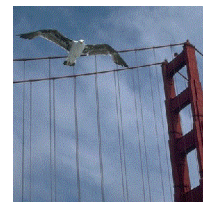




# Mission: History

*Studiorum Historiam Praemium Est*

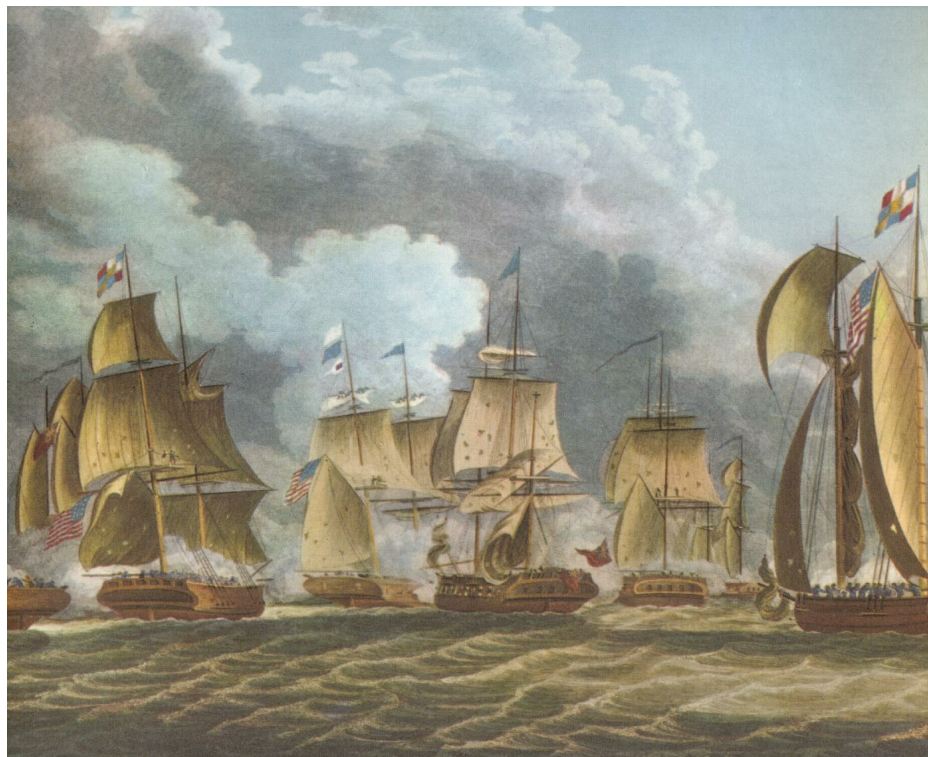


7 September 1999

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## 1813: 'We Have Met the Enemy and They are Ours...'



THE AMERICAN SHIP to the left of center is *Niagara*, flying Perry's blue flag after he had transferred from the battered *Lawrence*. The American ship in the left foreground is probably a figment of the artist's imagination, *Niagara* and *Lawrence* being the only two large ships Perry had.

### Perry's Lake Erie Victory Permits Harrison's Army To Recapture Detroit

The Battle of Lake Erie, fought on 10 September 1813 between a British squadron of six ships with 64 guns under Captain Robert H. Barclay, a veteran of Trafalgar who had lost an arm in that battle, and a nine ship American force mounting 54 guns commanded by 28-year-old Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, was the most important naval engagement of the War of 1812 to date and the nearest ocean was more than 450 miles away.

At shortly after 11 a.m., Perry, in his flagship *Lawrence*, a 20-gun brig named for Captain James Lawrence who lost his life three months earlier in the unsuccessful action between *Chesapeake* and the British frigate *Shannon*, closed Barclay's ships, and engaged *Queen Charlotte* and *Detroit*, while for reasons never explained American Captain Jesse Elliott stood off a mile away with *Niagara* and other smaller ships.

