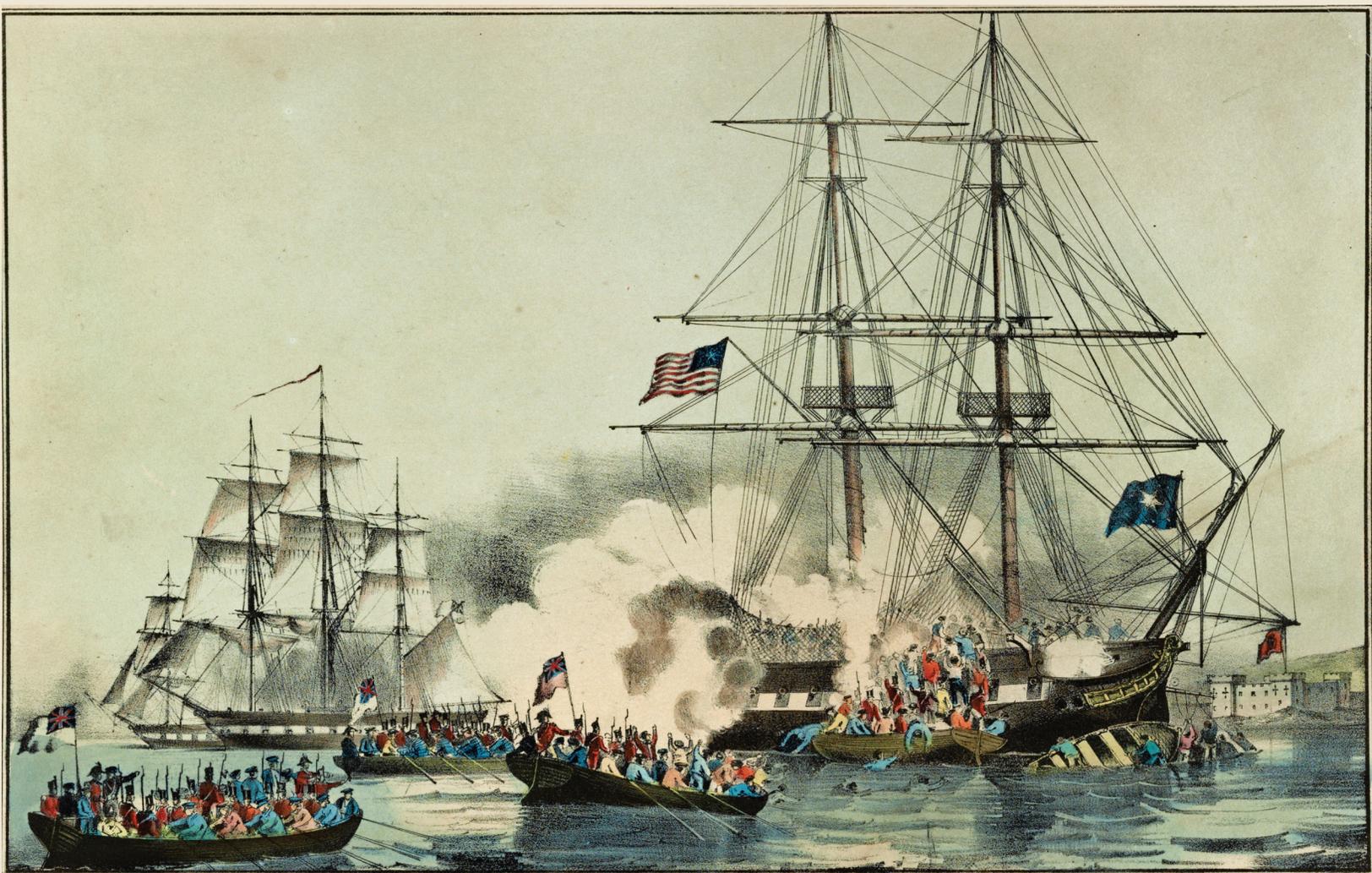


Virginia's Historical Highway Markers

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The War of 1812



Produced by the
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
for the 2014 Legacy Symposium
Fort Monroe & Hampton University
June 19–21, 2014

War of 1812 Historical Markers

The following compilation presents markers alphabetically by jurisdiction, then by marker title within each locality. Many of these markers, specifically those created by VDHR in partnership with the Virginia Bicentennial of the American War of 1812 Commission, have the text below on their reverse side. These bicentennial affiliated markers are flagged in this guide with an asterisk (*).

The War of 1812

Impressment of Americans into British service and the violation of American ships were among the causes of America's War of 1812 with the British, which lasted until 1815. Beginning in 1813, Virginians suffered from a British naval blockade of the Chesapeake Bay and from British troops plundering the countryside by the Bay and along the James, Rappahannock, and Potomac rivers. The Virginia militia deflected a British attempt to take Norfolk in 1813 and engaged British forces throughout the war. By the end of the war, more than 2000 enslaved African Americans in Virginia had gained their freedom aboard British ships.



