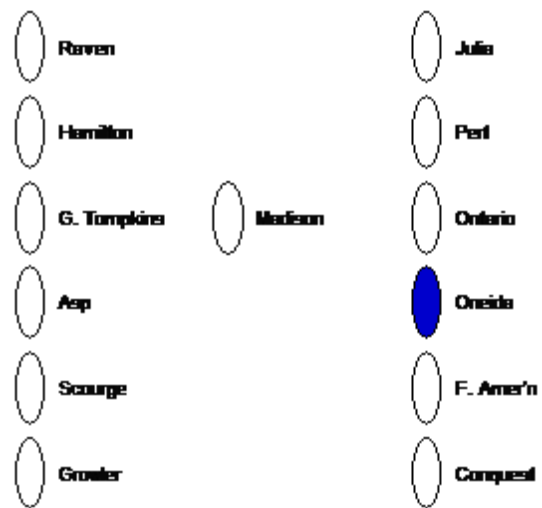
As part of his plan, Commodore Chauncey realized that no officer in his squadron, including himself, had any experience in managing 13 warships sailing in close formation. In an attempt to keep things in order, he created a set of sailing formations including line ahead, line abreast and in a two or three column formation. Furthermore, as the signal books he had on board did not contain any night signals, Chauncey had to improvise.<sup>234</sup>

Fortunately the weather cooperated and the overnight voyage to York ended without incident. On the morning of 27 April 1813 the navy successfully landed Brigadier General Zebulon Pike's brigade at York and a few hours later the village was in American hands. Victory, however, came at a heavy price in killed and wounded, including Pike himself who was mortally wounded by a rock thrown up when the British blew up their gunpowder magazine.

This attack was the first time in history that the United States army and navy conducted a joint operation of this magnitude.

Chauncey's careful planning, which included the order in which all the squadron's small boats were to receive the troops from the various vessels (the *Oneida* being fifth in line) resulted in as perfect an amphibious assault as could be desired.<sup>235</sup>

Other than a psychological blow to the British by having their provincial capital in American hands, the most significant result was the destruction of the 30-gun corvette *Sir Isaac Brock* which was under construction, the capture of the Provincial Marine schooner



*Chauncey's two-column squadron sailing plan for the voyage to York, 25 April 1813, CLB 4.*



*Duke of Gloucester*, and the destruction or capture of a large quantity of ordnance and naval stores.

The American plan called for the raiding force to quickly re-embark on board Chauncey's ships, sail to Niagara and assault Fort George. The troops were back on board by 1 May and Chauncey expected to sail to Niagara the next day. The weather did not cooperate. The wind from the east increased to a gale accompanied with rain which prevented the squadron from leaving York. As Chauncey reported to Secretary Jones, "we have been riding ever since with two anchors ahead and lower Yards and Top Gallant Masts down."

While the rest of the squadron remained at York, Commodore Chauncey made a quick round trip to Fort Niagara on board the dispatch schooner *Lady of the Lake*, taking advantage of her maneuverability to handle the easterly gale. When he returned to York on 4 May he discovered Lieutenant Woolsey, in the *Oneida*, had hoisted a broad pendant as squadron senior officer. Chauncey's reaction was swift and scathing. He wrote Woolsey

*As I have not been officially informed of my being superceded 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>236</sup>

Woolsey's reply expressed surprise at Chauncey's reaction, claiming he only did this because Chauncey had "left the squadron in an open roadstead upon an enemy's coast." Furthermore Woolsey protested that in Chauncey's absence he was senior officer and all commands to the squadron should therefore come from him and he hoisted a broad pendant to make that clear. Woolsey also included some supporting statements from other officers. None of this carried any weight with Chauncey. Chauncey had left his own broad pendant flying on the *Madison* and expected Lieutenant Jesse Elliot on board that ship, who was junior to Woolsey, to communicate any orders required. Chauncey made it clear that

*My pendant was my representative and as long as that was flying on board of this ship, every signal made from her ought to have been obeyed, and hereafter Shall be obeyed whether I am on board or not, and if any one should be so hardy as to refuse or neglect to obey such signal, I shall use my exertions to bring such offender to punishment.*<sup>237</sup>

That ended the matter but it was an example of how the rules for flying broad pendants and the nature and status of the post of commodore were very unclear during the War of 1812.<sup>238</sup> The incident, however, did nothing to improve Woolsey's stature in Chauncey's eyes.

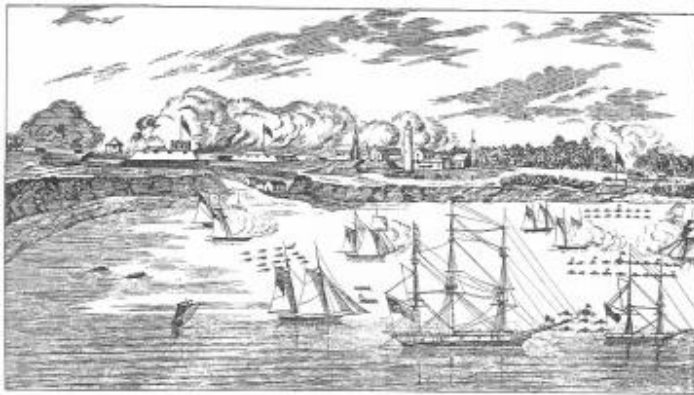
On 8 May the weather had finally moderated enough for the squadron to make the short voyage from York to Niagara. At midnight Chauncey ordered Woolsey to take the *Oneida* and all the schooners and proceed to Sackets Harbor. Before Woolsey could depart, Chauncey changed his mind and divided his force.

Instead of proceeding directly to Sackets Harbor, Woolsey and the *Oneida*, along with the schooners *Ontario*, *Scourge* and *Pert*, was "ordered to Oswego to take on board stores which have arrived there from New York and which the fleet are much in want of." The *Oneida* and the schooners collected the supplies and delivered them to Chauncey at Sackets Harbor.<sup>239</sup>

By 12 May the *Oneida* was at Sackets Harbor, where she took on board troops from Brigadier General John Chandler's brigade and sailed for Niagara on the evening of 16 May.<sup>240</sup> Chauncey himself sailed for Niagara on 22 May.

On 27 May the Americans successfully landed in Canada and captured Fort George. As at York, Chauncey's squadron, including the *Oneida*, covered the landing with its guns but this time most of the troops were already in small boats, having boarded them at Four Mile Creek to the east of Fort Niagara and rowed to the landing site.

Chauncey's after-action report to Secretary Jones applauded specific actions of the commanding officers, by name, of the eight schooners that participated in the attack plus Captain Richard Smith of the Marines. Omitted was any mention of his second in command, Lieutenant Woolsey.<sup>241</sup> The *Oneida* herself was only referred to as carrying, along with Chauncey's *Madison* and the *Lady of the Lake*, some troops and artillery. The



*The American attack on Fort George, 27 May 1813.  
From the Philadelphia Portfolio, 1817.  
The Madison and Oneida are in the foreground.*

*Lady of the Lake*, armed with only a single 9-pounder, would not be expected to have played a major role, but that was not the case with the *Oneida*, the second most powerful ship in the squadron. It appears that Chauncey remained so annoyed with Woolsey for flying a broad pendant that he deliberately omitted mentioning him, even as a courtesy, in his dispatch to Jones.

The *Oneida* remained at anchor off Niagara until 30 May when Chauncey received word that the British had attacked Sackets Harbor. The following morning Chauncey's squadron sailed back to York to see if the enemy's squadron, now a part of the Royal Navy under Commodore Sir James Lucas Yeo, was there, but saw nothing. The squadron then sailed along the Canadian shore until in sight of Kingston, again without seeing the enemy. Chauncey returned to Sackets Harbor about 4 p.m. on 1 June 1813.<sup>242</sup>

Two days later Chauncey wrote Secretary Jones lamenting that the British attack had resulted in the burning of most of the naval stores needed to finish the new frigate *General Pike* and that would delay its completion. Once again, Chauncey mixed optimism with pessimism when he described his plans for the enemy without the new frigate: "[If] he leaves Kingston I shall meet him. The result may be doubtful but worth the trial."

No such meeting took place. A few days after his return to Sackets Harbor, Chauncey heard and believed a report that Yeo's squadron was off Niagara.

*Immediately upon receiving this information, I prepared to proceed in quest of the enemy, but upon more mature reflection I have determined to remain at this place and preserve the new ship at all hazards.*<sup>243</sup>

Chauncey now put his fears for the safety of Sackets Harbor ahead of his orders from the president to obtain and maintain command of Lake Ontario “with the least possible delay.” If the British were at Niagara, clearly they were not in a position to attack Sackets Harbor.

On 5 June Chauncey appointed Lieutenant Woolsey president of a court of inquiry to be held on board the *Oneida*. While choosing Woolsey was logical as he was still Chauncey’s second in command, it did place him in a difficult situation. The court was tasked with investigating the conduct of Lieutenant Wolcott Chauncey, the commodore’s younger brother, who commanded the naval force at Sackets Harbor when the *Pike*’s stores were burned during the British attack on 29 May. Despite the prevailing sentiment that it was Wolcott who was really responsible for the loss, the court exonerated the younger Chauncey. It fell to Wolcott’s subordinate, Acting Lieutenant John Drury, to be court martialed for disobedience of orders and cowardice on that day. Drury was honorably acquitted but suffered a private reprimand by Chauncey for some of his actions.<sup>244</sup>

The *Oneida* remained at anchor off Sackets Harbor for the next seven weeks while Chauncey awaited the *General Pike*’s completion. During this time the British squadron, under Commodore Yeo, sailed the lake without interference. Chauncey predicted that the *Pike* would be ready by 15 July and he could sail to seek out the enemy but only “provided her stores and men arrive in time.”<sup>245</sup>

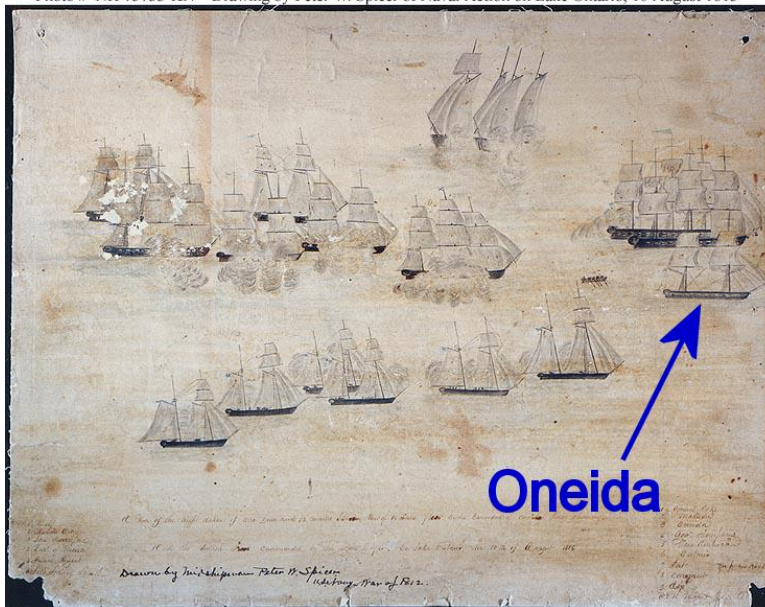
In December 1812 Chauncey had appointed Master Commandant James T. Leonard to command the 24-gun corvette *Madison*. By mid-April Leonard was under arrest and a new captain had to be chosen. Chauncey picked Lieutenant Jesse Elliott and transferred him from the schooner *Conquest* to the *Madison*.<sup>246</sup> This was unusual as Woolsey was senior to Elliott by over three years. Whether Woolsey remained as captain of the *Oneida* by choice or was deliberately passed over for command of the *Madison* is unknown. This situation was eased on 10 July when Master Commandant William M. Crane arrived at Sackets Harbor and was assigned the command of the *Madison*.<sup>247</sup> It is possible that Chauncey knew of Crane’s impending arrival for some months and made it clear to Woolsey that Elliott’s appointment was only temporary. The record, however, shows that Secretary Jones’s letter informing Chauncey of Crane’s transfer was not written until the end of June 1813 so that explanation is somewhat suspect.<sup>248</sup>

On 11 June Master Commandant Arthur Sinclair arrived at Sackets Harbor to command the *General Pike* and to replace Woolsey as Chauncey’s second in command. This allowed Chauncey to dispatch Woolsey to Oswego in the schooner *Growler* to superintend forwarding the naval stores needed to complete the *General Pike*. In his absence, Lieutenant Thomas Brown was left in command of the *Oneida*. Brown received his midshipman’s warrant in 1801, became a sailing master in 1804 and was commissioned a lieutenant in 1807, shortly after Woolsey. Before arriving at Sackets Harbor he served on the frigate *Philadelphia*, the brig *Syren*, the schooner *Nautilus* and commanded Gunboat No. 54 at New York.<sup>249</sup> Brown’s command was brief. By the end of June Woolsey had returned from Oswego and resumed command of the *Oneida*.

By the beginning of July it was clear that the *Pike*'s completion would take longer than expected as all the needed stores had not yet arrived at Sackets Harbor. Chauncey told Major General Henry Dearborn that he now hoped "to be upon the Lake before the end of this month." However, at that moment Chauncey was more concerned with what the British might do to him than the other way around. The *Oneida* was on high alert as Chauncey was "in hourly expectation of an attack from the enemy with the whole of his naval and military force."<sup>250</sup> Fortunately for the American cause Chauncey's fears were not realized, no attack took place and by 22 July the *Oneida* had left Sackets Harbor along with the *General Pike*, *Madison* and the rest of the American squadron.

The squadron sailed along the Canadian shore then to Niagara but light winds delayed their arrival until 27 July. They then sailed to the Head of the Lake where they landed a raiding party on 29 July which accomplished nothing as the enemy was too strong. The

Photo # NH 75733-KN Drawing by Peter W. Spicer of Naval Action on Lake Ontario, 10 August 1813



squadron then visited York and landed the raiding force. Unopposed, they "found several hundred barrels of flour and provisions in the public store houses, five pieces of cannon, eleven boats, and a quantity of shot, shells, and other stores, all which were either destroyed or brought away." Chauncey's force then returned to Niagara arriving on 3 August.<sup>251</sup>

Chauncey and Brigadier General Boyd wanted to take 1,500 troops on

board and land them at Burlington Bay but that plan was abandoned at daybreak on 7 August when the British squadron under Commodore Sir James Yeo appeared off Niagara. The *Oneida* and the rest of Chauncey's squadron sailed to engage the enemy. That day Yeo attempted to close with the American squadron but, as a midshipman on board the *Madison* observed,

*Being within long shot the Com. fired 5 or 6 guns which they did not return but continued bearing down upon us. The Com. thunder struck (and no doubt frightened) at their coolness and determination bravely tacked ship and left them under pretence of endeavoring to get the weather gage.*<sup>252</sup>

Watching the American squadron maneuver, British Commodore Yeo observed that the *Oneida* was "small & sails bad."<sup>253</sup> Probably more evidence of the permanent damage those months on the beach at Oswego inflicted on her hull.

