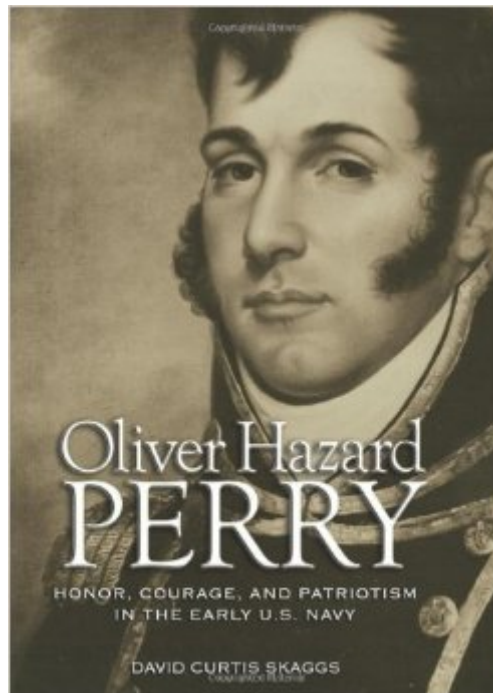


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Oliver Hazard Perry: Honor, Courage, And Patriotism In The Early U.S. Navy (Library Of Naval Biography)



Synopsis

Hailed for his decisive victory over a Royal Navy squadron on Lake Erie in September 1813 and best known for his after-action report proclamation *We have met the enemy and they are ours*, Oliver Hazard Perry was one the early U.S. Navy's most famous heroes. In this modern, scholarly reassessment of the man and his career, Professor David Skaggs emphasizes Perry's place in naval history as an embodiment of the code of honor, an exemplar of combat courage, and a symbol of patriotism to his fellow officers and the American public. It is the first biography of Perry to be published in more than a quarter of a century and the first to offer an even-handed analysis of his career. After completing a thorough examination of primary sources, Skaggs traces Perry's development from a midshipman to commodore where he personified the best in seamanship, calmness in times of stress, and diplomatic skills. But this work is not a hagiographic treatment, for it offers a candid analysis of Perry's character flaws, particularly his short temper and his sometimes ineffective command and control procedures during the battle of Lake Erie. Skaggs also explains how Perry's short but dramatic naval career epitomized the emerging naval professionalism of the young republic, and he demonstrates how the Hero of Lake Erie fits into the most recent scholarship concerning the role of post-revolutionary generation in the development of American national identity. Finally, Skaggs explores in greater detail than anyone before the controversy over the conduct of his Lake Erie second, Jesse Duncan Elliott, that raged on for over a quarter century after Perry's death in 1819.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The first modern biography of the "Hero of Lake Erie" is ably written by Great Lakes historian Skaggs. It is a deeply researched and balanced story of leadership in battle, heroism and contentious egos during our Early National Period. Perry, a Scotsman descended from Scotland's national hero, William Wallace, was born in Rhode Island in 1785 to naval Captain Christopher and his wife Sarah Wallace Alexander. Oliver was the older brother to Matthew Calbraith Perry, another career naval officer destined to open Japan to Western trade. So a naval career was pretty much a foregone conclusion and the older sibling was appointed a midshipman in April, 1799. assigned to his father's frigate, he saw his first action off the coast of Haiti, which was in a state of rebellion. The first Barbary War found him serving on the USS Adams and later, in command of the USS Nautilus, he was present at the capture of Derna. At the start of the War of 1812, Perry requested and was given command of the United States naval forces on Lake Erie. He supervised the construction of a small fleet at Presque Isle Bay in Erie, Pennsylvania, and on September 10, 1813, defeated the attacking British fleet at the Battle of Lake Erie, gaining everlasting fame in naval history. His battle report to General William Henry Harrison was brief and to the point: "We have met the enemy and they are ours..." The victory opened up Canada to invasion, while at the same time protected the entire Ohio Valley from British occupation. The controversy began before the smoke had cleared Detroit. Perry's second in command, Jesse Duncan Elliott, was a conniving, self-serving manipulator who immediately claimed more of the victorious action than he deserved.

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