

Spectacular Fireworks On January 1, 1813

by Lynne Belluscio

As 1812 came to a close in this little Western New York pioneer community, which had only recently been declared a legal entity in the state, the war with England continued to heat up.

Off the coast of Brazil, the British frigate Java was on its way from Portsmouth to India by way of the Cape of Good Hope at the end of South America. On board was the new Governor of Bombay and a new crew. It was reported that the crew had only practiced with the cannons once, but had never actually fired them. The Java had originally been a French vessel, but it had been captured by the British in 1811 and had been recommissioned.

The U.S.S. Constitution, known as Old Ironsides, had left Boston on December 13, accompanied by the U.S.S. Hornet. Its mission was to search out British ships that might be carrying American seamen, and more importantly, to engage in privateering which was sanctioned by the government. They were not much better than pirates. All the goods were sold at auction and the proceeds were divided between the U.S. Government and the ship owner.

As the Constitution and the Java sailed within range, they opened fire. The Java started the battle badly but managed to blast away the Constitution's helm with a mighty broadside which disabled the rudder. But the Java's rigging and masts had collapsed on the starboard side disabling the canons on that side. Attempts to fire the cannons set the sails and rigging ablaze.

The Java's captain was mortally wounded by a sharpshooter from the Constitution and although the captain of the Constitution was wounded, he remained at his post until the Java struck its colors and surrendered.

In the battle, Java suffered



"A Perfect Wreck" - This limited edition lithograph shows Constitution closing in on a ruined HMS Java, just moments before the latter ship surrendered, on 29 December 1812.

22 men killed, including its captain, and 102 wounded. The Constitution lost 14 men and 57 wounded. The battle rendered the Java a dismasted hulk, not fit to be taken as a prize. Instead her helm was removed and installed on the Constitution, replacing the one that had been shot away. (It should be noted, that the U.S.S. Constitution which is docked in Boston Harbor, has been refurbished so many times, that it is believed that the Java's helm was removed many years ago in a subsequent refurbishment.)

On New Year's Day, 1813, the Americans set the Java ablaze. Gunpowder stored in the magazine, blew up, creating a monumental New Year's Day fireworks display. But this was only the beginning and the fireworks continued for two more years, moving closer to our little pioneer settlement.

Almost to the day, a year later, on December 30, the British

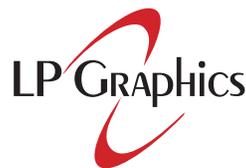
attacked the frontier settlement of Black Rock and set it on fire and moved on to Buffalo where every building was set ablaze. The war

continued another year and ended with the Treaty of Ghent, signed on December 24, 1814.



Postal & Consumer
FRIENDLY MAIL

Bring us your copy and your mailing list and we will print, address, prepare your mailing and deliver it to the post office!



1 Church St, LeRoy, NY 14482
585.768.2201
www.lpgraphics.net

YOU SAVE

Labor and Receive the Best Rates Available, when you use LP Graphics to:

- C.A.S.S. Processing
- First Class Presort
- Standard Mail
- Non-Profit
- Automated Rates
- Direct Impression
- Addressing
- Sorting, Bagging & Bundling
- Post Office Delivery
- Labeling
- Tabbing
- Folding