About midnight a sudden violent squall upset and sank the schooners *Hamilton* and *Scourge*. The following day the two squadrons maneuvered for advantage but night fell

without an action. At sunrise Chauncey formed his squadron into two columns. That evening the two forces came together and at 11 p.m. “the rear of our line opened his fire upon the enemy — in about 15 minutes the fire became general from the weather line which was returned from the enemy.”<sup>254</sup>

While both sides were firing at each other but too far apart to do much damage in the dark, the schooners *Julia* and *Growler* disobeyed Chauncey’s instructions, turned towards the British instead of towards Chauncey, sailed into the midst of Yeo’s force and were captured.

← British Squadron

Julia	↑ ↑	General Pike
Growler	↑ ↑	<b>Oneida</b>
Pert	↑ ↑	Madison
Asp	↑ ↑	Gov. Tompkins
Ontario	↑ ↑	Conquest
Fair	↑	
American		

The same midshipman who commented on Chauncey’s action on 7 August, now observed that

*We kept closing, two of our schooners were in the midst of the enemy’s fleet when the Com. wore ship and left the enemy!*<sup>255</sup>

Now having lost four of his schooners without any benefit to the American cause, Chauncey sent two of the remaining

schooners into Niagara and took the rest, including the *Oneida* which had not a single day’s provisions left on board, back to Sackets Harbor, arriving on 13 August.<sup>256</sup>

In his report to Secretary Jones, while admitting that the loss of the schooners, particularly the *Julia* and *Growler*, was “mortifying in the extreme,” his experience convinced him that “he [Yeo] has no intention of engaging us except he can get decidedly the advantage of wind and weather and as his vessels in squadron sail better than our squadron he can always avoid an action.” Chauncey concluded by, once again, mixing optimistic plans with a pessimistic view of the situation: “I hope that it will be my turn next and altho inferior in point of force — I feel very confident of success.”

Chauncey’s tactics on this occasion are questionable at best. He left the strongest part of his force, the *General Pike*, *Oneida* and *Madison*, in the leeward column away from the British. Chauncey’s plan, as he reported to Secretary Jones, was to use the windward column schooners as bait to encourage the British to close with them. When that happened, those schooners were to “pass through the intervals and form to leeward” of Chauncey’s strongest ships who would then engage and defeat the enemy at close range. It did not work out as he expected:

*At half past 11 the weather line bore up and passed to the leeward except the Growler and Julia which soon after tacked to the southward, which brought the enemy, between them and me.*

This gives the impression that the schooner column executed a turn on its own when in fact it turning at that time was part of Chauncey’s plan, even though the British were still some distance away. After seeing the result, Chauncey confirmed the *Madison*’s midshipman’s observation by reporting that he

*Edged away two points to lead the enemy down, not only to engage him to more advantage but to lead him from the Growler and Julia.*<sup>257</sup>

Yeo, however, failed to act as Chauncey wished. The British kept their distance, gobbled up the *Julia* and *Growler* and, having had the best of the action, disappeared into the night. Throughout, Chauncey left the initiative to the British. Instead of steering towards Yeo's squadron, forcing him to either fight or edge away himself, Chauncey waited for the British to make a mistake. That never occurred.

Once at Sackets Harbor, Chauncey lost no time in taking on board five weeks worth of provisions and the squadron sailed again that same day for Niagara, arriving on 16 August. For the next three days the American and British squadrons maneuvered on the lake, each trying to gain the advantage. Their efforts were hampered by gale force winds that continued until Chauncey was forced back to Sackets Harbor on 19 August. All the vessels, including the *Oneida*, had suffered significant storm damage "in spars, cables or anchors."<sup>258</sup>

In addition to the time needed to repair the storm damage, Chauncey decided to wait until his new schooner *Sylph* was ready for service. This kept the *Oneida* at Sackets Harbor until the end of August. During that time the *Oneida* transferred her two six-pounders and loaned one of her anchors to the *Sylph*.<sup>259</sup>

With the completion of the *Sylph*, the *Oneida* received a new captain. Melancthon Woolsey, promoted to master commandant in July, took over command of the *Sylph* and



was replaced by the *Oneida*'s first lieutenant, Thomas Brown. Brown's first task was to obtain and organize a new crew, as the existing crew of the *Oneida* was transferred to the *Sylph*. A year

before the *Oneida* was the most powerful American warship on the lake. Now it was considered to be fourth in line and its priority for officers and crew had diminished accordingly.

At the end of August the squadron finally sailed from Sackets Harbor with the still incompletely equipped schooner *Sylph*. Shortly afterwards the *Oneida* sent ten of her cutlasses to the *Sylph*. A week later the *Oneida* spent four and a half hours being towed by Woolsey's *Sylph* in an unsuccessful attempt to close with the British squadron. Commodore Chauncey, recognizing the poor sailing characteristics of the small schooners and the *Oneida*, began to have those vessels towed by the *General Pike*, *Madison* and *Sylph* as needed to improve his squadron's overall performance.<sup>260</sup> That the brig-rigged *Oneida* would require the same assistance as the small schooners is another indication that she was moving into second-class status in Chauncey's mind. Since it is unlikely that her design was badly flawed, her poor sailing performance was probably the result of hull damage from the many months she spent lying on the beach at Oswego in 1810.

On 7 September, while anchored at the mouth of the Niagara River, Chauncey sighted the British squadron approaching. The squadron immediately sailed in pursuit. A four day chase then ensued with a combination of light winds and the poor sailing of the *Oneida* and the small schooners preventing the Americans from getting any closer than a mile from the British.



Finally, on 11 September, the British squadron found itself becalmed off the mouth of the Genesee River while Chauncey's squadron still had a light westerly wind. Taking advantage of the situation, the American squadron got close enough to open fire with their cannon. The British squadron, armed primarily with short range carronades, was unable to effectively reply. Just when the British began to receive some serious damage, the wind increased allowing Yeo's squadron to escape. The next day the British "succeeded in getting into Amherst Bay which is so little known to our pilots and said to be full of shoals that they are not willing to take me in there."<sup>261</sup>

Once again a promising opportunity was lost, primarily due to the presence of "our heavy sailing schooners."<sup>262</sup>

Chauncey persisted in his belief that he could not risk an engagement with the British without those schooners present. The addition of the *Sylph* did allow him to reduce their number, but as the squadron's speed and maneuverability was limited by the

presence of even one small schooner, that reduction was not of much help, as Chauncey reported to Secretary Jones:

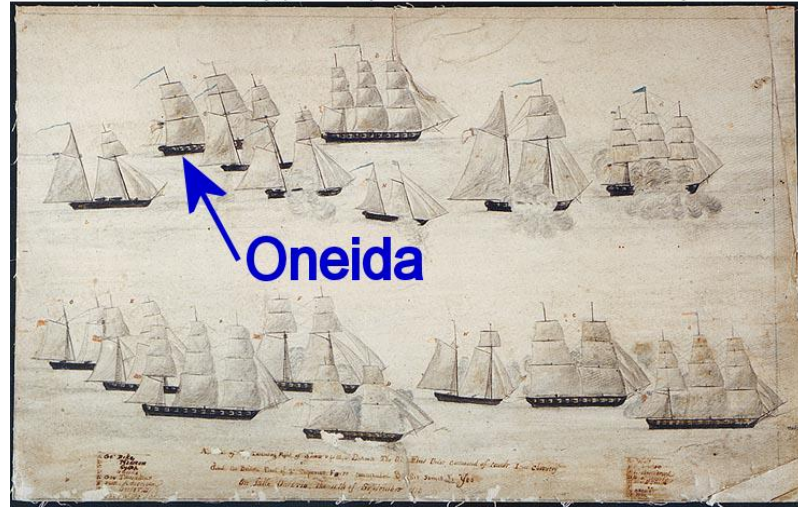
*This ship, the Madison, and the Sylph has each a schooner constantly in tow yet the others can not sail as fast as the enemies squadron which gives him decidedly the advantage.*<sup>263</sup>

For the first time Chauncey clearly considered "the others" as including the *Oneida*. As the *Oneida* herself was apparently being towed during Chauncey's pursuit of Yeo, this confused the British who incorrectly believed that the tow was due to battle damage received during the action.<sup>264</sup>

The American squadron, including the *Oneida*, blockaded the British until 17 September when the British reached Kingston and Chauncey returned to Sackets Harbor to meet with Secretary of War John Armstrong. Chauncey left Sackets Harbor the next morning and sailed to Niagara to meet with General James Wilkinson who was arranging to transport his army to Sackets Harbor in a fleet of small boats.

The *Oneida* remained at anchor in the Niagara River until 26 September when Chauncey received word that Yeo's squadron was at York. Departure for York was delayed until the next day due to unfavorable winds. When the two forces sighted each other, the American squadron was west of the British with a near gale-force wind from the east. For the first time in the war the British squadron was in a very bad tactical situation. While the Americans had the weather gauge, the British lacked maneuvering room and were being blown towards the Canadian shore.

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



Once again Chauncey lost an opportunity. This time the *General Pike* engaged Yeo's flagship the *Wolfe* with the British vessel receiving serious damage. Despite that, "the enemy however keeping dead before the wind was enabled to out-sail most of our squadron." Only the *General Pike* really got into the fight. The other vessels were never heavily engaged, the *Oneida* suffering only some damage to her main top mast which was quickly repaired. One reason for the poor sailing was that the Americans continued towing their small schooners, including the *General Pike* itself which was towing the *Asp*. Despite the best efforts of Lieutenant Brown, the *Oneida* never managed to come within effective carronade range of the British as she was "sailing very dull before the wind."<sup>265</sup>

When the British managed to anchor at the Head of the Lake, Chauncey "very reluctantly relinquished the pursuit of a beaten enemy" because, as he reported to Secretary Jones,

*I should be obliged to anchor also, and altho' we might succeed in driving him on shore, the probability was that we should go on shore also-he amongst his friends, we amongst our enemies.*<sup>266</sup>

Given the situation and Chauncey's repeated unwillingness to take any kind of risk, he found it easy to reiterate to Jones that he

*Without hesitation relinquished the opportunity then presenting itself of acquiring individual reputation at the expense of my country.*

This affair cost the *General Pike* four men killed and 23 wounded with nothing to show for it. While Chauncey did not know it, he had just lost his last (and best) chance to defeat the British squadron on Lake Ontario.

Chauncey then ordered the *Oneida* and the rest of the squadron back to the mouth of the Niagara River so he could "communicate with General Wilkinson to ascertain when he meant to move with the Army." Chauncey found Wilkinson's men embarking in small boats preparing to sail along the south and east coasts of Lake Ontario to Sackets Harbor and Grenadier Island. Chauncey agreed to sail immediately to locate and prevent the British from interfering with Wilkinson's movements.

Expecting Yeo's squadron to still be at the Head of the Lake, Chauncey dispatched the schooner *Lady of the Lake* to check. The schooner did so but the British had departed. Believing that the British had sailed east and would be a danger to Wilkinson's boat flotilla, the squadron sailed east in pursuit.

On 5 October Chauncey sighted a number of sails to the east, off the Ducks Islands. Originally thought to be Yeo's squadron, it was a British troop convoy sailing unescorted from York to Kingston. Five of the seven vessels were captured, one was burned by her crew and only one schooner managed to escape. Two of those captured were the former *Julia* and *Growler*. The *Oneida*, sailing slowly as usual, could only watch as the *Sylph*, *Lady of the Lake* and *General Pike* collected the prizes. Now burdened with prizes and prisoners of war, the squadron returned to Sackets Harbor in 6 October.<sup>267</sup>

The *Oneida* remained at Sackets Harbor until the squadron sailed again on 16 October for the mouth of the Genesee River to collect Colonel Winfield Scott and his men. On the way Chauncey received word that changed his course. He was now asked by Secretary of War John Armstrong to protect Wilkinson's army as it collects on Grenadier Island.<sup>268</sup>

Although Chauncey hoped this protection would take only a few days, it required almost three weeks. During this time the *Oneida* travelled with the squadron as it anchored in various places at the eastern end of Lake Ontario, including the Ducks Islands, Grenadier Island and Stoney Island.<sup>269</sup> Finally, on 2 November, with Wilkinson's army gathering at French Creek the *Oneida* and the rest of the squadron entered the St. Lawrence River.<sup>270</sup>

The *Oneida* and the squadron remained in the river for two days with only a shallow channel in the

Thousand Islands separating them from the British squadron. After Yeo returned to Kingston and with Wilkinson's force well down the St. Lawrence River, Chauncey took the squadron first to Carleton Island, then to Gravelly Point and finally back to



*The Oneida's starboard side in 1813. Model and photo by Clayton Nans.*

Sackets Harbor on 11 November 1813.<sup>271</sup> The *Oneida* and the squadron had sailed the eastern end of Lake Ontario for almost a month and accomplished very little. They certainly did not prevent British Captain William Howe Mulcaster from taking his gunboat flotilla down the St. Lawrence River where it effectively annoyed Wilkinson's army and was one factor in the American defeat at Chrysler's farm.

