

# **The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History**

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1813  
Part 6 of 8**

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warded to the Genl. Government. With Great Respect I have the honor to be  
Sir your &c—

signed Jesse D. Elliott  
Comdg. Naval officer  
Lake Erie

Commanding Military Officer  
Pittsburg

\*This must be a mistake the enemy's fleet cannot have arrived at Niagara—The sentence is ambiguous.

Copy, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 198, enclosure (M147, Roll No 5). The footnote denoted by an asterisk was added by William Jones.

[Enclosure]  
"Copy"

Erie 31st December 1813

Sir,

Enclosed you have the copy of a Dispatch this moment received from Majr. Isaac Barnes on his retreat before the Enemy from Buffalo, and I have the honor to suggest to you the propriety of calling out the Regiment of Militia under your command— Very respectfully your obd. sert,

Signed Jesse D. Elliott

Col. Wallace  
Erie

Copy, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 198, enclosure (M147, Roll No. 5).

## Chapter Four

### The Gulf Coast Theater: January–December 1813

*Captain John Shaw, commander of the New Orleans Station, was an old hand on the Gulf Coast. He had been appointed to the post soon after the Louisiana Purchase, was stationed there from 1803 to 1805, and returned in 1811. Although he was familiar with the geography and environment of the Mississippi Delta, he disliked serving under the military officers usually given overall command of U.S. troops in the Louisiana Territory. He especially disliked Major General James Wilkinson, who had held that post since 1803. Wilkinson had earned a strange reputation among regular army officers. He was given to intrigue and had been involved in the Aaron Burr conspiracy before betraying Burr. Investigated by courts-martial, Wilkinson managed to gain acquittal each time. He returned to New Orleans at the beginning of the War of 1812 having cleared his name once again. As soon as he was back in Wilkinson's grasp, Shaw began to communicate his distaste for the unsatisfactory command relationship. All the same, Wilkinson was the senior officer and the navy secretary ordered Shaw to cooperate.*

*The naval force available at New Orleans was unusually weak for an area so dominated by water approaches. A glance at a chart indicates at least five possible routes an enemy force could use to assault the city. All, save the Mississippi River, are shallow-water estuaries and bays, suggesting that the ideal defensive vessel would be a gunboat of the type admired by Thomas Jefferson. Yet, there were only ten operable gunboats out of fourteen assigned in late 1812. Of heavier vessels the station commenced the war with the brigs Siren, 16 guns, commanded by Lieutenant Michael B. Carroll; Viper, 12 guns, commanded by Lieutenant Daniel S. Dexter; and Enterprise, 12 guns, commanded by Lieutenant Johnston Blakeley. Lieutenant Joseph Bainbridge, Commodore William Bainbridge's younger brother, succeeded Carroll as commander of Siren in November 1812. Two other vessels remain to be mentioned: Shaw had purchased and renamed a ship Louisiana, formerly the merchantman Remittance, on the account of the navy, and had begun to convert her into an armed cruiser. Criticized for her rotten condition, Louisiana would one day give a good account of herself at the Battle of New Orleans. Shaw, an energetic officer, pressed hard to use the meager resources at his disposal to prepare for the enemy. He was, however, bedeviled by higher costs than those at other naval stations, a lack of willing recruits, and a disease-ridden, enervating climate.*

*Although unknown to Shaw for many months, he lost the brig Viper, now commanded by Lieutenant John Henley, to the frigate H.M.S. Narcissus, 32*

guns, in mid-January 1813. Johnston Blakeley's *Enterprise* sailed from New Orleans in company with *Viper*, separated, and put in at St. Marys, Georgia, without encountering the enemy. The department ordered Shaw to release Bainbridge to sail in *Siren* for the Delaware or Boston in March 1813.

Meanwhile, Shaw had to contend with the extensive smuggling and piracy along the coast. With the rebellion of Spain's Central and South American colonies in 1810, new republics emerged in Colombia and Venezuela. The flags of these would-be nations provided a convenient cover for "privateers" intent on piracy. Enterprising seamen, aware that money was to be made capturing Spanish shipping, established their bases along the Gulf Coast. Lake Barataria, west of the delta, was one of the best known of these pirate bases. These activities had been a problem in peacetime, but now that war was at hand it was a question how these pirates would behave in the face of the British. Shaw's gunboats, however, were no match for the swift sailing schooners preferred by the Baratarians. The pirates were allowed to exist undisturbed until the autumn of 1814.

One of Shaw's more creative ideas was the establishment of a shipyard on the banks of the heavily wooded Tchefuncte River that drained from the north into Lake Pontchartrain. It was a remote, protected site, easily approached from Mississippi Sound by vessels needing repairs. They would enter the narrow pass called the Rigolets from the south and sail northwest across the lake to the yard. Shaw commenced the building of a large blockship to protect the passes north and east of New Orleans. Without the yard and blockship, it is difficult to see how the naval station could function effectively in wartime. Yet, Shaw had to defend the Tchefuncte yard and the blockship from the cost-cutting knife of the new navy secretary, William Jones, who seems to have decided they were expensive, useless appendages. Shaw also had a critic within the naval station, Purser Thomas Shields, as well as civilians who wrote to the navy secretary, casting aspersions on Shaw's activities.

In the one joint military and naval operation conducted during Shaw's tenure at New Orleans, he collaborated successfully with General Wilkinson, providing gunboats for transportation and protection of the military force that captured Fort Charlotte from the Spanish at Mobile during May 1813. Following this event, the War Department ordered Wilkinson to relieve General Henry Dearborn of command of the army at Sackets Harbor.

Shaw was delighted to find that General Thomas Flournoy, Wilkinson's successor, was a man he could like and respect. Several months later, when a full-scale uprising of Creek Indians erupted north of Mobile, Shaw feared that nearby Choctaws might join, endangering the settlements at Bay St. Louis and even Tchefuncte. Andrew Jackson's Tennessee militia suppressed the Creek insurrection during 1813-14, but not before Shaw became concerned that the military forces needed at New Orleans were being sent to fight Indians at the very moment when the British might attack his base.

In October 1813 the Navy Department finally granted Shaw's request for a transfer from the New Orleans Station. He was replaced by his capable second-in-command, Master Commandant Daniel T. Patterson. Departing his long-held command, Shaw wrote Patterson a prescient letter warning him of possible inva-

sion routes and advising him of the measures needed to protect New Orleans from an expected British attack. Shaw then reported to Washington to settle his accounts before proceeding to a seagoing command.

## Capture of U.S. Brig *Viper*

On 2 January the U.S. brig *Viper*, Lieutenant John D. Henley commanding, departed the Balize on a cruise in the Gulf. The cruise was a short one, for only ten days out, the ship sprung a leak, forcing Henley to return to New Orleans for repairs. During the homeward voyage a strange sail was spied and Henley altered course to intercept the unknown vessel. The American commander discovered too late that he was closing with an enemy warship of superior size. Henley bore his ship away in an attempt to escape, but all efforts to outsail his foe proved futile. After a chase of five hours, *Viper* was overhauled by H.M. frigate *Narcissus*.

CAPTAIN JOHN R. LUMLEY, R.N., TO  
ADMIRAL SIR JOHN B. WARREN, R.N.

Copy.

His Majesty's Ship *Narcissus*  
at Sea, 17th Jany. 1813.—

Sir,

I beg leave to acquaint you, that His Majesty's Ship under my command Captured this day the United States Brig of War *Viper* mounting twelve Guns & having on board a Complement of 93 men— She had been Cruizing Seven Weeks off the Havanna, and had made no Captures—I have the honor to be Sir, Your most Obedient Humble Servant

Signed Jno. Richd. Lumley Captn.

Copy, UklPR, Adm. 1/503, p. 283.

LIEUTENANT JOHN D. HENLEY TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

New Providence Feby. 1st 1813

Sir,

It is my misfortune to address you as a prisoner, On the 2nd. of Jany. I sailed in company with the U.S. Brig *Enterprise*, on the 7 we parted off the Tortugas where I continued to cruise untill the 12. when it was discovered that the *Viper* has sprung a leak as the leak continued to increase I determined to run in to have a fair opportunity to examine it. on the 17th. about 50 miles to the Eastward of the Balise a large sail was discovered to windward it was soon discovered that she was a cruiser I bore up immediately for cat & Ship Island but the Superiority of the Sailing of the Frigate enabled the Enemy to get along side after five hours chase when I was compelled to surrender to H.M. Frigate *Narcissus* Capt. Lumley of 40 guns, during the chase I cut away my stern Boat & hove four of my guns over board but without effect. Myself purser<sup>1</sup> Docter<sup>2</sup> Midshipman<sup>3</sup>

& crew was landed at this place on the 29th. the Brig with the Lieuts.<sup>4</sup> has gone to Bermuda; every exertion will be made to get my Officers & crew to the U. States as early as possible and hope on examination that it will be found that the hr. of the Flag has not suffered by being struck to such superior force.<sup>5</sup> I have the hr. to be Respectfully yr. Obt. Sevt.

John D Henley

ALS, DNA, RG45, BC, 1813, Vol. 1, No. 30 (M148, Roll No. 11).

1. Humphrey Magrath.
2. Acting Surgeon's Mate Gerard Dayers was appointed a surgeon on 7 May 1813. His commission was confirmed by the Senate on 24 July 1813.
3. Henry Laub, Joseph Boussier, David C. Nicholls, Erasmus Watkins, and John B. Rousseau.
4. Acting Lieutenants Frederick W. Smith and Laurence Rousseau. They arrived in *Narcissus* at Bermuda on 10 February. Both officers were promoted to lieutenant on 24 July 1813.
5. A court of inquiry convened at the Washington Navy Yard on 18 May 1813 absolved Henley of any blame in the loss of *Viper*. For the record of this court, see DNA, RG125, CM, Vol. 4, No. 136 (M273, Roll No. 4).

## The Campaign against Smugglers and Pirates

*As commanding officer of the New Orleans Station, Captain John Shaw's most important responsibility was defending the American Gulf Coast against British attack. But the Royal Navy was not the only enemy with whom Shaw had to contend. He also had to suppress the numerous smugglers and banditti that infested the waterways of the Mississippi Delta. With limited resources at his disposal and denied adequate support from the department, Shaw was clearly overmatched by both opponents. It is not surprising, then, that the commandant responded with pique when criticized for not combatting piracy more vigorously.*

CAPTAIN JOHN SHAW TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON

The Honb. Paul Hamilton,

New Orleans, January 18th. 1813

Sir,

I was honored by yesterday's Mail, with yours of the 14th. Ult. enclosing a copy of a letter, from the Naval officer of the Customs,<sup>1</sup> at this port, to the Honorable the Secretary of the Treasury;<sup>2</sup> and must beg leave to make reference to the several letters to you, in which I have pointed out, from time to time, the many outrages committed on this coast, by privateers, pirates, and smugglers; and in which I have endeavored to demonstrate, that the force heretofore under my command, had been rendered by decay, altogether inadequate to the protection of the coast, and the support of the revenue laws, even in a time of peace:— On the latter subject, the incompetency of the force,—lest it may have been intercepted, for the receipt neither of it, nor of scarcely any other, has for a long time, been acknowledged; I beg leave to insert here, the second paragraph of my letter of the 10th. July last,<sup>3</sup> to the Honorable Secretary:

"From my former communications to the Honorable Secretary of the Navy, it will have been observed, that the force under my command, is by no means adequate to the defence of the extensive coast which it has to guard, even against pirates & privateers, in a state of peace; and how much less so, must it be in a time of War!— In addition to the Gun boats, which have been ordered to this station, from New York, but which, by the bye, have not yet arrived,—I would suggest, that a few copper-bottomed Schooners, mounting from 10 to 12 Guns each, are almost indispensably necessary. Such vessels would enable us, if sent out amongst the West-India-Islands, greatly to annoy the Commerce of the enemy, on its passage from Jamaica to England."

As the whole circumstance, taken together, of the round which Mr. Croudson's letter has taken, through two Departments of the Government, and thence back again to this place, cannot possibly be viewed in any other light than, as conveying, however delicately, an oblique glance at censure; it necessarily compels me again to advert, to a subject, to which my feelings had almost ceased to vibrate, and on which, I had intended, never again to trouble you:—

I have never, at any time, or on any occasion, declined or neglected to employ every mean within my power, towards the inforcement, not only of the revenue laws, but of every other law of our Country, so far as the duties of my office may have rendered the employment of these means proper; but as, from the subordinate situation under a Military General,<sup>4</sup> and, as circumstances may by chance require, in the case of his absence, under the command of a Military officer of almost any grade, in which you have judged it expedient to place me;—the disposal of the Naval force is entirely wrested out of my hands; I cannot conceive how any responsibility or censure, on account of such disposition, good or bad, of the force nominally under my Command, can possibly attach itself to me; I have in truth no manner of control over them; they are ordered by the Military Chief, from place to place, as he thinks proper, while I have become the mere trumpeter of his will and pleasure. Should any censure therefore be conceived to be due, on account of the neglect, apparently insinuated, by Mr. Croudson, in his letter; I trust that it will be directed to its proper object. In short, having no claim on any praise which may be judged due, to any judicious dispositions which may happen to be made, of the forces here, I hope to stand exonerated from the consequences of those of a contrary character.

I shall conclude with a sincere repetition of the assurances which I have heretofore offered so frequently; that every effort shall be used on my part, towards strengthening, by number and condition, the Naval forces on this station; and with informing you that nothing now detains the Ship *Louisiana*, but want of men,—and that a staunch brig of 229 Tons burthen,<sup>5</sup> lately purchased into the service, for the purpose of being turned into a bomb vessel, will, as I hope, be shortly ready for service. Sir, I have the honor to be with great respect your Most Obt Servt.

John Shaw

I have the honor to enclose herewith a copy of an order<sup>6</sup> from General Wilkinson, to exemplify the subject of this letter

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 1, No. 23 (M125, Roll No. 26).

1. Samuel Croudson.
2. Albert Gallatin.

3. See Dudley, *Naval War of 1812*, Vol. 1, pp. 383–84.  
 4. Shaw is referring here to Major General James Wilkinson, U.S.A. For background on the Shaw-Wilkinson feud, see *ibid.*, pp. 388–98.  
 5. *Etna*.  
 6. Enclosure not printed.

CAPTAIN JOHN SHAW TO THOMAS H. WILLIAMS<sup>1</sup>

New Orleans February 24th, 1813.

Sir,

I have been honored with the receipt of your note of yesterday, covering an "extract of a letter from the Secretary of the Treasurer, to the Collector at New Orleans, dated December 10. 1813";—and I am, myself, perfectly aware, how desirable it is, that efficient measures should be adopted by the authority which Controls the Naval & Military forces on this station, for breaking up the hordes of Marine banditti, by whom the revenue, & other laws of the United States, have been so long outraged within your district.— I have always, so far as I have been enabled by the means placed at my disposal, answered with alacrity, the several Calls which have from time to time, been made on me, for aid towards the accomplishment of that object; and I have made frequent representations to the Navy Department of the entire insufficiency of these means:—

It remains for me to inform you, however,—and the emotions with which I now do it, are remotely different from those of exultation,—that the situation in which I have been placed, by a letter from the Honorable Secretary of the Navy, dated 12th. October,—is such as to make it utterly impossible for me, without subjecting myself to trial & sentence, by a Military Court Martial, to render you any assistance whatever, without an order from General Wilkinson Sir, I have the honor to be yours respectfully

(Signed) John Shaw

LB Copy, DLC, Naval Historical Foundation Collection, John Shaw Papers, 1813 Letter Book.

1. Thomas H. Williams was collector of customs for the port of New Orleans.

## Problems of Ill Discipline

*The nature of naval service on the New Orleans Station made the maintenance of strict discipline among subordinate officers and enlisted men a difficult task for Captain John Shaw. Unlike the commander of a man-of-war, Shaw did not have the advantage of having his men confined within wooden walls, where a vigilant eye could be kept on one and all from the quarterdeck. Instead, Shaw's men were deployed in gunboats along waterways stretching from New Orleans to Mobile Bay. Such physical separation impeded his ability to exert authority consistently and effectively and increased the likelihood that disciplinary lapses might occur.*

*The most important instrument Captain Shaw had at his disposal to insure adherence to naval law was the court-martial. Courts-martial could, and often did, mete out harsh*

*corporal punishments to those guilty of breaching regulations. Naval officers believed that it was this type of punishment, and the fear it inspired, that helped maintain order among their men. Yet Shaw often lacked the necessary number of officers to convene courts-martial, a situation he feared would erode discipline on the station.<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that among all naval stations in 1813, the second highest number of courts-martial were convened at New Orleans.<sup>2</sup>*

1. For example, see p. 666.

2. Thirty-two courts-martial and courts of enquiry were convened in 1813. Eight were held at New Orleans—seven of the former and one of the latter. For additional reading on discipline in the early sailing navy, see Valle, Rocks & Shoals; Langley, Social Reform; and C. McKee, U.S. Naval Officer Corps.

## COURT-MARTIAL OF ORDINARY SEAMAN JOHN PERRY

New Orleans 2d. Feby. 1813.

