

could only come in by water. It thus became imperative for Barclay to regain command of the lake and he sailed out of Maiden harbor early in September to give battle. Perry himself was on board the Lawrence, named for the hero of the "Chesapeake" while his second in command, Captain Elliot, was on the Niagara. The young commander who was thirty years old, plunged into the action with a zeal which may have been indiscreet. At any rate he sailed his vessel ahead of his fleet so far that he met the fire of his enemy without much support. Captain, Elliott did not show any haste in following his chief and before long the Lawrence was ready to sink. Some men would have thought it about time to surrender then, but Perry's mind was of different mold. He looked about for escape from his dilemma and noticed the Niagara making its languid way to the front. Instantly he saw what to do. He lowered a boat, and leaving his ship to its fate, boarded the Niagara, which he immediately drove into action. A moment later the Lawrence raised the white flag. Soon after Perry reached the Niagara the British saw that they were beaten and surrendered.

This was one of the few decisive actions of the War of 1812. It gave the Americans command of Lake Erie and enabled them to begin effective operations against the British and Indians in the West by land. General Harrison, who had been sent to that quarter to succeed a series of incapables proved to be the right man. His vigorous measures presently recovered Detroit, which Hull had foolishly surrendered at the beginning of the war, and by the time the Winter set in the British retained none of their conquests west of Lake Ontario except Mackinaw. This post they held to the end of the war, but their scheme of erecting an independent Indian territory out of the spoils of the United States was blighted forever.

