

Sphex paper

March 13, 2014 / presented by Cham Light

Title of paper: Northwest 235

Good evening. I will begin this evening's paper with a very short questionnaire. Let me pass-out a sheet that I request you quickly fill-out and return to my son, Tray Light.

< N.B, questionnaire had list of seven different wars listed with request to indicate which one was America's "most forgotten", wait until all questionnaires return, will report results at the end >

We are in the middle of various events commemorating the sesquicentennial of the Civil War. Even though that war was one of the defining times of the history of the United States there is another war for which we are currently commemorating the bi-centennial.

So this evening my focus will be a survey of the War of 1812 with some attention given to the role played in it by soldiers from central VA.

I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Stuart Lee Butler who as a retired archivist from the Library of Congress is one of the leading scholars on the War of 1812 and on who's research and scholarship much of paper is based. He is a good friend and I wish he were here himself to hear my presentation.

The areas that I will cover are: 1, the causes of the war ; 2, a brief chronology of the war ; 3, the contribution made by central VA and 4, why the war was important.

At this time I pass-out some photo copies of maps of the war, you will be able to follow where most of these events happened by locations indicated on the map,

By way of introduction the war that we now commonly call the War of 1812 did not originally even have a title. If it was called anything it was the called the Second War of Independence. It really was not until about 1900 that the title we now use was commonly adopted. American has had many wars, some declared, some not, with a total of about 15,000 U.S. military deaths the War of 1812 was certainly not the bloodiest (the Civil War was the bloodiest with 625,000 and the Revolutionary War had at least 25,000 military deaths) and not one of the most important but at the time it was a critical step in the development and emergence of the United States.

So why did this war occur, what were its causes ? Like almost all wars there was a long build-up to the final outbreak of armed conflict.

THE CAUSES OF THE WAR

On June 18, 1812, the United States declared war on Great Britain and its colonies. This was the first declared war in the history of the young United States. It was not without controversy. The House of Representatives debated on it four days and their vote was 79 in favor to 49 against. The Senate vote was 19 in favor, 13 against. The declaration stemmed from the nearly twenty years of warfare between Great Britain and Napoleonic France, and the American desire to maintain peace with the belligerent powers. From 1793 until 1815, except for a brief period of peace in 1803, Great Britain and France were at war with one another. During this period, both nations attempted to protect their own trade by preventing the other from receiving aid from neutrals like the United States.

Each established blockades to interdict and seize goods destined for enemy ports. Because of Great Britain's larger naval forces, American ships were much more often seized by British than French forces; however, from 1798 to 1801, the United States fought an undeclared naval war or Quasi War against France over seizures of its ships. Between 1807 and 1809, Great Britain issued a series of Orders in Council which restricted the American commercial trade with Europe by banning trade with French ports, forcing neutrals to ship through British ports, and an outright ban of all trading between northwest Germany and all French controlled ports in the Mediterranean Sea.

Not only did Great Britain seize contraband goods, but they also seized merchant seamen whom they believed to be British citizens. In doing so, they impressed into service by the war's end, nearly ten thousand American citizens.

Although Great Britain recognized that its citizens could become naturalized American citizens, it also believed that naturalization did not absolve British-born citizens of their obligations to Great Britain. Great Britain refused to relent on its impressment policy, as it believed the policy was the only way in which it could maintain its naval supremacy during the wars.

British impressment and restrictive commercial policy were the two major reasons for the American declaration of war against Great Britain. Although not major reasons behind the declaration of war, many Americans on the western frontiers also resented continued British military occupation in the Northwest Territories, positions which they should have abandoned by provisions of the Treaty of Paris of 1783.

Moreover, Americans on the western frontier believed that the British supplied the Indians with arms and provisions from these posts and from nearby Canada to destabilize the frontier and raid American settlements.

Beginning in 1806 and continuing up to the declaration of war, the Jefferson and Madison Administrations sought to stay out of war by imposing commercial restrictions on its trade with Great Britain and France.

In 1806, Congress prohibited a partial non-importation on certain British goods. This was followed by a harsh non-exportation policy know as the Embargo which prevented American ships and goods from leaving American ports. This proved a commercial disaster for the United States and failed to change British or French attitudes.

Although repealed in 1809, a non-intercourse act replaced this policy which re-opened trade with the world except for the belligerent powers. A year later this was repealed in favor of what became known as Macon's Bill Number Two which committed the United States to resume trade with whatever power dropped its commercial restrictions and to continue non intercourse with the other power.