Proceedings of a Naval Court Martial convened by order of Commodore John Shaw—

Present

Lieut. Commt.	Joseph Bainbridge	} President
" "	Danl. T. Patterson	
" "	Danl. S. Dexter	} Members
" "	Louis Alexis	
" "	Tho: Ap Catesby Jones	} Judge Advocate
	Wm. Wilson	

The case of John Perry, ordinary Seaman, was taken up on the following charges—  
 To wit: A repeated breach of the 17th article of an act for the better government of the Navy of the U.S. passed in 1800—

- Specifi 1st. Deserting from the Goal in Bayou St. Johns while on duty on or about the 12th of Decr. 1812.  
 " 2d. Deserting from Mr. Dealy Masters mate of Gun Vessel No. 162 on the 13th of the same when under confinement.  
 " 3d. Deserting from the Marine Guard at the ~~Hospital~~ Arsenal on the 15th of the same month under similar circumstances.

The prisoner challenged two of the members of the court, and it appearing that he had already been punished in a summary way for the same offences that were now charged against him, the prosecution dropped—

The prisoner was then arraigned on a charge of, "Threatening and mutinous language while in confinement onboard of Gun Vessel No. 24 at Tchifonté and a repetition of the same on board Gun Vessel No. 156 on her passage from Tchifonté to Fort St. Johns on or about the 20th Inst."

Specification— "Saying publicly that he would have satisfaction and threatening to take the life of Lieut. Louis Alexis whenever he should have an opportunity"

Plea "Not Guilty"

1st. Witness George Parker I heard the prisoner say about 4 weeks ago that if Lieut. Alexis punished him, he would take his life—that he had no right to punish him and that he would have Satisfaction— I heard the prisr. afterwards say

the same thing on the passage to Fort St. Johns aboard 156— He was sober when he use thos expressions—

Q by Court What was the reason of the prisoners using those expressions?

Ansr. Because, as he said, he had been frequently and severely punished without cause.

Q. by Court Did you ever hear him assign any reason why Lieut. Alexis had no right to punish him?

Ansr. The reason was that he had asked Lieut. Alexis for his discharge & that he had denied it to him— That the prisr. came to the Bayou bridge in a boat, came to town and shipped on board the *Louisiana* leaving the boat without permission.

Q by Court Did you ever hear the prisr. mention the occasions on which he had been punished?

Ansr. He mentioned his having been ordered to repair a drum—that he had been called upon by Lieut. Alexis to do so and that he had refused to comply—the prisr. told me that he knew how to do it but that he would not—

2d. Wit Jas. Rowley The prisr. said on board of 24 that if Lieut. Alexis punished him at his own discretion, he would have his life— afterwards on board of 156 on his passage to Fort St. Johns he said that Lieut. Alexis was the greatest villain that ever he heard of and repeated that he would take his life if he were punished— He said that he would bring Alexis up for the transactions in Tchi-fonte— The prisr. was sober at the time.

Q by Court To what transactions did he allude?

Ansr. In the first place to bringing up the Marine Minus belonging to 66 and flogging him and keeping him standing in the cold without a shirt during 3 hours and pickling his back every half hour— And he said he would see whether it was lawful for a man to put a halter round anothers neck and drum him about town—and that if there was no satisfaction to be got he would write on to Head-quarters— The witness further Stated that he had recd. about 16 doz: aboard of Capt. Alexis—

Lieut. Jones Witness Stated that the expressions used on board of Gun Vessel 24 occurred between the 25th Decr. & the 7th Jany.—

The Court found the prisr. guilty and pronounced the following sentence—  
“That he receive three hundred lashes on his bare back with a cat of nine tails, in the most public manner at the time and place that the commander in chief shall direct”

Joseph Bainbridge Prest.

Dan<sup>l</sup> T. Patterson

Dan<sup>l</sup> S. Dexter

Louis Alexis

Thos<sup>n</sup> Ap Catesby Jones

Sentence approved—and to receive it—one half alongside the U.S. Brig *Siren*— the one half alongside the Ship *Louisiana* at 10 oclock on Saturday the 27th. Inst.

John Shaw

COURT-MARTIAL OF PRIVATE PATRICK GARREY, U.S.M.C.

New Orleans Wednesday 3d. Feby. 1813

Proceedings of a General Naval Court Martial convened by order of Commodore John Shaw—

Present

Lieut. Commt. Joseph Bainbridge	}	President
" " Danl. T. Patterson		} Members
" " Danl. S. Dexter		
" " Louis Alexis		
" " Tho: Ap Catesby Jones		
Wm. Wilson		Judge Advocate

The Court occupied itself with the case of Patrick Garrey private of marines on the following charges.

1st. Charge Drunkenness—

Specif— Being drunk on post at the large gate of the lower Navy Yard on the afternoon of the 26th Jany.

2d. Charge Assaulting a man belonging to the ship *Louisiana*—

Specif— Stabbing or wounding with his bayonet James Curry & striking him with his musket unprovoked and while doing his duty cooking on the afternoon of the 26th Jany.

Plea “Not Guilty”

Thos. Watts Witness “The prisr. appeared to be groggy on post, I believe on the 26th Jany. I did not see the prisr. wound the man but I saw the wound afterwards—which seemed to be done—not by a thrust, but by a slanting stroke while doing his duty— Curry bled freely”

Jas. Berthe Witness The prisr. seemed to be drunk about the time stated in the charge— I saw the prisr. give a side stroke to Jas. Curry but it was not a thrust

Jas. Curry Witness The prisr. appeared to be tipsey— He shoved the bayonet into my thigh— He left his post to attack me—

Lieut. Patterson Witness On the afternoon of the 26th Jany. I saw the prisr., off his post strike Curry with his Muskett— My attention was attracted by the noise Curry made when attacked by the prisr.— I went up and Curry shewed me his wound— Curry was at his station The prisr. I beleive struck him over the Caboose, behind which Curry was taking refuge— The prisr. appeared to me intoxicated—

Here closed the testimony for the prosecution.

Farragut Witness for prisoner Thinks that the prisr: was intoxicated

Thomas Witness— thinks that the prisr. was only tipsy—

The prisr. have threw himself on the mercy of the Court.

The Court found him “Guilty” of both charges and pronounced the following sentence:

"That Patrick Garrey receive seventy lashes with the cat of nine tails on his bare back at such time and place as the commander in chief shall direct."

Joseph Bainbridge Prest.  
Dan<sup>l</sup> T. Patterson  
Dan<sup>l</sup> S. Dexter  
Louis Alexis  
Thos<sup>"</sup> Ap Catesby Jones

Sentence Approved—and to receive it on Board the U.S. Brig *Siren* on Friday 26th. Inst.— (weather not favourable) the next good day

John Shaw

DS, DNA, RG125, CM, Vol. 4, No. 125 (M273, Roll No. 4).

## Orders to Economize

*Throughout the war, most of the materiel required to build, repair, and refit naval warships—cannon shot, gunpowder, cordage, canvas, kentledge—was unobtainable at New Orleans. It had to be shipped to the Gulf Coast from manufacturing centers in the North-east. The heavy expense incurred in transporting these stores greatly inflated their price and was the primary reason the naval station at New Orleans proved so costly to maintain.<sup>1</sup> In 1813 expenditures at New Orleans escalated even higher as additional monies were needed to repair hurricane damage sustained the previous summer and to establish a new shipyard on the Tchefuncte River.*

*The large sums of money expended on the naval establishment at New Orleans so troubled the new secretary of the navy, William Jones, that on 5 February, he warned Navy Agent John K. Smith to curb spending. Further economies were ordered the following March, when Shaw was directed to reduce the number of gunboats and men under his command. The department's call for fiscal restraint at New Orleans would remain a familiar refrain the remainder of the war.*

<sup>1</sup>. For Shaw's complaints to Secretary Jones concerning the high price of naval stores at New Orleans, see p. 666.

### SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES TO NAVY AGENT JOHN K. SMITH

John K. Smith  
New Orleans,.

Navy Depart.  
5. febr 1813

Your letter dated 31st. Decr 1812 advising of your having drawn on this Department for the sum of 20 m. \$ has just been handed to me.

The Accountant of the Navy has informed, that you have not forwarded your accounts—and I confess to you that with this information before me, and, perceiving as I have with great concern that the expenses on the New Orleans are extravagant beyond all reasonable bounds— I hesitated whether I should pay the bill in question or not. The solvency of your circumstances & that of your

Sureties has however induced me to accept this Bill— It is proper however that I should distinctly state to you, that after having allowed you sufficient time to transmit your accounts for settlement, I shall not, unless they shall be received, accept any more of your drafts— My determination is to check the great & astonishing extravagance of the New Orleans station: tho' I do not allow myself to attribute to you such extravagance.

W Jones.

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, MLS, Vol. 11, pp. 183–84 (M209, Roll No. 11).

### SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES TO CAPTAIN JOHN SHAW

Capt. John Shaw  
New Orleans.

Nav: Dep'mt.  
1. March 1813

It has been determined to retain in commission at New Orleans only ten gunboats—& the two block Ships—& the Bomb Brig, all the other gun boats, must be immediately laid up in ordinary in the care of the officer of the Yard— Each of the boats in commission must have:

a commander  
 2 Masters Mates or Midshipmen  
 1. Acting Gunner  
 1. Steward  
 1. Cook  
 8 able Seamen, & 6 ordinary seamen & boys. The block Ships & bomb Brig, must have no more men attached to them, than may be indispensibly necessary

The *Siren* you will immediately order to the Delaware giving to her commander, special instructions to keep a good look out for the enemy squadron now blockading the Chesapeake. & supposed to be lying, between the Delaware & the Chesapeake

Every officer & man, now on the orleans Station, not required to complete the above arrangement must be immediately paid off, & discharged from the Service.

I have to issue to you, my most positive injunctions, not again to purchase any vessel, of any description, or Even to do any important repairs—or to make requisitions on the agent, for any extensive supplies, without the previous approbation of this Department—otherwise you must be charged with the amount in, your individual capacity.

W. Jones

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, SNL, Vol. 10, pp. 286–87 (M149, Roll No. 10).

## Public Criticism of Captain John Shaw

*Critics of Captain John Shaw were to be found not only among officers of the army and navy at New Orleans, but also among the city's civilian population. Some complained of*

*a want of energy and judgment in Shaw's direction of the station's affairs. Others leveled a more serious charge: that the captain was guilty of grossly mismanaging department funds. Such allegations no doubt fueled Secretary Jones's suspicion that the New Orleans Station was run with too much laxity.*

[EDMOND?] JOHNSTON TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAMILTON<sup>1</sup>

New Orleans March 8th 1813—

As I am a man who never meddles himself with the private affairs of other People, but when it becomes public I think that everyman who feels a particular welfare for his Country & Nation ought to concern himself especially when he hears and sees discernably a part of the Naval Institution of this Port now dwelling upon the verge of an ~~eternal~~ eternal extermination. I will now acquaint you of the actions of Comodore Shaw, he ~~has~~ is a man slow in execution, decision and Judgement; He has [lately?] [purcha]sed a Merchantman & fitted her out for the defence [of?] [this?] port. Now you would be surprized and astonished [it?] [would?] alarm you, she is good for Nothing, she mounts from [?] [to?] [?] guns and the other day when they were firing salutes on [the?] birthday of Washington she was very much shattered and I have likewise heard an Old experienced Naval Officer express himself verry warmly on the subject, he says that as soon as she is ordered on a cruise and ever came into a contact with the Enemy she would directly sink; the Captain<sup>2</sup> who commands her, says that as soon as he is ordered on a cruise he will ~~ab~~ abdicate his ~~com~~ office before he would place his life in such a perilous situation not that he is pusillanimous but he dreads at the thought of coming in Contact with the Enemy and would inevitably crown his efforts with opprobrium and sorrow. her Name is the *Louisana* cost \$98.000. He spends one week with another \$5.000 and the Citizens of the City exclaims loudly at his extravagance and it is the perpetual conversation that the Government ought to be informed of his actions and that he ought to be displaced.<sup>3</sup>

I have now volunteered my services in performing the desires of the people and I think Sir that you would be doing a very patriotic thing to your Country to displace him immediately and place a Man of Reputation who would act with descision, Judgement, Judiciousness, and execute with the greatest velocity You have now an apparent elucidation of the subject. I have the honor to be with the highest consideration and respect Sir your most obedient humble servant

[Edmond?] Johnston  
New Orleans March 8th 1813

ALS, DNA, RG45, MLR, 1813, Vol. 2, No. 55 (M124, Roll No. 54).

1. Johnston was not aware that William Jones had replaced Paul Hamilton as navy secretary.

2. Lieutenant Daniel S. Dexter.

3. For similar complaints concerning Shaw, see Benjamin Morgan's letters of 11 January and 15 March 1813 to Chandler Price, PHI, U. C. Smith Collection, Papers of William Jones.

## U.S. Brig *Siren* Departs New Orleans

*With the departure of Enterprise and the capture of Viper, the only cruising vessel left on the Gulf Station was the brig Siren. But in March, she too was ordered to the northward<sup>1</sup> thus reducing Captain John Shaw's active force to the ship Louisiana and seven gunboats. Siren, commanded by Master Commandant Joseph Bainbridge,<sup>2</sup> departed Balize on 3 April, cruised for a month in the Gulf, then sailed for Boston where she arrived on 10 June.<sup>3</sup>*

1. For Siren's original sailing instructions, see p. 639. These instructions were countermanded in Jones to Shaw, 23 March 1813, DNA, RG45, SNL, Vol. 10, p. 318 (M149, Roll No. 11).

2. Bainbridge was promoted to master commandant on 3 March 1813.

3. For Joseph Bainbridge's report of Siren's arrival at Boston, see Bainbridge to Jones, 15 June 1813, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 73 (M147, Roll No. 5). See also William Bainbridge to Jones, 11 June 1813, CL, 1813, Vol. 4, No. 49 (M125, Roll No. 29).

MASTER COMMANDANT JOSEPH BAINBRIDGE TO  
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

U.S. Brig *Siren*  
Balize 30th March 1813

Sir,

Having fitted out my vessel in the best manner our means will allow on this station, for there are many things which are necessary to a vessel which can't at all be procured here; and being about to put to sea again, I do myself the honor of writing to you to inform you my readiness for a cruise and of my being about to go out; thereby performing a pleasing as well as necessary duty— After going into dock and being given up to the officers of the Navy Yard; the Vessel in heaving out accidentally fell beyond her bearings, filled and sunk: but by the skill and unremitting exertions of Lt. Patterson the commander of the Navy Yard, she was raised in two or three days without any injury whatever and got the partial repairs that her accident of striking on the shoal on the coast of Florida rendered necessary— In crossing the bar at the Balize we had the Mishap added to our other accident of grounding, from the extreme shoalness of the water, notwithstanding we had started all our water, and brought her to an even keel, to put her in condition to pass the bar; this circumstance added to the rapidity of the current slewed her across the bar which twisted her rudder off at the neck, and left it barely sufficient (as it hung by a small piece) to guide the Brig as far as Orleans; we were obliged to take out the Guns, and after being in that situation between two, and three days we got her off and out of danger— This is an additional proof of the difficulties which a vessel of this draught of water must always find on this station, which difficulties render her situation extremely hazardous, the want of harbours and the shoalness and unevenness of the coast would make her very liable to capture if chased by an enemy of superior force—

After my arrival I demanded in justice to myself and respect to those to whom I feel myself amenable, a court of enquiry on my conduct in getting my vessel on shore, and having been honorably acquitted of all blame in the affair, I hope the proceedings of the court which I presume Comod. Shaw has enclosed to



you, and their opinion as published, will be perfectly satisfactory to yourself—<sup>1</sup> I beg leave to mention to you the appointment of young Mr. Thos. Brown of Philadelphia, as a Midshipman on board this vessel, with the approbation of the Commodore, and which I hope will also meet yours—

Duty and respect to the Merits of Lt. Norris who is actg. as first Lieutt. on board this vessel who is really a deserving young man and has been a long time acting as Lieutt. require that I should endeavour to entreat you in his behalf, and thereby gain if possible his commission for him; his long experience, and his great merit as an Officer and a man justly entitle him to claim it—

Mr. S Henley who is also actg. as second Lieutt. is an extremely deserving young man, and having acted in that capacity for a long time I hope you will be pleased to confirm the appointment—

I must now Sir, speak to you on a subject very near my heart, and deeply interesting to me in my official capacity; my rise in the navy is all that I or any other Officer can promise himself, this from want of occupation, for our navy has at all times been slow, but when after having devoted the best part of his life to the service of his country there should be promotions made above an Officer, it excites emotions of wounded pride which are extremely poignant— I have felt it in its fullest extent in the promotion of Lieutt. Morris,<sup>2</sup> and I find by the papers and common report that Lieutts. Allen and Biddle are spoken of— This is a boon I have long laboured to deserve, and to acquire which I have entirely devoted myself since I first entered the service of my country— I have the honor to be Sir, with the greatest respect Your Obdt. Servt.

Joseph Bainbridge

ALS, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 44 (M147, Roll No. 5).

1. For the record of this court of inquiry, see RG125, CM, Vol. 4, No. 129 (M273, Roll No. 4).

2. The negative response of other officers to Charles Morris's promotion to captain is documented in Dudley, *Naval War of 1812*, Vol. 1, pp. 516–23.

