

PERRY'S VICTORY AT LAKE ERIE

(words by John Bennett, circa 1813; music by Lee Murdock, circa 2000)

Note: The following information is from the liner notes from Lee Murdock's CD, *The Lost Lake Sailors*:

Here is a ballad in the old grand style I found in the Walton collection but was attributed to the collection located at the Great Lakes Historical Society in Vermillion, Ohio. Just something to remember, Columbians and Columbia refers to people in the United States; there were not Canadians or Mexicans at that time or, for that matter, the country of Columbia as we know it today. This song predates Canada's and Mexico's independence, and was reportedly found in a Broadside published in Coshocton, Ohio within weeks of this most famous (or perhaps infamous) naval battle in Great Lakes history.

You tars of Columbia, give ears to my story
Who fought with brave Perry, whose cannon did roar
Your valor has gained you an immortal glory
And fame that will last until time is no more.
On the tenth of September let us all remember
As long as the globe on its axis reels 'round,
Our tars and marines on Lake Erie were seen
To make the red flag of proud Britain come down.
Columbian tars are the true sons of Mars.
Who rake fore and aft when they fight on the deep;
On the bed of Lake Erie, commanded by Perry,
They caused many Briton to take their last sleep.

The van of our fleet was brought up complete
Commanded by Perry, the Lawrence bore down;
Our guns they did roar such terrific power
That savages trembled at the dreadful sound.
The *Lawrence* sustained the most dreadful of fires,
She fought three to one for two glasses or more;
Whilst Perry undaunted did firmly stand by her
And on the proud foe heavy broadsides did pour.
Her masts being shattered, her rigging all tattered,
Her sails all in ribbons, her rigging shot away;
With few left on deck to manage the wreck;
Our heroes on board her no longer could stay.

There was one gallant act of our noble commander
Whilst writing my song I shall notice with pride;
When launching the smack that carried his standard
A ball whistled through her quite close by his side.
Said Perry, "Those villains intend sure to drown us,
But push on my brave boys, you need never fear."
And then with his coat, he plugged up the boat
And through sulfur and fire away he did steer.
The famed *Niagara*, now proud of her Perry,
Displayed all her banners in gallant array.
Full twenty five guns on board she did carry
Which soon put an end to this sad, bloody fray.

The fire of the Britons grew shorter and shorter
The signal was given to break through their fire
Whilst starboard to larboard and from every quarter
The guns of Columbia gloriously shined.
In the heat of the battle, whose cannon did rattle
On the *Lawrence* a wreck with her men near all slain,
Brave Elliot did steer and safe brought up the rear
And by this grand maneuver the victory was gained.
O, had you been there I vow and declare
That such a grand sight you had ne'er saw before,
When six bloody flags that no longer would wave
Were laid at the feet of our brave Commodore.

The whole British fleet was captured complete,
Not one single vessel from us got away;
And prisoners some hundreds, Columbians wondered
To see them all anchored and moored on the bay.
Great Britain may boast of her conquering heroes;
Her Rodneys, her Nelsons, and all the old crew,
But Rome in her glory ne'er told such a story
Nor boasted such feats as Columbians can do.
So Columbians sing, and make the woods ring,
And toast those brave heroes, by sea and by land;
Whilst Britons drink sherry, let us drink to Perry
And toss it about with a full glass in hand.

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This project is funded in part by Michigan Humanities Council, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this project do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.