Once at Sackets Harbor, Chauncey was asked to sail the squadron to Niagara to bring an army brigade to Sackets Harbor. The lateness of the season and the real possibility of encountering very bad weather made Chauncey reluctant to make the trip. Nevertheless he left for Niagara on 13 November, arriving the next evening without incident. The same was not true for the return trip. Major General William Henry Harrison and about 1,100 troops were on board by 16 November when the squadron sailed. Gale force winds, however, scattered the squadron and kept the individual ships at the west end of Lake Ontario for three days. The *Oneida* was forced to return to Niagara for shelter. She eventually arrived safely at Sackets Harbor on the morning of 21 November.<sup>272</sup>

It was now clear to Chauncey that "The season is too far advanced for any further operations upon the Lake."<sup>273</sup> On 2 December Chauncey positioned his squadron at their winter moorings as the *Oneida* began preparing to spend her fourth winter at Sackets Harbor. Chauncey's plan paid careful attention to defense:

*The fleet is moored in two lines at right angles with each other, so that each line is calculated to support the other and also to afford protection to the block houses, situated on the two sides of the harbor.*<sup>274</sup>

That "same night the harbor and bay froze over so that our people walked on shore from the ships."<sup>275</sup>

Now anchored in the harbor, the *Oneida* began to experience the usual shore-related disciplinary problems. On 6 December Lieutenant Brown asked Commodore Chauncey

to convene a court martial to try Quarter Gunner Samuel Lolly for remaining on shore one entire night and, on his return, calling Lieutenant William Mervine “a mule and jack ass.”<sup>276</sup> Lolly was tried on 20 January 1814. He plead guilty and claimed he was drunk at the time and did not remember what he said. Despite two officers, one of whom was Lieutenant Mervine himself, testifying that previous to this incident he had been a “very good; sober, industrious and quiet man and generally very respectful to the officers.” mercy was in short supply that day and Lolly was sentenced

*To be reduced to the grade of seaman from this date, and to receive one hundred lashes on his bare back with a cat of nine tails to be proportioned alongside the General Pike, Madison, Sylph and Oneida at such time as the Commanding Naval Officer shall direct.*<sup>277</sup>

In the Royal Navy this was known as “being flogged ‘round the fleet.” In Chauncey’s absence, Master Commandant William Crane ordered the sentence to be carried out five days later.<sup>278</sup>

### **Operational History 1814**

On a pleasant day in late February 1814 the *Oneida*’s crew, helped by the crew of the *Sylph* and probably others in the squadron, heaved her on her side and began cleaning her bottom, a task that took four days to complete.<sup>279</sup> While sailing in fresh water did not subject wooden hulls to the worm and barnacle damage they would suffer on the Atlantic, over several months grass and weed would build up on the hull reducing a vessel’s speed. This extremely labor-intensive cleaning effort was particularly beneficial to the *Oneida* as she was not a good sailer to begin with.

Whatever performance was gained by the cleaning was probably lost when it was decided to move the *Oneida*’s carronades to the *Sylph* and replace them with cannon. On 14 March 1814 this armament change began when a quantity of 24-pound round shot, grape and canister was transferred to the *Sylph*. The weather and ice in the harbor delayed the actual rearming until mid-April when the *Oneida*’s 24-pound carronades were moved to the *Sylph*.<sup>280</sup> In return, the *Oneida* received 14, 12-pound cannon.<sup>281</sup> While this increased her long range firepower, at close range it less than half of what it was when she was armed with carronades. Worse, the new cannon were collectively over twice as heavy as the old carronades, increasing the *Oneida*’s center of gravity and reducing her metacentric height and stability. Her sailing qualities, not good to begin with, probably became even worse.

However, by the summer of 1814, this was much less important than it would have been a year earlier. With the addition of the frigates *Superior* and *Mohawk* and the new brigs *Jefferson* and *Jones* to Chauncey’s squadron, the *Oneida* was clearly a second-class warship, inferior to every other purpose-built warship in Chauncey’s squadron except the little dispatch schooner *Lady of the Lake*. Also the *Oneida* was now over five years old, about the expected time a wooden vessel could sail on fresh water without needing a major repair. Despite her age, whether it was the wood used to build her, her relatively unhurried construction, or the salt placed between her ribs, the *Oneida*’s hull remained in good condition that summer.

The winter of 1813-1814 saw the number of seamen and Marines on the sick list increase significantly, often amounting to a quarter of the total at Sackets Harbor. Fortunately the *Oneida* was not as hard hit as the *Madison*. That vessel

*For instance has never had since November last less than one third of her crew sick and in five months she has lost by deaths 41 men — all new men that arrive on the station become sickly and in the seasoning that they are obliged to undergo many of them die.*<sup>282</sup>

This number would diminish with the onset of better weather but manning his ships remained a serious problem for Commodore Chauncey.

Despite the difficulties in obtaining stores and armament for the squadron, by 26 March 1814 Commodore Chauncey was able to report to Secretary Jones that “I have got all our fleet that are in the water rigged and fitted for Service” including the *Oneida*. However, providing crews for the new vessels *Superior*, *Jefferson* and *Jones* and the soon to be laid down *Mohawk* remained a problem as the “last accounts from the recruiting Officers are not encouraging.”<sup>283</sup>

As winter ended and the ice on the lake broke up, fears increased that the British squadron, now temporarily superior to Chauncey’s, would soon “attempt the destruction of our fleet in its present state, before we can fit and man our new vessels.” Chauncey believed that his existing force, including the *Oneida*, was “too small for the protection of a post of such vital importance to the nation.”<sup>284</sup>

Fortunately the British, after considering an immediate attack on Sackets Harbor, decided to raid Oswego instead hoping to retain command of the lake as long as possible by capturing or delaying the transport of the ordnance and supplies Chauncey needed to complete his new vessels.<sup>285</sup>

At this time Chauncey recommended two officers to Secretary Jones as worthy of promotion. One was *Oneida*’s captain, Lieutenant Thomas Brown. “Lieut Brown has been engaged with the enemy on this Lake six different times and in every instance has shown great zeal and ability.” Despite being passed over for promotion to master commandant in 1813, Chauncey recognized that Brown “has never relaxed in zeal for the service.” Despite Chauncey’s efforts, Brown remained a lieutenant for another year.<sup>286</sup> Chauncey also recommended two master’s mates as worthy recipients of midshipman’s warrants. One, 21 year old Ezekiel Bishop Hart, began his service on board the *York* (ex-*Duke of Gloucester*) in July 1813, later served on board the *Sylph* and was transferred to the *Oneida* in November 1813. Lieutenant Brown approved and Hart received his midshipman’s warrant at the end of April 1814.<sup>287</sup> While a master’s mate had more responsibility and was paid more than a midshipman, his warrant made Hart eligible for promotion to lieutenant at a later date. Unfortunately for Hart, he was killed that summer in a small boat action in the Bay of Quinte and buried by the British at Kingston.<sup>288</sup>

Chauncey was sometimes forced to become involved with the personal problems of his young midshipmen. In early May, Midshipman Daniel R. Walker, on board the schooner *Governor Tompkins*, “connected himself with a woman who was likely to ruin him.” The woman, almost certainly a prostitute, met Walker during one of his times on shore and the two developed a romantic relationship. Chauncey had Walker transferred to the *Oneida* and requested Lieutenant Brown to “keep him on board as much as possible.” The young midshipman did not appreciate this restriction and he submitted his resignation, presumably to allow him to be with his sweetheart. Although Chauncey’s usual reaction in cases such as this was to approve the resignation, in this case the young man must have had a good reputation as Chauncey told Secretary Jones:

*To save the young man if I could, I did not send his warrant on to the Department — but after M<sup>r</sup> Walker became sensible of his error and made an apology to Captain Crane and Lieu<sup>t</sup> Brown I returned him his warrant.*<sup>289</sup>

Walker remained on board the *Oneida* until the end of the war.

On 8 June the *Oneida* went to sea for the first time that year. Departing Sackets Harbor at 9 a.m. that morning along with the *General Pike*, *Jefferson*, *Madison* and *Sylph*, she spent five hours maneuvering on Lake Ontario, returning to Sackets Harbor at 2:30 p.m.<sup>290</sup>

Apparently her performance during this exercise was satisfactory as no subsequent changes were made to her configuration or armament.

By early June Chauncey was still short of men. Chauncey informed Secretary Jones that “if others should not arrive for the *Jones* I will dismantle the *Oneida* and take her crew and make up the deficiency from the army.”<sup>291</sup>

Rank	Number
Boatswain (Cotter)	1
Boys	3
Carpenter's Mate	1
Gunner (Brewer)	1
Lieutenants (Brown, Hendry, Mervine)	3
Master at Arms	1
Master's Mate (Ross)	1
Midshipmen (Harper, Walker, Downing)	3
Ordinary Seamen	20
Quarter Gunner	1
Quartermasters	2
Sailing Master (Kemper)	1
Seamen	42
Steward	1
Surgeon's Mate (Osborne)	1
Unspecified	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>

**Table 4** – *Oneida's* Crew as of 10 July 1814  
Pay Roll, NAUS, RG45, T829, roll 17 pp.173-175

At the same time Chauncey informed Secretary Jones that he expected to be ready to sail “by the first of July.” On 24 June he confirmed that the squadron will “Sail the first week in July to offer the enemy battle if he accepts the invitation.” In that letter he reported that the British expected to have their new 102-gun ship-of-the-line *St. Lawrence* launched by the first of August and that he had “nothing to oppose so overwhelming a force.” The sailing date was critical as the army commander on the Niagara Frontier, Major General Jacob Brown, was counting on receiving supplies and support from Chauncey's squadron at Niagara in early July.

It did not happen. At the beginning of July, Chauncey was waiting for the arrival of Captain Smith who was to take the command of the new frigate *Mohawk*. On 7 July Chauncey received word that Smith had reached Albany but too sick to continue and was returning to New York. Chauncey then had to reassign his senior officers to cover the loss. That was necessary, but he also allowed those officers to take their subordinate officers and crews with them when they changed commands. This was totally unnecessary and, as Chauncey wrote to Secretary Jones, it “will detain me in port a few days longer.”

Over two weeks later Captain Jacob Jones wrote Secretary Jones that Commodore Chauncey, who claimed to be too unwell to write, could not have sailed when planned due to “the delay in obtaining blocks and iron work.”<sup>292</sup> This Secretary Jones found to be absurd, the more so as General Brown had written several letters, to Chauncey and others, that found their way into the newspapers, complaining that the squadron's absence from Niagara was making it impossible for the American army to achieve its goals on the



Niagara Frontier. Jones ordered Chauncey replaced by Stephen Decatur and it was only Chauncey's last-minute sailing at the beginning of August that preserved his command.<sup>293</sup>

When the squadron finally sailed on 1 August 1814, the *Oneida* had been completely ready for service and waiting at anchor in Sackets Harbor for over four months.

The American squadron then sailed to Niagara but light winds delayed its arrival until 5 August. There Chauncey discovered and ordered the *Lady of the Lake* and *Sylph* to chase the British brig *Magnet*, which was run on shore and set on fire by her crew to avoid capture. Loaded with gunpowder, she later blew up. The *Oneida*, now considered too old and too slow to chase anything, was only a spectator.

Chauncey then left the *Oneida* and the brigs *Jefferson* and *Sylph* at Niagara under the command of *Jefferson*'s captain Master Commandant Charles Ridgely to blockade three British vessels anchored in that river while he took the rest of his squadron eastward to blockade Kingston.<sup>294</sup> The *Oneida* continued off Niagara until she returned to Sackets Harbor on 27 August along with the *Jefferson* and *Sylph*, all three vessels being entirely out of provisions. Chauncey ordered the *Oneida* and the other brigs to take on board provisions enough for six weeks and to join him off the Ducks Islands as soon as possible.<sup>295</sup>

Chauncey's original plan was to send the three brigs back to Niagara, but as the *Oneida* and *Sylph* were too "short manned" to be effective he replaced those vessels with the *Jones*. On 5 September Chauncey ordered the *Oneida* to return to Sackets Harbor where Lieutenant Brown was to

*Fit for service, as soon as possible, all the gun boats which have been recently built there, you will also fit all the schooners except the York. — As the Oneida is short man'd you will take her guns and put them on board of the gun boats and make up the deficiency from any guns at the Harbor not absolutely necessary for its defense.*<sup>296</sup>

Chauncey had been ordered to transport Major General George Izard and two brigades of his division from Sackets Harbor to the mouth of the Genesee River and, without taking the guns from the *Oneida*, the boats and schooners needed for that task would be unarmed.<sup>297</sup>

On 21 September Chauncey's squadron, with General Izard and his men on board, sailed for the mouth of the Genesee River where they landed the troops the next day then returned to watch the British at Kingston. The *Oneida*, now disarmed, remained at anchor in Sackets Harbor, a fact which was widely reported in the newspapers with the comment that "she will probably act hereafter as a transport."<sup>298</sup>

By 8 October Chauncey and his squadron had returned to Sackets Harbor. On 17 October Chauncey received word that the British squadron, now including the 102-gun *St. Lawrence*, was on the lake. Now badly outgunned, the American squadron would remain at Sackets Harbor for the rest of the war.

On 5 January 1815, Chauncey complained to acting Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Homans that instead of receiving the additional officers needed for the new ships building at Sackets Harbor,

*Within that last month most of the first lieutenants and others have been ordered away, and all that remains are daily expecting orders to leave the station.*<sup>299</sup>

Lieutenant Thomas Brown was himself ordered to Philadelphia in December to recruit seamen for the lakes, his place as captain of the *Oneida* taken by 26 year old Lieutenant Joseph Stout MacPherson. MacPherson became a midshipman in 1806, an acting lieutenant in 1811 and was commissioned a lieutenant in 1812. Before commanding the *Oneida* he had served on board the *Siren* and *John Adams* on the Atlantic and the *General Pike*, *Superior* and as commanding officer of the schooners *Hamilton* and *Governor Tompkins* on Lake Ontario.

Word that the war was over reached Sackets Harbor in mid-February 1815, eliminating the need for additional officers and starting the mass reassignment of those present to stations on the Atlantic. On 15 April 1815, MacPherson himself was ordered to Boston, Massachusetts as one of the officers of the ship-of-the-line *Independence*.