Erected Markers

[Accomack County](#)

Tangier Island Q-7-a

The island was visited in 1608 by Captain John Smith, who gave it the name. A part was patented by Ambrose White in 1670. It was settled in 1686 by John Crockett and his sons' families. In 1814, it was the headquarters of a British fleet ravaging Chesapeake Bay. From here the fleet sailed to attack Fort McHenry near Baltimore. The Rev. Joshua Thomas, in a prayer, predicted the failure of the expedition. It was in this attack that the Star-Spangled Banner was written.

[Bedford County](#)

Joel Leftwich KM-6

Within a few miles of here lived and died Joel Leftwich, militia general, legislator, justice of the peace, and Revolutionary War veteran. In the War of 1812, he commanded a brigade of Virginia militia that marched in the winter of 1812-1813 to assist Gen. William Henry Harrison defeat the British in Ohio. While there, his men helped build Fort Meigs, the largest wooden-palisaded fort in North America. In the summer of 1814, he also commanded a militia brigade that marched to the outskirts of Baltimore to assist in protecting Washington and Baltimore from further British threats.

[City of Chesapeake](#)

Craney Island K-266

Seven miles northeast in the Elizabeth River is Craney Island, a landmark of two wars. During the War of 1812, the British attacked its fortifications on 22 June 1813, but were repulsed by its defenders including the Portsmouth artillery. During the Civil War, while abandoning Norfolk in April 1861, the Union forces scuttled the USS Merrimack. The Confederates refloated it and transformed it into their first ironclad, the CSS Virginia. Famous for its duel to a draw with the USS Monitor, the Virginia was scuttled at Craney Island on 11 May 1862, when the Confederates evacuated Norfolk.

[City of Hampton](#)

Admiral Sir George Cockburn on the Chesapeake WY-102*

During the War of 1812, a British naval squadron arrived in Hampton Roads on 4 Feb. 1813 to establish a naval blockade of the Chesapeake Bay. Later commanded by Adm. Sir George Cockburn, the squadron remained in the Bay for two years. Its missions were to seize USS Constellation, to occupy Norfolk, and to harass, seize, and destroy commercial traffic on the Bay and its tributaries. Although the attempt to take Nor-

folk failed, Cockburn's squadron carried out numerous raids on the James, Rappahannock, York, and Potomac rivers. In Aug. 1814, British forces burned Washington, but were later defeated at Baltimore.

British Approach to Hampton WY-104*

Following the British defeat at Craney Island on 22 June 1813, Adm. Sir John B. Warren sought revenge and ordered Adm. Sir George Cockburn and Gen. Sir Sidney Beckwith to attack Hampton. This port town was defended by Maj. Stapleton Crutchfield's 436 militiamen and a 7-gun water battery. During the evening of 24 June Beckwith's 2,400 men landed near here at Indian Creek. The next day, Beckwith's troops engaged Crutchfield's command on the road to Hampton. Capt. Servant's company of riflemen slowed the British advance until Beckwith could use artillery to force Servant's withdrawal. Hampton was then open to British occupation.

Historic Hampton W-87

The Native American village of Kecoughtan stood across the Hampton River in 1607. Soon after the English forcibly removed the inhabitants in 1610, the colonists settled there and the village grew. By the early eighteenth century, the royal customhouse, wharves, warehouses, and taverns were located in the bustling seaport town of Hampton. In an early Revolutionary War engagement, militiamen repulsed a British naval attack against Hampton on 24 Oct. 1775. During the Revolution, Hampton was the home port of the Virginia State Navy. On 25 June 1813, during the War of 1812, the British sacked the town. Confederates burned it in Aug. 1861 to prevent its use by Union troops and slaves.

Little England W-88-1

In 1634 Capps Point, later known as Little England, was patented by William Capps, a prominent planter who maintained a lucrative saltworks. He served as a



An artist's depiction of the occupation and burning of Washington D.C. from a book published in 1876. It shows "an inaccurate rendering of U.S. Capitol [as] there was no center building or pediment in 1814," according to the Library of Congress. (Library of Congress)

burgess in the 1619 General Assembly, the first representative legislative body in the New World. On 25 June 1813, during the War of 1812, British Admiral George Cockburn sailed into the mouth of Hampton River and shelled Hampton. A complement of 450 Virginia militiamen tried in vain to hold the British at bay with several small cannons mounted in the fortification at Little England. Afterward the British occupied and plundered the town.

