

Soon after the date of Sherwin's letter we encounter a surprising document. William Woodbridge, collector of the port of Detroit, had persuaded the Treasury Department to permit him to procure a small sailing vessel to serve as a revenue cutter. She was built at Erie at a cost of \$600, a far cry from present-day conceptions of governmental expenditures. Named the *A. J. Dallas* and manned by sturdy Captain Gilbert Knapp and crew of three or four sailors, she cruised the Detroit River and adjacent waters intent upon discouraging smuggling and enforcing a proper degree of respect for the Government of the United States.

On September 2, 1818 the *Dallas* dropped down the river and out upon Lake Erie. Several vessels had been spoken, when in the distance a strange sail was observed veering and tacking in such manner as to indicate she was desirous of avoiding the *Dallas*. Captain Knapp set out in pursuit and presently came close enough to fire a blank shot across her bow. No attention being paid to this, he fired another loaded with ball. The vessel replied in kind, repeatedly firing a musket at the *Dallas* which continued the chase for several hours. Eventually the wind failed the cutter and the vessel she had been chasing passed from sight, heading toward the mouth of the Detroit River. Knapp reported, however, that in the chase he had come near enough to her to identify her as the *Hercules* of Detroit.

Luke Sherwin had stated in his letter of August 12 that the *Hercules* was to remain a week or more at Buffalo. Presumably she was returning to Detroit when Captain Knapp encountered her. But the character of James Thomas, recently a colonel in the United States Army and the acknowledged friend of Detroit's leading citizens, seems to render such conduct as Captain Knapp reported inexplicable.

Whatever the explanation of the mystery may be, the *Hercules* was engaged upon her last voyage. When favoring winds blew, the voyage from Detroit to Chicago might be made in a few days' time. When the winds were contrary, or lacking altogether, it might require many weeks. The *General Wayne*, which carried the troops from Detroit to build Fort Dearborn in 1816, had consumed a month on the voyage, and the *Hercules*, which left Lake Erie on September 2, was at Chicago ready to begin her return voyage to Detroit, exactly a month later.