### **Post-War**

In late March 1815, in reply to a request from the new Secretary of the Navy Benjamin W. Crowninshield, Commodore Chauncey reported that “The *Oneida* is a small brig built about seven years ago and quite rotten and in the course of two years would be condemned.” Chauncey recommended that she be sold at auction.<sup>300</sup>

On 15 May the surplus vessels were auctioned off at Sackets Harbor. The highest bid for the *Oneida*, however, was only \$1,760, less than that bid for the merchant schooners *Governor Tompkins* and *Conquest*. Consequently the navy purchased the *Oneida* itself.<sup>301</sup>

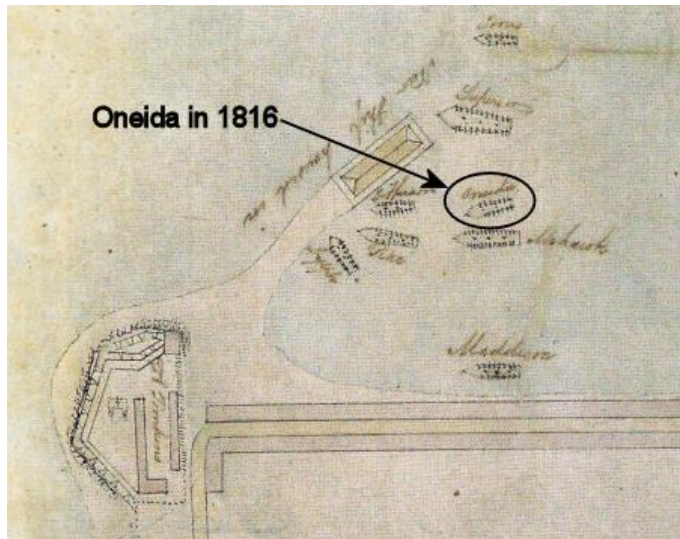
On 1 July 1815 Isaac Chauncey formally transferred command of the Sackets Harbor naval station to Master Commandant Melancthon Woolsey.<sup>302</sup> After almost three years Woolsey was once again in command of the navy on Lake Ontario. Now, however, circumstances on the lake were very different from what they were in September 1812.

During the summer of 1815, the *Oneida* was in use as a troop transport. On 6 July, Woolsey sailed from Sackets Harbor for Niagara with the *Jones*, *Oneida* and two transport schooners with about 800 troops on board. Once there the little squadron disembarked the troops, embarked more troops and returned to Sackets Harbor on 12 July. Woolsey expected to sail again on 17 July, which he hoped would “be the last of this truly disagreeable service.”<sup>303</sup> The sailing was delayed until 20 July to embark Major General Jacob Brown and his staff plus more troops, after which the *Jones*, *Oneida* and *Lady of the Lake* sailed for Niagara.<sup>304</sup>

That was not the last time the *Oneida* would act as a troop transport. On 5 August 1815 she returned from another trip to Niagara and, as Woolsey reported to the Board of Navy Commissioners, she would sail again for Niagara with another detachment of troops that same day. Once her troop transport duties were over, Woolsey planned to keep her “constantly employed in transporting such stores as may be destined for New York to Oswego.”<sup>305</sup> The *Oneida* had gone from the United States Navy’s flagship on Lake Ontario in 1812 to little better than a merchant ship three years later.

By the fall of 1815 the *Oneida*’s transport duties were over and she lay at anchor in Sackets Harbor, disarmed and receiving only occasional attention from the naval station’s staff. Only the *Jones* and *Lady of the Lake* remained armed and in service.

In May 1816 British intelligence correctly reported the *Oneida* as disarmed and laid up at Sackets Harbor. The report also gave her the ability to carry 18 guns, but incorrectly listed her as sold.<sup>306</sup>



The *Oneida* anchored in Sackets Harbor in 1816  
NAC NMC-7637 (detail)

In the summer of 1816 the Navy Commissioners ordered all the other warships, except the *Oneida*, covered with a board roof to protect them from the elements. The *Oneida* herself, moored in the “cove” off Navy Point inside the harbor and “tight though much rotten” was not considered worth the effort and expense of covering her.<sup>307</sup> A December 1816 report described the *Oneida* as “rotten and unfit for service.”<sup>308</sup>

In the spring of 1817 the *Oneida* remained moored off Navy Point.<sup>309</sup> That year the Rush-

Bagot agreement between the United States and Great Britain severely restricted the number and size of armed vessels on the Great Lakes. It was now unlikely that the *Oneida* would ever again be placed in service.

A November 1818 report from Woolsey was less pessimistic about the *Oneida*’s condition, claiming it to be just “dismantled” but not covered with a board roof. In addition, Woolsey noted that “All the vessels afloat except the *Oneida* and *Lady of the Lake* require caulking.”<sup>310</sup> Whether the station’s staff had made any repairs to the *Oneida* since the end of 1816 is unknown but not likely. Since all the other warships afloat, except the *Lady of the Lake* which was still in commission, were also listed as “dismantled” but covered with board roofs, it is probable that the *Oneida*’s condition was no better than it had been two years earlier but at least she was still afloat.

In 1819 Navy Commissioner Stephen Decatur reported to Secretary of the Navy Smith Thompson that the *Oneida* was “decayed.”<sup>311</sup> By early 1821 the *Oneida* was “unworthy of repair;” later that year she was declared “useless and decayed.”<sup>312</sup> Two years later the *Oneida* was finally on the harbor bottom, being reported to Washington as “sunk and decayed.”<sup>313</sup> On 3 February 1824 the Navy Department recommended to Congress that all the warships at Sackets Harbor, except the two incomplete ships-of-the-line, should be sold.<sup>314</sup>

While waiting for Congress to act, the Navy Department received a letter from the Trustees of the Village of Sackets Harbor asking that the sunken warships be removed as soon as possible as the area’s doctors had certified that bad airs emanating from the decaying wood were causing disease in the vicinity.<sup>315</sup>

On 3 March 1825 Congress passed a law authorizing the sale.<sup>316</sup> Three weeks later, Robert Hugunin of Oswego, New York, offered to buy the eight square-rigged warships,

including *Oneida*, for a total price of \$8,000, assuring the Navy Department that he would remove the vessels, except possibly *Superior*, within eighteen months.<sup>317</sup> On 13 April the Navy Department accepted Hugunin's offer, probably the only one they received.<sup>318</sup>

By the end of May 1826, Hugunin had raised, refitted and registered the *Oneida* as a merchant vessel at Sackets Harbor under the name of *Adjutant Clitz*, listing himself as both owner and master. The registration listed her as having a length of 87 feet 10 inches, a beam of 24 feet, and a depth of seven feet 11 inches. Tonnage is given as 146.82 which is clearly too small.<sup>319</sup>

Given her decayed condition, it is likely that this refit was a time-consuming and expensive task. However, once she was seaworthy again her size proved to be a problem in merchant service:

*Her draft of water was so great there was no profit in running her, she drawing twelve feet of water loaded and could only get in at Niagara River, Sackets harbor and the St. Lawrence, and would only come inside the piers here [at Oswego] light.*<sup>320</sup>

Despite that she was apparently kept busy for the next several years, loading timber at Oak Orchard, 18-Mile Creek, Lewiston, Youngstown and other ports, then sailing to Clayton, New York to unload. As one member of her crew described it:

*It was tedious work those days, every stick having to be hove in by the old fashioned windlass, horse not having been thought of and patent windlasses or capstan unknown.*<sup>321</sup>

The *Adjutant Clitz* was re-registered in August 1826 at Cape Vincent, but whether it was by Hugunin or someone else is not known.<sup>322</sup>

In May 1827 the *Adjutant Clitz* was again registered at Sackets Harbor but now with Jesse Smith, a merchant from Smithville, New York, and Shubel Westcott Formel of Sackets Harbor as owners. Robert Hugunin remained her master. That registration remained in place until 24 April 1829 when it was surrendered and the vessel re-registered at Sackets Harbor with the firm of Smith and Merrick as owners, Jesse Smith still residing in Smithville, New York and John Merrick at French Creek, now Clayton, New York.<sup>323</sup> Her master that season was Lester Pavy.<sup>324</sup>

The *Adjutant Clitz* was re-registered in April 1830 and again in June 1831, both times at Sackets Harbor. The 1831 enrollment gave her length as 90 feet, beam as 25 feet, depth ten feet and tonnage 202.40.<sup>325</sup>

Her enrollment was surrendered on 8 August 1832, but she was re-registered at Sackets Harbor in August 1833. This was the *Adjutant Clitz*'s last known registration.<sup>326</sup>

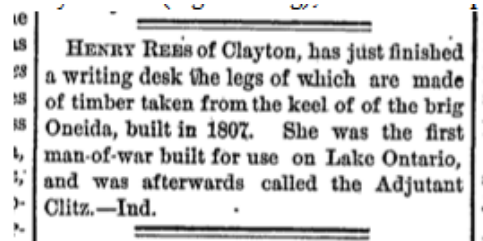
Samuel Humphrey was the *Adjutant Clitz*'s master on 1 May 1833 at Orleans on the St. Lawrence River when seaman George Dennett claimed Humphrey and Robert Hugunin did "with great force and violence struck and knocked" him down "upon the deck" and then with "fists and also with a certain rope" struck him "a great many blows" and as a result he was "greatly hurt bruised and wounded and became and was sick sore lame and disordered and so remained and continued ... for the space of eight weeks." Dennett sued Humphrey and Hugunin for \$500.00. Humphrey's defense was that Dennett had "neglected his duty" and disobeyed Humphrey's lawful orders requiring him to "moderately chastise and correct" Dennett. Furthermore, Humphrey claimed that he paid

Donnitt \$5.00 in June 1833 “in full satisfaction” of any claims of mistreatment. Apparently the case was settled out of court as no judgment appears in the record.<sup>327</sup> The case does show, however, that disciplinary problems on board were not limited to the brig’s naval service.

During these years the *Adjutant Clitz* ended each season at Clayton where she spent winters frozen in the ice.<sup>328</sup> In the spring of 1834 a Kingston, Upper Canada newspaper reported that she was “hauled up high and dry on the Rail-way, undergoing a thorough repair” at Niagara.<sup>329</sup> In 1836 the *Adjutant Clitz* was again repaired on the same Niagara marine railway.<sup>330</sup> That same year she was reported to be owned by E. J. Merrick & Co. of Clayton and her master was William G. Marshall.<sup>331</sup> After that, no further detailed records of her have been found.

At this time her fate is not definitely known. The former *Oneida* was apparently discarded at Clayton NY in the late 1830s or early 1840s. One report has the *Adjutant Clitz* sunk in the bay at Clayton in 1837.<sup>332</sup> Another report has that happening in 1838.<sup>333</sup> A third report has the *Adjutant Clitz* still active and unloading timber at Clayton in July 1840 when seven women and children drowned when the brig’s yawl was upset in a squall while returning from a day trip to Grindstone Island.<sup>334</sup>

A report from 1879 says Clayton resident John Rees made a writing desk out of wood taken from the *Oneida*’s keel.<sup>335</sup> If this is true then perhaps nothing now remains of the first American warship on Lake Ontario. This question will remain open until a definitive document describing her fate is found in some archive or private collection or an archaeological investigation of a sunken vessel proves to be the remains of the U. S. brig *Oneida*.



*The Oneida's fate – Furniture?*  
Ogdensburg Daily Journal, 4 February 1879

### **Acknowledgements**

The author is indebted to those who took the time to review and comment on a draft of this paper: Kevin Crisman, Benjamin Ford, John Grodzinski, Donald Hickey, Walter Lewis, Matthew MacVittie, Thomas Malcomson, Jonathan Moore, Clayton Nans, Stephen Otto and Peter Rindlisbacher. Their comments and suggestions made this a better paper but any errors that remain are my sole responsibility.

## Reference Abbreviations

To shorten and simplify the source references that appear in the notes they use a set of abbreviations. These are:

AF	NAUS, RG45, <i>Area File of the Naval Records Collection, Area 7.</i>
Articles of War	<i>Rules and Regulations for the Government of the United States Navy</i> , 23 April 1800. Copy in Valle, James E., <i>Rocks and Shoals</i> , (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1980) Appendix B, p.285.
ASP	<i>American State Papers</i> , Class 6 - <i>Naval Affairs</i> , Volume 1.
BECHS	Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, Buffalo, New York.
CELSI	NAUS, RG77, <i>Letters From the Office of the Chief of Engineers Relating to Internal Improvements, 1824-1830.</i>
CELSM	NAUS, RG77, <i>Miscellaneous Letters Sent by the Chief of Engineers.</i>
CLB	Isaac Chauncey's <i>Letterbooks</i> , Manuscript Department, New York Historical Society (#'s 1, 2, 5 & 6) & William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan (#'s 3, 4, & 7).
Crisman	Crisman, Kevin James, <i>The Jefferson: The History and Archaeology of an American Brig from the War of 1812</i> , Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1989.
DHC	Cruikshank, Ernest A., <i>Documentary History of the Campaigns on the Niagara Frontier</i> (Welland ON: Tribune Office).
Dudley	<i>Journal kept on board the U. S. S. Superior by Lieut. James A. Dudley U.S. Navy</i> , Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts.
NAC	National Archives (Canada)
NAUK	National Archives (United Kingdom)
NAUS	National Archives (United States)
NCLRC	NAUS, RG45, Entry 220, <i>Navy Commissioners Letters Received from Commandants.</i>
PJM-PS	<i>Papers of James Madison, Presidential Series</i> , University of Virginia Press.
PRR	<i>Prize and Related Records of the War of 1812</i> , NAUS, RG21.
PRC	Parish-Rossee Collection, Mss #5, Special Collections, Owen D. Young Library, St. Lawrence University, Canton, NY
RAO	NAUS, RG217, <i>Records of the Accountant of the Navy and the Fourth Auditor of the Treasury.</i>
RG	Record Group
Service Records	Gibson, Gary M., <i>Service Records of U. S. Navy and Marine Corps Officers Stationed on Lake Ontario During the War of 1812</i> , Second Edition (Sackets Harbor, 2012).
Settled Accounts	NAUS, RG217, <i>Records of the Accounting Officers of the Treasury, Fourth Auditor Settled Accounts.</i>
SNLRC	NAUS, RG45, <i>Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy From Captains ("Captain's Letters")</i> .
SNLRD	NAUS, RG45, <i>Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Commanders.</i>



SNLRM	NAUS, RG45, <i>Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy From Miscellaneous.</i>
SNLRO	NAUS, RG45, <i>Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy From Officers Below the Rank of Commander.</i>
SNLSC	NAUS, RG45, <i>Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy to Commandants and Navy Agents</i>
SNLSM	NAUS, RG45, <i>Miscellaneous Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy.</i>
SNLSO	NAUS, RG45, <i>Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy to Officers.</i>
SNPLB	NAUS, RG45, <i>Secretary of the Navy's Private Letter Book, microfilm publication T829 roll 453.</i>
SWLRR	NAUS, RG107, <i>Letters Received by the Secretary of War, Registered Series.</i>
SWLRU	NAUS, RG107, <i>Letters Received by the Secretary of War, Unregistered Series.</i>
Tompkins Papers	<i>Public Papers of Daniel D. Tompkins, Military, 3 volumes (Albany, 1898, 1902).</i>
WLB	Melancthon Woolsey's <i>Letterbook #3, Woolsey Family Papers, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, Detroit, MI.</i>
Woolsey Journal 5	Melancthon Woolsey's <i>Journal #5, Woolsey Family Papers, 52.MSS Box 95, WFP.2 JOU.1-5, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica NY.</i>
Woolsey Journal 7	Melancthon Woolsey's <i>Journal #7b (Jones 1814), Woolsey Family Papers, 52.MSS Box 95, WFP.2 JOU.1-5, Oneida County Historical Society, Utica NY.</i>

## References

---

<sup>1</sup> Roosevelt, Theodore, *The Naval War of 1812* (1882, repr. Naval Institute Press, 1987) p.216.

