

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

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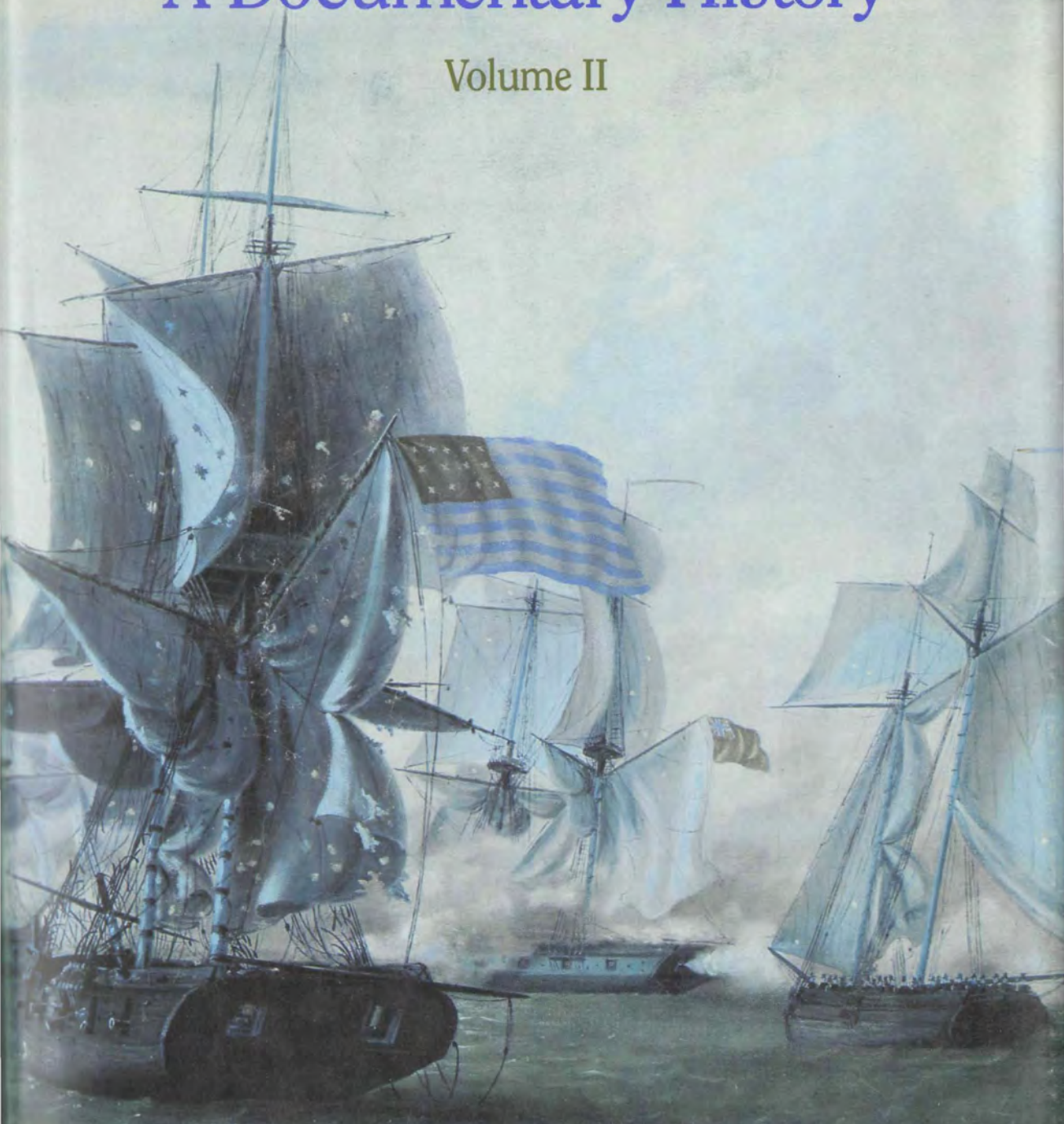
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# The Naval War of 1812

## ❧ A Documentary History ❧

Volume II



Edited by William S. Dudley



THE NAVAL WAR OF 1812

*A Documentary History*





*Perry's Victory on Lake Erie.*

# THE NAVAL WAR OF 1812

## *A Documentary History*

### Volume II 1813

WILLIAM S. DUDLEY  
Editor

CHRISTINE F. HUGHES  
TAMARA MOSER MELIA  
Associate Editors

CHARLES E. BRODINE, JR.      CAROLYN M. STALLINGS  
Assistant Editors

With a Foreword by  
DEAN C. ALLARD  
Director of Naval History

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## Foreword

In the first volume of *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, published in 1985, the reader was provided a summary view of American naval history from 1775 to 1805, a selection of documents representing the events that led to war, followed by a theater-by-theater grouping of some 300 naval documents describing the course of major and minor events that occurred during the first six months of the war.