Old Point Comfort Light W-93

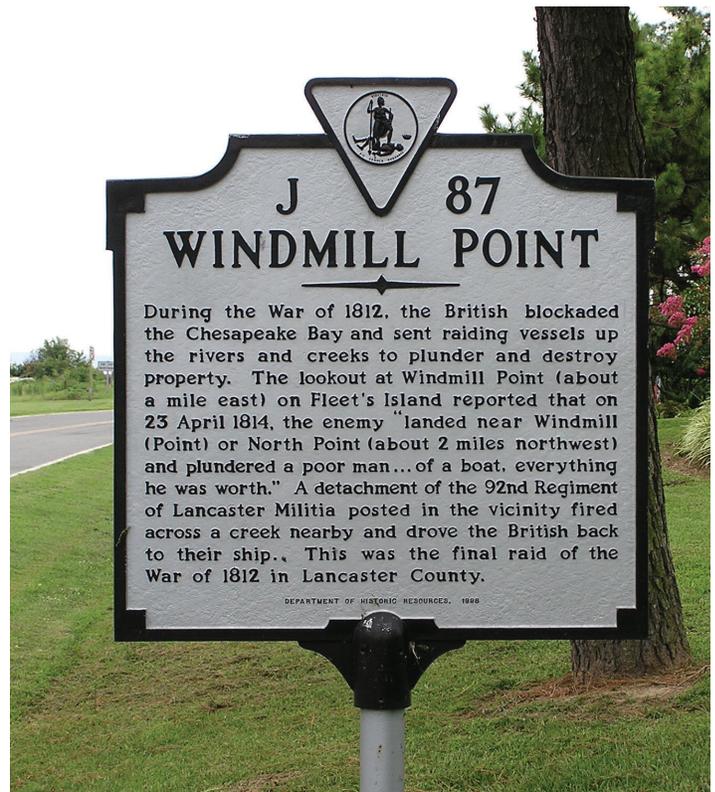
The lighthouse, built in 1802, is the oldest standing structure at Fort Monroe. It remains an active navigational aid, the property of the U.S. Coast Guard. During the War of 1812, the tower was used as a lookout by a British invasion force while they attacked Washington. The adjacent house was the lightkeepers' quarters until the light was automated in 1973 when the house became Army property.

Sack of Hampton WY-103*

As British Gen. Sidney Beckwith dispersed the local militia on 25 June 1813, Adm. Sir George Cockburn feigned an attack with barges at the mouth of the Hampton River. Hampton's water battery was abandoned and the British occupied the town. Their initial march in the town became known as the Sack of Hampton. There were reports that "at little Hampton, every horror was committed with impunity—rape, murder, pillage." These outrages became a rallying cry for the defense of the Chesapeake. By the end of June, the British left to raid elsewhere.

War of 1812 Military Legacy WY-105*

After damaging British coastal attacks during the War of 1812, Pres. James Madison recognized the need to improve the nation's coastal defense and naval power. In 1816, Congress created the Board of Engineers for Fortifications and in 1818, former Napoleon aide Gen. Simon Bernard became its chief. Bernard planned a series of masonry fortifications, later known as the Third System, to defend every major U.S. harbor. Fort Monroe was the first of these forts to be constructed, beginning in 1819. Named for Pres. James Monroe, it protected the entrance to Hampton Roads and the forerunner of the Norfolk Naval Shipyard, the Gosport Navy Yard.



A marker in Lancaster County erected in 1998. (Photo: VDHR)

[Henrico County](#)

Malvern Hill V-4

Nearby stood the Malvern Hill manor house built for Thomas Cocke in the 17th century. The Marquis de Lafayette camped here in July-August 1781, and elements of the Virginia militia encamped nearby during the War of 1812. During the Civil War, 1 July 1862, Gen. Robert E. Lee attacked Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan's Union Army of the Potomac here as it retreated to the James River from the gates of Richmond. Although he dealt Lee a bloody defeat, McClellan continued his withdrawal to Harrison's Landing. The Malvern Hill house survived the battle as a Federal headquarters but burned in 1905.

[Lancaster County](#)

Capture of the Dolphin J-107*

On 3 April 1813, one of the largest naval engagements in Virginia waters during the War of 1812 took place at the mouth of Corrotoman River. One hundred five British naval and marine forces under Lt. Polkinghorne managed to subdue four American privateers: Arab, Dolphin, Lynx, and Racer. The largest ship, Dolphin, out of Baltimore, had twelve guns and one hundred men commanded by Capt. W.J. Stafford. Stafford stubbornly refused to give up

when the other ships were taken, and defended his ship until he was severely wounded and his ship boarded.

Corotoman J-85

This place was three miles south. Little remains of the house. John Carter obtained patents for a large grant here before 1654, but the place is better known as the home of his son, Robert (“King”) Carter. In April, 1814, the British, raiding in the Chesapeake region, pillaged the plantation.