<sup>2</sup> Cooper, James Fenimore, *Ned Myers* (1843, repr. Naval Institute Press, 1989) pp.56-57.

<sup>3</sup> The attack on Kingston in November 1812, the attack on York in April 1813, the attack on Fort George in May 1813, three actions with the British Lake Ontario squadron in August and September 1813, and the attack on the British troop convoy in October 1813.

<sup>4</sup> Tenth Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, Chapter 4, *An Act to appropriate money for the providing of an additional number of Gun Boats*, 18 December 1807.

<sup>5</sup> A resolution to build an unspecified number of additional gunboats was introduced on 24 November 1807. *History of Congress*, 10<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, House of Representatives, p.1223.

<sup>6</sup> *History of Congress*, 10<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, House of Representatives, p.985.

<sup>7</sup> *History of Congress*, 10<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, Senate, 20 November 1807, pp.32-33.

<sup>8</sup> The Senate passed the resolution without a division. The vote in the House was 111 to 19.

<sup>9</sup> *History of Congress*, 10<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, *Public Acts of Congress*, 25 April 1808, p.2872.

<sup>10</sup> *History of Congress*, 10<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, House of Representatives, 12 January 1808, p.1408.

- 
- <sup>11</sup> Augustus Sacket to Albert Gallatin, 16 February 1808, *Albert Gallatin Papers*, microfilm edition, roll 15 frame 659.
- <sup>12</sup> Robert Fulton to Stephen Decatur, November 15, 1814, SNLRC, 1814 vol 7 item 135, M125 roll 40.
- <sup>13</sup> Tons burthen, later called “Builder’s Old Measurement,” applied the keel length “for tonnage” and beam measurements to a formula which derived the approximate amount of cargo that the vessel could carry; Steel, David, *The Shipwright’s Vade-Mecum* (London, 1805) pp.249-251. This was not the same as the current naval tonnage figure which gives the weight of the water displaced by the vessel as it floats. Tonnage values for a given ship tended to vary from source to source. The brig’s building contract specified a vessel of 220 tons burthen, close enough to the as-built value to be acceptable.
- <sup>14</sup> These and most of the following specifications are taken from the contract signed between Melancthon Woolsey, Henry Eckford and Christian Bergh, 26 July 1808, NAUS, RG45, Accountant of the Navy, *Contracts*, Book 1, pp.348-352.
- <sup>15</sup> For example, the *Thames*-class 32-gun frigate HMS *Alexandria*, launched in 1806, was over 40 feet longer and three times the tonnage of the *Oneida* but had a standard broadside only 40 pounds heavier. Lyon, David, *The Sailing Navy List* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1993) p.128.
- <sup>16</sup> May, W. E., *The Boats of Men of War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1999) p.62.
- <sup>17</sup> The standard anchor complement for brigs from 187 to 250 tons burthen on the Atlantic was three anchors of about 1,500 pounds each, and two smaller anchors of about 600 and 200 pounds. Curryer, Betty Nelson, *Anchors: An Illustrated History* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1999) pp.44, 58. data taken from Burney’s *Marine Dictionary* c.1815.
- <sup>18</sup> These details and the following cable list came from the specifications contained in the contract signed between the Navy Department and Henry Eckford and Christian Bergh, 26 July 1808, NAUS, RG45, Accountant of the Navy, *Contracts*, Book 1, pp.348-352.
- <sup>19</sup> Affidavits dated 20 and 22 February 1808, SNLRM, 1808 vol 2 item 75 and vol 6 item 46, M124 rolls 20 & 24; *Register of Officer Personnel and Ships Data 1801-1807* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1945) p.84.
- <sup>20</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Charles W. Goldsborough, 24 February 1808, SNLRC, 1808 vol 1 item 61, M125 roll 10.
- <sup>21</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Charles W. Goldsborough, 24 February 1808, SNLRC, 1808 vol 1 item 61, M125 roll 10.
- <sup>22</sup> *History of Congress*, 10<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, House of Representatives, 22 December 1807, p.1223. At the time a telegraph was a mechanical signal with movable devices such as arms, balls or flags whose configuration could be quickly changed and easily distinguished from a distance through a telescope.
- <sup>23</sup> Robert Smith to Melancthon Woolsey, 5 February 1808, SNLSO, vol 8 p.14, M149 roll 8.
- <sup>24</sup> Service Records, pp.180-182.
- <sup>25</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Robert Smith, 18 February 1808, SNLRC, 1808 vol 1 item 54, M125 roll 10; Woolsey Journal, entry for 7 December 1807..
- <sup>26</sup> Robert Smith to Melancthon Woolsey, 4 April 1808, SNLSO, vol 8 p.49, M149 roll 8.
- <sup>27</sup> John Rodgers to Robert Smith, 8 April 1808, SNLRC, 1808 vol 2 item 11, M125 roll 11.
- <sup>28</sup> Cooper, James Fenimore, “Sketches of Naval Men: Melancthon Taylor Woolsey,” *Graham’s American Monthly Magazine* XXVI (1845) p.16.
- <sup>29</sup> Although there were a number of captains and masters commandant unemployed in early 1808, none was eager for a lengthy job supervising warship construction in the wilderness of northern New York. Few officers, then or later, were pleased to receive an order sending them to the lakes.

- 
- <sup>30</sup> Robert Smith to John Rodgers, 2 July 1808, SNLSO, vol 8, M149 roll 8.
- <sup>31</sup> Joseph Rosseel to David Parish, 6 February 1809, folder 277, Parish-Rosseel Collection, Mss #5, Special Collections, Owen D. Young Library, St. Lawrence University, Canton, NY
- <sup>32</sup> Robert Smith to John M. Haswell, 2 July 1808; Smith to William Walker, Thomas Gamble and James Cooper, 5 July 1808; Smith to John Rodgers, 5 July 1808 all SNLSO, vol 8 pp.112-113, M149 roll 8.
- <sup>33</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 19 July 1808, NAUS, RG45, SNLRO, 1808 vol 2 item 95, M148 roll 5.
- <sup>34</sup> The British vessel referred to was probably the 168-ton ship *Earl of Moira*, launched at Kingston in May 1805. Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 19 July 1808, SNLRO, 1808 vol 2 item 95, M148 roll 5; Malcomson, Robert, *Warships of the Great Lakes* (Naval Institute Press, 2001) pp.45, 51.
- <sup>35</sup> Contract signed between the Navy Department and Henry Eckford and Christian Bergh, 26 July 1808, NAUS, RG45, Accountant of the Navy, *Contracts*, Book 1, pp.348-352.
- <sup>36</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 24, 26 & 29 July 1808, SNLRO, 1808 vol 2 items 99, 102 & 108, M148 roll 5.
- <sup>37</sup> *Summary of expenditures and commissions for building gunboats on lakes Ontario and Champlain*, Woolsey Family Papers, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, Detroit MI.
- <sup>38</sup> While diligent in his duties, Woolsey was less so when it came to record keeping. Due to his situation before, during and after the war it was not until September 1823 that his accounts were settled at the Treasury Department in Washington. Starting with the construction of the *Oneida*, that settlement showed he had received \$32,595 more in government funds than were covered by his receipts and vouchers. No one, from his friends to the secretary of the navy, believed Woolsey had pocketed the money. Everyone acknowledged that Woolsey's accounts should have been settled long before, and the missing paperwork was due to Woolsey's inexperience in managing such large sums of money but more so by difficulties caused by the War of 1812. Nevertheless, federal law required that Woolsey's salary as a navy captain be stopped until the deficit was repaid. In effect, Woolsey paid for the *Oneida* out of his wages, an observation made to the author by Walter Lewis. Woolsey and his family then lived for most of a decade on the value of his rations allowance. Finally, just a month before his death, a private act of Congress allowed Woolsey to retain a portion of his salary. Amos Kendall to Levi Woodbury, 18 February 1832, SNLRM, 1832 vol 2 item 144, M124 roll 131; *An act for the relief of Melancthon T. Woolsey*, 20 April 1838, 25<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, Chapter 68.
- <sup>39</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 6 August 1808, SNLRO, 1808 vol 2 item 116, M148 roll 5.
- <sup>40</sup> Oswego NY, *Oswego Daily Palladium*, January 27, 1858.
- <sup>41</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 13 August 1812, SNLRO, 1808 vol2 item 134, M148 roll 5.
- <sup>42</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to James Cooper, 28 July and 15 and 17 August 1808, WLB items 7, 12 and 13.
- <sup>43</sup> Cooper, James Fenimore, "Sketches of Naval Men: Melancthon Taylor Woolsey," *Graham's American Monthly Magazine* XXVI (1845) p.16.
- <sup>44</sup> Cooper, James Fenimore, "Sketches of Naval Men: Melancthon Taylor Woolsey," *Graham's American Monthly Magazine* XXVI (1845) p.16.
- <sup>45</sup> In 1755 the British at Oswego built the 70-ton *Ontario* and *Oswego* and the 20-ton *Valiant* and *George*. In 1756 they built the *Mohawk*, *London* and *Halifax*. The *Halifax* was about 170 tons and 80 feet six inches on deck, approaching the size of the *Oneida*. Malcomson, Robert, *Warships of the Great Lakes 1754-1834* (Naval Institute Press, 2001) pp.9-14.
- <sup>46</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 28 August 1808, SNLRO, 1808 vol 2 item 132½, M148 roll 5.
- <sup>47</sup> Cooper, James Fenimore, "Sketches of Naval Men: Melancthon Taylor Woolsey," *Graham's American Monthly Magazine* XXVI (1845) p.17.

- 
- <sup>48</sup> Cooper, James Fenimore, "Sketches of Naval Men: Melancthon Taylor Woolsey," *Graham's American Monthly Magazine* XXVI (1845) p.17.
- <sup>49</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 28 August 1808, SNLRO, 1808 vol 2 item 132½, M148 roll 5.
- <sup>50</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 8 September 1808, SNLRO, 1808 vol 2 item 136, M148 roll 5.
- <sup>51</sup> Gamble's midshipman's warrant was dated 2 April 1804, Cooper's 1 January 1808.
- <sup>52</sup> William Gamble may have been Midshipman Thomas Gamble's father or an uncle. He might have been the same William Gamble who served in the Continental Navy as a lieutenant.
- <sup>53</sup> William Gamble's report was dated 12 November 1808, SNLRO, 1808 vol 2 item 186, M148 roll 5; Woolsey acknowledged Secretary Smith's approval to salt the brig on 22 January 1809, SNLRO, 1809 vol 1 item 18, M148 roll 5; Voucher for salt provided by Daniel Hugunin at Oswego NY, 14 January 1809, Settled Accounts, Alphabetic Series, box 2982, Woolsey. It is not known why the amount was only a tenth of that recommended by Gamble. Salting was not unique to the United States. Beginning with the tenure of Sir Robert Seppings as British Surveyor of the Navy (1813 to 1832), ship timbers were often stored in brine for a period to preserve them, then marked "SALT" to record the process. See photograph in Goodwin, Peter, *The Construction and Fitting of the English Man of War 1659-1850* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1987) p.38.
- <sup>54</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 4 December 1808, SNLRO, 1808 vol 2 item 185, M148 roll 5; Cooper, James Fenimore, "Sketches of Naval Men: Melancthon Taylor Woolsey," *Graham's American Monthly Magazine* XXVI (1845) p.16. Lt. Chrystie was commissioned on 3 May 1808 and later became the colonel of the twenty-third regiment on 12 March 1813. He died in July 1813.
- <sup>55</sup> One of the first British references to the *Oneida* appears in Richard Cartwright to Major MacKenzie, 2 November 1808, PAC, RG8, C.673 p.140, though the building site is given as Oswagatchie not Oswego. Its force was considered excessive if its purpose was just to prevent smuggling. Canada's Governor-in-Chief Sir James Craig reported to Lord Castlereagh on 13 February 1809 that he had "directed a vessel of rather superior strength to theirs to be built at Kingston" which became the *Royal George*, PAC, Q 109, p.14 transcribed in Preston, Richard A., *Kingston Before the War of 1812* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1959) p.265.
- <sup>56</sup> The keel length times the square of the beam divided by 190, all measurements in feet.
- <sup>57</sup> *A Return of Vessels of War belonging to the United States upon Lake Ontario exhibiting their force in Guns and Men*, 10 June 1813, AF, M625 roll 76 frames 201-203.
- <sup>58</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 28 August and 25 December 1808 and 15 January 1809, SNLRO, 1808 vol 2 items 132½ and 196 & 1809 vol 1 item 14, M148 roll 5.
- <sup>59</sup> Cooper, James Fenimore, "Sketches of Naval Men: Melancthon Taylor Woolsey," *Graham's American Monthly Magazine* XXVI (1845) p.17.
- <sup>60</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 26 February 1809, SNLRO, 1809 vol 1 item 61, M148 roll 5.
- <sup>61</sup> It is not known who Lieutenant "R" was but it is certain he was not a member of the Royal Navy. He was probably an officer in the Provincial Marine, possibly Lieutenant Charles Rolette, but in 1812 Rolette was stationed on Lake Erie. Another possibility is James Richardson, who entered the Provincial Marine in 1809 at age 18 but did not become a lieutenant until 1812. Thanks to Walter Lewis for suggesting this alternative.
- <sup>62</sup> Cooper, James Fenimore, "Sketches of Naval Men: Melancthon Taylor Woolsey," *Graham's American Monthly Magazine* XXVI (1845) p.17.
- <sup>63</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 2 April 1809, SNLRO, 1809 vol 2 item 3, M148 roll 6.
- <sup>64</sup> Testimony of Isaac Chauncey at Leonard's court martial, NAUS, RG45, *Records of General Courts Martial and Courts of Inquiry*, vol 4 case 152, 1 December 1812, M273 roll 6.