For the small United States Navy, numbering sixteen ships in readiness at the start of the conflict, these early months were encouraging. American frigate commanders outfought several worthy British opponents on the high seas. These American naval victories had the important intangible effect of raising the morale of the American people and government after a series of military reverses on the Canadian frontier. The Royal Navy was much more powerful as a whole, and even the force initially on station in North America was measurably larger in resources than the American squadrons. Despite this, the Royal Navy was initially unable to blockade the U.S. Navy. For the later months of 1812 and the early part of 1813, this situation held. Gradually, however, the British naval and military reinforcements sent to Halifax and Quebec would change the fortunes of war in North America.

In the present volume, over 500 documents vividly relate the second campaign of the War of 1812 as it affected the U.S. Navy. The war at sea in 1813 brought unexpected disappointment as well as elation to those accustomed to the great celebrations of the previous year. Thus the sloop of war *Hornet's* victory over H.M.S. *Peacock* in February 1813 brought James Lawrence into the fold of heroes; yet only three months later Lawrence died following the *Shannon-Chesapeake* action. The frigate *Constellation*, Captain Charles Stewart, was unable to break out through the British blockade of the Chesapeake Bay, and the ship remained at Norfolk for the duration of the war. Commodore Stephen Decatur's squadron composed of the frigates *United States*, *Macedonian*, and the sloop *Hornet* likewise failed to break through the blockade of Long Island Sound.

On the eastern Great Lakes, the naval picture was different. Commodore Isaac Chauncey pressed with great energy to establish naval shipbuilding programs on Lakes Ontario and Erie during the winter and spring of 1813. This policy paid dividends, for it enabled the squadrons under Chauncey's command on Lake Ontario and under Master Commandant Oliver Hazard Perry on Lake Erie to seize the initiative and allowed American military commanders to bring their troops into the field. Chauncey's combined attacks on York and Fort George and Perry's victory on Lake Erie put the enemy into retreat in Canada. The military prospects for the United States improved greatly due to these applications of landlocked sea power.

As these events grasped the public imagination, American sailors were busy in other theaters as well. Captain David Porter's frigate *Essex*, sailing independently, rounded Cape Horn and entered the Pacific. Porter devastated British whaling fleets off the western coast of South America. Before the year was out, British warships were cruising Pacific waters to hunt him down.



On the Gulf Coast, an area given little thought by Madisonian strategists, naval and military commanders struggled to prepare for whatever the war might bring. The Creek War smoldered and flared up in Alabama; American military forces under Major General James Wilkinson captured Mobile from the Spanish; and Captain John Shaw, commanding the New Orleans Station, repeatedly warned Washington of the vulnerability of the Mississippi delta. Just as frequently, the navy secretary scolded Shaw for spending too much money on defensive measures. Shaw's nightmares came to life only one year later, as the British targeted New Orleans for a major amphibious assault.

On Chesapeake Bay, another segment of the American population learned only too well what war could bring. British amphibious attacks laid waste the coastal areas of the Chesapeake in Virginia and Maryland. Regular American army forces were virtually nonexistent, naval forces were too slender to oppose their ably led enemy, and the Virginia and Maryland militias had limited effectiveness. Under Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren and Rear Admiral George Cockburn, the British had their way in the Chesapeake during the spring and summer of 1813. The events of 1813, if read correctly, foretold of more and worse to come in the next campaign season.

The second year of the war brought a great challenge to the United States. The nation that declared war in 1812 began to taste its bitter fruit in 1813. The United States Navy learned more about its strengths and weaknesses in this more difficult phase. The strengthening enemy blockade, the lack of American ships of the line, the drain of warfare on at least two fronts, and inadequate preparations for war by the Jefferson and Madison administrations limited the U.S. Navy's capabilities in the face of superior force. It is difficult to build a navy during a war. But it may be built beforehand, thus delaying or even deterring armed conflict. Perhaps the most important lesson drawn from the second year of the war was the need for preparedness—in order for the United States to conduct a war at sea successfully, its navy must have adequate manpower, training, equipment, and ships.

