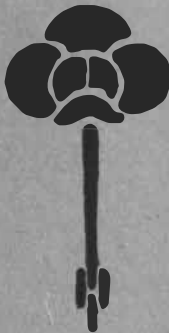


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acy demand a scientific training and discipline. There will always be room, however, for the local historian, for the gentleman of literary tastes and antiquarian proclivities—for that type of man, an ornament to our communities, of sufficient breadth of vision and culture to perceive that there is something more to the life that ceaselessly rushes onward, beside the mere satisfaction of material desires. The work of such collectors, whether it be expressed in the crude source material rescued from the flight of time, or in monographs moulding this material into literary form, will meet the appreciation and excite the gratitude of that discriminating element of posterity, into whose hands we must commit our hopes of posthumous remembrance.

THE GENESEE VALLEY IN THE NAVY

BY REAR ADMIRAL FRANKLIN HANFORD, U. S. N.



The first point of contact between the Navy and our Valley was during the War of 1812, when the vessels of Commodore Chauncey's Lake Ontario Squadron occasionally put into the mouth of the Genesee River and sometimes ascended as high as Hanford's Landing for refuge, for recruits, or for supplies. And off the Genesee in 1812 and 1813 appeared the British fleet under Captain Sir James Lucas Yeo, who, I regret to say, behaved in a very discourteous manner, and without asking the owner's permission, seized and carried away a quantity of provisions which he neither returned nor paid for! However, as Commodore Chauncey behaved in a similar manner at York (as Toronto was then called) the discourtesies may be said to have been "easy."

Fennimore Cooper, in his History of the Navy of the United States, says that about June 15-20, 1813, "Sir James Yeo went off the Genesee, where some provisions were seized and carried away." It is but just to the British Commodore to say that he gave receipts for the articles taken by his order. On August 16th, 1813, while Commodore Chauncey with his vessels was endeavoring to obtain the weather gage of the British fleet, it came on to blow, and Chauncey ran into the mouth of the Genesee, where he anchored. On the 11th of September, 1813, (this was the day after Perry's victory on Lake Erie) the American squadron having followed the British for six days, endeavoring, without success, to bring it to action, the enemy became becalmed off the Genesee; the American vessels, however, got a light breeze and ran within gunshot before the British squadron took the wind. A running fight that lasted more than three hours, was the result; but the enemy escaped, as the American Commodore was unable to overhaul the British with more than two of his vessels. But the "General Pike," one of Chauncey's squadron, succeeded in getting several broadsides at his adversaries, who did not escape without being a good deal cut up, having, according to Commodore Yeo's own report, an officer and ten men killed and wounded. The "General Pike" was hulled a few times during this fight, and other trifling injuries were received, but no person was hurt in the American squadron.

On October 13, 1813, Commodore Chauncey, with his vessels, went to the mouth of the Genesee, where on the 16th, he took on board 1,100 men belonging to the army of General Harrison and took them to the Niagara frontier. During the year 1814, Commodore

Chauncey's squadron took a force of 3,000 men, under General Izard, from Sackett Harbor to the mouth of the Genesee, where they were landed on September 22d.

Henry O'Reilly in his "Sketches of Rochester," Turner, in his "History of the Pioneer Settlement of the Phelps and Gorham Purchase," Mrs. Parker, in her "Rochester, a Story Historical," and Mr. Wm. F. Peck, in his "Semi-Centennial History of Rochester," all devote considerable space to Commodore Yeo's visits to the Genesee, and to his skirmish with Commodore Chauncey's squadron, but to quote them would unduly lengthen this paper. An excellent account of the parley with an officer who landed, bearing a flag of truce from Sir James Yeo's fleet, in May, 1814, at the mouth of the Genesee, is given by Elisha Ely in the "Proceedings at the Annual Festivals of the Pioneers of Rochester, held at Blossom Hall," in 1847 and 1848, and published in pamphlet form at Rochester in 1848.

I am indebted to Mr. Wm. H. Samson, of the Rochester "Post-Express," one of the honorary members of this Society, for an opportunity to examine a copy of an address given by Mr. Donald McKenzie before the Mumford Lyceum in 1843. Mr. McKenzie was one of the Scotch pioneers who had settled near the Caledonia "Big Springs." The following is quoted from his address: "In the latter part of 1812, being on a visit with my wife at her father's, at the mouth of the (Genesee) River, he accompanied us on horseback to the residence of my brother-in-law, Abel Rowe, on the Ridge Road. The next morning, as we were mounting our horses to return, a messenger arrived with an express, stating that a British fleet was approaching the mouth of the river, and requesting Captain Rowe to call out the militia immediately. Returning, on our way towards the landing, we could hear distinctly the report of every cannon fired by the enemy. After leaving my wife with the family of my worthy friend, Benjamin Fowle, at the landing, we hurried on as fast as possible to the mouth of the river. But nothing was to be seen of the fleet, nor of the few families there. We rode immediately to my father-in-law's old log house, standing then on the very spot where now stands the U. S. Lighthouse, fastened our horses, and from then, with my brother-in-law, William Hencher, Jr., went on foot to the beach of the lake. We soon discovered the fleet sailing toward us from the direction of Braddock's Bay, but not anticipating any danger, we remained on the spot until it approached quite near us. We were shortly saluted with a 24-pounder, which whistled through the bushes near where we stood, and entered the bank of the lake in our rear. This shot was in rather too close proximity to us to be agreeable. I afterwards dug the ball out of the bank and used it for a number of years to grind indigo with in my woolen factory." The British, according to Mr. McKenzie, retreated "without landing or doing any injury."