- 
- <sup>65</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 19 July and 28 August 1808, SNLRO, 1808 vol 2 items 95 & 132½, M148 roll 5; Melancthon Woolsey to John Bullus and Jonathan Walton, 23 and 26 August 1808, WLB items 14 and 15.
- <sup>66</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Richard Smith, 6 August 1808, SNLRO, 1808 vol 2 item 116, M148 roll 5.
- <sup>67</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Richard Smith, 28 August 1808, SNLRO, 1808 vol 2 item 132½, M148 roll 5; Melancthon Woolsey to John Bullus and John Rodgers, 28 August 1808, WLB items 17 and 18.
- <sup>68</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 20 September 1808, SNLRO, 1808 vol 2 item 146, M148 roll 5.
- <sup>69</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 4 December 1808, SNLRO, 1808 vol 2 item 185, M148 roll 5; Philander Forbes to William Kirkpatrick, 2 December 1808, SNLRM, 1808 vol 7 item 45, M124 roll 25; Melancthon Woolsey to Richard Smith, 26 February 1809, SNLRO, 1809 vol 1 item 61, M148 roll 5.
- <sup>70</sup> Using two 24-pound carronades in place of the 32-pound cannon saved about 3,500 pounds of top weight. In addition the weight of the pivot mounting plus the wooden platform weighed considerably more than the carriages for the carronades. Tucker, Spencer, *Arming the Fleet* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1989) p.125.
- <sup>71</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 4 December 1808, SNLRO, 1808 vol 2 item 185, M148 roll 5.
- <sup>72</sup> Robert Smith to Isaac Chauncey, 1 November 1808, SNLSO, vol 8 p.155, M149 roll 8; Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 4 December 1808, SNLRO, 1808 vol 2 item 185, M148 roll 5; Robert Smith to Melancthon Woolsey, 16 December 1808, SNLSO, vol 8 p.172, M149 roll 8; Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 15 January 1809, SNLRO, 1809 vol 1 item 14, M148 roll 5.
- <sup>73</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 15 January 1809, SNLRO, 1809 vol 1 item 14, M148 roll 5.
- <sup>74</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 22 January 1809, SNLRO, 1809 vol 1 item 18, M148 roll 5.
- <sup>75</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Christian Bergh and Henry Eckford, 23 January 1809, WLB item 34.
- <sup>76</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to John Rodgers, 23 January 1809, WLB item 35.
- <sup>77</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 29 January 1809, SNLRO, 1809 vol 1 item 29, M148 roll 5; a similar version appeared in Melancthon Woolsey to John Rodgers, 23 January 1809, WLB item 35.
- <sup>78</sup> Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 27 March 1810, SNLSO, vol 9 p.57, M149 roll 9.
- <sup>79</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 26 January 1811, SNLRO, 1811 vol 1 item 58, M148 roll 8; Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 11 February 1811, SNLSO, vol 9 p.283, M149 roll 9.
- <sup>80</sup> Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 27 March 1811, SNLSO, vol 9 p.321, M149 roll 9. The cannon remained at Oswego until July 1812.
- <sup>81</sup> Reprinted in the Pulaski NY *Pulaski Democrat*, July 27, 1871.
- <sup>82</sup> Van Cleave, *Reminiscences*, pp.98 & 116; Invoice for delay at Lewiston NY for cordage, 3 December 1811, Settled Accounts, Alfabetic Series, box 2982, Woolsey.
- <sup>83</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Robert Smith, 2 and 8 April 1809, SNLRO, 1809 vol 2 items 3 and 21, M148 roll 6.
- <sup>84</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 8 April 1809, SNLRO, 1809 vol 2 item 21, M148 roll 6.
- <sup>85</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to James Cooper, 20 July 1809, WLB item 61.
- <sup>86</sup> James Fenimore Cooper to Secretary of the Navy, 8 April 1809, SNLRO, 1809 vol 2 item 23, M148 roll 6.
- <sup>87</sup> James Cooper to Paul Hamilton, 13 September 1809, SNLRO, 1809 vol 4 item 25, M148 roll 7; Charles W. Goldsborough to James Cooper, 27 September 1809, SNLSO, vol 8 p.505, M149 roll 8; James Cooper to Paul Hamilton, 9 November 1809, SNLRO, 1809 vol 4 item 108, M148 roll 7. James Fenimore Cooper resigned from the navy on 6 May 1811.

- 
- <sup>88</sup> Haswell, who had supervised the building of gunboats 169 and 170 on Lake Champlain, was accused of financial irregularities in the building of those vessels.
- <sup>89</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 13 February 1810, SNLRO, 1810 vol 1 item 40, M148 roll 7.
- <sup>90</sup> Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 27 March 1810, SNLSO, vol 9 p.57, M149 roll 9.
- <sup>91</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to George S. Wise, 28 March 1810, WLB item 93.
- <sup>92</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 17 April 1810, SNLRO, 1810 vol 1 item 99, M148 roll 7.
- <sup>93</sup> Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 21 April 1810, SNLSO, vol 9 p.75, M149 roll 9.
- <sup>94</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 21 April 1810, SNLRO, 1810 vol 1 item 105, M148 roll 7.
- <sup>95</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 24 April 1810, SNLRO, 1810 vol 1 item 109, M148 roll 7.
- <sup>96</sup> Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 27 April 1810, SNLSO, vol 9 p.79, M149 roll 9.
- <sup>97</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 20 May 1810, SNLRO, 1810 vol 1 item 155, M148 roll 7.
- <sup>98</sup> Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 2 August 1810, SNLSO, vol 9 p.158, M149 roll 9.
- <sup>99</sup> Melancthon Woolsey at New York to Paul Hamilton, 6 August 1810, SNLRO, 1810 vol 2 item 57, M148 roll 8.
- <sup>100</sup> Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 10 August 1810, SNLSO, vol 9 p.164, M149 roll 9.
- <sup>101</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 13 August and George S. Wise to Paul Hamilton, 14 August 1810, SNLRO, 1810 vol 2 items 64 & 65, M148 roll 8.
- <sup>102</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 22 August 1810, SNLRO, 1810 vol 2 item 79, M148 roll 8.
- <sup>103</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Isaac Chauncey and John Bullus, 22 August 1810, WLB items 107 and 108; George S. Wise to Melancthon Woolsey, 24 December 1810, WLB item 130.
- <sup>104</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 22 September and 6 October 1810, SNLRO, 1810 vol 2 items 117 and 132, M148 roll 8.
- <sup>105</sup> In fiscal 1811 the Navy Agent at New York City, Dr. John Bullus, reported an expenditure of \$798.20 to repair the *Oniada*. The reason for this expenditure is not known for certain but it was probably associated with the expenses needed to refloat and refit the *Oneida* after her months on the beach. *Condition of the Several Navy Yards*, 30 November 1814, ASP, No. 118, p.335.
- <sup>106</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to John Bullus, 19 November 1810, WLB item 122.
- <sup>107</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 4 November 1810, SNLRO, 1810 vol2 item 163, M148 roll 8.
- <sup>108</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 19 November 1810, SNLRO, 1810 vol 2 item 180, M148 roll 8.
- <sup>109</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to John Bullus, 19 November 1810, WLB item 122.
- <sup>110</sup> Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 19 November and 7 December 1810, SNLRO, vol 9 pp. 230 & 240, M149 roll 9.
- <sup>111</sup> Making a total of 18 24-pound carronades. Melancthon Woolsey to Jonathan Walton & Co., 14 December 1810, WLB item 126.
- <sup>112</sup> George S. Wise to Melancthon Woolsey, 24 December 1810, WLB item 130.
- <sup>113</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 16 December 1810, SNLRO, 1810 vol 2 item 205, M148 roll 8.
- <sup>114</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 16 December 1810, SNLRO, 1810 vol 2 item 205, M148 roll 8; Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 3 January 1811, SNLSO, vol 9 p.258, M149 roll 9.
- <sup>115</sup> George S. Wise to Paul Hamilton, 4 March 1811, SNLRO, 1811 vol 1 item 128, M148 roll 8; Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 27 March 1811, SNLSO, vol 9 p.320, M149 roll 9; Melancthon

---

Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 16 April 1811, SNLRO, 1811 vol 1 item 192, M148 roll 8; Paul Hamilton to Alexander P. Darragh, 22 May 1811, SNLSO, vol 9 p.359, M149 roll 9; Melancthon Woolsey and Alexander P. Darragh to Paul Hamilton, 17 and 18 June 1811, SNLRO, 1811 vol 2 items 29 and 30, M148 roll 9.

<sup>116</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 9 April 1811, SNLRO, 1811 vol 1 item 186, M148 roll 8.

<sup>117</sup> Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 23 April 1811, SNLSO, vol 9 p.339, M149 roll 9.

<sup>118</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 20 May 1811, SNLRO, 1811 vol 1 item 262, M148 roll 8.

<sup>119</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 23 July 1811, SNLRO, 1811 vol 2 item 141, M148 roll 9.

<sup>120</sup> Melancthon Woolsey and William Caton to Paul Hamilton, 10 and 13 June, 25 August and 8 September 1811, SNLRO, 1811 vol 2 items 14, 27, 130 and 142, M148 roll 9. Paul Hamilton to Alexander P. Darragh, 7 January 1812, SNLSO, vol 9 p.542, M149 roll 9.

<sup>121</sup> Woolsey mentioned the *Charles and Ann*, *Fair American*, *Diana*, *Niagara*, *Ontario*, *Collector*, *Experiment* and *Genesee Packet*. He estimated that these schooners plus the *Julia* could mount a total of 69 cannon or carronades. Those guns, with the 18 carronades on the *Oneida*, would give the United States equality with the British on Lake Ontario.

<sup>122</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 10 September 1811, SNLRO, 1811 vol 2 item 140, M148 roll 9.

<sup>123</sup> Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 23 September 1811, SNLSO, vol 9 p.466, M149 roll 9; Woolsey received this letter at Sackets Harbor on 11 October, Woolsey Journal.

<sup>124</sup> Alexander P. Darragh to Paul Hamilton, 30 September 1811, SNLRO, 1811 vol 2 item 171, M148 roll 9.

<sup>125</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 11 and 18 October 1811, SNLRO, 1811 vol 2 items 188 and 201, M148 roll 9; Alexander P. Darragh to Paul Hamilton, 1 November 1811, SNLRO, 1811 vol 2 item 224, M148 roll 9; Charles W. Goldsborough to Alexander P. Darragh and Henry Wells, 5 November 1811, SNLSO, vol 9 pp.498-499, M149 roll 9.

<sup>126</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 18 October 1811, SNLRO, 1811 vol 2 item 201, M148 roll 9.

<sup>127</sup> These vessels included the *Charles and Ann*, *Fair American* and *Diana* at Oswego and the *Collector*, *Genesee Packet* and *Experiment* at Ogdensburg.

<sup>128</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 18 October and 29 November 1811, SNLRO, 1811 vol 2 items 201 and 268, M148 roll 9; Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 13 November 1811, SNLSO, vol 9 p.304, M149 roll 9.

<sup>129</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 18 October 1811, SNLRO, 1811 vol 2 item 201, M148 roll 9.

<sup>130</sup> Voucher #125 dated 6 February 1812 from Harvey Church for use of his sleigh & horse for one night to bring McGrath to Ogdensburg (\$3.50) and voucher #146 from William Vaughan dated 14 February 1812 for sleigh, horses and services apprehending McGrath (\$67.00), Settled Accounts, Alphabetic Series, Woolsey, box 2982; Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 12 November 1811, SNLRO, 1811 vol 2 item 243, M148 roll 9; Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 14 February 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 1 item 49, M148 roll 9.

<sup>131</sup> Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 3 March 1812, SNLSO, vol 9 p.571, M149 roll 9.

<sup>132</sup> NAUS, RG45, *Miscellaneous Records of the Navy Department*, Muster Books (1) *Oneida*, 21 August 1813, T829 roll 17 pp.155-158, (2) *Sylph*, 30 April 1814, T829 roll 19 pp.184-189.

<sup>133</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 8 and 29 November 1811 and 4 May 1812, SNLRO, 1811 vol 2 items 236 and 268, 1812 vol 1 item 233, M148 roll 9.

<sup>134</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 8 November 1811, SNLRO, 1811 vol 2 item 236, M148 roll 9.



<sup>135</sup> Woolsey Journal, entries for 1, 5, 25 and 28 November, 2, 6 and 15 December 1811; Voucher #155 from Samuel F. Hooker dated 21 December 1811, *Woolsey Family Papers*, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, Detroit MI.

<sup>136</sup> Woolsey Journal, entries for 4 and 6 November 1811. Franklin later sued Woolsey for libel but lost as Woolsey's statements that Franklin was a liar and a thief were judged to be true. Melancthon Woolsey adm. Abel Franklin, filed 19 November 1811, Court Records, Jefferson County Clerk's Office, Watertown NY.

<sup>137</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Melancthon Woolsey, 30 November 1811, CLB 2 p.145.

<sup>138</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Paul Hamilton and James Trant, 30 November 1811, CLB 2 pp.145-146; Paul Hamilton to Isaac Chauncey, 4 December 1811, SNLSO, vol 9 p.516, M149 roll 9; Alexander P. Darragh to Paul Hamilton, 6 December 1811, SNLRO, 1811 vol 2 item 277, M148 roll 9.

<sup>139</sup> Henry Wells to Paul Hamilton, 4 December 1811, SNLRO, 1811 vol 2 item 276, M148 roll 9.

<sup>140</sup> Purser's Quarterly Report, Marines, 26 January 1812, NAUS, RG45, T829 roll 17 p.325.

<sup>141</sup> Woolsey Journal, entries for 8, 9, 15, 22 and 29 December 1811.

<sup>142</sup> Woolsey Journal, entries for 18, 21 and 23 January 1812.

<sup>143</sup> Woolsey Journal, entries for 17 and 21 December 1811, 7 to 10, 11 to 14 and 27 January 1812.

<sup>144</sup> Woolsey Journal, entries for 25 January and 1 February 1812.

<sup>145</sup> Woolsey Journal, entries for 3 to 7 January 1812; Voucher #147 from James Shields for \$2.00, 23 April 1812, *Woolsey Family Papers*, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, Detroit MI; *Muster Book, Oneida*, 21 August 1813, NAUS, RG45, *Miscellaneous Records of the Navy Department*, T829 roll 17 pp.155-159; Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 14 February 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 1 item 49, M148 roll 9.

<sup>146</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 10 January 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 1 item 16, M148 roll 9.