Napoleon signaled his intent to drop French trade restrictions in the summer of 1810, and the United States accepted prematurely the Emperor's word, though many Americans thought the French could not be trusted. When Great Britain refused to recognize France's position and alter her trade restrictions, President Madison recommended to the Twelfth Congress that war with Britain may be the only just recourse.

The vote for war in the House of Representatives was 79-49, and 19-13 in the Senate, the closest vote for a war declaration in American history. Support for the war was greatest in the South and West, and weakest in New England.

While most Republicans voted for the war, many did not. No Federalist in Congress voted for the declaration. The country as a whole was conflicted over the war with perhaps near a third of Americans opposed to war, although many thought there were grievances enough to go to war. For many Americans, the nation's honor was at stake, while others felt that the British, through their Orders in Council, were determined to destroy the American carrying trade under the guise of defeating Napoleon.

Most modern historians have now dismissed the belief that Americans went to war to annex Canada. Canada was a means for carrying on the war, not its cause.

HOW AND WHERE THE WAR WAS FOUGHT

The United States was completely unprepared for war against Great Britain in the summer of 1812.

Both the Jefferson and Madison administrations had reduced expenditures in the War and Navy Departments during the first decade of the eighteenth century. Consequently, the country's ability to wage offensive military and naval campaigns against British military and naval targets in Canada and on the sea was severely hampered.

Nor was the country in a strong position to finance the war. The First Bank of the United States expired years before the war, and no successor took its place to act as a central banking institution to finance the war. The war was largely financed through large loans at unattractive rates of interest, and through internal taxes that would strap the young country for some time to come.

The United States relied primarily on revenue from its import duties to finance government expenditures. After years of restrictive commerce directed against Great Britain and France, such duties became irregular and, in some cases, had gone uncollected.

THE WAR AT SEA

There were only two avenues open to American arms to get at British forces: on the high seas, and through Canada.

American naval forces were hopelessly outnumbered by the mighty Royal Navy. The War of 1812 at sea was fought mostly on the Atlantic, but included action in the Caribbean, and even in the South Pacific.

At the start of the war, the American navy consisted of some twenty warships, eight frigates and twelve sloops, plus an assortment of gunboats. This compared to the nearly six hundred ships the British had, but the best of the British warships were concentrated in European waters.

The American frigates were larger and carried more firepower than their British counterparts. They were also built of firmer oak and pine, and manned by experienced crews including some Englishmen. These discrepancies accounted for many of the American naval victories early in the war.

In what was considered to be the first major American naval victory of the war, Capt. John Rodgers of the *President* defeated British Capt. Richard Byron's *Belvidera* in June 1812.

Other significant victories included Capt. Isaac Hull's *Constitution (Old Ironsides)* over *Guerriere* in August 1812; Capt. Stephen Decatur with the *United States* over *Macedonian* October, 1812; and Capt. William Bainbridge in *Constitution* when it defeated *Java* on December 29, 1812. Although Capt. James Lawrence died when his ship *Chesapeake* was defeated at the hands of British Capt. Philip Broke and the *Shannon* on June 1, 1813, Captain Lawrence's famous words, "Don't Give up the Ship," soon became a national slogan and the Navy's motto. Capt. David Porter also became an American naval hero when he took the *Essex* into the Pacific by way of the Cape Horn. Later, Porter was defeated in battle at Valparaiso, Chile, when a squadron of British vessels trapped him in the harbor. American naval victories, however, did not decisively change the course of the war.

What they did, however, was to prove to Americans and the world that American ships could one-on-one hold their own against the best British frigates.

THE WAR IN CANADA 1812-1814

In comparison with the early American naval victories, the American military invasion along the Canadian border in 1812-1813 was anything but victorious. Days before the declaration of war, President Madison sent General William Hull with a small army to secure Detroit and Michigan Territory, and in case of war, to cross over to Canada and seize Fort Malden. Hull's delay in securing Detroit and his failure to take Fort Malden, led to the capture of his entire army of some two thousand at Detroit by Upper Canada's Governor, Maj. Gen. Sir Isaac Brock. This was followed by British victories at Mackinac and at Fort Dearborn at Chicago.

Following Hull's defeat, President Madison appointed Maj. Gen. William Henry Harrison in command of a new Northwest Army to retake Detroit, destroy Fort Malden and defeat the British and their Indian allies in Upper Canada.

