

Plattsburgh, on 11 September 1814. Lake Erie had been dominated since the fall of 1813 by the Americans, as a result of the British defeat at the Battle of Lake Erie. Having lost their entire squadron, the British had one armed transport vessel on Lake Huron, which they subsequently burnt to avoid its capture. But much of the American forward momentum on the upper lakes had been countered by the British in 1814.

In August 1814 the Americans lost *Somers* and *Ohio* to a cutting out raid at Fort Erie. A month later, another cutting out expedition, on Lake Huron, relieved the Americans of *Tigress* and *Scorpion*, which were renamed *Confiance* and *Surprise*, respectively.¹⁵ Thus, at the end of 1814 the British had a small but definite presence on the upper lakes. The British sank the *Somers* and *Ohio* at the mouth of the Chippawa River, to prevent their re-capture. Once the British could establish a new naval base on Lake Erie, the two schooners would be raised and employed.

The new year promised to be the deciding one, thus determining the fate of the upper province. By the time Owen arrived at Quebec, however, the war was over, and his mission changed. Now he would lead the winding down of the British naval presence on the Great Lakes, and set up a peace establishment, that could be brought back to an adequate war footing, if needed, to challenge a possible American renewal of war.¹⁶ The fiscal pressure both countries faced necessitated a downsizing, but continued tensions required a readiness for war.

As 1815 began the Americans were building two 118 gun ships at Sackets Harbor on Lake Ontario.¹⁷ They were also setting up frames for two frigates and a steam boat. These building endeavours created quite the stir in Kingston. American troops were being moved along the St Lawrence to Ogdensburg, in preparation to cut British communication lines.¹⁸ Lt.-Gen. Sir Gordon Drummond, in command of Upper Canada, moved forces to counteract this threat, but it was clear the United States would no longer allow the nearly free passage along the only water route

Prince Regent (58 guns) and *Princess Charlotte* (40 guns) were launched, and building began on HMS *St Lawrence*, 104 guns. The Americans built the 58 gun frigate *Superior* in response to the British frigates, and had laid down the keels of two 118 gun first rate ships.

15 R. Malcomson, *Lords of the Lake*, 296; J. Mackay Hitsman. *The Incredible War of 1812: A Military History* (1965), (Toronto, ON: Robin Brass Studio, updated 1999), 236; Barry Gough, *Fighting Sail on Lake Huron and Georgian Bay: The War of 1812 and its Aftermath* (St Catharines, ON: Vanwell, 2002), 107-116.

16 Bourne, 14-15.

17 Sherbrooke to Bathurst, 17 January 1815, LAC, RG 8, v. 687, mfr. C3231, 42-4; Drummond to Prevost, 11 February 1815, LAC, RG 8, v. 687, mfr. C3231, 104-7; Drummond to Prevost, 14 February 1815, LAC, RG 8, v. 687, mfr. C3231, 108-13. The two ships were named *Chippawa* and *New Orleans*.

18 The Americans planned to invade Upper Canada in 1815, along the St Lawrence with a force large enough to beat any British counter attack. The goal was to drive the British into Lower Canada, preferably to Quebec City. This would give the Americans the upper province, and necessitate the reassignment of British forces from the east coast of America to Lower Canada and Nova Scotia. See C. Stacey, "An American Plan for a Canadian Campaign" in M Zaslow (ed.), *The Defended Border: Upper Canada and the War of 1812* (Toronto, ON: Macmillan Company, 1964), 273-82.