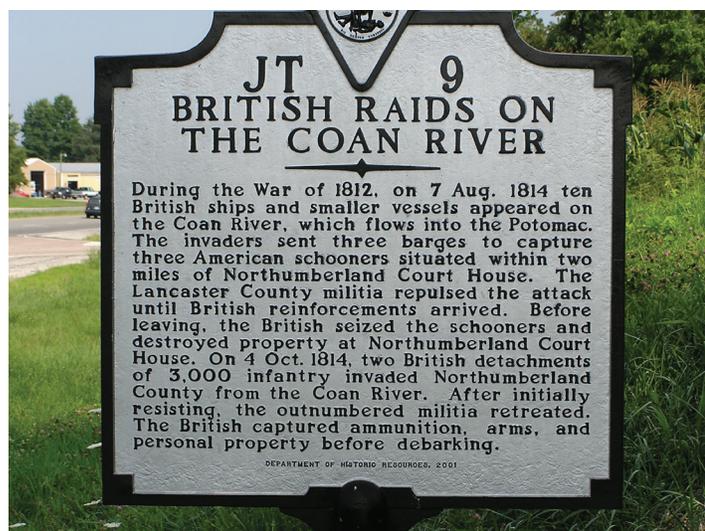
Windmill Point J-87

During the War of 1812, the British blockaded the Chesapeake Bay and sent raiding vessels up the rivers and creeks to plunder and destroy property. The lookout at Windmill Point (about a mile east) on Fleet’s Island reported that on 23 April 1814, the enemy “landed near Windmill [Point] or North Point (about 2 miles northwest) and plundered a poor man ... of a boat, everything he was worth.” A detachment of the 92nd Regiment of Lancaster Militia posted in the vicinity fired across a creek nearby and drove the British back to their ship. This was the final raid of the War of 1812 in Lancaster County.

Loudoun County

Charles Fenton Mercer T-24

Charles Fenton Mercer (1778-1858) is buried near here in Union Cemetery. After serving as an officer in the U.S. Army, he was recalled to service as an aide to Virginia Governor James Barbour of Virginia in the War



A marker in Northumberland County approved by VDHR in 2001. (Photo: VDHR)

of 1812 and rose to the rank of brigadier general while commanding militia forces in Norfolk. A prominent attorney in Loudoun and Fauquier counties, he served in the Virginia House of Delegates (1810-1817) and in the U.S. Congress (1817-1839), where he was among the first congressmen to introduce a bill to abolish slavery. He also advocated universal public education and promoted American commerce.

Northumberland County

African Americans in the War of 1812 O-69*

During the War of 1812, thousands of enslaved African Americans gained freedom by fighting for the British or serving as guides during British raids on coastal communities. Many were given the choice of enlisting in the armed services or settling in various locations throughout the British Empire. East of here on Tangier Island, at the British base of Fort Albion, the British trained African Americans to serve in the Colonial Marines. From Fort Albion, the Colonial Marines, along with British troops, engaged the Virginia militia in numerous landings along the Northern Neck and the Eastern Shore throughout the summer of 1814.

British Attacks at Kinsale and Mundy Point O-70*

Two miles east on 3 Aug. 1814, 500 British marines and seamen under Adm. Sir George Cockburn landed at Mundy’s Point and Kinsale. Opposing the enemy at the Point were Capt. William Henderson and thirty Northumberland county militiamen. Henderson’s company was forced to retreat to the county courthouse. Later that day, British forces took Kinsale, burned the town, and seized tobacco. Three days later, they began raids along the Coan River. Among the British troops were about fifty formerly enslaved African Americans, who were among the thousands who gained freedom by fighting or working for the British.

British Raids on the Coan River JT-9

During the War of 1812, on 7 Aug. 1814 ten British ships and smaller vessels appeared on the Coan River, which flows into the Potomac. The invaders sent three barges to capture three American schooners situated within two miles of Northumberland Court House. The Lancaster County militia repulsed the attack until

British reinforcements arrived. Before leaving, the British seized the schooners and destroyed property at Northumberland Court House. On 4 Oct. 1814, two British detachments of 3,000 infantry invaded Northumberland County from the Coan River. After initially resisting, the outnumbered militia retreated. The British captured ammunition, arms, and personal property before debarking.

Cherry Point and Cowart's Wharf 0-53

Settled by Englishmen about 1640, Cherry Point was later a childhood home of Mary Ball, the mother of George Washington. In August 1814 American militia repulsed a British force there. From the early 1800s to the 1940s, steamboats plied the waters of Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, and linked Baltimore with such Northern Neck ports of call as Cowart's Wharf. There, by the late 19th century, Slater ("Bump") Cowart had established a general store, seafood factory, and other businesses. From about 1920 to 1946, Samuel and Giles Headley built skipjacks, the preferred vessel of bay fishermen, at their nearby boatyard on Cherry Point.

Orange County

Dolley Madison JJ-29*

Born to Quaker parents in North Carolina, Dolley Payne lived with her family in Hanover County, Virginia until 1783. Following the death of her first husband, John Todd, she married Congressman James Madison in 1794. As First Lady of the United States from 1809-1817, her social graces, political acumen, and enthusiasm for public life became the standard by which first ladies were measured for more than a century afterward. Before the British burned the White House in August 1814, Mrs. Madison oversaw the removal and safeguard of many national treasures, including a large portrait of George Washington. She is buried at Montpelier.