## The Mobile Campaign

*In early February, the U.S. Congress, voting in secret session, authorized the occupation of Spanish West Florida.<sup>1</sup> Within days of Congress's action, Secretary of War Armstrong issued orders to Major General James Wilkinson instructing him to seize Mobile and the surrounding territory as far east as the Perdido River.<sup>2</sup> Wilkinson received these orders on 14 March, and, acting with great dispatch, assembled an expeditionary force by the end of the month. In making his preparations, the general called on Captain John Shaw to provide naval escort for the army's troop transports.*

*The transports, convoyed by six gunboats, arrived at the entrance of Mobile Bay on the evening of 10 April. While Wilkinson's troops debarked and made preparations to invest Mobile and nearby Fort Charlotte, Shaw and his flotilla blockaded the entrance to the bay. The siege that followed was a brief and bloodless affair with the Spanish garrison's commander, Captain Don Cayetano Perez, agreeing to articles of capitulation on 13 April. Two days later Fort Charlotte changed hands.*

*Although the capture of Mobile had been a modest enterprise, undertaken against forces of a neutral power, it was one of the few military successes the United States could point to in 1813. It was also "the only permanent gain of territory made during the war."<sup>3</sup>*

1. For background on American designs on West Florida, see Adams, *History of the United States*, Vol. 1, pp. 206–15; and Pratt, *Expansionists of 1812*, especially Chapter 2.

2. A copy of these orders, dated 16 February 1813, may be found in Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, Vol. 3, p. 339.

3. Adams, *History of the United States*, Vol. 1, p. 215.

MAJOR GENERAL JAMES WILKINSON, U.S.A., TO  
SECRETARY OF WAR ARMSTRONG

Pass of Christian  
April 3d. 1813 Evening

Sir

After many unexpected delays & cross accidents, one of which had nearly brought me to an antiprofessional end, (by drowning instead of Shooting) I reached this place, last evening in rear of the Detachment destined to take possession of fort charlotte, excepting a party of thirty or forty men whom I hourly expect; and the day Capt. Shaw overtakes me with two Gun Boats which I left at the Bayou St. John I shall proceed: orders had anticipated my arrival here, for three of those vessels Supposed to be in this vicinity at the Bay of St. Louis to take possession of Mobile bay & guard the pass to the town, but those vessels left this Station on the 24th. ultmo. contrary to my arrangements, & have not since been heard of. I have Shifted my baggage twice, by necessity Since I left New Orleans, and finally was obliged to leave it, in a grounded Gun Boat, last evening; This morning I dispatched a Small vessel with a three pounder & about twenty men to get into Mobile bay, by the inland pass and prevent all communication between Pensacola & the Town if possible, at the Same time the Troops at Fort Stoddart are ordered to descend Mobile River & fortify opposite that town to cut off all Intercourse over land. A crazy Gun Boat which I have observed in the Bay of St. Louis will also be ordered to intercept all communication between the Spanish Ports the moment a Gale which now prevents all Intercourse with her shall abate; and if Capt Shaw does not detain me, I will if I live & am not opposed by Superior force, be before Fort Charlotte in eight days. For your Satisfaction & that of the President I Send this by express, to meet the mail at Fort Stoddert, and am in much in haste most respectfully Sir, Your obedt. Servt.

Ja: Wilkinson

N.B. I have with me Seven companies of the 2d. & 3d. Regts. Infantry & one of Artillery— I inclose the copy of a letter from Capt Shaw received the last Instant.

LS, DNA, RG107, Letters Sent to the Secretary of War, Registered Series, July 1812–May 1814, W-148(7) (M221, Roll No. 58).

[Enclosure]

New Orleans April 1st. 1813

Dear Sir:

It has been with much regret I have just learnt that the Barge which you had been on board of have been upset, and that from the act of providence alone both yourself and those Gentlemen whom accompanied you were arrested from being drowned. Presuming that all your baggage must have been with you in the boat, and the letter to Lt. Merrel [*Merrill*] must have been lost I have thought it adviseable to forward a duplicate of that dispatched by Mr. Roany [*Roney*] to him. I shall sail positively tomorrow—I will have to remain in the Chefuncta a few hours from thence I shall proceed to the Eastward Sir, I have the honor to be yr. ob St.

(Signed) John Shaw

Copy, DNA, RG107, Letters Received by the Secretary of War, Registered Series, July 1812–May 1814, W-148(7), enclosure.

## CAPTAIN JOHN SHAW TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

Honorable William Jones.

Mobile April the 19th. 1813.

Sir,

I have the Honor to Inform you that Fort Charlotte is now in our possession.

The Expedition sailed from the Pass Christian on the night of the 8th. Instant, the wind being ahead prevented our progress as fast as we could have Wish'd, On the 11th. Inst., Four hundred men were landed about three Miles below this place, and on the Evening of the 14th Inst. I anchor'd the following Gun vessels *Nos. 5. 22. 65. 156 & 163* in a close line ahead on Springs within 200 yards of Fort Charlotte, Articles of Surrender of the Fort was Enter'd into between the Spanish Commandant, and General Wilkinson & on the Evening of the 15th. Inst. our Flag was display'd within their Works, The Spanish Troops about Eighty in Number immediately took shipping and proceeded to Pensacola. Fifty Peices of Cannon has been got within the Work, Forty of which are mounted, but the Carriages much decay'd.

We have now Sir, an Extensive Coast, full of Shallows, which require light Vessels for Easy draughts of Water to navigate them, from the mouth of the Lafourche to this place is at least in Extent 300 Miles, the Naval force under my command has decreas'd to almost nothing, I have now with me nearly our whole Strength, *Nos. 5. 22. 65. 156 162 & 163*, Gun vessel *No. 22* with difficulty got here, I shall moor her for a guard Boat for the defence of this Harbour. & for the protection of the Bay, It will require for its defence 15 Sail of Gun Vessels, for the defence of the Regolets and the Island nearly Eastwardly 10 Sail, for the Mississippi and the Balize 10 Sail, for the La Fourche and Barrataria 6 Sail, with this Force I am satisfied that no Enemy's Vessels could anchor within our Waters with Safety, There is now but one Gun Vessel at New Orleans, which is under orders to sail for this place as soon as ready, Should an attack be made by the Enemy wherein the Naval force is required to act, It is too Evident that the small force under my command could make but a feeble resistance, Under these Circumstances, my

Honor as an Officer of the Navy may be liable to much censure & abuse, I trust that the Honorable Secretary of the Navy In the event of an attack being made on me by an Enemy, and my Incompetency to oppose the same, will be placed in a proper point of view, In all my communications to the Honorable Secretary for some months previous to the War, I have given him a true & faithfull statement of the real state and condition of the Force under my Command.

The General and myself will leave here in a few days In order to take a Survey of Mobile Point, to fix on the most Suitable place to Establish a Battery for its defence.<sup>1</sup>

Enclosed is a List of the whole Naval force now on this station Sir I have the Honor to be Your mo Obt. Servt.

John Shaw

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 3, No. 16 (M125, Roll No. 28).

1. Relations between Shaw and Wilkinson during the Mobile campaign were free of the acrimony that had characterized their earlier dealings with one another. Indeed, the general was generous in his praise of Shaw's contributions to the expedition, and over the next several weeks the two commanders cooperated effectively to strengthen Mobile's defenses. A new fort was constructed at Mobile Point and four gunboats were stationed at the bay's entrance to protect the town from sea assault.

"That Patrick Garrey receive seventy lashes with the cat of nine tails on his bare back at such time and place as the commander in chief shall direct."

Joseph Bainbridge Prest.  
Dan<sup>l</sup> T. Patterson  
Dan<sup>l</sup> S. Dexter  
Louis Alexis  
Thos<sup>"</sup> Ap Catesby Jones

Sentence Approved—and to receive it on Board the U.S. Brig *Siren* on Friday 26th. Inst.— (weather not favourable) the next good day

John Shaw

DS, DNA, RG125, CM, Vol. 4, No. 125 (M273, Roll No. 4).

## Orders to Economize

*Throughout the war, most of the materiel required to build, repair, and refit naval warships—cannon shot, gunpowder, cordage, canvas, kentledge—was unobtainable at New Orleans. It had to be shipped to the Gulf Coast from manufacturing centers in the North-east. The heavy expense incurred in transporting these stores greatly inflated their price and was the primary reason the naval station at New Orleans proved so costly to maintain.<sup>1</sup> In 1813 expenditures at New Orleans escalated even higher as additional monies were needed to repair hurricane damage sustained the previous summer and to establish a new shipyard on the Tchefuncte River.*

*The large sums of money expended on the naval establishment at New Orleans so troubled the new secretary of the navy, William Jones, that on 5 February, he warned Navy Agent John K. Smith to curb spending. Further economies were ordered the following March, when Shaw was directed to reduce the number of gunboats and men under his command. The department's call for fiscal restraint at New Orleans would remain a familiar refrain the remainder of the war.*

<sup>1</sup>. For Shaw's complaints to Secretary Jones concerning the high price of naval stores at New Orleans, see p. 666.

### SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES TO NAVY AGENT JOHN K. SMITH

John K. Smith  
New Orleans,.

Navy Depart.  
5. febr 1813

Your letter dated 31st. Decr 1812 advising of your having drawn on this Department for the sum of 20 m. \$ has just been handed to me.

The Accountant of the Navy has informed, that you have not forwarded your accounts—and I confess to you that with this information before me, and, perceiving as I have with great concern that the expenses on the New Orleans are extravagant beyond all reasonable bounds— I hesitated whether I should pay the bill in question or not. The solvency of your circumstances & that of your

Sureties has however induced me to accept this Bill— It is proper however that I should distinctly state to you, that after having allowed you sufficient time to transmit your accounts for settlement, I shall not, unless they shall be received, accept any more of your drafts— My determination is to check the great & astonishing extravagance of the New Orleans station: tho' I do not allow myself to attribute to you such extravagance.

W Jones.

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, MLS, Vol. 11, pp. 183–84 (M209, Roll No. 11).

### SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES TO CAPTAIN JOHN SHAW

Capt. John Shaw  
New Orleans.

Nav: Dep'mt.  
1. March 1813

It has been determined to retain in commission at New Orleans only ten gunboats—& the two block Ships—& the Bomb Brig, all the other gun boats, must be immediately laid up in ordinary in the care of the officer of the Yard— Each of the boats in commission must have:

a commander  
 2 Masters Mates or Midshipmen  
 1. Acting Gunner  
 1. Steward  
 1. Cook  
 8 able Seamen, & 6 ordinary seamen & boys. The block Ships & bomb Brig, must have no more men attached to them, than may be indispensibly necessary

The *Siren* you will immediately order to the Delaware giving to her commander, special instructions to keep a good look out for the enemy squadron now blockading the Chesapeake. & supposed to be lying, between the Delaware & the Chesapeake

Every officer & man, now on the orleans Station, not required to complete the above arrangement must be immediately paid off, & discharged from the Service.

I have to issue to you, my most positive injunctions, not again to purchase any vessel, of any description, or Even to do any important repairs—or to make requisitions on the agent, for any extensive supplies, without the previous approbation of this Department—otherwise you must be charged with the amount in, your individual capacity.

W. Jones

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, SNL, Vol. 10, pp. 286–87 (M149, Roll No. 10).

## Public Criticism of Captain John Shaw

*Critics of Captain John Shaw were to be found not only among officers of the army and navy at New Orleans, but also among the city's civilian population. Some complained of*

*a want of energy and judgment in Shaw's direction of the station's affairs. Others leveled a more serious charge; that the captain was guilty of grossly mismanaging department funds. Such allegations no doubt fueled Secretary Jones's suspicion that the New Orleans Station was run with too much laxity.*

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New Orleans April 1st. 1813

Dear Sir:

It has been with much regret I have just learnt that the Barge which you had been on board of have been upset, and that from the act of providence alone both yourself and those Gentlemen whom accompanied you were arrested from being drowned. Presuming that all your baggage must have been with you in the boat, and the letter to Lt. Merrel [*Merrill*] must have been lost I have thought it adviseable to forward a duplicate of that dispatched by Mr. Roany [*Roney*] to him. I shall sail positively tomorrow—I will have to remain in the Chefuncta a few hours from thence I shall proceed to the Eastward Sir, I have the honor to be yr. ob St.

(Signed) John Shaw

Copy, DNA, RG107, Letters Received by the Secretary of War, Registered Series, July 1812–May 1814, W-148(7), enclosure.

## CAPTAIN JOHN SHAW TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

Honorable William Jones.

Mobile April the 19th. 1813.

Sir,

I have the Honor to Inform you that Fort Charlotte is now in our possession.

The Expedition sailed from the Pass Christian on the night of the 8th. Instant, the wind being ahead prevented our progress as fast as we could have Wish'd, On the 11th. Inst., Four hundred men were landed about three Miles below this place, and on the Evening of the 14th Inst. I anchor'd the following Gun vessels *Nos. 5. 22. 65. 156 & 163* in a close line ahead on Springs within 200 yards of Fort Charlotte, Articles of Surrender of the Fort was Enter'd into between the Spanish Commandant, and General Wilkinson & on the Evening of the 15th. Inst. our Flag was display'd within their Works, The Spanish Troops about Eighty in Number immediately took shipping and proceeded to Pensacola. Fifty Peices of Cannon has been got within the Work, Forty of which are mounted, but the Carriages much decay'd.

We have now Sir, an Extensive Coast, full of Shallows, which require light Vessels for Easy draughts of Water to navigate them, from the mouth of the Lafourche to this place is at least in Extent 300 Miles, the Naval force under my command has decreas'd to almost nothing, I have now with me nearly our whole Strength, *Nos. 5. 22. 65. 156 162 & 163*, Gun vessel *No. 22* with difficulty got here, I shall moor her for a guard Boat for the defence of this Harbour. & for the protection of the Bay, It will require for its defence 15 Sail of Gun Vessels, for the defence of the Regolets and the Island nearly Eastwardly 10 Sail, for the Mississippi and the Balize 10 Sail, for the La Fourche and Barrataria 6 Sail, with this Force I am satisfied that no Enemy's Vessels could anchor within our Waters with Safety, There is now but one Gun Vessel at New Orleans, which is under orders to sail for this place as soon as ready, Should an attack be made by the Enemy wherein the Naval force is required to act, It is too Evident that the small force under my command could make but a feeble resistance, Under these Circumstances, my

Honor as an Officer of the Navy may be liable to much censure & abuse, I trust that the Honorable Secretary of the Navy In the event of an attack being made on me by an Enemy, and my Incompetency to oppose the same, will be placed in a proper point of view, In all my communications to the Honorable Secretary for some months previous to the War, I have given him a true & faithfull statement of the real state and condition of the Force under my Command.

The General and myself will leave here in a few days In order to take a Survey of Mobile Point, to fix on the most Suitable place to Establish a Battery for its defence.<sup>1</sup>

Enclosed is a List of the whole Naval force now on this station Sir I have the Honor to be Your mo Obt. Servt.

John Shaw

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 3, No. 16 (M125, Roll No. 28).

1. Relations between Shaw and Wilkinson during the Mobile campaign were free of the acrimony that had characterized their earlier dealings with one another. Indeed, the general was generous in his praise of Shaw's contributions to the expedition, and over the next several weeks the two commanders cooperated effectively to strengthen Mobile's defenses. A new fort was constructed at Mobile Point and four gunboats were stationed at the bay's entrance to protect the town from sea assault.

[Enclosure]

A List Exhibiting the whole Naval Force under my Command on this Station.—

What No.	No Guns	Calibre.	Number of Men	Where at
Ship <i>Louisiana</i>	22		136	Balize
G Vessel No. 5	5	1 24 pounder } 4 6 do	44	Mobile
" " 65	3	1 24 do } 2 6 do	40	do
" " 156	5	1 18 pr. } 2 18 } 2 12 }	44	do
" " 162	5	1 18 pr. } 4 12 do Carronades	46	do
" " 163	3	1 24 pr. } 2 6 }	40	do.
" " 22	3	1 12 pr. } 2 6 "	26	do
" " 23	5	1 32 pr. } 4 6 pr. }	45 will be required, but at present—not man'd	
51 Guns Total			421 Men Total	

Gun Vessel No. 27., Condemned &amp; is now laying at the Bay St. Louis.

Mobile April 19, 1813.

DS, DNA, RG45, AF8 (M625, Roll No. 200).

John Shaw*Louisiana*

By April 1813, Lieutenant Daniel S. Dexter had completed fitting out the ship *Louisiana* for service.<sup>1</sup> Over the next five months, *Louisiana* alternated duty between stations at *Plaquemine* and the *Balize*. Dexter's most pressing concern during this time was the health of his crew, which, due to the effects of heat and disease, steadily deteriorated over the course of the summer. By August the numbers of men felled by death and sickness had become so great that there were scarcely enough healthy crewmen to work the ship. Dexter himself finally succumbed to illness, forcing his return to New Orleans in September.

Another problem demanding Lieutenant Dexter's attention was the decayed condition of *Louisiana's* gun deck. In May it was discovered that all of the beams and some of the knees supporting the vessel's gun deck were rotten. As a temporary measure, Dexter had the gun deck reinforced with stanchions, but he warned Captain John Shaw that *Louisiana* could not engage the enemy and safely bear her current weight of metal. It was not until the end of the year that *Louisiana's* heavy armament was removed in favor of lighter guns.

