

Painting WAR

FURTHER SELECTION OF ART WORKS HELD BY THE NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND. THESE WORKS, CREATED BY OFFICIAL NAVY ARTISTS, SPAN A VARIETY OF DISCIPLINES AND HELP FORM A VALUABLE RECORD THAT DEFINES THE EXPERIENCE OF THE US NAVY

BY HOWARD CARTER



Before photography, portrait paintings were able to capture high-ranking naval officers and officials. This oil painting on canvas by V. Zveg depicts Commodore John Barry. Born in Ireland, Barry immigrated to the American colonies to serve as a merchant sailor and captain. He favored the revolutionaries' views and volunteered his services to their cause. He became the first officer in the Army or Navy to receive a commission from the Continental Congress. As captain of several vessels, including *Lexington* and *Raleigh*, Barry besieged many Royal Navy vessels and merchant ships. Eager to improve communications between ships, he authored the first American signal book, published in 1780. Barry is considered by many historians to be a founding father of the US Navy, along with John Paul Jones.



This oil on board painting by Alfred T. Agate (done approximately 1842) was created when the artist was serving with the United States Exploring Expedition and depicts the loss of the USS *Peacock*. This vessel participated in the expedition, which departed Hampton Roads, Virginia, on 18 August 1838 to explore the south Atlantic and south Pacific oceans. Sailing south until ominous ice forced her withdrawal, *Peacock* rejoined the expedition at Valparaiso, Chile. The sloop visited various Pacific islands and then proceeded to the Columbia River, where she struck a shoal on 18 July 1841. During the night, heavy tides battered the sloop and ripped it to pieces.



Among the thousands of pieces of art held by the US Navy's History and Heritage Command is this engraving done by Murray Draper and Company that depicts the Battle of Lake Erie on 10 September 1813. This engagement was a major naval victory in the War of 1812, ensuring the United States control over the lake and precluding any territorial cession to Great Britain in the peace settlement. On that date, Commandant Oliver Hazard Perry's fleet of nine ships engaged six British warships. After Perry's flagship, USS *Lawrence*, suffered heavy casualties and had been reduced to a defenseless wreck, he transferred his command to a sister ship, USS *Niagara*. He led his forces directly into the British line, firing broadsides and forcing their surrender. Perry's ship flew a banner with James Lawrence's celebrated words "Don't Give Up the Ship" sewn on it.