Harrison, with some regular U.S. Army forces, and with 1500 militia each from Pennsylvania and Virginia, marched through Ohio to establish Fort Meigs on the Maumee as a major post from which to launch his Detroit campaign.

Part of Harrison's army under the command of Gen. James Winchester was captured by Col. Henry Proctor and Chief Tecumseh, at Frenchtown on the River Raisin, which delayed indefinitely Harrison's plans to retake Detroit.

Following the capture, British troops were unable to control their Indian allies who killed in cold blood over one hundred prisoners, many of whom were Kentuckians. This atrocity gave rise to the patriotic call on the lips of Kentuckians in future battles of "Remember the Raisin!"

Farther east along the Niagara River, Gen. Stephen Van Rensselaer led an inexperienced army composed mostly of militia across the Niagara River on the night of October 12-13, 1812, where he was soundly defeated by a smaller force of regular British and Canadian militia at Queenston Heights.

Van Rensselaer was succeeded by Irish-born Brig. Gen. Alexandria Smyth, who launched an ill-fated expedition to take Fort Erie in late November and early December 1812. Smyth managed to get only a portion of his army across the Niagara, but dallied in getting the rest across. Smyth delayed crossing for several days, and by that time the British had reinforced the shore batteries, and Smyth was forced to abandon any more invasion plans for the winter season.

Smyth's refusal to entertain further plans to invade Canada resulted in a massive army mutiny which destroyed any discipline and spirit left in the army of the Niagara.

What accounted for such poor showing by the American military forces? Much of the American army along the Niagara was composed of raw and inexperienced militia. The regular army at this time, however, was not that much better. The army, as a whole, was ill-supplied and ill-prepared for a late fall campaign. While the militia supplied large numbers of troops, the troops were undisciplined and unruly, and often refused to cross over into Canada. In addition, American efforts to invade Canada and hold territory suffered by and large from poor leadership and incompetent generals. This was slow to change.

In 1813, American military prospects improved along the Canadian frontier, but attempts to take Montreal and Quebec failed, and Americans were unable to seize and hold large portions of either Upper Canada (Ontario) or Lower Canada (Quebec).

In May and July of 1813, General Harrison's army withstood a massive siege at Fort Meigs, aside by Cham, we will hear more about Ft Meigs later on. Maj. George Croghan successfully defended Fort Stephenson from British attacks in August. Failures by the British to take either fort ended further British attempts to curtail American influence in the area.

By late spring 1813, at Presque Isle on Lake Erie, four ships were being built for what was to become part of Capt. Oliver H. Perry's Lake Erie Squadron.

Perry's victory over the British Commander Robert Barclay near Put-in-Bay on October 10, 1813, secured American control of Lake Erie.

Perry's statement to General Harrison that "We have met the enemy and they are ours" became one of the most memorable dispatches in naval history.

Perry's presence on the lake leading up to the victory on Lake Erie enabled General Harrison to pursue British Gen. Henry Proctor and Chief Tecumseh and defeat them both at the Battle of the Thames on October 9, 1813.

It was the first major American victory on Canadian soil and marked the end of British control and Indian threats in the Detroit area.

Meanwhile, to the east, Secretary of War John Armstrong and Maj. Gen. Henry Dearborn made plans to attack York (now Toronto), the Canadian capital, and seize British Forts George and Erie on the Niagara River.

Victories there would precede a main attack on Montreal later in the year. The joint military and naval attack on York took place on April 27, 1813, under the joint command of Commodore Isaac Chauncey and Brig. Gen. Zebulon Pike.

During the assault, General Pike was killed as well as several hundred Americans when a powder magazine exploded. During the battle, many Canadian parliamentary buildings were burned, and their contents destroyed or taken away.

The British used the destruction of York as their main reason for burning Washington the next year.

A British attack on Sackets's Harbor, New York, by British Commodore Sir James Yeo on May 29, 1813, failed to destroy the small naval base there, but indicated that the British could strike American bases across Lake Ontario.

Two days earlier, on May 27, 1813, Fort George was taken by General Dearborn's forces. Attempts to invade farther into Canada, failed when part of Brown's army was defeated by British General John Vincent at Stoney Creek.