1. For additional documentation on the purchase, manning, and fitting out of *Louisiana*, see Dudley, *Naval War of 1812*, Vol. 1, pp. 382-83, 417-19, 434-35.

## LIEUTENANT DANIEL S. DEXTER TO CAPTAIN JOHN SHAW

U.S. Ship *Louisiana*, *Plaquemine*, 6th April, 1813.

Sir,

I had the honor this morning to receive your two communications of the 25th March and 5th inst. and shall pay particular attention to the injunctions contained in them.

I arrived here on the 27th ult. and have remained here since for the purpose of getting the Ship in complete readiness for any event that may occur, and to exercise my men at quarters, the necessity of which your own reflection will convince you, as few of them were ever on board a man of war before.

I am sorry to inform you it is absolutely necessary that this Ship should be furnished with 40 or 50 more men; With her present complement I am unable fully to man the guns, even by stationing every man on board at them (including the Marines.) One gun is worked entirely by officers. In the event of going to sea, I should not be able to fight more than six guns, after manning the braces, tops, &c. and have none at small arms.

By a boat from the *Balize* last night, I learn that the Brig *Siren* sailed on Saturday last; that Gun Vessels No. 5, No. 156, and No. 163, arrived there a few days since; and that an English Sloop of war<sup>1</sup> appeared off the bar on Friday—I am unacquainted with the nature of Lieut. Merrill's orders, but from what you mention respecting Mobile, I conceive you expect to find these gun Vessels at the Bay St. Louis; and have accordingly dispatched a letter to Lieut. Merrill, apprizing him of your intentions.

I have caused the power of attorney to be copied, and again inclose it to you, with the signatures of all on board this Vessel who formerly to G B No. 162 and 66.

CAPTAIN JOHN SHAW TO BRIGADIER GENERAL THOMAS FLOURNOY,<sup>1</sup> U.S.A.

New Orleans June 8th. 1813

Sir,

It has hitherto been found impracticable to procure a sufficient number of seamen to complete the crew of the ship *Louisiana*, now stationed for the defence of the Balize; nor has she at this moment, men enough on board, fit for duty, to man more than one half of her guns, while the Enemy have a force stationed actually in sight:— The Marine fencibles, a Corps formerly under the Command of Captain Allan, one of the pilots, stationed also at the Balize, are made up, chiefly, of sea-faring men, who are anxious to be transferred to their proper element; in which, could they be accommodated, our embarrassments, with regard to the *Louisiana*, would be at once removed; an object, which, under existing circumstances, is all-important to the interests of the public service. These considerations, therefore, induce me to solicit your authority, for the transfer of of so many of them, to the *Louisiana* as shall be found sufficient to work her guns, or, in other words, to complete her crew.

This transfer, at the desire, or with the consent, of the men themselves, will be no more a departure from principles, as you must readily perceive, than the inlisting of men from Volunteer Corps, into the regular service of the United States; the authority for the two measures, differing only in this, that the latter is directly authorized by an order from the Government, while the former is only indirectly authorized, by orders from the same source, for a strict co-operation between the land and Naval forces on this station.— The only possible objection which can ever be raised to arrangements of the kind now requested, is that of its being an interference with the command of the officers, who may thus loose their men. I believe it will be granted, however, that where the views of individuals happen to come in contact with the publick interest or safety, as in the present case, and they cannot be made to harmonize, the former should always be made to yield. Sir, I have the honor to be, very respectfully your obt. servt.

(signed) John Shaw

LB Copy, DLC, Naval Historical Foundation Collection, John Shaw Papers, 1813 Letter Book.

1. Flournoy succeeded Major General James Wilkinson as commander of the Seventh Military District after the latter's departure from New Orleans in June 1813. The Seventh Military District comprised Louisiana, the Mississippi Territory, and Tennessee.

LIEUTENANT DANIEL S. DEXTER TO CAPTAIN JOHN SHAW

U.S. Ship *Louisiana*,  
Plaquemine, 1st August 1813.

Sir,

I had the honor, last evening, to receive your two letters of the 26th ult. by a boat from G V No. 5, off Britain Island. She brought a Masters Mate, 4 Seamen, a sergeant and 12 soldiers, all of whom I have sent on board No. 23, and ordered Mr. Pollock to proceed in her immediately to Britain Island, where he will join No. 5.

Inclosed is a list of the sick belonging to this vessel;<sup>1</sup> though there are many not included in it, whose state of convalescence is not so well established as to prevent fears of relapses and who will not, probably, be able to do duty during the warm months evening; and also a list of the deaths.

Immediately after Dr. Marshall's departure, I dispatched a boat to New Orleans, for a Surgeon, medicines, and Hospital stores, and Doctor William Barnwell, junr. has, by Lt. Comdt. Patterson's orders, served on board, with a supply of the necessary articles. Every assistance and nourishment that Could possibly be procured, has been administered to the sick, and no pains or expence spared to render their situation comfortable. I am sometimes induced to hope a gradual and general recovery is about taking place, but am as frequently drawn back to despondency by relapses, deaths, & new cases.

Could I for a moment have conceived myself justifiable in the measure, I should long since have proceeded in this Vessel to one of the places mentioned in your letter, for the preservation of my crew; I could, by that means perhaps have saved the lives of 14 or 15 of them; But, of course, unauthorised, I dare not leave my station. Since I know your wishes on the subject, I shall, as soon as it is in my power, attempt it, though I fear tis too late, for I have now scarcely well men enough to weigh the anchor. I dispatched Mr. McKeever to New Orleans on the 28th ult. to open a rendezvous for this ship. Should he be have good success I may yet soon be able to extricate myself from this second *Terre aux Buoeff's* scene.<sup>2</sup>

I have given Mr. Edward Herries<sup>3</sup> permission to proceed to the Bay St. Louis for the benefit of his health. He is anxious to visit his friends at Baton Rouge, for which permission I have directed him to apply to you of his arrival at the Bay. I have the honor to be Sir, With Respect Your Obt. Servt.

(Signed) Dan<sup>l</sup> S. Dexter.

Commodore John Shaw  
Bay St. Louis

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, Daniel Dexter Letter Book, pp. 83–84. In Dexter's hand.

1. Not found.

2. Dexter is referring here to the terrible suffering endured by the army while it was encamped at Bayou Terre aux Boeufs in 1809. Within a year losses due to disease and desertion had reduced the size of Wilkinson's 2,000 man force by over fifty percent; see Jacobs, *U.S. Army*, pp. 345-52.

3. Acting Midshipman Edward Herries died on 10 August 1813.

## English Pilots at the Balize

*On 31 May Lieutenant Daniel S. Dexter wrote Captain John Shaw that he suspected the river pilots at the Balize, most of whom were English, of providing intelligence to the enemy.<sup>1</sup> Because their work gave them an intimate knowledge of all ship movements in and out of the Mississippi River, these pilots were in a unique position to assist the Royal Navy in striking a blow not only against American commerce, but against Shaw's command as well. Readily perceiving the threat such men posed to the safety of the New Orleans Station, Captain Shaw promptly requested Governor William C. C. Claiborne to dismiss all pilots at the Balize who were British subjects.*

1. See Dexter to Shaw, 31 May 1813, DNA, RG45, Daniel Dexter Letter Book, pp. 65–66.



## CAPTAIN JOHN SHAW TO GOVERNOR WILLIAM C. C. CLAIBORNE

New Orleans June 7th. 1813.

Sir,

By a letter just received from the commanding officer of the *Louisiana*, stationed at the Balize, I am informed that an English man of war, had appeared off the mouth of the river on the 27th. ultimo; that she had continued generally in sight, close in with the land, off the S.W. pass, until the 30th.; that the pilots, on board a pilot-boat, which had been out, and which was boarded, as they say, by a boat from the British ship,—learned that she was the *Herald* sloop of war, carrying 24 guns—16 long twelves, on the main deck, & eight on her upper deck; that she is stationed off the Balize, & is expected to be joined in a few days, by a brig of 22 guns; and that the Lieutenant from whom this information was obtained, inquired where the *Siren* was.

Lieut. Dexter expresses his strong suspicion, of the pilots having been on board the enemy's vessel, which, however, they deny; and that, as almost all the pilots\* at the Balize, are, as he assures me English subjects, he has no doubt but they will give the enemy all the information which they may acquire, while they will conceal the real truth from us; or, in other words, that they will act agreeably to such instructions, as they may receive from the enemy:—

Your Excellency will readily perceive the obvious danger, to the safety of the country, to be apprehended, from permitting such a description of spies, to continue to act in the character of pilots; and I must therefore pray you to cause such of them as may be found to be British subjects, to be removed from their present situation. Sir, I have the honor to be your Excellency's Most obt. servt.

(signed) John Shaw.

\*The assistant pilots are here wished to be distinctly understood; and not those regularly appointed by the Executive of the state.

LB Copy, DLC, Naval Historical Foundation Collection, John Shaw Papers, 1813 Letter Book.

## GOVERNOR WILLIAM C. C. CLAIBORNE'S CIRCULAR TO PILOTS

New Orleans June 10th 1813

Sir,

If any of the deputy Pilots in your employ at the Balize should be British subjects, you are hereby instructed to dismiss them & to report their names to the marshal of the ——— You will also dismiss from your service every other person against whom there exists the smallest suspicion of holding intercourse with the enemy, & you will report to me by every mail, whether any & what vessels of the enemy are to your knowledge or belief hovering on our Coast. I am, Sir, &c

Signed/ W. C. C. Claiborne.

Claiborne, *Letter Books*, Vol. 6, pp. 219–20.

## GOVERNOR WILLIAM C. C. CLAIBORNE TO CAPTAIN JOHN SHAW

New Orleans June 10th 1813

Sir,

I have received the letter in which you inform me, that several persons employed by the Branch Pilot at the Balize, were British subjects, & strongly suspected of holding Intercourse with the enemy.— I have in consequence directed that all persons of the above description, be dismissed from service, & that their names be reported, in order that the necessary measures may be taken to remove them from the sea board. I am sir &c.

Signed) W. C. C. Claiborne.

Claiborne, *Letter Books*, Vol. 6, pp. 221–22.

## A Purser's Authority: Shaw vs. Shields, Part II

*In December 1812, Captain John Shaw and Purser Thomas Shields became embroiled in a dispute over Shaw's appointment of a purser to Louisiana.<sup>1</sup> Protesting this infringement of his prerogatives as station purser, Shields appealed to the Navy Department for relief. The newly appointed secretary, William Jones, decided in favor of Shields, ordering Captain Shaw to dismiss Louisiana's purser.<sup>2</sup> The bickering between the two men had scarcely subsided when a new altercation arose. This time the quarrel centered on Shields's authority to refuse advance monies to men on the New Orleans Station, even when ordered to pay out such monies by Captain Shaw. Once again, both officers called on the navy secretary to arbitrate their dispute.*

1. See Dudley, *Naval War of 1812*, Vol. 1, pp. 435–40.

2. See Jones to Shaw, 31 Jan. 1813, DNA, RG45, SNL, Vol. 10, p. 238 (M149, Roll No. 10).

## PURSER THOMAS SHIELDS TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

The Honble. Wm. Jones,

New Orleans 12 June 1813

Sir,

I have the honor to herewith to Enclose for your perusal and decision copies of a correspondence between Comde. Jno. Shaw & myself, on the Subject of an order given me by Tho Turner Esqr. the Accountant of the Navy— I beg leave sir, most respectfully to suggest to you the delicacy of my situation & to ask yr instructions how to proceed. I have the honor to be Most Respectfully Sir, Yr. Ob. St.

Tho. Shields  
Purser

ALS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 6, No. 163 (M125, Roll No. 31). The four enclosures that follow were individually numbered. They are bound in reverse order following Shields's cover letter.



*Captain John Shaw*



*Purser Thomas Shields*

[Enclosure]

1

New Orleans June 5th. 1813

Sir,

It has become my duty to inquire of you, upon what authority, Mr Boswell, who, I understand, acts for you in your absence from Town, refused to comply with a request made by me, on or about the first of April last, during your absence from New Orleans,—to pay up Mr. Ballard, what might then be due to him; and in addition, to advance to him, on my responsibility, one or two month's pay; as he was then on the eve of his departure, on an expedition, in company with myself, against Mobile?

You will also be pleased to inform me whether or not Mr. Boswell (rated in your last return as a purser's steward) is considered by you as amenable to the laws & regulations of our service?—Hurry of duty alone, has so long prevented me from addressing you on this subject. Sir, I have the honor to be yours respectfully

John Shaw

Thomas Shields esq.  
Purser of the N.O. station  
New Orleans

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 6, No. 163, enclosure (M125, Roll No. 31).

[Enclosure]

2

Commodore John Shaw.

New Orleans 7th June 1813.

Sir,

Your Letter of the 5th. Inst. was not handed me until the night of its date, it otherwise would have been immediately replied to.

My instructions from the Navy Dept. are positive in regard to pecuniary transactions, and are couch'd in the following terms— "You will in no instance make advances to the Officers & Seamen, on your Station except the usual advance on joining a Vessel, unless the same is bona fida due, even if the same should be order'd by the Commanding Naval Officer."

Mr. Boswell holds the same situation now, that he did when I arrived on this Station, sanctioned, I presume by the Department as Mr. Hambleton has settled his transactions here, at the Accountants Office.—

My inclinations have ever led me to further, as far as in my power lay, the Interest of the Public service My orders to Mr. Boswell have ever been preremptory to advance no money unless due, to any one— I am forbidden to keep a contingent Acct. if the Service requires additional aid in a pecuniary way, I beg leave to suggest the propriety of calling on the Agent. From the Tenor of your Letter, I fear Mr. Ballard has said, that he could not get what money was actually due him, on the date of yr. order,— the enclosed will shew that he received more.<sup>x</sup>

I do not conceive that Mr. Boswell is subject to, or amenable to Naval Law, he is not on the Articles— But even were he, the Censure in this instance, if any, must attach to me.—

I am heavily bonded Sir, to account for the monies drawn by me, & tho I most certainly should not hesitate to obey your orders directed to me personally, supposing my instructions were Known to you it would compell me at the time I obey'd them to solely protest against the proceedure,—this proceedure, I should in justice owe to myself— at the same time I know & acknowledge the necessity of obedience to orders, but I have to settle & am held responsible hereafter for the correctness of my accts.— I beg you Sir, most respectfully, to reflect on this subject seriously & before censuring me, to ascertain whether I am really in an error.— I have the honor, to be, Yr. Most Obt. Servt.

Signd. Thos. Shields  
Purser

Mr. Ballards acct transmitted to Comdr. Shaw.—

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 6, No. 163, enclosure (M125, Roll No. 31). This copy was signed by Shields.

[Enclosure]

3

New Orleans, June 9th. 1813.

Sir,

I have received your letter of the day before yesterday, in reply to mine of the 5th. instant, and should consider it a perfect waste of time for you & I, at this late period, to enter into a contest on the subject of rank; that being a point long since established by the laws of our country & the usages of the service; I shall at once, therefore, and without further comment, dismiss that part of the subject of the present letter.—

You state in your letter, now before me, that your 'instructions from the Navy-Department, are positive in regard to pecuniary transactions, and' that they 'are couch'd in the terms,' which you there recite, namely, that you should not perform certain acts, aptertaining to your office as purser—"even if the same should be ordered by the Commanding Naval officer."— As an order of this nature, forbidding a subordinate, to be obedient to his superior officer, must be considered perfectly anomalous, a precedent for which might in vain be sought for in the annals of Naval transactions throughout the civilized world; and as, to my recollection, I have never yet been favored with the sight of your orders from Government to join this station,—which I presume, includes your general instructions,—I must request of you to allow me the perusal, or to furnish me with a fair transcript, of your original orders referred to.

It is perfectly true, indeed, that I formerly in 180[8?] or 1809, saw a circular letter, from Mr. Thomas Turner, purporting to have the same effect, which you ascribe to your instructions; and I had the perusal, also, of a letter from Commodore Decatur, to Mr. Paul Hamilton, the then Secretary of the Navy, produced by that very extraordinary occurrence; and in reply to which he was informed that the circular in question, could by no means interfere with his authority, but on the contrary, that every officer & other person on board his ship, must of course yield obedience to his orders.— As a Post Captain in the Navy, I was ordered here by my Government, in command of this station; & I should be extremely sorry to perceive a disposition in any officer under my command, to court the issue of a contest with me, or the consequences of a disobedience of orders, on the subject of

duties incident to my command. I have never on any occasion, attempted an unwarrantable interference with the duties, either of the Navy-agent, or the purser, on this station; and as I shall continue, as heretofore, to guard against the issuing of any other than legal orders, holding myself in the meanwhile responsible for all, as well for those, which may to any person happen to appear doubtful, as for others, I shall take care in future to enforce prompt obedience to them: To permit the contrary, would be a departure from duty; inasmuch, as it could not fail to have a direct tendency to degrade the command entrusted to me by Government, and thus completely deprive it of its naval character & respectability.