I have endeavored to find out what became of Mr. McKenzie's British shot, but regret to say all trace of it is lost, as I learned from his daughter, Miss Elizabeth McKenzie, and his nephew, Mr. Wm. S. McKenzie, of Caledonia, N Y

When one visits Charlotte or wanders among the trivial or amusing shows of "Ontario Beach Park," it is difficult to realize that

the now peaceful waters of Lake Ontario, off the mouth of our river were once plowed by hostile fleets.

A curious incident connecting the Genesee Valley and the navy is the fact that one of the earliest books printed in Rochester was (I quote the title page in full) "The Life and adventures of James R. Durand, During the Period of 16 years, from 1801 to 1816; in which time he was impressed on board the British Feet and held in detestable bondage for more than Seven Years. Including an account of a voyage to the Mediterranean. Written by Himself. Rochester, N. Y. Printed for the author by E. Peck & Co. 1820." We can only conjecture how this old man-of-wars-man happened to turn up in the then far western town of Rochester, and figure to ourselves his interviews with E. Peck & Co. over the publication of his book.

Another interesting fact is that the first commissioned officer to enter the navy from the Genesee Valley was a three-quarter blooded Seneca Indian, Jacob Jameson, a grandson of Mary Jemison, the celebrated "white woman of the Genesee." He was educated at Dartmouth College, studied medicine, and on January 3, 1828, was appointed an assistant surgeon in the navy, by President John Quincy Adams; he made one cruise on the old frigate "Java," on the Mediterranean station, and died in 1830, after only two years service, and about three years before the death of his grandmother.

We claim, and the whole country can claim and be proud of the life, the record and the services of William T. Sampson, of Palmyra. When I entered the navy in 1862, as a midshipman, Sampson was a lieutenant, only 23 years old, and had graduated No. 1 in his class at the Naval Academy, where he was then stationed as an instructor. He was then, to my mind, the finest looking man in the navy; he was calm, courteous, and dignified in manner, thoroughly competent in his profession, and though never a "hail, fellow, well met," he obtained and held the respect of the entire corps of midshipmen and of the whole navy as well.

Among others in the navy from the Valley was Dr. Newton L. Bates, a Monroe County boy, who studied medicine with the Dr. Moore, of Rochester, entered the service as an assistant surgeon during the Civil War, and later became the Surgeon-General of the Navy.

Then there is Captain Zera L. Tanner, of Warsaw, lately deceased. After Civil War service as a volunteer officer, he entered the regular navy and made a world-wide reputation as an authority on deep sea sounding and dredging, having commanded the Fish Commission steamers, "Fish-Hawk," and "Albatross," on deep sea scientific work for 15 years.

Rear Admiral Willard H. Brownson, who is at the very head of his profession, is from Lyons. Rear Admiral Joseph E. Craig (a brother of Oscar Craig, for whom Craig Colony is named) has been the chief hydrographer of the navy and is the author of several astronomical and mathematical works.

Commodore Qualtrough, of Rochester, has published the "Sailor's Handy Book," and the Boat Sailor's Manual," works useful, not only for naval seamen, but also for merchant sailors and yachtsmen.

Captain Fullam, of Monroe County, is a recognized authority on naval drills, exercises and discipline, and is the author of the latest text book on Naval Ordnance and Gunnery.

Then there are the younger men, Quimby, Ball, Bronson, Fenner, David, McKittrick and others not one of whom has failed to make a good record, both as officer and man. It is not necessary to wait until they are dead to speak well of them.

From Livingston County we now have on the active list of the navy, Captain Frank Adams Wilner, of Portage, recently commanding one of our finest vessels, the "Pennsylvania," and now commandant of the Naval Station at Portsmouth, N. H. You will find his portrait in Capt. Hand's History of Nunda. Captain Wilner entered the Naval Academy in June, 1869, and now, after over 40 years' service, is well up on the captains' list and may expect his promotion to Rear Admiral some time in 1911. I wish that he could be induced to appear before this Society and give you an account of his interesting experiences in the service.

As for "the men behind the guns," hundreds from the Genesee region entered the navy at various times, especially during the Civil War and the war with Spain, and helped to win our battles.

The services performed by our navy men in time of war are fully recorded, though but little is known of the splendid work done by them in time of peace—in preparations for war, in averting war, in assisting commerce, in aiding navigation, in light-housework, in surveys, in explorations, and in scientific work of various kinds—and in this grand peace work, your representatives from the Genesee Valley, as I have faintly outlined, already have been well to the front.

In conclusion, Mr. President, let me say that I cannot do justice to the subject assigned me—but, after all, the navy needs no one to speak for it, nor does our beautiful valley—they have always spoken, and I believe always will, speak for themselves!