Later, at Beaver Dams in June, two American generals, William Winder and John Chandler, were captured. American forces remained cooped up at the fort until December when Gen. George McClure abandoned the fort, but not before burning and destroying the nearby town of Newark. British forces used Newark as a pretext for a sustained campaign of severe reprisals on the New York-Niagara frontier during the winter of 1813-14, especially at Lewiston and Buffalo, resulting in the capture of the American fort at Niagara.

Meanwhile, Secretary Armstrong replaced General Dearborn with Maj. Gen. James Wilkinson. Armstrong planned an attack on Kingston or Montreal, but left too much discretion in the hands of Wilkinson who preferred to attack Montreal first, then Kingston.

The plan called for Wilkinson's forces, nearly seven thousand at Sacket's Harbor, to sail down the St. Lawrence and join Maj. Gen. Wade Hampton's four thousand troops then at Plattsburg, New York, for a coordinated attack on Montreal.

The whole plan began to fall apart when the two generals, who despised one another, began to feud over strategy, while bad weather delayed the start of the campaign. Wilkinson also suffered severe health problems which plagued him the whole campaign. Hampton's forces managed to reach Chateaugay, about fifty miles south of Montreal, where they were met by a smaller (about 1700 men), but more determined Canadian army of militia and Indians. Unable to dislodge the enemy, Hampton called off the battle, citing sickness in his army, and the fact that Armstrong had already ordered Hampton to winter in headquarters south of the Canadian border. Wilkinson's army fared no better against British and Canadian forces.

At the battle of Chrysler's Field, Ontario, November 11, 1813, Wilkinson's army was outmaneuvered by a much smaller army under Col. James Morrison, a setback that ended any further attempts to take Montreal.

Although American forces gained considerable experience and some victories in 1813, they were unable to take full advantage of them, and the Canadian border remained a stalemate.

Armed engagements erupted once again in the spring of 1814 when Commodore James Yeo and Gen. Gordon Drummond attacked the important naval and supply base of Oswego, New York, on May 5 to keep the Americans from gaining control of Lake Ontario. Gen. Jacob Brown, American commander on the lake, sent reinforcements to beat back the British attack, but not before the enemy confiscated thousands of barrels of supplies there. Brown later sent Gen. Winfield Scott with his 4,800 man army across the Niagara to seize Fort Erie on July 3, as a prelude to consolidating American control of Upper Canada. Fort Erie was taken, but British forces contested American control by attacking Brown's army at nearby Chippewa and Lundy's Lane later in July.

The battle at Lundy's Lane was perhaps the bloodiest in the war, with both sides sustaining huge losses. On September 17, two dramatic attempts to break out of Fort Erie succeeded in inflicting some damage on British arms, but the Americans remained in the fort until November when all American arms were withdrawn from Canada. The battles of Chippewa and Lundy's Lane proved that the American army could fight as professionally as British veterans of the Napoleonic war.

This was due largely to the tough discipline and training imposed on American troops by Gen. Winfield Scott during the previous winter.

The last major offensive by British forces in Canada was the joint army-navy campaign down the Lake Champlain corridor towards Plattsburg, New York, that would split the New England states from the rest of the country.

Gen. Sir George Prevost had about 7,000 men, compared to the American force at Plattsburg of about 3,500 regulars and 3,000 militia troops under the command of Gen. Alexander Macomb. Prevost, however, depended on the success of the naval forces on the lake to maintain supply lines into New York. While Prevost's army neared Plattsburg on September 5, 1814, and probed for weaknesses in the American defensive lines, he waited until Captain Downie's squadron to arrive on September 9. Defending the lake was Navy Lt. Thomas MacDonough's squadron of three warships and three gunboats.

On September 11, the decisive battle of Lake Champlain was fought ending in the American victory, and the death of Captain Downie. Without naval control of the lake, General Prevost concluded he could not long sustain his army, and ordered a retreat back to Canada.

The American victories at Plattsburg and Lake Champlain, coming at the same time as that of Baltimore, gave Americans a new optimism about the war's end.

THE WAR IN THE SOUTH, 1812-1815

CHESAPEAKE BAY

On February 4, 1813, British naval forces under Vice Admiral John B. Warren sailed into Hampton Roads and imposed a naval blockade of the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays.

Later that year, the blockade was extended from Georgia to as far north as Long Island Sound.

The blockade served several purposes: to prevent maritime trade from entering or leaving the East Coast, and to destroy the many swift sailing privateers particularly out of Baltimore and New York, that continued to menace British merchantmen.