It would seem to appear, however, from the view which you take of the subject, that the commanding officer of this station, is to be considered as a mere automaton, without any authority whatever, not possessing so much as the right to expect obedience, during your absence at any time from this city—even from one of your deputed assistants—a person who is rated on your general return as a purser's steward:— On this subject, sir, you will permit me to observe, that such a mode of doing duty is disapproved; that every person in your office must be subject to legal orders, and amenable to the consequences of disobedience; and that I shall take the most prompt steps to punish the officer who may represent you in your absence, & who shall make a reply to an order from me, similar to the one made to Mr. Ballards, by Mr. Boswell. It seems proper further to remark, that I know Mr. Turner only as a Gentleman, and as a clerk in the Navy-Department; that it yet remains for me to learn that he possesses the power of interfering with my command, or that I am subject to his orders (if he possess such transcendent authority let it be produced;) and that, until such authority be shown I shall not consider communications from him as possessing the force of law, or of orders.

I shall conclude by setting you right on the score of your conjecture respecting the representations which Mr. Ballard might have made to me; his statement corresponded with your own, and was no more I presume, than a simple report of the fact as it had actually occurred. Sir, I have the honor to be yours respectfully

John Shaw

Thomas Shields, esq.  
Purser of the N.O. station  
New Orleans

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 6, No. 163, enclosure (M125, Roll No. 31).

[Enclosure]

4

Commdr. John Shaw

New Orleans 10 June 1813.

Sir,

I had the honor to receive your letter of yesterday. It certainly never was my wish or intention to court the issue of a contest or even a contest itself with my commanding Officer, enclosed is a copy of my orders which I presented you on the morning of my arrival in this city— I beg leave most respectfully to assure you Sir, that I feel too high a regard for the honor & prosperity of the Navy, ever knowingly to degrade it by disrespectful conduct on my part

This is the first moment Sir, that I ever heard an order issued from the accountants office, to the Purser's, & wherein the authority of the Commanding Officers

cannot be concern'd, should be questioned as illegal, and the more especially so, as it must unquestionably have been by the order of the Hon'ble Secretary of the Navy himself.— I take the liberty of enclosing Mr. Turner's Letter on the subject.—

I beg leave to call a circumstance that has occur'd to the Knowledge of Comdr. Shaw— Lieut. Trippe while commanding the Schooner *Enterprize* on a distant or foreign station, drew on his own responsibility several large sums of money— after his decease, Mr. Timberlake her Purser, now on board the *U. States* Frigate with Commdr. Decatur, was order'd to settle his Accounts; on their adjustment, Lt. Trippe was found indebted to the Governmt. from actual receipts upwards of \$3,000.— Which sum was actually charged to the private account of Mr. Timberlake & deducted from, the earnings of his industry, without an act of Congress has been passd. since I left the Atlantic States in his favor.— This circumstance Sir, I believe was the cause of the order given by the direction of the Secretary of the Navy.— It occurred early in the winter of 1809.—

To put this subject at rest for ever, as well as to convince you of my sincerity in declaring, that nothing is more distant from my wishes or intentions than to disobey orders— I have this day written to the Hon'ble William Jones, for a final answer to the question. I again beg leave to inform you, that I am not allow'd to keep a contingent account, nor have I ever drawn a dollar for that purpose since I have had the honor to be under your command— I respectfully suggested in my note of the 7th inst. the propriety of directing yr. orders to the Agent, when the interest of the Public required other appropriations than what I am authorized to make; I was in hopes Sir, this observation would not have been deemed indecorous, it certainly was not intended so— as it regards Mr. Boswell's being amenable to Naval Law, in my opinion was given because askd.— it is only matter of opinion— my duties on this station, are arduous & perplexing, not like as tho it was on board a single ship; Mr. Boswell is rated on, or was rated on the Muster Roll a Steward. I did not conceive from the circumstance of his never having signd. the shipping articles that he was subject to Naval Law— I have erased his name from the Books, my instructions to him during my absence from Orleans were "to comply with all orders emanating from the Commdg. Naval Officer, be him whom it might, the advances of money where not due excepted— unless the usual advances on joining a Vessel when any new appointments of Officers should be made—" I am not inform'd that he has acted contrary to his instructions— A steward Sir, by Naval Law you know is subject to Corporeal punishment— Mr. Boswell never will consent to the exercise of this power nor do I believe, I can find a man of sensibility who will— I am not allow'd by Law a Clerk, consequently am obliged to pay him out of my own pocket— this decision makes a difference of 500\$ a year against me— I will be much obliged to Commdore Shaw, to inform me, whether I can visit the Bay St. Louis, or have leave of absence for a month. My office will be shut, but all supplies will be as readily furnished as tho I was here.— Respectfully, I am Sir, Yr Most Ob Servt.

Signd. Thos. Shields  
Purser

After perusal be pleased to return the enclosed orders

Signd. T. S.—

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 6, No. 163, enclosure (M125, Roll No. 31). This copy was signed by Shields.

## CAPTAIN JOHN SHAW TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

The Honl. William Jones

New Orleans June 14th 1813

Sir,

It has become an object of the most interesting inquiry with me,—to know with precision, in what light the Government considers me at this place,—whether as a land, or as a Naval officer,—and in either case, what rank I am allowed to hold among my brother officers. The doubts and difficulties which have pressed themselves on my mind, in relation to this subject, have been produced by the several mutations which the command, originally assigned to me, has undergone, since my arrival at New Orleans, nearly three years ago:—

On joining this station, in the latter part of 1810, I was placed under the immediate command, of the Governor of the Orleans Territory: Again, on the arrival of General Wilkinson, another transfer was made (a copy of the order for which I have the honor to enclose) placing me in the line, and, together with all my disposable force, under the command of that officer; to which I have continued amenable, until he, on the 10th. instant, took his departure from this place, for the City of Washington.

There have, I assure you, Sir, been great confusion & much vexatious bickering, produced by these (as they have appeared to me) unusual & irregular transfers; and as I believe it to be well known, that the older officers in the Navy, are men of experience in their profession—who have approved themselves worthy (by a faithful & patriotic discharge of duty) of the trust usually reposed in officers of their rank in service,—a very unpleasant question, which still remains without a solution, frequently & unavoidably obtrudes itself on the mind;—why have our Government thought necessary or proper, to place a Post Captain in the Navy, under the immediate orders of a Brigadier General, or, the Military Commanding officer near New Orleans? An order, by which, without any forced construction, of the disjunctive member of the sentence, with which it ends,—and without any very extraordinary change of the military arrangement of the district,—I have all along been liable to come under the unqualified command of a Major or Captain of Militia,—Officers who, it must indeed be confessed, generally know pretty nearly as much about Naval, as military, duty.

Having heretofore, so strongly & so frequently, remonstrated on the fluctuating circumstances of my Command, to the late Honorable Secretary of the Navy without effect, I had almost determined to trouble the Navy Department no more on the subject. As however, you cannot but be perfectly sensible of the heart-burnings, which these Circumstances must necessarily produce; I still entertain hopes of being restored to such a state of respectable responsibility, & independence on on the military as may restore the spirit of emulation & enterprise, which late regulations on the station have almost driven out of the service. To maintain a perfectly good understanding with the Military, & to Co-operate with them, in the strictest & most spirited manner, would exactly accord with the feelings of us all; but I pray you let it be a cooperation: Such an arrangement as this,—making the naval commanding officer responsible to the government alone, for his official acts,—is all that is wished,—& this, I still hope, will be granted by the Government.

I must also beg particular attention to the enclosed Copies of a Correspondence, which has recently taken place, between Mr. Shields, the purser of the station & myself. It was produced, as will appear by the Correspondence itself,—by an order of mine to his office, to advance one or two months pay, to Mr. John P Ballard, my Clerk (on my own personal responsibility) who was then making preparations, to accompany me on the expedition, of which you have been informed, to Mobile. Mr. Shields himself was absent from Town, & the order was rejected by the person who acted for him in his absence, & who is rated on the pursers books as a steward. It appears that he had received peremptory orders from Mr. Shields, to disobey any orders from me, which might require advances of money to any person during his absence; notwithstanding this was a solitary instance, within my recollection, since I have been on this station of my having given such an order. The propriety of the order under the circumstances of the case, will not, I presume be questioned, but will I hope, on the contrary, be approved; while the attitude taken by Mr. Shields, & the language used in the discussion especially in his letter of the 7th., was improper & unwarrantable, & will, I doubt not, be so considered, as long as the necessity of regularity, subordination & obedience to orders, shall continue to be admitted, in public service.<sup>1</sup> Sir, I have the honor to be with great respect &c.

John Shaw

LS, DNA, RG45, MLR, 1813, Vol. 4, No. 51 (M125, Roll No. 29).

1. After reviewing the above correspondence, Secretary Jones decided in favor of Purser Shields. See Jones's handwritten memo of 12 July 1813, probably to accountant of the navy, Thomas Turner, in which he writes, "I wish to correct the errors of Captain Shaw who appears to fancy himself supreme and to forget that there is any other authority," in DNA, RG45, MLR, 1813, Vol. 4, No. 154 (M124, Roll No. 56).

## Protesting Reductions at New Orleans

*By mid-year, Captain John Shaw's command at New Orleans had reached its nadir. With just six gunboats and one ship to guard over three hundred miles of coastline, U.S. strength in the Gulf was at its lowest ebb since the commencement of the war. It was a particularly frustrating time for Shaw because, just as the threat to the station was increasing, the forces he had at his disposal to oppose it were dwindling. In a letter to the secretary of the navy dated 12 June, Shaw protested the reductions Jones had ordered the previous March; and, as he had numerous times before, the captain warned of his inability to counter British sea power effectively. Secretary Jones's continued silence in the face of Shaw's repeated pleas for more resources starkly illustrates the low priority given by the department to the needs of the New Orleans Station.*

## CAPTAIN JOHN SHAW TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

The Honl. William Jones

New Orleans June 12th. 1813

Sir,

The circumstance of my having been, for some time past, absent from New Orleans, on the public duty, must be offered as an apology for not having, until

now, acknowledged the receipts of your several letters of the 1st. 23rd. & 30th. of March last; which came duly to hand, & was acted upon by Lieut. Patterson, agreeably to instructions which I had left with him,—as the officer next in Command at this place,—on my departure for Mobile in the beginning of April:—

Agreeably to your instructions of the 1st. March, I have issued orders for the reduction of the crews of the several Gun Vessels; but I should be sensible of, and very justly chargeable with a remissness in my duty, were I to omit to express to you my decided opinion,—produced by a personal knowledge of the exposed & vulnerable situation of the extensive coast which they are designed to protect,—that this reduction of their crews, is directly opposed to every idea of even a tolerable defence of this station, which is now strictly blockaded by the enemy.

The whole force at present attached to this Station, and intended for the protection of three hundred miles of Coast,—from the Perdido, eastwardly to Vermillion Bay on the West, every point of which is open to the inroads of the enemy's boats,—consists of the Ship *Louisiana*, stationed for the defence of the Balize; and Six sail of Gun Vessels—four of which have been stationed at Mobile since the time of taking possession of that place—one at the out-let of the Rigoletts—and the other (newly fitted out) attempting to make up a crew at New Orleans; in which, however, notwithstanding the transfers made to her from other vessels, on the reduction of their crews, she has, as yet, owing to the extreme scarcity of Seamen, but half succeeded. This force, even were the crews augmented to the full number of men who could be usefully employed on board, would, there can be no doubt, be absolutely inadequate to the purposes of an efficient defence against a vigorous attack of the enemy. I shall consider it my duty, occasionally, as I have heretofore done, in my letters to the Navy-Department, of Feby. 17th. April 11th. June 2nd. July 10th. August 17th. & 27th. October 1812;<sup>1</sup> and of the 19th. April last (the three first before the declaration of War) to all of which I beg leave to refer you,—to state to the Honorable Secretary of the Navy, my own ideas of force necessary for the defence of this station, or at least, of the insufficiency of what is at present allotted to it; sincerely hoping that I may not be considered as chargeable with what might be the consequences of an attack from a superior & overwhelming force from the enemy. All that I can possibly do, in addition to the making of correct representations of the incompetency of the means which may be placed at my disposal, is to take care that the reasonable expectations which may be entertained by our country, respecting the efficient employment of these means, shall not be disappointed; and for this I pledge myself.

The Bomb Brig is now nearly complete in her carpenters work. She is constructed for mounting 12 Guns—6 or 9 pounders,—and a 13 inch sea-Mortar: There are however, no seamen at New Orleans; owing to which, the difficulty of manning her, must be selfevident.

The building of the block Ship on the Tchifoncta, is progressing with all the activity which I have found it possible to give to it. Her frame will, I expect, be entirely moulded in the course of three or four weeks; after which it will not take us long to have her plank sheers on. Her frame consists altogether of live-oak & pitch-pine timber; & with the latter kind she will be planked. The spot which I have selected for building this vessel on, is incomparably the best one on that river. It is in part a rising ground, forming an inclined plane, in short, just such as was desirable for that purpose,—A very trifling expense has been incurred in preparing the foundation on which to place her blocks. The site to-

gether with nearly 20 acres of well timbered pine land annexed, forming a spacious front on the river, has been obtained from a Mr. Lorens,<sup>2</sup> a french gentleman, residing near the spot, on a lease, renewable every ten years at the option of the Government, forever, at the moderate rent of \$20 per annum. When the lease shall be completed & put on record, I shall do myself the honor of forwarding to you a Notarial Copy. The advantages of the situation selected on the Tchifoncta for a Ship-yard over any other place within the limits of this station; and the advantageous terms on which live-oak timber for Ships of any size could be procured on the margin of the lakes in the vicinity of Tchifoncta,—shall be made the subjects of a subsequent communication.

The Brig *Siren*, Captain Joseph Bainbridge, sailed from Ship Island on the 8th. or 9th. of last month, for Boston or Portsmouth, in New-Hampshire, agreeably to your order of the 23rd. of March last. Sir, I have the honor to be with great respect your Most Obt Servt.

John Shaw

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 4, No. 58 (M125, Roll No. 29).

1. The letters of 10 July, 17 August, and 27 October 1812 referred to by Shaw are printed in Dudley, *Naval War of 1812*, Vol. 1, pp. 383–85, 392–95, 417–19.

2. Jacques Lorreins.

## Progress on the Blockship at Tchefoncta

*Between June and September, Captain John Shaw spent most of his energy superintending the building of the blockship at the Tchefoncta shipyard. Progress on the blockship through the summer months was steady if not spectacular. Work was hampered chiefly by a shortage of skilled shipwrights, though construction did halt for a brief time when the yard appeared in danger from an Indian attack.*

*Shaw's major concern while at Tchefoncta was in keeping the cost of the blockship under control. He found this very difficult to do because the iron and canvas needed to finish the ship were very scarce, and therefore very costly. The one item that Shaw was able to obtain plentifully and cheaply was timber. White oak and live oak—prime woods for shipbuilding—were readily available for cutting and hauling in the forests surrounding the yard. Their use enabled Captain Shaw to boast that the blockship was constructed of the finest materials.*

CAPTAIN JOHN SHAW TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

The Honl. William Jones

New Orleans, June 28th. 1813

Sir,

I have just returned from the Tchifoncta, where the building of the block ship is fast progressing. This Vessel, I hope to have launched in November or December next. I have experienced some difficulty, however, in procuring a sufficient number of good Ship-Carpenters, for the wages (\$50 per month & a ration) which I have attempted to establish; nor am I certain but that I shall yet be compelled to raise them to \$60 per month, of 26 working days, made good to each.

The whole extent of the river Tchifoncta, & within a small distance of its banks, is thickly timbered with yellow & pitch-pine, well calculated for Ship-building; while the margin of Lake Ponchartrain, into which the Tchifoncta discharges itself, abounds in live-oak—is easy of access—and from which, I presume, that timber can be procured, & landed at the Ship-yard, at about a third of a dollar per cubic foot. Plenty of large white oak timber, also grows, & can be procured within the short distance of from 1 to 2 1/2 miles, in the country, back of the Ship-yard; of which 130 knees have already been collected, & with a part of which the Navy-yard at New Orleans, has been supplied. We pay as I have formerly taken occasion to state to you, a dollar per tree, standing, for pine timber; for live-oak, however, where it is obtained from land belonging to individuals, we pay double that sum. The hauling is far from being expensive: The timber for the masts & spars complete, for the block ship, will cost the Government less than \$75; whereas, had it been necessary to purchase them at New Orleans, they could not have been procured for less than six hundred dollars.

There could not, in my opinion, be a more eligible situation found in the United States, at which to collect, & prepare any quantity of live-oak, of the very best quality, for our Naval service. The trees being large, the timbers for vessels of all sizes—from a first rate Ship of war, down to those of Gun boats, can be procured with great facility. From the pass of Manchac,—which connects the lakes, Maurepas & Ponchartrain,—all along the sea-coast to the eastward, as far as Mobile bay, this timber can be procured in great abundance. The eastern extremity of the coast just mentioned (near to Mobile bay) would, however, on account of the more easy approach of vessels be the preferable part at which to cut live oak, intended to be transported to a distant Navy-yard. I feel persuaded;—from every calculation I have been able to make on the subject,—that the complete frame of a line-of-battle ship, or a Frigate, could be cut & prepared on this coast, agreeably to the mould which might be designated, with advantages over that of any other part of the United States, in a ratio of, at least, 5 to 3; and that, were even 100 frames of such vessels required, they could be procured on this coast, within the limits I have mentioned, with great facility. Should the Honl. Secretary of the Navy, conceive these suggestions to be of any importance to the service, in the event of any number of frames being required by Government; I should willingly volunteer my services—between this, & the time when I may have to leave the Station—in making all the arrangements, for the accomplishment of such object.