After absorbing a pummeling for two hours, *Lawrence* was a wreck. Perry, in the ship's one remaining small boat, transferred his flag to *Niagara*. He sent Elliott to round up three schooners and then took command of *Niagara*. The British ships had also suffered and their crews were tired, but soon they had to face *Niagara*, which broke through their line firing broadsides to port and starboard. The confusion brought by Perry's return resulted in the rigging of *Queen Charlotte* and *Detroit*, Barclay's strongest ships, be-

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### 1776: An Army Sergeant Was the First Commander Of an American Submarine to Attack the Enemy

The first commander of an American submarine to make an attack on an enemy man of war was an Army sergeant. He was also the crew.

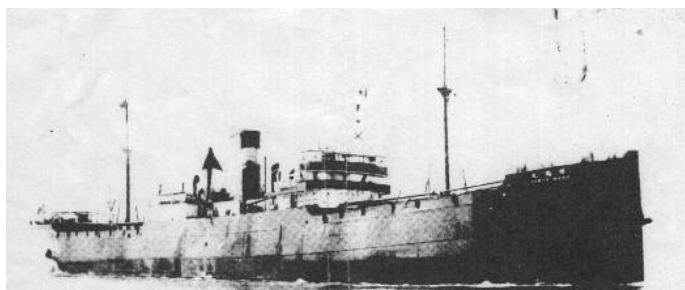
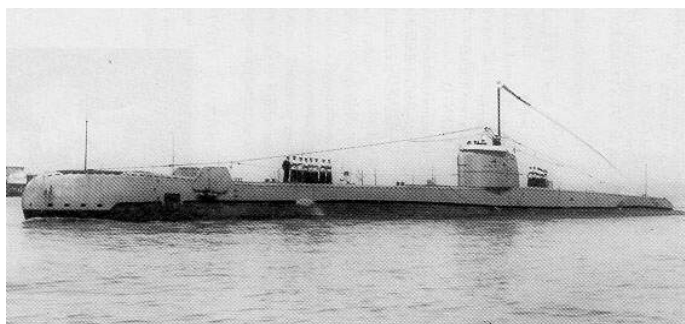
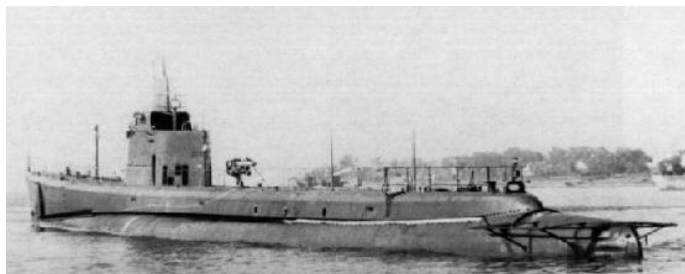
On the night of 6 September 1776, Sergeant Ezra Lee climbed into the *American Turtle*, the world's first combat submarine, and slid beneath the inky waters off what is now the Battery in Manhattan. His objective was the sinking of HMS *Eagle*, flagship of Admiral Lord Richard Howe.

David Bushnell had conceived the idea of a submarine in 1771 while a student at Yale. He had earlier theorized that an underwater explosive device could easily sink the mightiest warship. The submarine would be Bushnell's means of getting his mine or torpedo to its target.

*American Turtle* was nearly complete when war began in the spring of 1775. It was an engineering marvel for that or any other day. The hull was

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# 1944: Allies Sink Six Prisoner-Laden Jap Ships; Death Toll Greater Than Saipan, Tarawa and Iwo



TOP TO BOTTOM: **USS Barb** (SS 220) sank 96,628 tons of enemy shipping during the war. She was decommissioned and loaned to the Italian Navy on 13 December 1954. She was returned to the U.S. and scrapped 15 October 1972. **USS Flasher** (SS 249) sank 100,230 tons of Japanese shipping, the highest total of any U.S. submarine. *Flasher* was decommissioned 16 March 1946 and mothballed. On 1 June 1959 she was struck from the Navy records. She was sold for scrap on 1 June 1963. The conning tower was removed and placed on display as a Memorial at the entrance to Nautilus Park, a Navy housing area in Groton, Conn. **HMS Tradewind** was a Trident class submarine of the Royal Navy, about two-thirds the size of American *Gato* class subs such as *Barb* and *Flasher* and with a proportionately smaller crew. **SS Junyo Maru** began life in 1913 as *Ardgorm*, in the service of Lang & Fulton. Five years later, she was *Hartland Point*. She next became *Hartmore* then *Sureway*, before becoming *Junyo Maru* in 1927.