<sup>147</sup> Voucher #154 from Samuel F. Hooker for \$9.38, 27 February 1812, *Woolsey Family Papers*, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, Detroit MI; *Muster Book, Oneida*, 21 August 1813, NAUS, RG45, *Miscellaneous Records of the Navy Department*, T829 roll 17 pp.155-159. Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 15 March 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 1 item 115, M148 roll 9, containing copies of letters from Henry Wells to Woolsey and from Woolsey to the British commander at Kingston requesting Waters' return.

<sup>148</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 6 December 1811, SNLRO, 1811 vol 2 item 281, M148 roll 9.

<sup>149</sup> Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 8 April 1812, SNLSO, vol 10 p.13, M149 roll 10.

<sup>150</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 28 April 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 1 item 227, M148 roll 9.

<sup>151</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 3 January 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 1 item 5, M148 roll 9.

<sup>152</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 31 January 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 1 item 45, M148 roll 9.

<sup>153</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 14 February 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 1 item 49, M148 roll 9.

<sup>154</sup> Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 14 February 1812, SNLSO, vol 9 p.565, M149 roll 9.

<sup>155</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 15 March 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 1 item 115, M148 roll 9.

<sup>156</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 23 February, 21 March and 1 June 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 1 items 82 and 133 and vol 2 item 1, M148 rolls 9 and 10; Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 3 March 1812, SNLSO, vol 9 p.571, M149 roll 9.

<sup>157</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 23 February 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 1 item 82, M148 roll 9.

<sup>158</sup> Contract signed between Thomas Tingey at the Washington Navy Yard and Joshua Forman, 22 January 1812, NAUS, RG45, Accountant of the Navy, *Contracts*, Book 2, pp.28-29.

- 
- <sup>159</sup> Joshua Forman to Paul Hamilton, 15 April 1812, SNLRM, 1812 vol 3 item 2, M124 roll 48; Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 25 April 1812, SNLSO, vol 10 p.23, M149 roll 10. Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 4 May 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 1 item 233, M148 roll 9.
- <sup>160</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 28 April 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 1 item 227, M148 roll 9.
- <sup>161</sup> One newspaper report had the shot fired “into her rigging” which, if true, was certainly more dramatic if probably unintentional. At that point (before the war) the *Oneida*’s crew didn’t have much experience firing their carronades. Canandaigua NY, *Ontario Repository*, 16 June 1812.
- <sup>162</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 9 June 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 2 item 19, M148 roll 10; H.Doc 126, U. S. 15<sup>th</sup> Congress 2<sup>nd</sup> Session. A court case resulting from the seizure of the *Lord Nelson* became an international issue and was not finally settled until the late 1920s.
- <sup>163</sup> *The Columbian*, New York NY, 24 June 1812.
- <sup>164</sup> *List of vessels purchased by Commodore Chauncey*, 3 March 1813, AF, M625 roll 76 frames 59-60.
- <sup>165</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 6 October 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 3 item 86, M148 roll 10.
- <sup>166</sup> Article VIII of the *Rules and Regulations for the Government of the United States Navy*, 23 April 1800, Sixth Congress, First Session.
- <sup>167</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 6 October 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 3 item 86, M148 roll 10.
- <sup>168</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to William Jones, 20 February 1813, SNLRO, 1813 vol 1 item 72, M148 roll 11.
- <sup>169</sup> William Jones to Melancthon Woolsey, 26 March 1813, SNLSO, vol 10 p.322, M149 roll 10.
- <sup>170</sup> Henry Lee to Samuel L. Southard, 23 December 1826, AF, M625 roll 78 frames 299-302.
- <sup>171</sup> Samuel L. Southard to Margaret McCormick, 4 June 1827, SNLSM, vol 16 p.113, M209 roll 6.
- <sup>172</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 26 June 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 2 items 63 and 66, M148 roll 10; Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 11 July 1812, SNLSO, vol 10 p.93, M149 roll 10; Vouchers submitted jointly by 29 volunteers together and one separately by Peter Cook for \$5.00 bounty each for their services during the British attack on 19 July 1812, *Woolsey Family Papers*, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, Detroit MI.
- <sup>173</sup> Melancthon Woolsey, to Paul Hamilton, 28 June 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 2 item 72, M148 roll 10.
- <sup>174</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 10 July 1812, SNLRO, 1813 vol 3 item 16, M148 roll 12. Note this letter is filed with 1813’s not 1812’s letters.
- <sup>175</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 4 and 10 July 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 2 item 82 and 1813 vol 3 item 16, M148 rolls 10 and 12. The second letter is filed with 1813’s not 1812’s letters.
- <sup>176</sup> Malcomson, Robert, *Lords of the Lake* (Annapolis MD: Naval Institute Press, 1998) p.329.
- <sup>177</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 21 July 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 2 item 100, M148 roll 10.
- <sup>178</sup> Voucher submitted by Hezekiah Wing dated 24 July 1812 and paid on 5 December 1812, Settled Accounts, Alphabetic Series, box 2982, Woolsey.
- <sup>179</sup> In September 1812, following the U. S. frigate *Constitution*’s victory over HMS *Guerriere* (the first U. S. Navy victory of the war), *Constitution*’s first lieutenant, Charles Morris, was promoted two ranks to captain over the head and much to the annoyance of every master commandant in the navy. This was the only time during the War of 1812 that this occurred and, had Earl’s Provincial Marine squadron been defeated a month earlier, that promotion could have been Woolsey’s.
- <sup>180</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 3 August 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 2 item 138, M148 roll 10.
- <sup>181</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 8 August 1813, SNLRO, 1812 vol 2 item 142, M148 roll 10.

- 
- <sup>182</sup> Paul Hamilton to Melancthon Woolsey, 21 August 1812, SNLSO, vol 10 p.131, M149 roll 10; Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 25 August 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 2 item 180, M148 roll 10.
- <sup>183</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Paul Hamilton, 25 August 1812, SNLRO, 1812 vol 2 item 180, M148 roll 10.
- <sup>184</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Paul Hamilton, 22 June 1812, SNLRC, 1812 vol 2 item 53, M125 roll 24; Paul Hamilton to Isaac Chauncey, 4 August 1812, SNLSC, M441 roll 1 frame 177 or T829 roll 175 p.308.
- <sup>185</sup> Charles W. Goldsborough to Isaac Chauncey, 31 August 1812, SNLSC, T829 roll 175 pp.325-327.
- <sup>186</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Melancthon Woolsey, 3 September 1812, CLB 3 p.2,
- <sup>187</sup> *Mercantile Advertiser*, New York NY, 7 July 1812, another copy appears in New York's *The Columbian* of the same date. The Plattsburgh NY *Republican* on 10 July 1812 printed a similar article about a "heavy cannonading" heard on Lake Ontario which drew the same conclusion.
- <sup>188</sup> New York NY, *The Columbian*, 13 July 1812.
- <sup>189</sup> New York NY, *Mercantile Advertiser*, 14 July 1812.
- <sup>190</sup> Washington DC, *National Intelligencer*, 16 July 1812.
- <sup>191</sup> Boston MA, *Boston Gazette*, 29 October 1812.
- <sup>192</sup> Buffalo NY, *Buffalo Gazette*, 21 July 1812.
- <sup>193</sup> New London CT, *The Connecticut Gazette*, 22 July 1812.
- <sup>194</sup> Montreal LC, *Montreal Gazette*, 20 July 1812. This was reprinted from the *Boston Palladium* of 7 July 1812, the delay amounting to almost three weeks from the time of the reported event.
- <sup>195</sup> Montreal LC, *Montreal Gazette*, 27 July 1812.
- <sup>196</sup> Geneva NY, *Geneva Gazette*, 29 July 1812.
- <sup>197</sup> For example, Charleston SC, *The Investigator*, 27 April 1813.
- <sup>198</sup> *A Book for the Use of Capt Reuben Kings Compy during the campaign at Fort Tompkins Sackets Harbor...*, Lansingburgh Historical Society, Troy NY, entry for 7 October 1812.
- <sup>199</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Paul Hamilton, 8 October 1812, SNLRC, 1812 vol 3 item 106, M125 roll 25.
- <sup>200</sup> Currently the city of Fulton NY.
- <sup>201</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Paul Hamilton, 21 October 1812, SNLRC, 1812 vol 3 item 137, M125 roll 25.
- <sup>202</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Paul Hamilton, 27 October 1812, SNLRC, 1812 vol 3 items 148 & 149, M125 roll 25.
- <sup>203</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Paul Hamilton, 4 November 1812, SNLRC, 1812 vol 3 item 161, M125 roll 25.
- <sup>204</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Paul Hamilton, 4 November 1812, SNLRC, 1812 vol 3 item 161, M125 roll 25.
- <sup>205</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Daniel D. Tompkins, 7 November 1812, CLB 3.
- <sup>206</sup> Chauncey's force had seven vessels carrying 40 guns and 430 men including Marines. He credited the Provincial Marine with seven vessels carrying 108 guns and 890 men. He gave the Provincial Marine three vessels and over 50 guns that did not exist.
- <sup>207</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Paul Hamilton, 6 November 1812, SNLRC, 1812 vol 3 item 167, M125 roll 25.
- <sup>208</sup> Lieutenant Woolsey was still at Oswego. The schooners were (as renamed) *Hamilton*, *Governor Tompkins*, *Conquest*, *Growler*, *Julia* and *Pert*.
- <sup>209</sup> Referred to by Chauncey, incorrectly, as "Armingstown." The current name for the village is Bath.
- <sup>210</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Paul Hamilton, 13 November 1812, SNLRC, 1812 vol 3 item 176, M125 roll 25.

- 
- <sup>211</sup> Walter W. Buchanan to Samuel L. Southard, 27 November 1825, SNLRC, 1826 vol 1 item 40, M125 roll 99.
- <sup>212</sup> The *Governor Simcoe's* captain was James Richardson Sr., an experienced mariner who had previously served in both the Royal Navy and Provincial Marine.
- <sup>213</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Paul Hamilton, 13 November 1812, SNLRC, 1812 vol 3 item 176, M125 roll 25.
- <sup>214</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Paul Hamilton, 17 November 1812, SNLRC, 1812 vol 3 item 183, M125 roll 25.
- <sup>215</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Paul Hamilton, 21 November 1812, SNLRC, 1812 vol 3 item 185, M125 roll 25.
- <sup>216</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Paul Hamilton, 22 November 1812, SNLRC, 1812 vol 3 item 187, M125 roll 25.
- <sup>217</sup> Paul Hamilton to Isaac Chauncey, 23 and 30 November 1812, SNLSO, vol 10 pp.208 and 213, M149 roll 10.
- <sup>218</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Melancthon Woolsey, 31 October and 5 November 1812, CLB 3.
- <sup>219</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Joshua Forman, 7 November 1812, CLB 3.
- <sup>220</sup> General Order, 4 December 1812, CLB 3; Isaac Chauncey to Melancthon Woolsey and Chauncey to Lieutenants Brown, Elliott, MacPherson and Wells, 5 December 1812, all CLB 3.
- <sup>221</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Melancthon Woolsey and William Nicoll, 7 December 1812, CLB 3.
- <sup>222</sup> *General Order*, 10 December 1812, CLB 3.
- <sup>223</sup> Lt. Col. Alexander Macomb, Third Artillery Regiment, *Orderly Book*, entry for 21 November 1812.
- <sup>224</sup> *Condition of the Several Navy Yards*, 30 November 1814, ASP, No. 118, p.335.
- <sup>225</sup> In July 1814 Chauncey delayed sailing for at least two weeks due to illness when he should have placed the squadron in the hands of his second in command, Captain Jacob Jones. That might have avoided a conflict with the army on the Niagara Frontier who were waiting for naval support.
- <sup>226</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Thomas Turner, 4 February 1813, CLB 3.
- <sup>227</sup> *General Order*, 2 February 1813, CLB 3.
- <sup>228</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Benjamin Forsyth, Henry Dearborn and Colonel N. Cox, 29 January and 7 and 8 March 1813, CLB 3.
- <sup>229</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones, 3, 5, 12 and 16 March 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 2 items 8, 12 33 and 48, M125 roll 27.
- <sup>230</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Alexander P. Darragh and Augustus Conkling, 26 January and 8 and 22 April 1813, CLB 3 and 4; Isaac Chauncey to David M. Hall, 28 June 1813, CLB 4.
- <sup>231</sup> *Statement of Naval Forces on Lake Ontario*, 10 June 1813, AF, M625 roll 76 frames 201-203 also CLB 4. Chase guns were cannon mounted in the foremost gun ports and used to fire at a ship being pursued. For this purpose it was range and accuracy that was more important than shot weight.
- <sup>232</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Pursers Darragh & Fry and Acting Purser Anderson, 18 April 1813, CLB 4.
- <sup>233</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones, 22 and 24 April 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 3 items 30 and 51, M125 roll 28.
- <sup>234</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Commanders of Vessels, 25 April 1813, CLB 4.
- <sup>235</sup> *General Order*, 26 April 1813, CLB 4.
- <sup>236</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Melancthon Woolsey, 4 May 1813, CLB 4.
- <sup>237</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Melancthon Woolsey, 5 May 1813, CLB 4.

