

who was to give Governor-in-Chief of North America Sir George Prevost the letter recalling him to London, replacing him with Sir Gordon Drummond, then military commander and lieutenant governor of Upper Canada. The ship also gave passage for several junior military and naval officers, 150 soldiers of the Royal Artillery and 140 seamen for the ships on the North American Station. After an uneventful crossing the *Niobe* arrived in Halifax, on 29 January 1815. Owen, Vidal, and Murray landed at Quebec City on 26 February and stayed through 8 March. News of the ratification of the Treaty of Ghent and the cessation of hostilities arrived 1 March.⁹ Prevost immediately ordered Drummond to reduce costs in all public departments, halting work on all fortifications, except the citadel at Kingston.¹⁰ Troop reduction in the right and centre divisions would occur as soon as transports were available.

While in Quebec Owen evaluated an Admiralty idea of securing large ships there, and sending their men and guns into the lakes.¹¹ With the assistance of the Harbour Master J. Hambly, he found such a spot. He also suggested some of the rivers feeding into the St Lawrence further upstream, in particular at Trois Rivières. Taking the steam boat from Quebec, he and Vidal arrived in Montreal 9 March, reaching Kingston on 19 March, by the less than comfortable passage in a bateau.¹² With the numerous rapids at the lower end of the St Lawrence River, the party had experienced the ten portages between Montreal and Cornwall. The foot paths and mud roads were nearly impassible, showing Owen first hand, how difficult transportation was into the upper province. On arriving at Kingston, Commodore Owen entered the frigate HMS *Psyche* and took command of the Great Lakes on 22 March. Sir James Yeo hauled down his pennant and made arrangements to cross over to Sackets Harbour (at the invitation of American Commodore Isaac Chauncey) and head back to England, via New York City.¹³ Owen then shifted his broad pennant to the first rate, HMS *St Lawrence*.

His orders on 12 December 1814, had sent Owen out to replace Sir James, who had been the commodore on the inland seas since May 1813. The war on the lakes was in a stalemate, with both sides spending much of 1814 building bigger ships on Lake Ontario.¹⁴ Lake Champlain had been lost to the Americans in the Battle of

(16 March 1815), 2; Owen to Corker, 4 March 1815, Library and Archive of Canada [LAC], ADM 1/2262, mfr B2635. Vidal had served in HMS *Cornwall*, under Edward Owen, see O'Byrne, 1229. Owen appears to be Vidal's patron.

9 Baker to Prevost, 17 February 1815, LAC, British Military and Naval Records RG 8, C Series, v. 687, mfr. C3231, 131. The British Prince Regent signed the Treaty of Ghent on 30 December 1814, while American government ratified the Treaty on 16 February 1815.

10 Prevost to Drummond, 1 March 1815, LAC, RG 8, v. 1226, mfr. C3527, 25-6.

11 Owen to Croker, 4 March 1815, LAC, ADM 1/2738, 52-3b.

12 Owen to Croker, 25 March 1815, LAC, ADM 1/2262, 110-12.

13 Owen to Croker, 4 March 1815, LAC, ADM 1/2262, 68-9; Yeo to Croker, 23 March 1815, LAC, In-letters, ADM 1/2738, 81.

14 See Robert Malcomson. *Lords of the Lake: The Naval War on Lake Ontario 1812-1814* (Toronto, ON: Robin Brass Studio, 1998), Part IV, 225-55. Sir James Yeo had spent much of 1814 building larger ships to dominate over the Americans on Lake Ontario. In April, the large frigates