As in our first volume, we particularly hope that this work will attract a wide and varied audience. The general reader, the earnest student, the professional scholar, and the serving officer can all use this book with interest and profit. We hope, as well, that the documents presented in this series will stimulate a better understanding of the historical lessons of sea power for the United States.

I wish to express gratitude to Dr. William S. Dudley, senior historian and previously head of the Early History Branch, for the dedicated leadership and professional skill that he has devoted to the War of 1812 series since 1978. The present volume's preface identifies many additional historians, editors, librarians, archivists, and officials who supported and shaped this work. Among them I especially thank Rear Admiral John D. H. Kane, Jr., the former director of naval history, who initiated the project thirteen years ago; and Christine F. Hughes, Carolyn M. Stallings, and Charles E. Brodine, Jr., the able editorial staff of this volume. It is obvious that *The Naval War of 1812* results from the combined talents and interests of many people. It also reflects the longstanding faith of the United States Navy in the value of historical understanding for the well-being of the American naval service and for the nation as a whole.

DEAN C. ALLARD  
Director of Naval History

## Preface

This is the second volume of three in a documentary series on the history of the United States Navy in the War of 1812. It contains documents that reflect the substance of maritime warfare between the United States and Great Britain from 1812 to 1815. We have drawn heavily on naval records held by the National Archives and Records Administration. To these we have added others reflecting a variety of viewpoints: the plans and reports of British naval and army officers who engaged our forces, newspaper columns of the day, statements of civilian officials who were charged with direction of the war, and the papers of private citizens who chose to go to war for personal profit though at great risk. To guide the reader in the use of these documents and as a unifying medium, brief essays and headnotes are provided.

The historical materials are arranged chronologically by topics within theaters of operations. Each theater is preceded by an introductory essay that provides a context for the documents that follow. We have expanded the number of theaters treated in the first volume. To the Atlantic, Northern Lakes, and Gulf Coast theaters, we have added ones for the Chesapeake Bay and the Pacific, reflecting the drift and expansion of war as determined by the main participants. The documents contained in this volume will cover the period from January through December 1813. This arrangement is logical because it best illustrates the tempo of warfare during a time when the change of seasons and sudden changes of weather persuaded combatants to slow or halt operations to avoid the increased risks of catastrophe that frequent storms, freezing temperatures, and excessively muddy roads would bring. The final volume of this series will deal with the events of 1814–15.

This documentary history is more than a recounting of battles from eyewitness reports. Many documentary works have dealt with the War of 1812, but none is currently in print and very few have focused solely on naval affairs as this series does. The objective of this work is to display the underpinnings of the U.S. Navy during the war. In this way, we hope to explain its successes and failures at a formative period in its institutional history. While battles are the stuff of war and cannot be ignored, this volume also attempts to explain through documents the concerns of policy makers as well as commanding officers, of ordinary sailors and marines, and of common citizens who had opinions about the course of the war. It is hoped that the documents in this volume will provide glimpses of the U.S. Navy long forgotten or perhaps unknown to a majority of its readers. Specialists will be familiar with much of the material, but its variety should stimulate research in new directions.

This documentary project has been underway since 1978 and has involved the efforts of many dedicated individuals working within and outside of the Naval Historical Center. A former director of naval history, Rear Admiral John D. H. Kane, Jr., made the decision for the Historical Research Branch to commence the project in keeping with the wishes of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who had urged an earlier director, Captain Dudley W. Knox, to print the naval manuscripts of the War of 1812. The first volume of these documents was



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in distribution when Dr. Ronald Spector became director of naval history. His support of the project was constant and appreciative. Dr. Dean C. Allard, the present director, has enthusiastically urged completion of these and other documentary projects. Dr. William J. Morgan, senior historian emeritus of the Naval Historical Center, has lent his wisdom and experience from years as editor of *Naval Documents of the American Revolution* in offering welcome advice to a younger project.