By the end of the war, Chesapeake Bay privateers alone were responsible for taking or destroying nearly five hundred British merchantmen.

British presence in the Chesapeake Bay so close to the capital also prevented more military resources and manpower from being sent from Virginia and Maryland to Canada.

Warren's chief lieutenant, Adm. Sir George Cockburn, was given the order to harass, capture, or destroy as much Chesapeake Bay commercial shipping as possible, as well as capturing or destroying goods and provisions at ports. He was also to capture the port of Norfolk, and destroy, if possible, the frigate USS *Constellation*.

Cockburn's squadron effectively blockaded the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, and later sent his squadrons up the bay in May 1813 where he raided Havre-de-Grace, and burned much of Frenchtown, Georgetown, and Fredericktown on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

Reinforced by Admiral Warren at Norfolk, the British admirals planned an amphibious assault on Craney Island as a prelude to taking Norfolk. British forces of 2,500 on the morning of June 22, 1813, were repulsed by a force of roughly eight hundred militia artillerymen, and naval personnel from USS *Constellation* and its gunboats.

Three days later, on June 25, Cockburn's naval and marine forces easily overwhelmed about five hundred Virginia militia defending nearby Hampton, and occupied the town for several days.

The town had little or no strategic importance, but during its occupation, a battalion of French soldiers enrolled by the British from the Peninsular War in Spain, wreaked havoc on the town, indiscriminately killing, pillaging, and, in some cases raping some citizens.

A few weeks later, Cockburn stationed a few frigates to maintain the blockade, and sailed with a small squadron south to Oracoke on North Carolina's Outer Banks, to put an end to inland trade being shipped to that port from Virginia through the Albemarle Sound.

During the rest of 1813, Cockburn's forces visited the James, the Rappahannock and Potomac Rivers, landing occasionally and engaging with the local militia in Virginia's Northern Neck and Eastern Shore. During this time, British naval forces captured or sunk over a hundred commercial vessels in the bay.

WASHINGTON-BALTIMORE CAMPAIGNS

In April 1814, British and allied forces entered Paris and forced Napoleon to abdicate and be sent to exile in Elba.

This event freed up considerable numbers of British troops which were sent to America to prosecute the war more forcibly there.

In the Chesapeake, Vice Admiral Alexander Cochrane relieved Admiral Warren, and promised a more vigorous enforcement of the war there.

Cockburn was given additional Royal Marines and army regiments and ordered to execute a campaign of reprisals for the American burning of York and Newark.

This Cockburn did in the summer of 1814 using his reinforced squadrons to raid and pillage up and down the Chesapeake Bay, especially along Virginia's Northern Neck counties and the southern Maryland counties of St. Mary's and Calvert.

On April 2, 1814, Cochrane issued a proclamation to all enslaved persons that those coming aboard British ships or occupied territory would be greeted as free persons.

Many of those who came in were enlisted in the Colonial Marines and trained to fight against their former masters.

Tangier Island was transformed into a British base, Fort Albion, which served as a training base for the Marines. Former enslaved men and families were offered jobs at the British naval base in Bermuda, or were transported to New Brunswick or Nova Scotia. By the end of the war, an estimated several thousand former slaves of the Chesapeake states were liberated by British forces.

Norfolk was no longer considered a priority for British assaults by early 1814. In July 1814, Admiral Cockburn convinced Admiral Cochrane that an assault on Washington or Baltimore was feasible.

The capital was part of the new Tenth Military District under the command of Brig. Gen. William Winder. Neither Winder nor Armstrong fortified Washington for a possible attack, believing that Baltimore was the preferred target.

With four thousand British regulars and Royal Marines under the command of Gen. Robert Ross and the naval squadrons under Cockburn, the British cleared out the remaining American opposition in the Patuxent, and landed at Benedict, Maryland on August 19.

They quickly pushed aside an ineffectual militia army composed primarily of militia from Maryland at Bladensburg, Maryland, a few miles outside of Washington D.C., at the battle of the same name on the late morning early afternoon of August 24. President Madison and other government officials had been at the battle and were almost captured. The battle has been called “the greatest disgrace ever dealt to American arms” and the “most humiliating episode in American history” with the retreating militia literally running through the streets of Washington just ahead of the British in the late afternoon of August 24. The battle has derogatorily been called the Blandensburg Races.

Once the British had captured Washington they torched the Capitol Building, the White House, and other government buildings.