The expense of the Naval establishment at this place, has, unavoidably, been very considerable; but I can truly say, that since I have had the honor of being in the command of this station, none of these expenses, have, with my knowledge or approbation, been wantonly incurred. The Hurricane of last year, as must be well known, was productive of a very large portion of expense; but the consequences of that gale, were unavoidable; as neither precaution nor exertion, could in any degree, counteract its devastation: This is manifest from the destruction of private property,—of which, the proportion was at least as great as that sustained by the public—Some individuals were entirely ruined by it:—Our store in the Navy-yard, was blown down; & our vessels afloat, were all, either driven ashore, or almost torn to pieces. These vessels were ordered by Government, to be immediately repaired & equipped for active service and with that order I strictly complied.

After the hurricane, the Honl. Secretary of the Navy, placed me under the command of Brig. Gen. Wilkinson; & having thus become a subordinate officer, I knew my duty too well to be guilty of disobedience of orders; or to court the issue of

a trial by a General Court Martial, by opposing the measure, although in my private opinion, I could not rid myself of the idea of its being, if not actually wrong, at least without a precedent. Hence, if any improper expence shall have been incurred, in my department of the service, in the purchase of Ships &c for the defence of this City—having in every instance, acted under orders—I trust that no just grounds for censure; can attach itself to me, for having in these cases merely obeyed orders.

The British Sloop of War *Herald*, anchored off the bar of Mobile, on the 3rd. instant. Gun Vessels No. 156, 163 & 65, went out, attacked, & in ten minutes, drove her from her anchorage; since which, she has not re-appeared.

The last account received from Pensacola, states that 10 or 12 Gun boats, are fitting out at the Havanah, for that place—were to be convoyed by the British—&, as I presume, to be employed by them. A report is also current, and seems to gain ground, that E. Florida, has been either sold or ceded to Great Britain.—An official account reached this place last evening, from Mobile, that a small party of spanish Troops, had crossed the Perdido, & burned down a new block-house & other buildings which had been recently erected there, under the superintendence of Lt. Col. Boyer of the 2nd Infantry. Col. Boyer with the Troops under his command, had been previously ordered to Mobile Point, to relieve a detachment of the 3rd. regt. who were under marching orders from Government, for the borders of Upper Canada.

The 24 pounder Guns, now on board the Ship *Louisiana*, are found to be quite too heavy for her; & as they will answer, and be required, for the blockship, building at Tchifoncta, I must beg the attention of the Honl. Secretary to the subject of ordering a tier of 16 medium 9 or 12 pounders, to be forwarded as early as possible from Pittsburgh. Unless this arrangement be attended to, and the present armament be continued on board the *Louisiana*, 16 twenty-fours will be required, in the fall, for the blockship.

I am happy to inform you, for the honor of the contractors, that the Gun powder, which has been sometime since received from Tennessee, has on trial, greatly exceeded in strength the conditions of the contract. The average range of a twenty-four pound shot, with an ounce of powder from the provette, was found to be (instead of 75, the terms of the contract) 115 yards.

I have no officers here, unemployed. I have been compelled to move about, myself, in every situation of my command. The circumstances of the service, will this summer, require the greater part of my time to be spent, in the superintendence of the building of the block-ship on the Tchifoncta. Sir, I have the honor to be with great respect your most Obt. servt.

John Shaw

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 4, No. 128 (M125, Roll No. 29). A duplicate of this letter was bound along with the original.

CAPTAIN JOHN SHAW TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

Honl. William Jones.

New Orleans, July 12th. 1813

Sir,

I have the honor to enclose you herewith a duplicate of my last communication;—& shall, in a few days, proceed eastwardly, in order to join General Flournoy

at the pass of Christiana; from whence we shall visit Mobile & the river Perdido. On this excursion, I may perhaps be absent from this City, about thirty days.

We experience much difficulty, in obtaining a sufficiency of Iron for the Block-ship; that article being extremely scarce, and now selling at, from 15 to 19 cents per pound: We have no Canvass in store, nor can there, at this time, be even a very moderate quantity of it purchased in this City; what little there is sells—English at forty, & Russia at even sixty, dollars per bolt. And in short, every other article, wanted for service, seems to have taken a proportionate rise: Hence the expenses, necessarily to be incurred on this station, owing to the enormous prices, which must be thus, unavoidably paid, for articles of first necessity, for the use of our armed vessels, must, of course, be very considerable. Having nothing to do, however, with the purchase of supplies no share of the responsibility can possibly attach to me. I do most earnestly recommend, & I have all along recommended, the purchasing by whole-sale instead of retail, to be deposited in store, such supplies, as, it, must be known, will ultimately be wanted: An obvious consequence, resulting, under existing circumstances, from this retail mode of purchasing small articles as they happen to be wanted, is, that the retail prices, even if they were not subject to any kind of change, must always be much higher than those of whole-sale; while, on the other hand, our supplies having been almost wholly cut off for sometime past, the prices daily & rapidly encrease with the scarcity of the articles required. They ought to have been laid in twelve months ago at least, when they might have been purchased here, on comparatively moderate terms; whereas, they will now have to be obtained, at advanced prices, elsewhere.— I have therefore to request of the Honl. Secretary, to cause to be forwarded to this place, as early as may be, by the way of Pittsburgh, a sufficient quantity of Russia duck & of canvass (from No. 1 to No. 7) to make the sails complete for the Block-ship; also a supply of bar-iron assorted—and, as I have formerly suggested, sixteen or twenty—nine or twelve pounder cannons, to be mounted here, for the Ship *Louisiana*; the 24 pounders which She now carries on her Gun deck, having been found to be quite too heavy for her.

It appears necessary to repeat to the Honl. Secretary, what I have formerly represented to the Navy Department, that the scarcity of commissioned Lieutenants on this station, is such, as to render the convening of Naval Courts-Martial, extremely inconvenient & embarrassing to the Service; a consequence of which is, that offenders cannot, without manifest injury to our arrangements, be dealt with, agreeably to the nature of their crimes, and have thus to be allowed to pass with impunity.

The 3rd. Regt. of Infantry, 850 strong, under the command of Col. Constant, left this city, yesterday in barges, for Cincinnati, Ohio. Sir, I have the honor to be with great respect your Most Obt Servt.

John Shaw

P.S. The present hostile disposition of the creek indians has temporarily, though perfectly shut up the Southern Mail route via Fort Stoddert.

J. Shaw

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 4, No. 185 (M125, Roll No. 29). A duplicate of this letter was bound along with the original.

CAPTAIN JOHN SHAW TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

Honorable William Jones Tchifoncta September the 11th: 1813.

Sir

Nothing particular has transpired in the Division, under my Command Since I last had the Honor to address you. General Flournoy and myself have been together to the Eastward for these Six Weeks, The Gun Vessels have some time Since transported from the Pass of Christian to Fort Charlotte, Mobile, 400 of the 7t. Regiment, 500 men of the 2d Regiment is now Stationed at the Point of Mobile in Cooperation with four Sail of Gun Vessels viz, nos. 65: 156. 162 & 163, The Bomb Brig *AETNA*, I have also orderd to Mobile Bay where she will proceed as soon as her Crew is Completed.

Since the arrival of General Flournoy on this Station the greatest Harmony has Existed between us, duty goes on very pleasantly, the Officers of the Navy feel Emulated in a Strict Cooperation with the Army, As it must be naturally Expected that the Enemy will not let us rest Idle much longer in peace or quietness on the Frontiers, Should it meet the Views of the Honorable Secretary of the Navy, I should wish to continue in my present command, in preference of being recall'd to the North. General Flournoy has Sollicated me to remain with him, if it meets with your approbation.

The Crew of the Ship *Louisiana*, stationd in the Early part of the Season, for the defence of the Balize, has unhappily been cut up by Sickness, from 90 to 100, of her crew have been Violently attack'd by a malignant Fever & are now in the Hospital under the particular care of Doctor Heermann, only one Officer onboard of this vessel has Escap'd this Fever, I have order'd her to New Orleans where she arriv'd on the 9t Instant,

The Block Ship is progressing as fast as the nature of our Force will admit, She is built of the Very first materials, will be able to mount 26. 32 pound heavy Cannon on her Deck, her draft of Water all on board, will not Exceed 6 feet, 6 In: The perpendicular of her Gun Deck in length 148' feet, beam molded 42 feet, This Ship will when ready for service in my Opinion be better calculated to defend our Waters than all the Forts & Batterys Erected for the defence of the country, I shall do myself the honor of writing more fully in my next

Fort Mims on the Tensaw was attack'd by a large party of Indians on the 30th. Ulto., the americans consisting of 300 men were all distroyd by the Savages, and the Fort fell into their possession.

I beg leave again to remind the Honorable Secretary of the Navy, of the great necessity of the Canvass & Cannon being forwarded Early as possible, both of these articles are at present of the first necessity. I have the honor to be Your obt. St.

John Shaw

LS, DNA, RG45, MLR, 1813, Vol. 6, No. 37 (M124, Roll No. 58).

CAPTAIN JOHN SHAW TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

Tchifonta September the 15th. 1813.

Sir

I have the Honor to Enclose you a Copy of my last communication.



Governor Claiborne & myself have been in company for these three days past, and have call'd together the militia Officers of this Parish, apprising them of their danger., the Governor has recommended that strong Stockade Forts should be built in Each Parish, and I have no doubt, but that the Inhabitants will Immediately avail themselves of this Salutary advice., I am of an opinion that little or no danger can happen to the Inhabitants here from the Creek Indians, the distance is too far, and I apprehend could not be attended with any success to them.; Should however the Chactaws join them against us, all this frontier would no doubt be immediately abandoned and would be left subject to their ravages.—

I have Organized all the Mechanicks and workmen here, Employ'd at the Block Ship, into a Corps., in addition I shall have a subalterans guard of marines, a stockade Fort will be built by the different residents for their protection. I shall mount a few peices of heavy cannon, as soon as the work is completed I shall then not feel the same anxiety of being attacked by the Indians should they attempt it. I feel very confident of defeating them. This morning I received a dispatch from General Flournoy, requesting my joining him at Mobile. I shall depart from this place tomorrow Evening and join him agreeable to his wishes.

I shall, Sir, be very much mistaken if an attack will not be attempted by the British ere long, on some part of our Sea Boards, the progress of the Indian War, sufficiently, in my opinion bespeaks their design., whilst it is necessary to require the attention of all the Physical force of the country to places far distant from any part of our sea board, will afford the British an opportunity to land their forces on any part of the Coast, between the Pass Heroine and Pearl River, In the Event of their succeeding in this object, the standard of Revolt would be hoisted, and the Chactaw Indians invited by them to take up the Tomahawk & scalping Knife against us., These few remarks may be consider'd as a Visionary Calculation Emanating solely from Timidity, but sir since I have had the honor to command on this Station my personal exertion has been Employ'd from time to time, in gaining a most perfect Knowledge of our Sea board, and as it is well Known that very many Enemys to our Country have an Equal share of the Knowledge of the nature and Extent of the Sea Coast, with myself, convinces me the more, that at any time the Enemy may require Pilots to Effect their landing, they will succeed in obtaining them. in this Situation they would meet with a very feeble opposition by the small force under my command which as I have heretofore stated is now at Mobile Bay. I must again repeat to the Honorable Secretary of the Navy the great necessity there is of augmenting this force at this Critical moment. I have now at this yard as much live Oak Timber, calculated to build four gun Boats, the Live Oak in the Lake, is allready cut calculated to build 6 or 8 more, The Small Timber has been taken from the large live Oak Trees cut down for the Block Ship. I have received no communication from the Honorable Secretary of the, Navy Since last June. I have the honor to be Your Obt Servant

John Shaw

## A New Commandant at New Orleans

*On 18 October Secretary Jones ordered Master Commandant Daniel T. Patterson<sup>1</sup> to relieve Captain John Shaw as commander of the New Orleans Station.<sup>2</sup> Patterson was a seasoned, professional officer with more than thirteen years of naval service. He had been stationed at New Orleans since 1807, and his knowledge of the Gulf coupled with his experience made him the logical choice to succeed Shaw. Patterson embarked on his new duties with energy and resolve, and his performance at New Orleans in the months that followed would demonstrate the wisdom of Jones's selection.*

1. Patterson was promoted to master commandant on 24 July 1813.

2. Like many of his subordinates, Shaw had made repeated requests to the Navy Department for a transfer from the New Orleans Station. After leaving New Orleans, the captain returned to Washington to settle his accounts. On 19 October 1814 he was given command of the frigate *United States*. For letters expressing the dissatisfaction of naval officers with service on the Gulf Station, see Dudley, *Naval War of 1812*, Vol. 1, pp. 421-28 and C. McKee, *U.S. Naval Officer Corps*, pp. 306-7.

### SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES TO MASTER COMMANDANT DANIEL T. PATTERSON

Daniel T. Patterson Esqr.  
Master Commandant, U.S. Navy,  
New Orleans.

Navy Department  
Octr 18th 1813.

Sir,

I enclose to you a duplicate of my letter of this date to Commodore Shaw, lest he should be absent from New Orleans, in order that you may immediately communicate it to him, and carry into execution the object of its contents; in conformity with which, you are invested with the command of the Naval Forces of the U. States on the New Orleans Station, which you will immediately assume, on communicating with Com. Shaw on the subject of this Order.

I entertain the most perfect assurance, that this mark of the confidence of the President, will be returned by the most diligent, faithful, and zealous discharge of the very important duties of your command; and, that whilst you maintain the force under your command in the most efficient order, and employ it to the best advantage for the defence of the Coast and Country, and annoyance of the Enemy, you will also exercise your best discretion and care, to check the enormous expenditure and waste, which has hitherto marked the Naval Service on that Station, and confine your requisitions to what may be absolutely necessary for the substantial benefit of the service; avoiding all superfluities, and particularly restraining the extravagant propensity of the Officers, to indulge in costly and luxurious equipments and furniture, which, whatever may have been the practice hitherto, will no longer be tolerated; as the Navy Agent will be positively prohibited from paying all bills, not absolutely necessary for the plain, substantial, and indispensable equipments, repairs, and Supplies, according to law and the Regulations of the Naval Service.

The first step required of you, will be a comprehensive and accurate report, of the number, force, state, and condition of all the vessels under your com-

mand; and a correct Muster roll of all the Officers and men, as well those attached to the vessels, (which you will distinguish,) as all those who may be connected with the Establishment, directly or indirectly.

You are to understand, explicitly, that no vessels are to be purchased, or built; nor no alterations in the Hull, Rigging, or Armament; nor any extensive repairs to be made, without the previous approbation of this Department; unless such repairs as may arise from casualty, and not admitting of delay, without manifest injury to the Service.

You will also report to me, such supplies as you deem necessary for the station, for the ensuing year, of a nature not to be obtained on favourable terms on the spot; taking into view, those on board the Squadron at the time, and in the hands of the Agent. You will also take care that the Purser makes his regular, periodical returns to this Department, according to instructions.

I am not informed of the actual progress and condition of the Block Ship, which, I perceive, will be a most costly object; and I am yet unapprised of the probable extent of her cost. Had I known the actual state of her progress, when I came into the Department, her further progress would have been instantly arrested; and I have no doubt, to the saving of an enormous, useless expense. I wish, therefore, to have particular information on this subject.

Should any of the Gun Boats be in a state of great decay, it will be proper to forego any repair; as I contemplate substituting large Barges, or Galleys, to go in very shoal water, row and sail fast, and carry heavy. We have now, on the Chesapeake, several of this description, 75 feet long, 15 feet wide, 4 feet deep, with two lug sails, and 40 oars; mounting a 24 Pounder, in one end, & a 42 pound Carronade in the other. They have a wide Gangway, but open amidships, to row double banked, under cover of a cedar awning, with Curtains at the sides, which afford complete Shelter for the men. They row either end foremost, indifferently, and draw, with all on board, but 22 inches water. Draughts and plans will be sent to you.

On all important occasions, where the military operations may require the co-operation of the Naval forces, you will use every effort in your power, to render it effectual; but this will be by mutual concert, between the Commanding General and Yourself, not by his command. For the Naval and Military commands are separate, and independent, and governed by the enclosed joint regulations of the War and Navy Departments; of which the Commanding General has, doubtless, the Counterpart. Nevertheless it is all important, and I am sure you will cherish the Sentiment, that the utmost harmony should prevail; and indeed it is equally honourable to both branches of the service, that wherever they have been combined, the harmony and emulation, that have prevailed, are without example. The Detachment of Marines you will also consider as attached to your command, and subject to your order.