Since the publication of Volume I, several staff members who gave invaluable assistance toward the editing of Volume II have transferred to other branches of the Naval Historical Center or have gone on to other walks of life. Nonetheless, they helped assemble our documentary base extending into 1815, established the professional editorial practices that the Early History staff follows today, and set our standards through publication of the first volume of this series. These include Dr. Tamara Moser Melia, the first associate editor of Volume II, and assistant editors Lieutenant Donna Geiger Nelson, Dr. Michael A. Palmer, Lieutenant Marycarol Hennessy, and Joye Leonhart Durant. Of the present Early History Branch staff, I am most indebted to our superb War of 1812 editorial team, led by associate editor Christine F. Hughes, and aided by assistant editors Carolyn M. Stallings and Charles E. Brodine, Jr. These are the individuals whom I guided in the selection, transcription, annotation, and writing of headnotes for the documents printed in this volume. They also shared the arduous task of copy editing before final submission to the printer, correcting galleys and page proofs, selecting illustrations, and indexing the volume. Dr. Michael J. Crawford, head of the Early History Branch, and staff historian E. Gordon Bowen-Hassell contributed their expert knowledge of early American naval history and offered their assistance whenever it was needed. Charlotte Marie Knowles, the branch secretary, quietly and patiently took care of many details essential to the smooth running of the office during this demanding period. As usual in publishing a book such as this, many Naval Historical Center employees were called upon for assistance. To Stanley Kalkus, librarian of the navy, John Vajda, director of the Navy Department Library, and others on the library staff, we are indebted for efficient service and willing cooperation with the many requests made for obscure works, difficult citations, and liaison with the Library of Congress. Charles Haberlein, Agnes Hoover, and Edwin C. Finney, Jr., of the Curator Branch's Photographic Section provided advice and information concerning the many possibilities for illustrating the volume. The staff members of Bernard Cavalcante's Operational Archives Branch assisted by making available the biographical data in their Early Naval Records Collection ("ZB" Files).

Many archival institutions and libraries provided us with information and copies of documents and illustrations from their repositories. Most notably included in this category are the Military Reference Branch of the National Archives whose naval specialists, Richard Von Doenhoff and Barry Zerby, were most helpful in the search for obscure documents and in expediting their availability for proofreading. The Library of Congress, the National Archives of Canada, the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, the National Library of Scotland, the Public Record Office in London, and the National Maritime Museum of Greenwich, England, are repositories of large collections of naval documents that we frequently consulted. Of special assistance to us was Mary Z. Pain of London, whose unparalleled knowledge of holdings and painstaking research provided documentation available nowhere else. As with all documents obtained

from the Public Record Office, unpublished Crown Copyright materials are reproduced in this volume with the permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Other helpful institutions included: the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, the Chicago Historical Society, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, Michigan, the Essex Institute and Peabody Museum of Salem, Massachusetts, the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, the Maryland Historical Society, the New York Historical Society, the New York Public Library, the Rhode Island Historical Society, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and libraries at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of South Carolina. The United States Naval Academy Museum provided us with assistance and access to their collections, as did the Special Collections Division of the Nimitz Library at the Naval Academy. Other individuals who deserve mention here are William Clipson of Annapolis, Maryland, who provided us an excellent set of specially drawn maps for illustrations; Emily Cain of the *Hamilton-Scourge* Project in Hamilton, Ontario, for advice based on her research on the U.S. Navy schooners *Hamilton* and *Scourge*; and Dr. William M. P. Dunne of Hampton Bays, Long Island, New York, researcher and bibliophile extraordinary, for access to his collection of naval documents and books and for generously sharing his wide knowledge of naval history.

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W. S. DUDLEY  
Naval Historical Center  
Washington Navy Yard  
Washington, D.C.



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| "A View of the night action of one hour and 43 minutes between Part of U.<br>States Fleet Under Command of comdr Isaac Chauncey, And the<br>British Fleet Commanded by Sir James L. Yeo, On Lake Ontario the<br>10th of August 1813." Tinted drawing by Acting Midshipman Peter W.<br>Spicer, who served on board U.S. Brig <i>Oneida</i> during this action.<br>(Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C.)                   | Front endsheet |
| "A View of the Running Fight of 3 hours & 40 m., Between The U.S. Fleet<br>Under Command of Comdr Isaac Chauncey and the British Fleet of a<br>Superior Force commanded By Sir James L. Yeo On Lake Ontario,<br>the 11th of September 1813." Tinted drawing by Acting Midshipman<br>Peter W. Spicer, who served on board U.S. Schooner <i>Sylph</i> during<br>this action. (Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C.)         | Back endsheet  |

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## Editorial Method

This documentary series is a selective edition of naval records. The reader familiar with Volume I will notice a change in Volume II's layout. Desiring to provide more documents, the editors have redesigned the page style and used a lighter weight paper—all in the interests of gaining more print per page and more pages in the book. We have also saved space by grouping more documents into themes, thereby writing fewer, but more comprehensive headnotes. The result has been a substantial increase in documents printed.