## *American and British Submarines, Planes Unwittingly Drown More Than 10,600*

Six Japanese transport ships were sunk by Allied torpedoes in September 1944 — four by U.S. submarines, one by a British sub and one by U.S. carrier aircraft. The shipping was no great loss to the Japanese — the ships were all rust buckets — and the loss of the cargo was little more than an inconvenience.

The cargo consisted of American, Australian, British, Dutch and Filipino prisoners of war, and Javanese slave laborers.

About 10,600 prisoners lost their lives in these six sinkings. That total is greater than the combined loss of life by American forces in securing Tarawa, Saipan and Iwo Jima.

The successful invasions of those three islands is a lot better known than the sinking of six *Something Marus* and one wonders if there is an official desire at work to spare the feelings of Americans. In his 15-volume *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, Samuel Eliot Morison mentions only three of the sinkings and, in total, devotes about 500 words to these tragic events.

The *Shinyo Maru* was a rusty old tramp steamer. San Francisco port records show she delivered a cargo of Chinese immigrants to that city on 18 March 1918. On 7 September 1944, she was transporting close to 1,000 American and Filipino prisoners away from Mindanao in the Philippines when attacked by the submarine *USS Barb* (Morison says it was *USS Paddle*) and sunk with an outright loss of 688 POWs. When the ship was attacked, Japanese guards sprayed the holds into which the prisoners were crammed with automatic arms fire. About 15 or 20 were fished from the water by Japanese “rescuers,” taken aboard another ship and shot. Some were able to swim to shore. *USS Narwhal* was directed to the scene and picked up 81 survivors, mostly from the water.

More than 16,000 prisoners died during construction of the infamous Death Railway linking Burma and Thailand, and crossing the River Kwai. In early September 1944, 2,218 Australian and British prisoners of war who had survived that forced labor were marched to Singapore and loaded onboard *Rakuyu Maru* and *Kachidoki Maru*, to be taken to Formosa. In the South China Sea, the ships were attacked by *USS Growler*, *USS Sealion* and *USS Pampanito* and both were sunk, 1,274 POWs losing their lives. The American submarines picked up 114 survivors, all they could carry, and hundreds of others were picked up by the Japanese. They weren’t whistling *Colonel Bogey*.

*MV Junyo Maru* was built in 1913 in Glasgow by Robert Duncan Co. and was a cut above the others at 5,065 tons, but she was on her sixth owner and little more than a wreck. She was bound from Java to Sumatra on 18 September 1944 with a cargo of about 2,300 Dutch, British, American and Australian

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## 1939: German U-Boat Sinks British Passenger Liner Carrying Civilians Away from Newly-Declared War

Death Toll Includes 22 Americans; Hitler Fears *Lusitania*-Type Backlash, Orders Goebbels to Say British Behind Provocation

Compositors were still setting type for morning paper stories announcing the declaration of hostilities between Britain and Germany on 3 September 1939 when the German submarine *U-30*, Oberleutnant Fritz-Julius Lemp, scored its first kill of the war.

S.S. *Athenia*, a 13,500 ton Donaldson Atlantic liner was bound for Canada carrying 1,418 men, women and children, including 316 American citizens hurrying home ahead of the clouds of war. She was 250 miles west of Inishtrahull, Ireland as darkness fell on the evening of a day on which war came to England at 11 a.m.

*Athenia's* captain had been notified by radio of the onset of hostilities and as darkness overtook him he darkened ship, slowed to 10 knots and began to zigzag. He would have been better advised to have kept a straight course at 20 knots with lights blazing and a

dance band playing on the fantail.

Lemp was also 250 miles west of Inishtrahull, sent there in anticipation of war, and he also had been notified by radio of the onset of hostilities. To a man with an itchy trigger finger, the darkened, zigzagging *Athenia* looked like an armed cruiser. He fired one torpedo, and then a second.