City of Petersburg

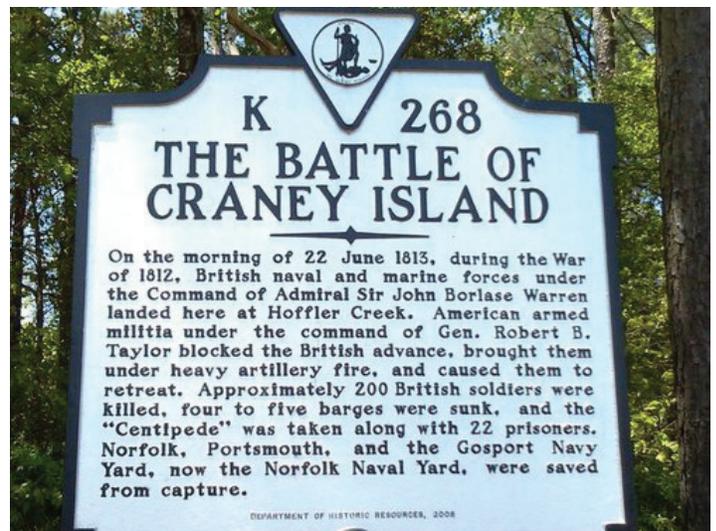
Blandford Church and Cemetery QA-11

The brick church on Well's Hill, now known as Old Blandford Church, was built between 1734 and 1737. The British General Phillips was buried in the church-

yard in 1781. In the cemetery is a monument to Captain McRae and the Petersburg volunteers, who at Fort Meigs in 1813 won for Petersburg the name of the "Cockade City of the Union." Soldiers of six wars rest here, among them 30,000 Confederates.

Poplar Lawn QA-5

Poplar Lawn is now known as Central Park. Here the Petersburg Volunteers camped in October 1812, before leaving for the Canadian border. Here Lafayette was greeted with music and speeches in 1824. The place was bought by the city in 1844. Volunteer companies enlisted here, April 19, 1861. In the siege of 1864-65 a hospital stood here.

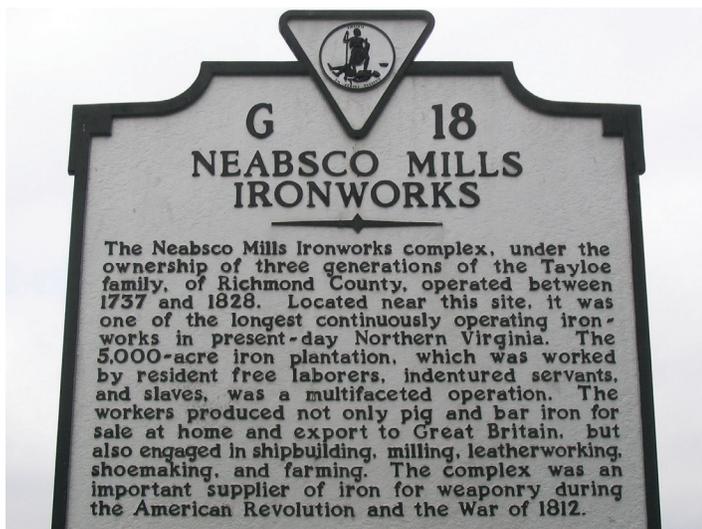


A City of Portsmouth marker from 2008. (Photo: VDHR)

City of Portsmouth

The Battle of Craney Island K-268

On the morning of 22 June 1813, during the War of 1812, British naval and marine forces under the Command of Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren landed here at Hoffer Creek. American armed militia under the command of Gen. Robert B. Taylor blocked the British advance, brought them under heavy artillery fire, and caused them to retreat. Approximately 200 British soldiers were killed, four to five barges were sunk, and the "Centipede" was taken along with 22 prisoners. Norfolk, Portsmouth, and the Gosport Navy Yard, now the Norfolk Naval Yard, were saved from capture.



A Prince William County marker from 1994. (Photo: VDHR)