As it is important that the command of the Flotilla would be kept distinct and entire, should a superior Officer appear on the Station, he is not to interfere with your special command, for which you are held directly responsible to this Department. I am, Sir, respectfully, Your Obedient Servant,

W. Jones.

MASTER COMMANDANT DANIEL T. PATTERSON TO  
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

New Orleans Novr. 22d 1813

Sir,

I do myself the honour to acknowledge the receipt by yesterday's mail of the Triplicates of your instructions to me of the 18th. and 19th. ult. investing me with the Command of the United States naval forces on this Station, and permit me to repeat that I Sensibly feel this flattering mark of Confidence which the President of the United States and yourself have honoured me with, and that my utmost exertion Shall be used to fulfill every expectation you may have Kindly formed from it, and I feel highly gratified to find my Command responsible only to the navy Department.

Commodore Shaw not having yet returned to this City the transfer of Command has Consequently not taken place but having forwarded to him by two Several Conveyances Copies of your letter to him, as transmitted me, I expect him almost hourly, as soon as in Command you may rely upon receiving from me every information, you have required, and Such other as I may find necessary.

I beg leave at present to remark only on that part of your letter, relative to Substituting large Galleys in place of Such Gun Boats, as may require material repairs, the Species of Galley or Barge as Stated by you, would be the most efficient kind of force for our Shoal Waters, would be formidable and of infinite Service, with Such Boats, the piratical depredations on the Commerce of this place might be destroyed, their Hounts [*Haunts*] on our Western Coast discovered and the Band Broken up, As we could then with a Strong force follow them into their harbours of Shoals. They have now arrived at such a pitch of insolence and Confidence from numbers as to Set the revenue laws and force at defiance, and Should they not be Soon destroyed, it will be extremely hazardous for an unarmed vessel even American to approach this Coast. they have even dared to rescue property which had been Seized by the Officers of the Customs in the river Mississippi; the property Smuggled by them into this place is immense, the honest merchant Cannot obtain a livelihood, by his Sales while those robbers roll in riches piratically captured on the high Seas and brought and Sold in face of day in this place in violation and defiance of all our revenue laws this evil which is I feel of great magnitude, I am extremely desirous of Correcting and the force you Speak of is peculiarly well adapted for Such Service and for defence, these could here be built and put in the water Complete except Sails, and armament, for \$2400. in a Short time, and the Timber of this Country is remarkably good. By the monthly return of the navy Agent, you will perceive that we have no Carronades on this Station of any description; but on the Subject of Supply, I Shall as Soon as possible make you a particular Statement. I have the honour to be with much respect Sir, Your most Obedt. Servt.

Dan<sup>l</sup> T. Patterson

## A Petition for Promotion

*If a naval officer had a grievance concerning rank, his only course of redress was to write a letter to the Navy Department laying the merits of his case before the secretary. Sometimes these letters carried the endorsement of the aggrieved officer's superior. More often than not, such attempts to solicit promotion failed. What is singular about Lieutenant Daniel S. Dexter's petition for promotion is that it was addressed to the U.S. Senate. Dexter must have chosen this route for his memorial because he had something most officers did not—politically influential friends. It is not known whether Dexter's memorial was ever laid before the Senate. Perhaps it was suppressed on the advice of his supporters, Senator James Brown and Congressman Thomas B. Robertson, both representatives of Louisiana. Nevertheless, Lieutenant Dexter's wish for promotion was finally gratified thirteen months later when he was commissioned a master commandant on 20 December 1814.*

LIEUTENANT DANIEL S. DEXTER TO SENATOR JAMES BROWN

New Orleans, 14th November, 1813.

Sir,

I should, long since, have done myself the honor of writing to you, had not a severe and lingering illness prevented me; and I now beg you will consider the cause of my past silence an excuse for it.

Capt. Patterson has politely favoured me with a sight of that part of your letter to him which mentions the interest and exertions you were so good as to use in behalf of my promotion;<sup>1</sup> and I have the pleasure of informing you that I hope soon to enjoy the gratification of making you my acknowledgements personally for your friendly attention; as I have just received the Secretary's permission<sup>2</sup> to return to the Atlantic States with all convenient speed.;—I shall accordingly Leave this for head quarters, and soon as my state of health which is yet delicate, will permit.

I have it in contemplation to forward by next mail a Memorial to the Senate relative to my advancement; but, as you have already with such obliging promptitude espoused my cause, and are best acquainted with the dispositions and intentions of Government, I shall take the liberty of inclosing it in a letter to yourself, and request you will decide on the propriety of presenting it. In the meantime, dear Sir, permit me to hope, should any further promotions be brought on the Carpet this winter, that the services you have so kindly proffered will be continued in my favour.

We have no news here.— Considerable activity prevails in preparation, but no actual service is going on, either Naval or Military. With sentiments of the highest respect and esteem I have the honor to be, Dr. Sir, Your Obt. Servt.

(Signed) Dan<sup>l</sup> S Dexter

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, Daniel Dexter Letter Book, pp. 92–93. In Dexter's hand.

1. See p. 208.

2. Dexter was ordered to report to the department on 18 October. See Jones to Dexter, 18 Oct. 1813, DNA, RG45, Letters Sent Conveying Appointments and Orders and Accepting Resignations, No. 11, p. 69.

LIEUTENANT DANIEL S. DEXTER TO SENATOR JAMES BROWN

New Orleans, 29th Novr. 1813.

Dear Sir,

Inclosed is the Memorial I mentioned to you in my last letter.— I am not aware that it contains any thing which might militate against my chance of speedy promotion, nor am I certain that it will operate in favour of it; I have therefore to request you will be so good as to peruse and determine on its merits and the effects it will probably produce; which your being present and perfectly acquainted with the disposition of the Senate, will enable you to do with a degree of correctness and precision which my absence and want of Knowledge prevents me from doing; and acceding to your own opinion on the subject, either present or repress the Memorial.

I anticipate the pleasure of seeing you in Washington in about a month, as I have taken passage in a schooner that sails for Baltimore next Sunday. I have been induced to adopt this mode of proceeding to the North by the advice of my friends, and the assurance of Dr. Heerman that my low state of health would not allow me to undertake the journey by land in less than two or three months, without danger of a relapse. As I shall so soon be with you, I could wish, should no existing circumstances make it necessary to present the Memorial immediately, that you would retain it till my arrival; of this, however, you will be the best judge.

Capt. Patterson has also forwarded a Memorial on the same subject; I believe, under cover to the Secretary of the Navy.— We have nothing new here worth mentioning. With much Respect, I have the honor to be, Sir, Your Obt. Servt.

(Signed) Dan<sup>l</sup> S. Dexter

Honorable James Brown,  
Senator, City of Washington.

LB Copy, DNA, RG45, Daniel Dexter Letter Book, pp. 94–95. In Dexter's hand.

LIEUTENANT DANIEL S. DEXTER TO U.S. SENATE

To the Honorable the Senate of the U. States of America in Congress Assembled  
Danl. S. Dexter, of Providence R.I. a Lieutenant in the Navy, most respectfully presents this memorial to the Senate of the U. States, conceiving himself entitled to a Rank superior to the one he now holds in the naval service, & that he feels himself injured & agrieved in having with held from him rights which he considers his due, in as much as other Officers his juniors in service have been promoted over him possessing no greater claims than himself to such reward

He appeals therefore to yr. honorable body as forming an integrel part of this Source from whence promotion flows & begs leave to narrate the Services in which he has been engaged that you may the better judge of the justice of his claims, and apply to them the relief your wisdom & liberality may think they deserve & which your high attributes under the Constitution enable you to give—

Yr. Memorialist respectfully represents that he entered the ~~Naval~~ Service as a Midsn. in Apl. 1800, & in June joined the Frigate *Geo Washington*, Lt. Jacobs Comde. at N. Port. R.I. and proceeded to Philaa. where Capn. Wm. Bainbridge

assumed the comd. & from whence she sailed for the Mediteranean early in Augt. that he continued in this capacity to serve onboard of different Vessels & under different Commanders Generally on the Mediterranean Station until Sepr. 1804 when he was promoted to an acting Lieutenancy by the late Comde. Prebble, with whom he was during all the attacks made on Tripoli & continued with him until Comde. Saml. Barron took command of the Squadron— ~~when~~ & Cap. Decatur that of the *Constitution* With Capn. Decatur yr Memorialist continued to act as a Lt. and was transferred with him when he assumed the command of the *Congress* Frigate, and continued on board that ship in the same capacity until her return to the U States in Novr. 1805—

In Jan'y 1806 your Memorialist was orderd by Comde. Prebble to Portland, to superintend the building of the Bomb Ketch *Etna*, whence he was shortly after orderd by the Hon. Secy. of the Navy to Newberry Port to direct the building of Gun boat *No. 12*—& where he remaind until she was equipt for sea, when he was orderd by the navy Department to take command of her & proceed for New Orleans under the Command of Lt. Jones & when he arrivd in Novr. 1806—

Your Memorialist has remaind on this unhealthy station ever since, generally in comd. of a Division of G.B. in the Mississippi, on the coast of Florida & on the waters of Mobile—

Your Memorialist was not commissioned as a lieut. until Feby. 1807 altho he distinctly understood that Comde. Prebble was authorized to confer that rank & from the year 1804 he was always addressd by that title from the N Dept.—

In Octr. 1811 yr Memorialist took command of the late US Brig *Viper* & was employd in her Cruizing off the Coast about six months when Lt. J. D. Henley, as a senior officer, applied for her & she was given up to his comd.— He then re-assumed the command of the Gun Vessels in which service he remained until after the declaration of war when in Novr. 1812 he was orderd to take charge of the ship of war *Louisiana* & in which command he still continues—

Thus has yr Memorialist ~~served~~ for thirteen years served in the navy of his country with activity and without intermission & with the proud conciousness of ever enjoying the confidence of his different commanders and of being as servicable to the Republic as the limited situation in which he acted would allow, yet have his services been overlookd, or forgotten & his claims to promotion denied or neglected while others his juniors have been promoted & rewarded whose pretensions are certainly not fairer than his own—

This exclusion from his rank, this forgetfulness of his rights, Yr Memorialist has felt to be a amortifying and greivous wrong—equally derogatory to his character as destructive to his honor as an Officer, for it cannot but strike yr honorable body as a tacit avowal of ~~my~~ his inability to fill the office He now claims—

Since the declaration of War yr Memorialist has repeatedly but in vain solicited a recall from this most unpleasant station & requestd more active duty—Upwards of seven years the prime of his life has been consigned in this pestilential clime & what might be termd meritorious in him has been made the ~~reason~~ ~~for~~ plea to justify injustice— He cannot descend to particulars which might seem invidious & unmanly, for while he acknowledges the pretensions of some of his brother Officers, juniors to himself, to the thanks & highest rewards of his country Yet there are others who have not surpassed him in devotedness to his duty & with whom he would not blush to be compared were their brightest actions to be contrasted with his own—

Under these circumstances & considerations yr Memorialist most respectfully presents a view of his Grievances to yr Honble. body, He would also suggest that regular promotions, unless obviated by brilliant actions terminating in the honor & Glory of our Common Country & which yr Memorialist could never for one moment think of objecting to He humbly conceives to be the Officers right, as it is his hope, tis the spring that gives activity to his valor & inspiration to his ability, it soothes him when enviroind by difficulties & danger & consoles him when separated from his Kindred & his Country Rob him of this expectd boon & you rob him of hope;— the sources of emulation are dried up and the proud Chaplet with which fancy had encircled his brow, when Merit & Services brought reward fades in uncertain perspective beneath the Chilling influence of favoritism and neglect

Your memorialist hesitated long, before he resolved on addressing yr H—body, but the goading remembrance of unrequited service, the humiliating & almost daily examples of junior officers being placed over him, added to protracted hopes & the ill Success attending reiterated applications for recall from a disagreeable & distant station, at last compelld him to claim yr interposition in his behalf an interposition that he cannot doubt will be accorded in such amanner as to advance him, to that rank he feels so justly his due— And etc.—

AD, DNA, RG45, AF8 (M625, Roll No. 200). Memorial is dated 29 November 1813 in a hand other than Dexter's.

LIEUTENANT DANIEL S. DEXTER TO CONGRESSMAN THOMAS B. ROBERTSON

New Orleans, 29th November 1813.

Dear Sir,

Long and severe illness has deprived me of the pleasure of writing to you for some months past, and even now, I cannot boast of good health; but my recovery has been and will continue to be greatly accelerated by the pleasing idea of shortly enjoying a personal interview with my friend in the City of Washington, as I have just received an order of recall from this station, and engaged in a Schooner that sails for Baltimore in four days. Dr. Heerman's advice and assurance that it would be a long time ere my health would warrant attempting the journey by land, has induced me to adopt this mode of returning.

I have written to Mr. Brown, of the Senate, inclosing a Memorial relative the unjust delay in my promotion, and requested him to determine on the expediency of presenting or repressing it. As a friend in whose judgment and good wishes towards me, I have all confidence, I could wish that you would advise with Mr. Brown on the subject, should it be agreeable to both.

We have no news here. In about a month I hope to be with you. Till then adieu. With much Respect & esteem, Your friend & Servt.

(Signed) Dan<sup>l</sup> S Dexter

Hon Thos. B. Robinson<sup>1</sup>  
City of Washington.

1.B Copy, DNA, RG45, Daniel Dexter Letter Book, pp. 93-94. In Dexter's hand.

1. Dexter meant Robertson.

## New Orleans at Year's End

*At year's end, the situation on the New Orleans Station had not measurably improved from that of the preceding summer. While a new ship, the bomb brig Etna, had been added to the station's force, two others, Gunboat No. 65 and Louisiana, were temporarily out of service. What was particularly mortifying to Master Commandant Daniel T. Patterson, the new commander at New Orleans, was that he had no ships strong enough to challenge any of the British vessels hovering off the Gulf Coast. As had his predecessor, Captain John Shaw, Patterson pleaded with Secretary Jones to provide the New Orleans Station with enough officers, men, and craft to contest the enemy effectively.*

MASTER COMMANDANT DANIEL T. PATTERSON TO  
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

New Orleans 7th. December 1813.

Sir,

I have forborne touching on the various points of your letter of instructions of the 18th Octr. till the transfer of the command should have taken place; but the unexpected and protracted absence of Comr. Shaw, from this place renders it a duty I owe to the station to, remark on one or two points, 1st. as it respects the number, force & State of the Vessels on this station, I have the honor to inform you that, there are at this moment in commission only 11 vessels of every description, viz: One Ship (*Louisiana*) one Brig (*Bomb Etna*), Six Gun Boats & their dispatch Vessels or Tenders.—

The *Louisiana* has heretofore mounted 14 long 24 pdr. on her Gun Deck, six 12 pd. Carronades on her Qr. deck, & two long 12s. on her Forecastle, but her main deck battery is now changing by an order of Comdr. Shaw's dated in Octr. last, to 10-9s & 6 12s long guns; which will make her a much more Formidable Vessel, & enable her to cross the Bar, as she is fully capable of bearing that armament with safety; the other Guns it would have been impossible to fight to advantage, nor would her Frame have been able to support many discharges. she will be ready to proceed on Service in a few days except her crew, which is very much reduced from the sickness last season, the Bomb Brig *Etna* mounts 6-6s. 2-8s. two breech Brass Howitzers, is ready for service, except a crew, but will drop down the River as low as Fort St. Philips in a day or two, she has on board 50 Souls.— Gun Boats *nos 156 & 162* mount each a long 18 pr. and four carronades 12s & 18's. *nos 163* one long 24, & four sixes *no 5* one long 24 & 4-6's *no 23* one long 32. & 4 sixes and are on duty with full crews, *No. 65* mounts one long 24 & 4-6's [ordered?] a few days ago by the comdr. for repairs, but upon enquiry I find she will require so material a repair, that I shall lay her up: the crew's time having expired will be paid off— the dispatch vessels are two of them armed with 4 prs. and all with muskets.

This force you will perceive Sir, is inadequate to the defence of such a great extent of coast as requires defending, independently of annoying the enemy, which is extremely desirable, [?] permit me to suggest the great advantage two fast schooners [that?] could mount 12. to 16. 18 pd. carronades with long Gun on a Pivot amidships would be to this station, both for defence & offence, they could

hang on the rear of the Jamaica convoys & cut out of their Fleet, & when occasion required act in squadron with the Ship & Brig; this coast would then require so large a force to maintain a Blockade that the enemy would scarcely be able to spare it for that purpose.— 2nd. Lieut. Dexter having been taken from this station, deprives me of one if not my best officer & leaves not Lieutenants enough to form a court Martial, nor enough to place in such commands as in my opinion requ[uires] a Lieutenant.— There are only three Warranted Masters now in service, & 5 Warranted midshipmen, all others are A[cting] appts. granted by Comdr. Shaw.— With two more Lieuts. & three who are acting on this Station Command.—, three or four Sailing M[asters] 8 or 10 midshipmen, & 150 to 200 Seamen, this Station would be [?] formidable; & I should hope that even then the expences would not exceed 20,000\$ per mo: This number of Officers & men who in the winter cannot be employed on the lakes & now not required much I presume on Lake Erie, could embark at Pittsburgh & be here in a short time; seamen have at all times been extremely difficult to obtain here, & now more so than ever, indeed there are none in this [place?] to be had for any wages— As Mr. Smith Navy Agent is at Washington, he can fully inform you how very requisite 'tis that this station should be reinforced—with active, enterprising, trusty Officers, & a number of Seamen;—& many Changes which it will be highly necessary to make, could more readily be effected, with new Officers; than with only those, who, are now here, by the next mail I hope to be able, to reply satisfactorily to every part of your letter which requires it.—

The enemy have on this coast at this moment three men of War viz: Sloop *Herald* mounting 26 Guns 18-32 pound carronades. 6-18's & two long Guns, with about 150 men, Brig *Forester* mounting 22-32 lb. carronades & 200 men & Brig *Contest* 14 Guns,<sup>1</sup> & I feel truly mortified, that I have no vessel with which to give either of them a meeting, with the ship & Brig I shall watch them closely, & seize the first favorable opportunity that may Offer of bringing them to action, but theirs all sail well ours very indifferently, consequently they can if they wish it, avoid at most times a contest.— but should you coincide with me in opinion, & give me the additional force of Vessels, Officers, & men, I should hope to add another Flag to those already so gloriously won from the foe: & indeed the two latter are indispensably necessary, to support our present force, as they cannot be obtained here.— I have the honour to be Sir with Great Respect Your Obedt. Servant

Dan<sup>1</sup> T. Patterson

ALS, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 185 (M147, Roll No. 5).