The first torpedo exploded against *Athenia* but the second apparently missed. Lemp took *U-30* down to avoid the possibility of being hit by a run-away torpedo. Lemp then surfaced and fired a third torpedo, which also missed, but *Athenia* had been fatally wounded. Now Lemp was close enough to realize what he had done, and he checked *Athenia's* silhouette in his Lloyd's Register for confirmation.

*Athenia's* distress signals told the world that she had been torpedoed, but Lemp did not report it. Instead, he was

not heard from until 14 September when he reported damage sustained in a depth charge attack following the sinking of the British freighter *Fanan Head*. Berlin learned of the sinking of *Athenia* from British broadcasts and Hitler, fearing another *Lusitania*, laid down the law. Deny everything.

Berlin announced that Winston Churchill had personally placed a bomb aboard *Athenia*, hoping for a *Lusitania*-type reaction that would draw the United States into the war. In early October, Churchill was dining with two Admiralty officials when he received a telephone call from President Roosevelt who told him that Admiral Raeder, chief of the Kriegsmarine, had planted a story with the Americans that a U.S. Navy ship would be sunk by the British, as they had sunk *Athenia*.

This clumsy effort by the Germans to drive a wedge between the two English-speaking nations served only to open lines of communication between Franklin Roosevelt and the "former naval person" in Whitehall, which, after Churchill became prime minister, blossomed to the tightest sort of bond.

Churchill had, on that busy September 3, returned to the Admiralty as First Lord. "*Athenia* was torpedoed without the slightest warning," he told Britons, "She was not armed." Goebbels responded by interrupting a Radio Berlin broadcast to call Churchill "*ein Lügenlord*," a "lying lord."

A few days later, Churchill went on BBC to say that the Royal Navy was fighting back against the U-boats, "hunting them night and day — I will not say without mercy for God forbid we should ever part company with that — but at any rate with zeal and not altogether without relish."

Survivors of the attack on *Athenia* were rescued by a Norwegian freighter, an American steamer, two British destroyers and a motor yacht. Eighty-three civilian passengers perished, including 22 Americans. Eighteen crew members, also civilians, died, and were the first British merchant sailors to die under the Red Ensign in World War II.

## 5,600 Perish When HMS *Tradewind* Sinks *Junyo Maru*

(Continued from page 2)

POWs and 4,200 Javanese slave laborers slated to work on a railroad. She was sunk by two torpedoes from the British submarine HMS *Tradewind* and the death toll of 5,620 made it the greatest marine disaster up 'til that time. The survivors went on to build the railroad, which cost most of them their lives.

Bound from Singapore to Japan with about 1,200 British and Dutch prisoners of war who were crammed in her holds, *Toyofuku Maru* diverted to Manila to offload the dead and dying, so as to not contaminate healthy laborers. It was a mistake. She departed Manila on 15 September 1944 with a convoy and, when only three days out, got caught up in one of the great carrier air strikes of the war, as aircraft from the 17 carriers in Vice Admiral Marc

A. Mitscher's Task Force 38 delivered devastating attacks on Japanese airfields and shipping. Hit by U.S. torpedo planes, *Toyofuku Maru* went down in minutes. Fewer than 200 survived.

USS *Flasher* sank more enemy tonnage than any other U.S. submarine during World War II. She was on patrol due west of Manila on 21 September 1944 when *Ural Maru*, 6,374 tons, crossed her bows. Only a couple of sentences in *Flasher's* patrol report, *Ural Maru* took about 2,000 Allied prisoners of war to the bottom with her. Some 350 survived.

These six ships weren't the only enemy vessels sunk by Allied action while carrying prisoners of war, but September 1944 saw the tragedy repeated over and over.



## Perry's Dispatch Etched Victory in U.S. Memory

(Continued from page 1)

coming locked together. With those two ships unable to maneuver, Perry pounded them as he swept past.