Prince George County

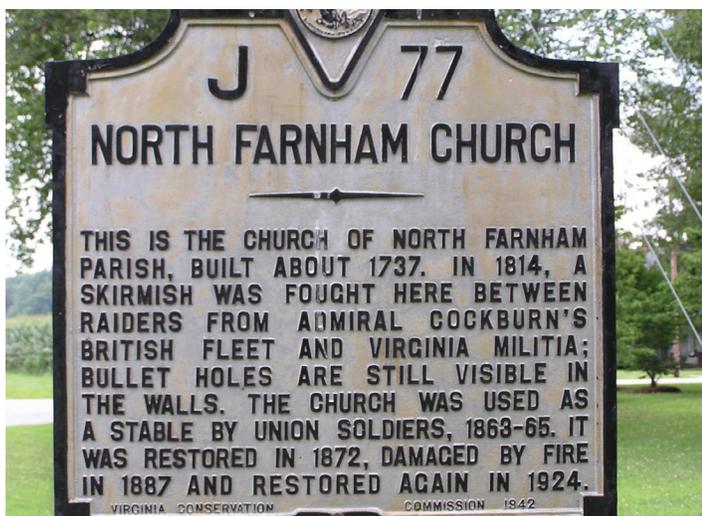
Hood's K-215

Four miles north on James River. There, on January 3, 1781, Benedict Arnold, ascending the river, was fired on by cannon. On January 10, Arnold, returning, sent ashore there a force that was ambushed by George Rogers Clark. Fort Powhatan stood there in the War of 1812.

Prince William County

Neabsco Mills Ironworks G-18

The Neabsco Mills Ironworks complex, under the ownership of three generations of the Tayloe family, of Richmond County, operated between 1737 and 1828.



A Richmond County marker erected in 1942 by authority of the Virginia Conservation Commission, the agency then tasked with managing Virginia's marker program. (Photo: VDHR)

Located near this site, it was one of the longest continuously operating ironworks in present-day Northern Virginia. The 5,000-acre iron plantation, which was worked by resident free laborers, indentured servants, and slaves, was a multifaceted operation. The workers produced not only pig and bar iron for sale at home and export to Great Britain, but also engaged in shipbuilding, milling, leatherworking, shoemaking, and farming. The complex was an important supplier of iron for weaponry during the American Revolution and the War of 1812.

Richmond County

North Farnham Church J-77

This is the church of North Farnham Parish, built about 1737. In 1814, a skirmish was fought here between raiders from Admiral Cockburn's British fleet and Virginia militia; bullet holes are still visible in the walls. The church was used as a stable by Union soldiers, 1863-65. It was restored in 1872, damaged by fire in 1887 and restored again in 1924.

Washington County

Governor David Campbell K-58

David Campbell was born in Aug. 1779 at Royal Oak in Washington County (present-day Smyth County), Virginia. His family eventually moved to Hall's Bottom outside Abingdon. Campbell served in the infantry during the War of 1812 and was promoted to lieutenant colonel of the 20th Regiment in March 1813. He also served in the Senate of the Virginia (1820-1824) and as Washington County Court clerk. During this time Campbell's federal style home, Mont Calm was completed. Elected governor in 1837, Campbell served until 1840. He died on 19 March 1859 and was buried in Sinking Spring Cemetery.

Westmoreland County

British Landing at Nomini Ferry JT-92*

On 20 July 1814, Adm. Sir George Cockburn sent about a thousand marines ashore at Nomini Ferry to attack the Westmoreland County militia under the command of Lt. Col. Richard E. Parker. Parker's Virginians bravely defended their positions, but were

soon outflanked by superior British forces and forced to retreat to Westmoreland Court House (Montross). Before they left the next morning, the British marines burned and destroyed a number of houses and several plantations in the immediate area, such as Bushfield, and ransacked nearby Nomini Church.

Kinsale JT-8

Two miles east, on picturesque Yeocomico River, is Kinsale, the founding of which the Assembly ordered in 1705. The town was established in 1784. Near by at the old home of the Bailey family, "The Great House," is the tomb of Midshipman James B. Sigourney, who in command of the sloop "Asp" fell in an engagement with the British in Yeocomico River, June 14, 1813.

War of 1812 Poisoning Inquiry at Yeocomico Church JT-93

In Spring 1814, a 36th U.S. Infantry detachment camped here at the near ruinous Yeocomico Church to guard against British Potomac River raids. Soon after the British landed at nearby Nomini Ferry in July, they found poisoned wine at the Thompson house and accused the Virginia militia of uncivilized warfare. Militia Gen. John P. Hungerford held a court of inquiry here in the repaired church and found the accusations "utterly without foundation." The British accepted the finding. In 1816, William L. Rogers, a 36th Regiment soldier, returned here from New Jersey, married Ann Murphy of Ayrfield, and coordinated the 1706 church's restoration.



This illustration was created by artist William Charles (1776-1820). Here's how the Library of Congress summarizes it: *The citizens of Alexandria, Virginia, are ridiculed in this scene for their lack of serious resistance against the British seizure of the city in 1814. At left two frightened gentlemen kneel with hands folded, pleading, "Pray Mr. Bull don't be too hard with us -- You know we were always friendly, even in the time of our Embargo!" In the center stands a bull in English seaman's clothes, holding out a long list of "Terms of Capitulation" to the Alexandrians. He says, "I must have all your Flour -- All your Tobacco -- All your Provisions -- All your Ships -- All your Merchandize -- every thing except your Porter and Perry -- keep them out of my sight, I've had enough of them already." His allusion is to American Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry and Captain David Porter. At right, a soldier and sailor carry off spirits, saying: "Push on Jack, the yankeys are not all so Cowardly as these Fellows here -- let's make the best of our time." and "Huzza boys!!! More Rum more Tobacco!"* (Library of Congress)

Markers To Be Erected



Gen. Winfield Scott. (Library of Congress)

and argued that it would lead to high taxes and a larger national debt. Randolph lost his reelection bid in 1813 over his opposition to the war, but was elected to his former seat in 1815. He died in Philadelphia in 1833 and is buried in Richmond.

