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[Stick to Your Guns! The Third US Artillery and the Battle of Oswego 1814](#)

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Stick to Your Guns! The Third US Artillery and the Battle of Oswego 1814



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Abstract

The early months of 1814 witnessed a shipbuilding-race on Lake Ontario. The British Commodore James Lucas Yeo constructed a squadron of frigates while the American Commodore Isaac Chauncey countered by building their own squadron which threatened to outgun and over-power the British on Lake Ontario. Accordingly, early in May 1814, Yeo decided to attack Fort Ontario to seize the 30 plus guns believed to be stored there en route to the naval-yard at Sackets Harbor. Opposing Yeo was Major George Mitchell of the Third US Artillery. Fort Ontario was in a state of disarray and neglect as government had allowed the post to become antiquated and ill equipped to fight off a well-armed adversary. However, Mitchell and his 242 men (along with 25 sailors and roughly 200 Militiamen) prepared for an all-out British assault and fortified the post against the stronger and better-armed opponent. This paper takes a look at both sides of the battle, its major players, and why it is still considered to be both a victory for the British and American Forces.



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Summary

Oswego county saw a fair share of war time activity even though the county didn't formally didn't exist until 1816. An under equipped American regiment clashed with a disciplined, battle savvy British force. By 1814, a massive ship building race between the Americans and British ensued.

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Commodore James Lucas Yeo worried about delaying Commodore Isaac Chauncey or the lake would come under American control. On April 22, 1814: Sir Gordon Drummond wrote about his difficulties obtaining food and supplies, complaining chiefly of flour was not getting to the British troops. Flour was not the only problem; there were other problems transporting goods. There were not enough merchant schooners to transport supplies to the troops. In October 1814, Yeo began to use his merchant schooners as transports to get provisions to Drummond's army and planned to delay Chauncey by intercepting his supplies. Earlier, in March 1814, the Third US Artillery



troops marched and waited for their brigade. They were quickly dispatched to Fort Ontario to defend supplies there and prevent Commodore Yeo from taking their provisions. Gun crews were created to defend the fort against the British. On May 4th, 1814 they received word that the enemy's fleet was out. The 342 men of The Third readied themselves for battle with no surrender in mind. On May 5th, the battle began. The Americans were out numbered 2-1. Canon fire was exchanged at Oswego but the British flotilla retreated that evening. On May 6th, 1814, Yeo's ships renewed their fire on Major George Edward Mitchell's men. Many undisciplined soldiers escaped into the woods and Mitchell ordered a retreat. Casualties on the British side were 24 killed, 96 wounded. Commodore Yeo and Sir Gordon Drummond captured Oswego successfully. After the battle - Yeo sailed for Sacket's Harbor to blockade it but was unsuccessful. Conversely, the attack on Oswego had mixed results and not considered a strong victory for the British. Yeo's only real triumph was the capture of supplies and two schooners. The battle was technically a British [win](#) but it came at a high cost. Mitchell's men put up a good fight against the British and earned a noble status in American history.

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