

This Day in History... August 23, 1785

Birth of Oliver Perry

Oliver Hazard Perry was born on August 23, 1785, in South Kingstown, Rhode Island.

Perry was a direct descendant of William Wallace, a leader during the Scottish Wars of Independence. He was also older brother to Matthew Perry, who later opened Japan to the West.

From a young age, Perry learned to sail ships anticipating a career at sea. At the age of 13, he was appointed a midshipman in the United States Navy. He had his first combat experience during the Quasi-War with France in 1800 aboard his father's ship, the USS *General Greene*. During that war and the Tripolitan War, he served on such famous ships as the *Adams*, *Constellation*, *Nautilus*, *Essex*, and *Constitution*. Perry then served in the First Barbary War, commanding the USS *Nautilus* and *Revenge*.



Stamp from the Bank Note Series, printed by Continental.



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Perry took a leave of absence to get married, but when war was declared in 1812, he sought to join the action. After briefly commanding a small squadron in Newport, he petitioned for a posting at sea. In February 1813, he received orders to report to the Great Lakes to command and oversee construction of a flotilla. It was a busy year for Perry. Upon arrival, he took command and led the defense of Presque Isle. He obtained reinforcements from Lake Ontario and commanded schooners and gunboats at the Battle of Fort George. He also traveled to Black Rock to recover abandoned American vessels that had been taken by the British.



Stamp pictures Perry at the Battle of Lake Erie.

Perry's other successes included the destruction of British munitions at Fort Erie, overseeing construction of the Erie fleet of ships, getting those ships over the sandbar, blocking British supplies for a month before the battle, and planning the Thames invasion with General William Henry Harrison. Perry also acquired more men for his fleet from the *Constitution*, which was then undergoing repairs.



From the Series of 1890-93 was printed smaller than previous issues.

Perry's leadership was crucial to the success of all nine Lake Erie American victories during the War of 1812. The most famous was the September 10, 1813, battle for which he earned the nickname, "Hero of Lake Erie."

Perry went on to serve with distinction, receiving the Congressional Gold Medal and an eventual promotion to commodore. He later commanded the USS *Java* during the Second Barbary War. In 1819, Perry traveled to Venezuela to discourage piracy and encourage friendly relations. However, after signing the treaty, Perry and much of his crew were stricken with yellow fever. Perry died on August 23, 1819, his 34th birthday.



1895 Type II – only 63,803 were issued

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