The editors direct the reader to Volume I for a full explanation of the editorial method. The following are the major changes that have been implemented.

### Source Note

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has microfilmed many of the record groups used in this series. The typical researcher is not permitted to use the original manuscripts except in special cases. NARA allowed us to check our transcriptions against the originals, thus ensuring us the most accurate transcription possible. We have provided in the source note the microfilm designation for the documents as an aid to the researcher. For example, M125 is the microfilm group for captains' letters sent to the secretary of the navy.

We have expanded our symbols for designating copied material to include one for a letter book copy (LB Copy).

### Transcription

We have continued the policy established in Volume I to adhere as closely as possible to the original in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and abbreviation. In order to preserve the author's original writing style, we retained the dashes used in place of periods, commas, and semicolons. We do not abbreviate the complimentary close as was done in Volume I, but in the interest of saving space, have run it at the end of the last paragraph rather than as a separate paragraph.

### Missing and Indecipherable Words

A bracketed question mark indicates illegible or mutilated material.

Unlike Volume I, we no longer add in square brackets the first names of persons mentioned in a document. We consider this to be an unnecessary editorial intrusion. The interested reader is directed to the index for full names.



## Abbreviations Used to Describe Manuscripts

|     |                           |
|-----|---------------------------|
| AD  | Autograph Document        |
| ADS | Autograph Document Signed |
| AL  | Autograph Letter          |
| ALS | Autograph Letter Signed   |
| D   | Document                  |
| DS  | Document Signed           |
| LB  | Letter Book               |
| LS  | Letter Signed             |

## Repository Symbols and Other Abbreviations

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| A&R   | Appointments and Resignations  |
| Adm.  | Admiralty  |
| AF    | Area File  |
| BC    | Letters from Officers of Rank Below that of Commanders Received by the Secretary of the Navy |
| CaOOA | National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario   |
| CGO   | Circulars and General Orders, Navy Department  |
| CL    | Captains' Letters to the Secretary of the Navy   |
| CLS   | Confidential Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy                                       |
| CM    | Records of General Courts-Martial and Courts of Inquiry of the Navy Department               |
| CMC   | Office of the Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps  |
| CNA   | Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy to Commandants of Navy Yards and Navy Agents       |
| CSmH  | Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.  |
| CtY-M | Yale Medical Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.                                      |
| DLC   | Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.  |
| DNA   | National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.                               |
| DNR   | Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C.  |
| InU   | Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind.  |
| MC    | Masters Commandant Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy                             |
| MdAN  | U.S. Naval Academy Museum, Annapolis, Md.  |
| MdHi  | Maryland Historical Society Library, Manuscripts Division, Baltimore, Md.                    |
| MHi   | Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass.  |
| MiU-C | William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.                        |
| MLR   | Miscellaneous Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy                                  |
| MLS   | Miscellaneous Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy                                      |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| NBuHi    | Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, Buffalo, N.Y.                                 |
| Nc-Ar    | North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, N.C.  |
| NcD      | William R. Perkins Library, Special Collections Department, Duke University, Durham, N.C. |
| NCooHi   | New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown, N.Y.                                  |
| NcU      | University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N.C.   |
| NHi      | New-York Historical Society, New York, N.Y.   |
| NHpR     | Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, N.Y.  |
| NN       | New York Public Library, New York, N.Y.   |
| PHi      | Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa.                                     |
| RG       | Record Group  |
| RHi      | Rhode Island Historical Society, Manuscript Collection, Providence, R.I.                  |
| R.N.     | Royal Navy  |
| RNHi     | Newport Historical Society, Newport, R.I.   |
| RPB      | Brown University Library, Providence, R.I.  |
| ScU      | South Carolina Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.                      |
| SNL      | Secretary of the Navy Letters to Officers, Ships of War                                   |
| UKLPR    | Public Record Office, London  |
| U.S.A.   | United States Army  |
| U.S.M.C. | United States Marine Corps  |



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