Dinwiddie County

Winfield Scott (1786-1866) K-322*

Winfield Scott, one of America's early military heroes, was born nearby. He attended the College of William and Mary and in 1807 received a U.S. Army commission. During the War of 1812, wounded twice, he was promoted to brigadier general. He became Army general in chief in 1841. He commanded the amphibious force that captured Mexico City in 1848, ending the Mexican-American War. Scott remained loyal during the Civil War, and his Anaconda Plan—blockading the Southern coast and severing the Confederacy in the West—presaged eventual Union victory. Scott retired in Nov. 1861 and died at West Point, N.Y.

Essex County

British Raid on Tappahannock N-39*

On 2 Dec. 1814, British naval forces under the command of Capt. Robert Barrie shelled and seized the town of Tappahannock during the War of 1812. Aiding the British were three companies of African American Colonial Marines composed of escaped slaves. Before the British troops departed on 4 Dec., they ransacked a number of private houses, blew up a tannery, and burned two jails, the custom house, and the courthouse. They desecrated the burial vault of the prominent Ritchie family before Essex County militia reentered the town. (Note: This text subject to revision.)

Henrico County

Richmond's War of 1812 Defensive Camps V-53*

During the War of 1812, Virginia established three militia posts on the outskirts of Richmond to guard against possible British invasion. Within a mile of this point was built Camp Carter (Sept. 1814-Feb. 1815)

Caroline County

Lt. Col. George Armistead (1780-1818) ND-14*

Known for his service in the War of 1812, George Armistead was born here at Newmarket plantation. Armistead distinguished himself in 1813 during the capture of Fort George, Canada, but is best known as the commanding officer of Fort McHenry during the 1814 Battle of Baltimore, for which he earned the rank of lieutenant colonel. The American victory proved a turning point in the war, and was the inspiration for Francis Scott Key's poem "The Star Spangled Banner." Armistead commanded at Fort McHenry until his death in Baltimore in 1818. He is buried there in Old St. Paul's Cemetery.

Charlotte County

War of 1812 Opposition—John Randolph FR-28*

The War of 1812 sparked intense opposition, particularly among members of the Federalist Party who unanimously opposed the June 1812 declaration of war. One of its most outspoken opponents was Virginia Republican Congressman and later Senator John Randolph of nearby Roanoke Plantation. Echoing other opponents, he denounced the war as needless

under the command of Gen. John H. Cocke. Camp Holly Springs (April 1813-Feb. 1814) was located five miles southwest at Route 5 near Newmarket Road, under Gen. Robert Porterfield. Camp Bottoms' Bridge (Sept.-Nov. 1814), under the command of Gen. William Chamberlayne, was two miles east at Bottoms Bridge. These posts were never threatened by British forces during the war.

Norfolk

War of 1812 Elizabeth River Defenses KV-23*
President George Washington authorized the construction of 19 coastal defense fortifications in 1794. Nearby Fort Norfolk, which mounted 37 guns, and Fort Nelson, armed with 10 cannon, were constructed by 1810 to guard the Elizabeth River approaches to Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Gosport Navy Yard. Additional defensive works, Forts Barbour and Tar, were later added and a blockhouse was built on Craney Island. Because Craney Island was successfully defended against the British on 22 June 1813, Forts Norfolk and Nelson never fired their guns during the war. Only Fort Norfolk survived as a relic of this conflict.

Orange County

Governor James Barbour JJ-28*

Here at Barboursville lie the ruins of the family home of James Barbour, Virginia's governor during the War of 1812. As commander in chief of Virginia's militia forces, Barbour planned, organized, and directed the defense of Virginia from January 1812 until December 1814. Known for his oratorical skills and organizing talents, he inspired his fellow Virginians to defend the Commonwealth from relentless British incursions in Hampton Roads and the Northern Neck. On a few occasions, he took command of the militia while in the field. He later served as U.S. Senator from Virginia and U.S. Secretary of War.

Virginia Beach

British Naval Blockade and Cape Henry Lighthouse KV-17*

During the War of 1812, a British naval blockade along much of the U.S. East Coast disrupted foreign trade and interfered with commerce. On 4 Feb. 1813, the



The USS *Constitution* capturing HMS *Guerriere*, August 19, 1812. (Library of Congress)

blockade was extended to the Chesapeake Bay. At that time, the light at the Cape Henry Lighthouse was extinguished to prevent British ships from using it as a navigational aid. The British attacked the lighthouse early in Feb. 1813 and thereafter British scouting parties often visited the area to obtain freshwater from local wells. On 14 July 1813, Captain Lawson of the Princess Anne militia captured 20 British marines nearby.