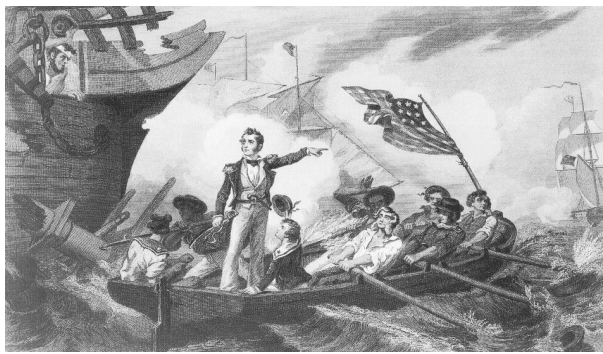
Coming about, Perry again passed through the British line, hurling broadsides right and left. By 3 p.m., Barclay had had enough and surrendered *Detroit*. *Queen Charlotte* and two smaller ships soon followed suit. Two other small vessels attempted to escape, but they were soon rounded up.

In his dispatch to General William



Henry Harrison, Perry wrote "We have met the enemy and they are ours: two ships, two brigs, one schooner and one sloop." That felicitous message has as much as anything to do with the Battle of Lake Erie being remembered. A year later on Lake Champlain, separating New York from Vermont, Commodore Thomas Macdonough's squadron defeated a British force in an event that, more than any other, convinced the British to sue for peace.

But Perry's victory permitted the recovery of Detroit and Michigan which had earlier been taken by the British. It also had a part in ending an alliance between the Indians and the British, which aimed at setting up an Indian state under British protection.



PERRY TRANSFERS HIS FLAG from *Lawrence* to *Niagara* during heat of battle. After two hours of pounding by the two largest British ships, *Queen Charlotte* and *Detroit*, *Lawrence* was a wreck. For reasons never explained, Captain Jesse Elliott had kept *Niagara* out of the battle. With the fresh ship, Perry returned to the fray and an hour later the British commander surrendered.

## Was an Army Sergeant the Father of the Silent Service?

(Continued from page 1)

made of oak staves bound by iron bands. Ventilators opened when the vessel surfaced and automatically closed when it submerged, and submerging was controlled by drawing water into tanks and pumping it out.

Maneuvering the American *Turtle* was done by using an array of vertical and horizontal propellers and by a rudder. The sergeant operated a rudder with one hand and a set of propellers with the other. Propulsion machinery consisted of foot pedals. Small windows in a tiny lump of a conning tower provided a view if it were light and the operator had a depth gauge and compass with luminous dials.

In order to attach a torpedo to the hull of a ship, the submarine had a hand-operated screw which could bore into English oak or even copper sheathing. The screw would be left behind and, with it, the mine.

Sergeant Lee was a replacement for Bushnell's brother, who had fallen sensibly ill. Lee volunteered and, with scant training, set out across Upper New York Bay, proceeding underwater toward *Eagle*. The submarine performed as designed and Lee had no trouble getting under Howe's flagship — his trouble came when he tried to drive the screw through not oak or copper but the large iron plates on which the rudder was mounted.

Lee kept turning his crank until dawn and then cast loose his torpedo and headed back to Manhattan. A whaleboat was dispatched to speed his return. As the *American Turtle* was being secured, the torpedo exploded, doing no damage but throwing up a huge geyser of water and scaring hell out of everybody aboard *Eagle*.

A few days later, Sergeant Lee once

again took *American Turtle* against the enemy, this time a British ship anchored in the Hudson River above Manhattan. Once more the submarine functioned perfectly, but by the time Lee had found his target, the tides had shifted and the currents were more than the submarine's propulsion machinery could handle.

That was pretty much the end of submarine activities in the Revolution, but Bushnell had one success when, attempting to sink the British frigate *Cerberus* off New London, Conn., he used a whaleboat and affixed a torpedo not to the frigate but to a schooner tied alongside. The explosion destroyed the schooner and so unnerved the captain of *Cerberus* that he sailed immediately for New York. Thus, Bushnell lifted the blockade of New London.

David Bushnell is recognized today as the father of the submarine, and rightly so, but what of Sergeant Ezra Lee? Should not this Army enlisted man be remembered as the father of the U.S. Navy's Silent Service?

### How to Get in Touch

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Submissions are not encouraged because of constraints on the time available for editing. If such are sent, they should be sent as e-mail attachments in Microsoft Word 6.0 or as type-written copy, double-spaced, accompanied by a 3½-inch diskette containing the submission in MS Word 6.0 for Windows.

Quite welcome are suggestions of events for coverage. Please offer suggestions two months ahead of the anniversary of an event.