# The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History

Volume III 1814–1815 Chesapeake Bay, Northern Lakes, and Pacific Ocean Part 7 of 7

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## Index

Certain aspects of the treatment of persons and vessels in this index supplement annotation in the volume.

PERSONS: The rank of military personnel, whenever ascertainable, is the highest rank attained by the individual by the end of 1815. When all references to an individual lie outside that span, the rank is the highest applicable to the person at the time to which the text refers. Vessels that civilians and naval personnel commanded during 1814 and 1815 are noted in parentheses at the end of the person's entry. The abbreviation USFS is used to distinguish those officers who served in the flotilla service and not in the U.S. Navy.

VESSELS: In most cases, vessels are identified according to their use and rig such as *Essex*, US frigate; Industry, American merchant brig; *Earl of Moira*, HM sloop of war—according to the best information available. Since the use and rig of a vessel could vary, nomenclature used to identify vessels refers to the years 1814–15. When all references to the vessel lie outside that year, the nomenclature is that applicable to the vessel at the time to which the text refers. The names of commanders of warships for 1814–15, including privateers but not most gunboats, are noted in parentheses at the end of their vessels' entry. The names of masters of commercial vessels are so listed when they are known.

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## JANUARY 1814-AUGUST 1815

## PACIFIC THEATER

ble in their attentions to them; the two first I beg leave to recommend for confirmation, and the latter to the notice of the Department—

I must in justification of myself observe that if the *Essex* has been lost for want of suitable arrmament I am not to blame; myself & officers applied to Paul Hamilton Esqr. for a greater proportion of long guns, which were refused us, and I now venture to declare, that if she had been armed in the manner I wished, she would not have been taken by the *Phoebe* and *Cherub*— with our six twelve pounders only we faught this action, our carronades were almost useless; what might we not have done had we been permitted to take on board a few long Eighteens?<sup>31</sup>

The loss in killed and wounded has been great with the enemy, among the former is the first Lieut. of the *Phoebe*,<sup>32</sup> and of the latter Captn. Tucker of the *Cherub* whose wounds are severe—Both the *Essex & Phoebe* were in a sinking state, and it was with difficulty they could be kept afloat until they anchored in Valparaiso next morning: The battered state of the *Essex* will I believe prevent her ever reaching England, and I also think it will be out of their power to repair the damages of the *Phoebe* and *Cherub* are badly crippled, and their hulls much cut up, the former had eighteen twelve pound shot through her below her water line, some three feet under water; nothing but the smoothness of the water saved both the *Phoebe* and *Essex*—

I hope sir, that our conduct may prove satisfactory to our country and that it will testify it by obtaining our speedy exchange that we may again have it in our power to prove our zeal—

Commre. Hillyar (I am informed) has thought proper to state to his government that the action lasted only 45 minutes, should he have done so, the motive may be easily discovered, but the thousands of disinterested witnesses who covered the surrounding hills can testify that we faught his ships near two hours and a half; upwards of fifty broadsides were fired by the enemy agreeable to their own accounts, and upwards of seventy five by us; except the few minutes they were repairing damages the firing was incessant—

Soon after my capture I entered into an agreement with Commre. Hillyar to disarm my prize the *Essex Junior*, and proceed with the survivors of my officers and crew in her to the United States taking with me all her officers and crew, he consenting to grant her a passport to secure her from recapture—<sup>33</sup> The ship was small and we knew we had much to suffer yet we hoped soon to reach our country in safety that we might again have it in our power to serve it— This arrangement was attended with no additional expence as she was abundantly supplied with provisions & Stores for the voyage—

In justice to Commre. Hillyar I must observe that (although I can never be reconciled to the manner of his attack on the *Essex* or to his conduct before the action) he has since our capture shewn the greatest humanity to my wounded (whom he permitted me to land on condition that the United States should bear their expences) and has endeavoured as much as lays in his power to alleviate the distresses of war by the most generous and delicate deportment toward myself my officers and crew, he gave orders that the property of every person should be respected, his orders however were not so strictly attended to as might have been expected, besides being deprived of books charts &c &c both myself and Officers lost many articles of our cloathing some to a considerable amount— I should not have considered this last circumstance of sufficient im-

portance to notice, did it not mark a striking difference between the Navy of Great Britain and that of the United States, highly creditable to the latter—

By the arrival of the *Tagus* a few days after my capture I was informed that besides the ships which had arrived in the Pacific in pursuit of me, and those still expected, others were sent to cruize for me in the China seas, off New Zealand, Timor and New Holland, and that another Frigate was sent to the River la Plate— To possess the *Essex* it has cost the British Government near six millions of dollars, and yet sir her capture was owing entirely to accident, and (if we consider the Expedition with which Naval contests are now decided) the action is a dishonor to them, had they brought their ships boldly into action, with a force so very superior, and having the choice of position, they should either have captured or destroyed us in one fourth the time they were about it—

During the action our Consul General Mr. Poinsett called on the Governor of Valparaiso<sup>34</sup> and requested that the Batteries might protect the *Essex*, this request was refused, but he promised that if she should succeed in fighting her way to the common anchorage, he would send an officer to the British Commander and request him to cease firing but declined using force under any circumstances, and there is no doubt a perfect understanding existed between them this conduct added to the assistance given to the British and their friendly reception after the action, and the strong bias of the faction which govern Chili in favor of the English, as well as their hostility to the Americans, induced Mr. Poinsett to leave that country under such circumstances I did not conceive it would be made by my government to more effect—

Finding some difficulty in the sale of my prizes, I had taken the *Hector* and *Catharine* to sea and burnt them with their cargoes—<sup>35</sup>

I exchanged Lt. McKnight, Mr. Adams and Mr. Lyman,<sup>36</sup> and eleven seamen for part of the crew of the *Sir Andrew Hammond*, and sailed from Valparaiso on the 27th. April, where the enemy were still patching up their ships to put them in a state for proceeding to Rio de Janeiro previous to going to England—

Annexed is a list of the remains of my crew to be exchanged, as also a copy of the correspondence between Commre. Hillyar and myself on that subject<sup>37</sup> I also send you a list of the prisoners I have taken during my cruize amounting to 343—<sup>38</sup> I have the honor to be with the greatest respect Your Obt. Servt.—

## D Porter

P.S. To give you a correct idea of the state of the *Essex* at the time of her surrender I send you the Boatswains & Carpenters report of damages; I also send you a report of the divisions—<sup>39</sup>

LS, DNA, RG45, CL, 1814, Vol. 4, No. 127 (M125, Roll No. 37). Portions of this letter were bound out of order. It was enclosed in Porter to Jones, 8 July 1814, DNA, RG45, CL, 1814, Vol. 4, No. 144.

1. Bainbridge to Porter, 13 Oct. 1812, in Dudley, Naval War of 1812, Vol. 1, pp. 525-26.

On the capture of Nocton, see ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 684–85; and, Porter, Journal of a Cruise, pp. 48–49.
 The British merchant schooner Elizabeth. See Porter, Journal of a Cruise, pp. 59–60; and, Dudley, Naval War of 1812, Vol. 2, pp. 689, 690n.

 Rear Admiral Manley Dixon, R.N., commander in chief of the South American Station, 1812–15. Dixon was promoted to vice admiral 4 December 1813.

5. For documentation on the capture of Java by Constitution, see Dudley, Naval War of 1812, Vol. 1, pp. 639-49.

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