- 
- <sup>238</sup> See Gibson, Gary M., “Commodores on the Lakes,” *The War of 1812 Magazine*, Issue 17 (January 2012): [www.napoleon-series.org/military/Warof1812/2012/Issue17/c\\_Gibson.html](http://www.napoleon-series.org/military/Warof1812/2012/Issue17/c_Gibson.html).
- <sup>239</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #16, 11 May 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 3 item 136, M125 roll 28.
- <sup>240</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #24, 17 May 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 3 item 148, M125 roll 28.
- <sup>241</sup> The schooners whose commanders were “mentioned in dispatches” were the *Julia*, *Growler*, *Ontario*, *Governor Tompkins*, *Conquest*, *Hamilton*, *Asp* and *Scourge*. Chauncey left the *Raven*, *Fair American* and *Pert* at Sackets Harbor.
- <sup>242</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #30, 2 June 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 4 item 8, M125 roll 29.
- <sup>243</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #38, 11 June 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 4 item 67, M125 roll 29.
- <sup>244</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Melancthon Woolsey and Arthur Sinclair, 5 June and 6 July 1813, CLB 4; Transcript of the Court of Inquiry into the conduct of Wolcott Chauncey, 8 June 1813 and Transcript of the Court Martial of John T. Drury, 8 July 1813, NAUS, RG45, *Records of General Courts Martial and Courts of Inquiry of the Navy Department*, vol 4 cases 141 and 143, M273 roll 6.
- <sup>245</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #38, 11 June 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 4 item 67, M125 roll 29.
- <sup>246</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Jesse Elliott, 17 April 1813, CLB 4.
- <sup>247</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #56 and #61, 8 and 10 July 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 4 items 170 and 182, M125 roll 29.
- <sup>248</sup> William Jones to Isaac Chauncey #23, 26 June 1813, SNPLB, pp.37-39, T829 roll 453.
- <sup>249</sup> Service Records, pp.40-41.
- <sup>250</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Henry Dearborn, 5 July 1813, CLB 4.
- <sup>251</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones, 4 August 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 5 item 69, M125 roll 30.
- <sup>252</sup> Unknown Midshipman to J. Jones, 13 August 1813, SNLRC, 1814 vol 2 item 70, M125 roll 35.
- <sup>253</sup> James Lucas Yeo to George Prevost, 9 August 1813, NAC, RG8, C.730, pp.78-80, roll C-3243.
- <sup>254</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones, 13 August 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 5 item 99, M125 roll 309.
- <sup>255</sup> Unknown Midshipman to J. Jones, 13 August 1813, SNLRC, 1814 vol 2 item 70, M125 roll 35.
- <sup>256</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones, 13 August 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 5 item 99, M125 roll 309.
- <sup>257</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones, 13 August 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 5 item 99, M125 roll 309.
- <sup>258</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #73, 19 August 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 5 item 119, M125 roll 30.
- <sup>259</sup> Woolsey Journal, entries for 23 and 27 August 1813.
- <sup>260</sup> Woolsey Journal, entries for 2 and 8 September 1813.
- <sup>261</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones, 13 September 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 6 item 42, M125 roll 31.
- <sup>262</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones, 13 September 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 6 item 42, M125 roll 31.
- <sup>263</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones, 13 September 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 6 item 42, M125 roll 31.
- <sup>264</sup> “Several of our long shot had effect, as they were obliged to take the *Oneida* in tow, to save her from falling into our hands,” Montreal LC, *Montreal Herald*, 18 September 1812.
- <sup>265</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #85, 1 October 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 6 item 115, M125 roll 31.
- <sup>266</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #85, 1 October 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 6 item 115, M125 roll 31.
- <sup>267</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #91, 8 October 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 6 item 147, M125 roll 31.

- 
- <sup>268</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #97, 17 October 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 7 item 10, M125 roll 32.
- <sup>269</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #97, #99, #100 and #104, 17, 25 and 27 October and 1 November 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 7 items 10, 44, 54 and 70, M125 roll 32.
- <sup>270</sup> Currently Clayton, New York.
- <sup>271</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #106, 11 November 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 7 item 93, M125 roll 32.
- <sup>272</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones @111, 21 November 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 7 item 114, M125 roll 32.
- <sup>273</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #114, 25 November 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 7 item 128, M125 roll 32.
- <sup>274</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #138, 24 December 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 8 item 191, M125 roll 33.
- <sup>275</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #127, 11 December 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 8 item 38, M125 roll 33.
- <sup>276</sup> Thomas Brown to Isaac Chauncey, 6 December 1813 and Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #133, 20 December 1813, SNLRC, 1813 vol 8 item 81, M125 roll 33.
- <sup>277</sup> NAUS, RG45, *Records of General Courts Martial and Courts of Inquiry*, vol 4 case 155, M273 roll 6.
- <sup>278</sup> Samuel Lolly arrived on board the *Oneida* as a Quarter Gunner on 2 October 1812. A month later he was moved to the *Governor Tompkins* where he remained until returning to the *Oneida* on 21 August 1813 as part of the reorganization when the *Sylph* replaced a number of the small schooners. After being disrated to seaman on 20 January 1814 he remained on board the *Oneida* until the war was over, apparently without any further problems. On 9 June 1815 he was transferred to the shore station at Sackets Harbor. On 25 July 1815 he deserted. As the war was over no effort was made to recover him. NAUS, RG45, *Oneida's Muster Book and Pay Roll*, T829 roll 17 pp.161-166 and 345-348; *Governor Tompkins' Muster Book*, T829 roll 15 pp.167-168; *Sackets Harbor Muster Roll*, T829 roll 18 pp.192-202.
- <sup>279</sup> Woolsey Journal, entries for 23 to 26 February 1814.
- <sup>280</sup> Woolsey Journal, entries for 14 March and 23 April 1814.
- <sup>281</sup> *A View of the Force of the Squadron on Lake Ontario*, 15 July 1814, AF, M625 roll 77 frames 25-27.
- <sup>282</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #19, 15 March 1814, SNLRC, 1814 vol 2 item 47, M125 roll 35.
- <sup>283</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #22, 26 March 1814, SNLRC, 1814 vol 2 item 76, M125 roll 35.
- <sup>284</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #32, 4 April 1814, SNLRC, 1814 vol 2 item 114, M125 roll 35.
- <sup>285</sup> Gordon Drummond to George Prevost, 26 and 28 April 1814, PAC, RG8, C.683 pp.52-56 and 61-64.
- <sup>286</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #33, 6 April 1813, SNLRC, 1814 vol 2 item 124, M125 roll 35. The other officer was Acting Lieutenant Francis H. Gregory. Brown finally received his promotion to master commandant on 1 March 1815.
- <sup>287</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #38 and #74, 17 April and 17 May 1814, SNLRC, 1814 vol 2 item 103 and vol 3 item 71, M125 rolls 35 and 36. The other master's mate was Richard Dominick on board the *Sylph*.
- <sup>288</sup> James Lucas Yeo and Francis H. Gregory to Isaac Chauncey, 27 August 1814 and Isaac Chauncey to James Lucas Yeo, 28 August and to William Jones #144, 29 August 1814, SNLRC, 1814 vol 5 item 144, M124 roll 38.
- <sup>289</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #61, 4 May 1813, SNLRC, 1814 vol 3 item 15, M125 roll 36.
- <sup>290</sup> Dudley, entry for 8 June 1814.
- <sup>291</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #96, 9 June 1814, SNLRC, 1814 vol 4 item 46, M125 roll 37.

- 
- <sup>292</sup> Jacob Jones to William Jones, 25 July 1814, SNLRC, 1814 vol 5 item 31, M125 roll 38.
- <sup>293</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #131, 31 July 1814 and Stephen Decatur to William Jones, 2, 4, 5, 8 and 10 August 1814, SNLRC, 1814 vol 5 items 45, 57, 62, 63, 75 and 83, M125 roll 38.
- <sup>294</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #132, 10 August 1814, SNLRC, 1814 vol 5 item 84, M125 roll 38. The British vessels were the Royal Navy warships *Star*, *Charwell* and *Netley*.
- <sup>295</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #145, 29 August 1814, SNLRC, 1814 vol 5 item 145, m125 roll 38.
- <sup>296</sup> Isaac Chauncey to William Jones #151, 5 September and to Thomas Brown, 6 September 1814, SNLRC, 1814 vol 6 item 17 and vol 4 item 12½, M125 rolls 39 and 37.
- <sup>297</sup> George Izard to Isaac Chauncey, 11 August and 13 and 16 September, Isaac Chauncey to George Izard, 21 August and 9, 15 and 16 September and to William Jones #142, 25 August and #157, 18 September 1814, SNLRC, 1814 vol 5 items 121 and 135 and vol 6 items 39, 64 and 66, M125 rolls 38 and 39.
- <sup>298</sup> New York NY, *Mercantile Advertiser*, 19 September 1814. The news also appeared in the *Boston Gazette*, the Philadelphia *Pennsylvania Gazette*, the Richmond VA *Enquirer* and many other newspapers that September.
- <sup>299</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Benjamin Homans #1, 5 January 1815, SNLRC, 1815 vol 1 item 16, M125 roll 42.
- <sup>300</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Benjamin W. Crowninshield #48, 26 March 1815, SNLRC, 1815 vol 2 item 114, M125 roll 43.
- <sup>301</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to Benjamin W. Crowninshield, 13 June 1815, SNLRD, 1815 item 114 [2<sup>nd</sup>], M147 roll 4.
- <sup>302</sup> Isaac Chauncey to Benjamin W. Crowninshield, 1 July 1815, SNLRC, 1815 vol 4 item 50, M125 roll 45.
- <sup>303</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to John Rodgers, 14 July 1815, NCLRC.
- <sup>304</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to John Rodgers, 20 July 1815, NCLRC
- <sup>305</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to John Rodgers, 5 August 1815, NCLRC.
- <sup>306</sup> William Fitz William Owen to Gordon Drummond, 16 May 1816, NAC, RG8, C.674 pp.33-34, roll C-3171.
- <sup>307</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to John Rodgers, 15 August 1816, NCLRC.
- <sup>308</sup> *Exhibit of U. S. Naval Forces on Lake Ontario*, December 1816, AF, M625 roll 78 frame 25.
- <sup>309</sup> Melancthon Woolsey to John Rodgers, 24 May 1817, NCLRC.
- <sup>310</sup> *Exhibit shewing the names, force and present state & condition of the Vessels of War...*, 1 November 1818, NAUS, RG45, AF, Area 7, M625 roll 78, frames 65-66.
- <sup>311</sup> Stephen Decatur to Smith Thompson, 19 November 1819, NAUS, RG45, T829 roll 341, pp.367-369.
- <sup>312</sup> "Condition of the Navy and its Expenses", 25 January 1821, 16th Congress, 2nd Session, *American State Papers*, Class VI, *Naval Affairs*, vol 1 p.713; David Porter to Secretary of the Navy, 27 October 1821, NAUS, RG45, T829 roll 341 pp.547-550.
- <sup>313</sup> S.Doc 1, United States Senate, 18th Congress 1st Session, December 1, 1823.
- <sup>314</sup> S.Doc 30, United States Senate, 18th Congress 1st Session, February 3, 1824; S.Doc 1, United States Senate, 18th Congress 2nd Session, December 1, 1824.
- <sup>315</sup> Egbert Ten Eyck to Samuel L. Southard, 18 March 1824, SNLRM 1824 vol 7 item 141, M124 roll 100.
- <sup>316</sup> *Public Statutes at Large of the USA*, Vol 4, 18th Congress 2nd Session, Chapter 101 (Boston: Little & Brown, 1846). S.Doc 2, United States Senate, 19th Congress 1st Session, December 2, 1825.



- <sup>317</sup> Robert Hugunin to William Bainbridge, 23 March 1825, enclosed with a letter from Lieutenant Samuel W. Adams to Bainbridge, 28 March 1825, NAUS, RG45, Entry 220, *Letters to Navy Commissioners from Sackets Harbor*. Lt. Adams replaced Melancthon Woolsey as commandant at Sackets Harbor.
- <sup>318</sup> Samuel W. Adams to William Bainbridge, 9 May 1825, NAUS, RG45, Entry 220, *Letters to Navy Commissioners from Sackets Harbor*. Adams was acknowledging Bainbridge's letter of 13 April.
- <sup>319</sup> Registration #4 at Sackets Harbor NY, 28 May 1826, NAUS, RG41, *Records of the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, Certificates of Enrollment issued at Sackets Harbor, New York*. First Lieutenant John Clitz joined the army as an ensign in 1814 and was the Second Infantry's regimental adjutant at Madison Barracks, Sackets Harbor, beginning in 1816. He was promoted captain in 1829 and died in Michigan in 1836.
- <sup>320</sup> Oswego NY, *Oswego Palladium*, November 30, 1878.
- <sup>321</sup> Oswego NY, *Oswego Palladium*, November 30, 1878.
- <sup>322</sup> Registration #6 at Cape Vincent NY, 17 August 1826, NAUS, RG41, *Records of the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, Certificates of Enrollment issued at the District of Cape Vincent, New York*.
- <sup>323</sup> Registration #2 and enrollment at Sackets Harbor NY, 18 May 1827, enrollment #3 at Sackets Harbor, 24 April 1829, NAUS, RG41, *Records of the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, Certificates of Enrollment issued at Sackets Harbor, New York*; Oswego NY, *Oswego Daily Times*, April 4, 1878.
- <sup>324</sup> Lester Pavy's obituary, Wayne County NY, *Wayne County Alliance*, 23 January 1884.
- <sup>325</sup> Enrollments at Sackets Harbor NY, #6 on 21 April 1830 and #3 on 4 June 1831, NAUS, RG41, *Records of the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, Certificates of Enrollment issued at Sackets Harbor, New York*.
- <sup>326</sup> Enrollment surrendered on 8 August 1832 and enrolled again at Sackets Harbor NY, #9 on 8 August 1833, NAUS, RG41, *Records of the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, Certificates of Enrollment issued at Sackets Harbor, New York*. The tonnage was again listed as 202.40.
- <sup>327</sup> George Dennett vs. Samuel Humphreys and Robert Hugunin, Court of Common Pleas, Jefferson County, New York, case papers from August and November 1833, documents at Jefferson County Clerk's office, Watertown, NY. The extent of the injuries suffered are as presented in the legal documents, obviously exaggerated.
- <sup>328</sup> The *Adjutant Clitz* spent the winter of 1830-31 at Clayton NY. Oswego NY, *Oswego Palladium*, December 7, 1878.
- <sup>329</sup> Kingston UC, *Chronicle & Gazette*, May 10, 1834 and an article on 21 May 1836 describing the Niagara Harbor and Dock Company that included a list of vessels repaired in 1834. Thanks to Walter Lewis for information clarifying the location of this railway.
- <sup>330</sup> Kingston UC, *Chronicle & Gazette*, 21 May 1836.
- <sup>331</sup> William G. Marshall's obituary, Buffalo NY, *Buffalo Courier*, 16 January 1884.
- <sup>332</sup> Mexico NY, *Mexico Independent*, 10 April 1878 and Snider, C. H. J., "Schooner Days." Toronto ON, *Toronto Telegram*, 9 October 1848.
- <sup>333</sup> "The First War Vessel on Lake Ontario," from Lewiston NY dated 30 March 1878 and appearing in the Oswego NY *Oswego Daily Times*, 4 April 1878.
- <sup>334</sup> The accident occurred on 19 July 1840 from an item in the *Oswego Palladium*, quoted in the *New York American*, 27 July 1840 but without specifically mentioning the *Adjutant Clitz*. The same story, identifying the *Adjutant Clitz* and with more details, appeared in the *Watertown Daily Times*, 18 September 1879. Thanks to Walter Lewis for providing these references.
- <sup>335</sup> Oswego NY, *Oswego Daily Times*, 3 February 1879 and Ogdensburg NY, *Daily Journal*, 4 February 1879 both quoting the Clayton NY *Independent*.