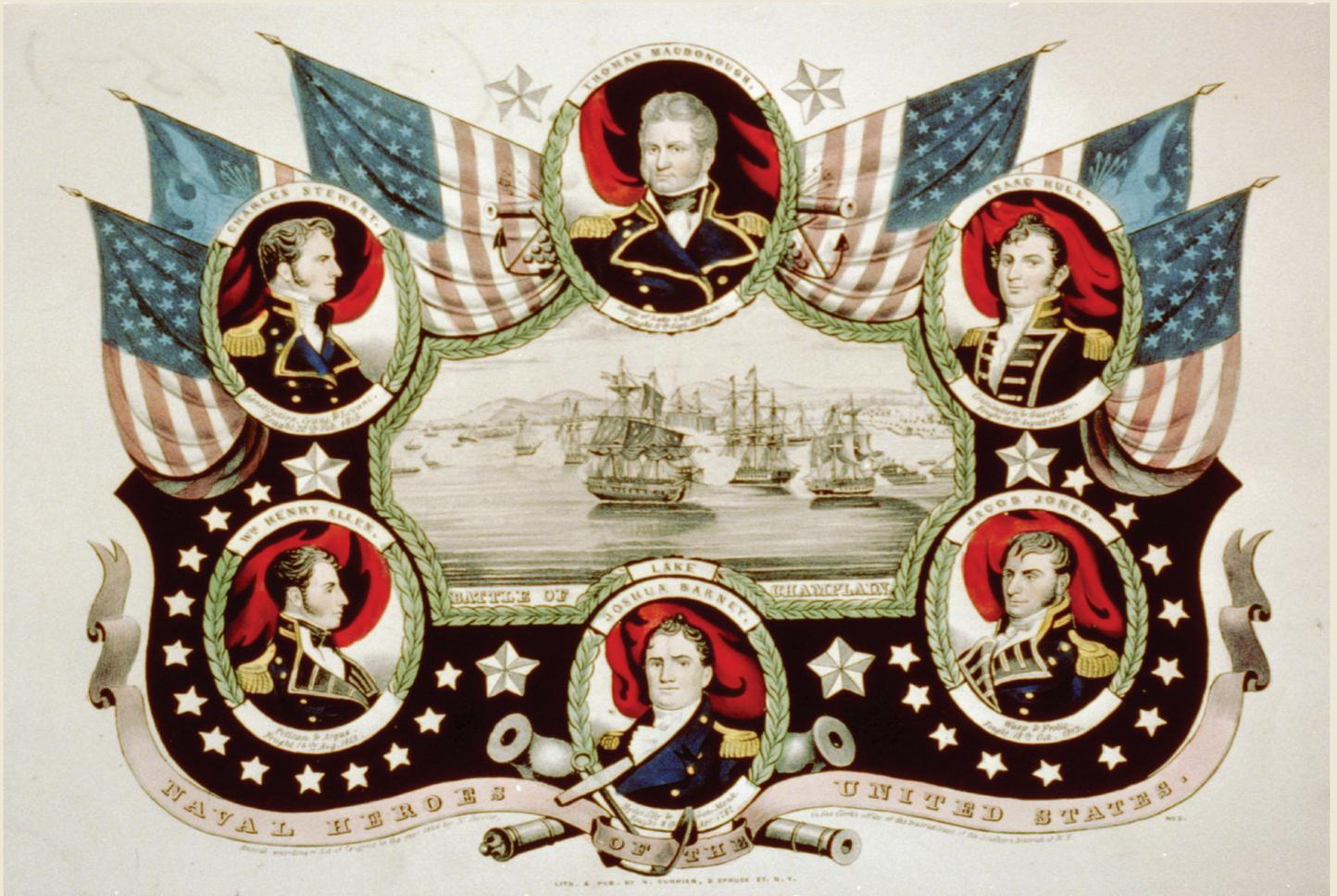
President-Little Belt Affair KV-18*

British impressment of United States sailors into military service prompted the 44-gun frigate USF President,

commanded by Comm. J. Rodgers, to cruise along the coast in this area watching for British warships. The President encountered the 20-gun HMS Little Belt off the Chesapeake Capes on 16 May 1811. When the British sloop did not identify its purpose, the two ships began exchanging broadsides. The Little Belt was badly damaged and the engagement ended. This naval duel provoked disagreement about freedom of the seas and impressment that resulted in the U.S. declaration of war in June 1812.



Notes



An N. Currier print (circa 1846) shows portraits of War of 1812 American naval officers Thomas MacDonough, Isaac Hull, Jacob Jones, Joshua Barney, Charles Stewart, and William Henry Allen surrounding a vignette of the battle of Lake Champlain. (Library of Congress)