1. According to the Admiralty's list of ships in sea pay, both *Forester* and *Contest* were rated sloops, the former mounting 18 guns and the latter 14 guns. See pp. 170, 172.

MASTER COMMANDANT DANIEL T. PATTERSON TO  
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

New Orleans Decr. 13th. 1813

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that Commodore Shaw arrived here on the 7th instant, and on the 10th resigned all Command of the naval forces on this

Station, tho' a regular transfer of Official papers relative thereto, has not yet taken place but will in a day or two.

By the next mail I shall hope to give you full information on every remaining unanswered point of your letter of instructions of the 18th. Octr. On the 6th inst. I had the honour to State to you the number, Force, and Condition of all the vessels under my Command, duplicate of which accompanies this<sup>1</sup>

In consequence of the force of the enemy on this coast (as stated in my last) the Strict Blockade maintained by them; believing that no vessel can depart from this port, without falling into the hands of the enemy, and that none would depart, unless to aid the enemy, by furnishing them Supplies or giving information it has been deemed by the Commanding Genl. and myself necessary to inforce most rigidly the naval General Order of 29th July last that of the war Department of the 5th Augt. and which are Consequently Strictly inforced by the Commanders of the vessels under my Command, with Such vessels, as may be laden with provisions or munitions of war. that it is the intention of the Spaniards to Supply our enemy with provisions & from [this?] place, we have certain intelligence by letter from Pensacola, a [copy?] of which letter Genl. Flournoy forwards by this mail to the war Department, that Spanish vessels for that purpose, with a Pass from the Commander of the Blockading Squadron are to Come to this place and load with Such articles as they may Stand in need of, is I think unquestionable, Should the Spanish Colonies Suffer from the exportation of flour &c. being Stopped from this port, they have only their great ally to blame for it; but while [ ]<sup>2</sup> continues the Same certainties of Such Supplies falling into the hands of our enemy as at present exist. I Should feel myself wanting in duty to my Country, were I permit it to pass, and that you Sir, will Support me in the execution of my duty. However, it may militate against the interest of individuals, I am fully Confident, I have the honour to be Sir, with great respect, Your Obedt. Servt.

Dan<sup>1</sup> T. Patterson

LS, DNA, RG45, MC, 1813, No. 189 (M147, Roll No. 5).

1. Patterson means his letter of 7 December printed above. The duplicate he is referring to has not been found.

2. There is a blank space in the text of Patterson's letter here.

CAPTAIN JOHN SHAW TO MASTER COMMANDANT DANIEL T. PATTERSON

New Orleans December 21st. 1813

Sir

In consequence of arrangements sometime since made, but which was afterwards suspended, the Honorable Secretary of the Navy, has at length been pleased to indulge me in a desire I had previously expressed, of being withdrawn from this Station; and as you have been ordered to the command, it becomes my duty to make to you as my successor, a few observations relating to the strength of the force, now about to be transferred to you, and my opinion of the proper mode of disposing of it, in case of an attack made by a formidable force from the Enemy:—

For information, respecting the public vessels on the station, together with a statement of their force, respectively, I must beg leave to refer you to an accompa-

nying paper, marked A; which contains every thing necessary on that subject. Although it is impossible for me to furnish you with a correct statement of the various articles, at present on board each of them, yet I believe I can assure you of their having at least one hundred rounds of ammunition on board for each gun; of their being well supplied with the necessary Naval stores & equipments; and, upon the whole of their being in excellent order to perform any kind of service.

In taking a view of the nature and extent of the sea-board—its bays, bayaus, &c. I have all along been of opinion, that, if ever, or whenever, an attempt should be made by the Enemy to capture this City, the approach would not be either by way of the Balize or the S.W. Pass; as the rapidity of the current, and other difficulties, arising from its numerous meanderings, must be insuperable objections to those routes. The approach by the way of Lake Barritaria, would, I apprehend, be found equally objectionable; for the narrowness of the Bayaus, and, indeed, their shallowness, as must be apparent, would render almost impossible, the transportation, to this place, of a force adequate to such an object. The Bayau, or river, La Fourche, is however known to be a stream of considerable magnitude & importance,—being navigable for vessels of considerable size. I must give it as my opinion therefore, & strongly recommend it to you, that a vigilant look-out should be constantly kept up on that route; and that a regular express to pass between this City and a Military post which will probably be established on that river, ought to be urgently recommended to the Commanding General, as essentially necessary, during the Winter & Spring months, to the safety of this part of the Country.

The eastern section of this state & the Bay and waters of Mobile, appear to me much more vulnerable to the attack of an invading enemy, than any of the points to the westward of the Balize; for what obstacle is there to oppose the landing of British troops, should an expedition be undertaken for that purpose, at any spot, between Pearl river & the Pasgagola? Were such an attempt to be made on that part of our Coast, the enemy would immediately find himself on terra-firma—would have an open pine-woods-country to march through—would be able to procure beef cattle in abundance, for his support—and, what is more, Sir, he would, in my opinion, obtain pilots with great facility, to conduct him either to Natchez or to Baton Rouge; from either of which places it must be obvious, he would meet with nothing to arrest, either his progress or his ravages, in his descent towards this City—The mouth of the Rigoletts—from thence eastwardly, across Lake Bourne, to the Malheureux Islands—& the pass of chef menteur, will also claim your attention:—Through these passes if not properly guarded, owing to their proximity to this place, an expedition from the enemy, might with great facility, approach New Orleans. I would therefore, recommend, that you, in co-operation with the commanding General, should use the utmost vigilance towards the defence of those positions, during the winter & spring months. During the sickly season of summer & autumn, I imagine that nothing need be apprehended from the enemy; as the unhealthiness of the climate will be their best protection.

The coasting trade between this and Mobile, will, I apprehend, require the particular attention of the Naval Commanding officer. The keeping of our waters, along the Islands, as far as pass Heron, free of the enemy, will probably afford a pretty steady, and a very important exercise, for his utmost vigilance & efforts; while the fort on Mobile point, if made tenable by the Military, and supported by a small Division of Gun Vessels, may prevent the enemy from obtaining possession

of that Bay. The free navigation of that part of our coast, being thus kept open, will afford almost the only practicable means of conveying supplies of provisions, munitions of war &c. to such Military force as may be stationed by our government within the Creek Nation & elsewhere, along our eastern frontier. These Sir, are my views on this particular subject; & which I hope may accord with your own, when turned to them, as I imagine they must soon be.

The only unfinished duty, now in progress, under orders from the Secretary of the Navy, which has to be transferred for your completion, is the building of the Block-ship now on the stocks on the Tchifoncta river, that the advancement of that duty has been as rapid, as the means in my power admitted; and that no exertions on my part, or on the part of any other officer concerned in it, have been spared for bringing it to a speedy & successful termination, must be too well known to yourself to admit of any doubt on the subject. On this subject, therefore, it only remains for me to recommend to you, the continuance of the necessary exertions, in getting her afloat and put in Commission. If well officered and manned, she will form a battery for any point where she may be required, on which reliance may be confidently placed in time of danger.

I transfer to you, herewith, marked B, a list of the names & respective grades of the officers attached to this station:— Your personal knowledge of them all renders it unnecessary for me to make any other particular mention of them to you by name; yet I cannot on this occasion, refrain from expressing the high sense I entertain of their unremitting attention, in general, to duty, & their strict observance of orders, since I have had of the honor to command of this station. I am also much indebted to the medical Gentlemen, for their humane & skilful attention to the sick under their charge; more especially, during the rage of the most malignant diseases among our men. On these occasions, no complaint has been made, nor any desire expressed by them, to withdraw from the posts assigned them, notwithstanding the perilous situations in which they were placed. The consideration of these circumstances, induces me to express for those gentlemen, sentiments of the highest respect & esteem.

The general state of the magazine—the cannon powder on hand—the number of cannon—sea-mortars—cannon-shot, shells &c. are so well known to yourself, that I should consider it useless and unnecessary, to make any return of, or particular observations respecting them, to you: The same may be observed, with regard to the state of the Navy-store, and the various Naval supplies which it contains.

Accompanying this I hand over to you the following official letters, from the Navy-Department, which you will find numbered from 1, to 8, inclusively: Viz. No. 1, dated February 14th. 1811, authorizing the appointment of sailing Masters &c.: No. 2, dated August 28th. 1811, directing the appointment of Midshipmen: No. 3, dated 20th. June, 1812, which mentions an arrangement between the War & Navy-Departments, respecting a mutual interchange of munitions of war &c. &c. and directing a conformity therewith: No. 4, dated 26th. August, 1812, communicating the appointment of John Mitchell esquire, and the fixing of his residence a Halifax, as agent for Prisoners; & containing orders relating thereto: No. 5, dated September, 1812, authorizing the procuring of two Block-ships, in case of indispensable necessity; & enjoining economy: No. 6, dated 28th October 1812, which authorizes the convening of Courts Martial: No. 7th. dated the 1st. March 1813, communicating the determination of that Department, of the amount of force allowed to this station, and containing orders arising out of that subject: and No. 8 dated March 30th. 1813, accompanying

twenty blank certificates to be furnished to disabled & wounded persons in service, and containing directions for filling them up.

I also transfer to you a letter from the Navy-Department, which I have marked (C) together with the copy of the signals, transmitted with it, to be observed between our public & private armed vessels; which latter you will perceive to be strictly confidential.

I have requested the Honorable secretary of the Navy to permit the Block-ship building on the Tchifoncta, to be coppered, if it were but up to her first ribbands; and I beg leave to recommend it to you to make a similar application. I have urged its necessity on the ground of the probable difficulty and indeed the almost impossibility (owing to her extremely flat form) there will be of heaving her out for the purpose of paying her bottom, after she shall have been once launched, in order to secure her against the destruction of the insects so prevalent in these waters.

I have often represented to the honorable secretary of the Navy, the extensive practice of smuggling kept up on this coast, and especially to the Westward of the Balize; and the insufficiency of the Naval force on this station to effectually arrest its progress. The same subject will no doubt, necessarily employ no small portion of your attention—as will also the subject of a rigid economy, so justly and strongly urged by our government.

Before closing this communication I must beg to be permitted, sir, to tender to you individually, my most sincere thanks, for the very able & important support which you have afforded me in the execution of the various duties, appertaining to the command of the station, since I have been honored with it; and to assure you, that while I cordially congratulate you on your appointment, as my successor to the command, I am truly mortified, at its not being in my power to turn over to you such a naval force (I speak of the vessels) as if called into action would be productive of honor to our country and tars which you will have the honor to command Sir, I have the honor to be very respectfully your most obt servt.

John Shaw

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1813, Vol. 8, No. 94 (M125, Roll No. 33).

MASTER COMMANDANT DANIEL T. PATTERSON TO  
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY JONES

New Orleans 27th December 1813

Sir,

In my last dated the 13th inst, I had the honor to inform you of Commodore Shaw's having transferred the Command of this Station to me; since then Viz: on the 21st inst he transferred all the public letters from the Navy Department relative to the Station.

In a few days I shall visit the Block Ship Building on the Tchifuncte, when I will make A particular report to you of her State, progress, the probable length of time yet required to finish her; and the extent of her cost &c., After which I shall proceed to Mobile Bay, visit every Vessell under my Command, with the Purser of

the Station; muster their crews, and make to the Department a correct return thereof, in the manner prescribed by your instructions of the 18th. of Octr.—

Enclosed I have the honor to transmit a list<sup>1</sup> of such articles, with the quantities of each, as are required for the ensuing year; and which cannot be obtained here, except at the most extravagant prices, and many not at all; I have inserted yarns, instead of ready made Cordage as it can be made here, on as good terms, and of better quality, and Sizes; than in the Western States, the last parcel Sent from Tennessee is indifferent in quality and nearly useless in size, except it may be applied to the Block Ship.—

The carronades may become extremely servicable, on this Station, from the enemy's Vessels using that Species of Gun; and as we can then be on a more equal footing with them; when fortunate enough to be able to encounter them.—

The Ship muskets, on this Station are of a very bad quality, and require continual repairs; nor are there more than Sufficient for the few Vessels at present in Commission; that can be rendered fit for Service. the Pistols are too much worn to be put in Such order as to be depended on, nor are there sufficient for the Station; all that the Military could possibly spare they [have?] furnished us with. Cutlasses, and Battle Axes, you will perceive by the monthly return of the Navy agent; we are entirely destitute of, of course in want of those articles, these things cannot be obtained here on any terms

Excuse me Sir for repeating my urgent Solicitations, for an increase of Officers, Seamen, and Vessels; I have not now Sufficient to protect efficiently the coasting trade between this and Mobile; and which 'tis highly important to maintain; particularly during the War with the Creek Indians in order to furnish the necessary provisions &c for the army, in that Country as the Capture of any of the Convoys by the enemy, would be a most serious loss to that Army, might compel them to abandon their Conquest and would at the Same time greatly relieve the latter; the approaches to this City too; by Water are so numerous, that they require many Vessels and Vigilant Officers; to guard them effectually:— The Ship *Louisiana* will be in readiness to drop down the River in a few days, except the want of Seamen, & where or how to obtain them, I Know not; for there are none in this City; had I Seamen for her the *Herald* Should be mine.

By letters from Jamaica it appears the enemy are there fitting out a number of Gun Brigs &c of light draft of water, supposed for an expedition against this Country; Should they come, what can be effected with the force under my command Shall be I can only express my regret that 'tis not greater, or Such as to afford a reasonable prospect of Success.— I have the Honor to be Sir with great respect yr Obt. Sev't.

Dan<sup>l</sup> T. Patterson

ALS, DNA, RG45, MC, 1814, Vol. 2, No. 105 (M147, Roll No. 5).

1. Enclosure not found.

## Chapter Five

### The Pacific Theater: January–December 1813

*Writing from Constitution on 13 October 1812, Commodore William Bainbridge informed Captain David Porter that Constitution would set sail within two weeks on a commerce-raiding cruise that would pass the Cape Verde Islands and then shape a course for the island of Fernando de Noronha in the south central Atlantic. From there, he intended to head south, searching for British prizes along the coast of Brazil as far as the island of "St. Catherine's" (Santa Catarina), with a final destination of St. Helena where he would try to intercept merchant ships returning from India. Bainbridge hoped Essex would be able to join him at the Cape Verde Islands or at one of the other locations no later than 1 April 1813. Should this be impossible, he allowed Porter complete discretion to act "for the good of the service." When Essex finally sailed from the Delaware River in late October, Porter steered for the south Atlantic, expecting to meet Bainbridge at Fernando de Noronha. He arrived one day before Bainbridge's planned arrival date, but there was no sign of the commodore. Constitution and Hornet had already passed by, leaving a letter for Porter with orders for a new rendezvous off Cape Frio, about 60 miles north of Rio de Janeiro. Porter again arrived at the designated place on the appointed day, but Bainbridge had been detained at Bahia (Salvador) where he and Master Commandant James Lawrence, in Hornet, were blockading H.M. sloop of war Bonne Citoyenne. Porter remained in the vicinity of Cape Frio until 13 January 1813. He sailed for Santa Catarina off southern Brazil and waited again for Bainbridge, but the commodore by this time had defeated H.M.S. Java and was en route to the United States. Having missed rendezvous a third time, Porter implemented the discretionary part of his orders. On 26 January, he set sail for the Pacific and an extraordinary naval adventure.*

*Several years earlier, Porter had dreamed of a voyage of discovery in the Pacific. He wrote a lengthy letter to Secretary Hamilton proposing an elaborate navigational plan for the acquisition of new territory for the United States and the exploration of uncharted coasts. Hamilton did not endorse the idea. In setting sail for Cape Horn, Porter combined his yearning for Pacific exploration with his cruising orders and carried the war against Britain into a new theater. There was much that could be done, against little serious opposition, until word reached London that an American frigate was at large in a British sphere of influence along the western coast of South America.*

*The Spanish colonies of South America were in rebellion against the Napoleonic regime in Spain which had been invaded and occupied by French armies in 1807.*