Meanwhile, a secondary British squadron under the command of Capt. James Gordon sailed up the Potomac to meet the main British force at Washington.

Delayed by weather and shoals, Gordon’s squadron arrived too late to reinforce Cockburn, but managed to destroy Fort Washington, twelve miles below Washington, and force the leaders of Alexandria to hand over to the British all the available tobacco, corn, cotton and flour on the city’s wharves.

On returning to the main fleet, Gordon’s squadron and his prize ships encountered stiff resistance from hastily built batteries of Virginia militia troops a few miles below Mount Vernon from September 4-5, but escaped relatively unharmed.

Flushed with victory at Washington, the unified British fleet and Ross’ army were transported up the Patapsco River for a full-scale assault on Baltimore, the nation’s third largest city, and the privateering capital of the Chesapeake.

Baltimore's defenses, consisting of approximately 17,000 soldiers were under the command of U.S. Senator, and now Maj. Gen. Samuel Smith. These were mostly militia from Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, and some U.S. regulars. Baltimore's chief defensive point was Fort McHenry, commanding the sea entrance into Baltimore on the Patapsco River. In command there was Virginia-born Maj. George Armistead and U.S. artillery consisting of 1,000 men. The fort had to be taken in order for British ships to safely enter the harbor.

Shortly after unloading his men at North Point, near Baltimore, Maryland, on September 12, 1814, British General Ross was killed by Maryland militia. Col. Arthur Brooke succeeded to command. Brooke fought a strong skirmish with Maryland militia, and marched his army within two miles of the eastern part of the city where he found nearly fifteen thousand militia behind well-entrenched fortifications and professionally constructed bastions.

Meanwhile, Admiral Cochrane's bombships and frigates began an all-night barrage on Fort McHenry on September 13 into the 14th. The next morning, the fort remained in American hands.

Francis Scott Key, an attorney who was on one of the British ships to secure release of Dr. William Beanes, witnessed the aerial bombardment of rockets and bombs. So moved was Scott on seeing a large American flag still waving in the morning through rain and cloud, that he wrote the poem, the "Star Spangled Banner". The poem was later set to music, and became in 1931 the nation's national anthem. So in addition to 2014 being the bi-centennial of the War of 1812 it is also the bi-centennial of our National Anthem.

Cochrane called off the assault on Fort McHenry, and Brooke considered the Baltimore defenses too strong to overcome. The British withdrew from Baltimore the next day.

By the end of November, British naval forces in the Chesapeake Bay were greatly reduced to prepare for the assault on New Orleans.

A small, but still potent squadron remained in the Bay to maintain the naval blockade until the end of the war.

In November, Admiral Cochrane began to prepare for a Gulf of Mexico campaign and the capture of New Orleans. As a diversion, he sent Admiral Cockburn to the South Carolina and Georgia coasts to draw off speculation to where the main assault would fall.

Meanwhile, General Jackson, now commander of the Gulf area U.S. Army units, suspected a major British campaign somewhere on the Gulf when the British seized Pensacola, but failed to take Mobile.

When Jackson learned that Cochrane intended to take New Orleans, he arrived at the city on December 1, 1814, to prepare for its defenses.

Cochrane arrived in Louisiana on December 8, landed part of the British army on December 23, and waited for Gen. Edward Pakenham's main army, which did not arrive until December 25. A

series of skirmishes between the two forces took place in the days leading up to the main battle on January 8, 1815.

The British sent wave after wave of soldiers against Jackson's well entrenched army. In a combined volley of artillery, rifles, and muskets, Jackson's regulars and militia dealt a devastating blow to the British line, resulting in the death of General Pakenham.

The British lost primarily because Jackson had enough time to pick and prepare his defenses, and the British failed to apply their numerical strength at the right places.

One of the most interesting aspects of the battle was that it was fought two weeks after the Treaty of Ghent was signed and which had ended the war but news of the victory coming as it did about the same time as the treaty reached Washington, it cemented the two in the minds of most Americans.

THE CREEK CAMPAIGNS, 1813-14

< N.B., since because of voting for new members the meeting was running later than usual I summarized this section to save some time >

War between the United States and part of the Creek nation came not as a result of British encouragement as was the case in the Northwest, but from a civil war within the Creek Nation.

This war was in part aided by the influence of Tecumseh and only much later by promises of Spanish and British help.

The Upper Creeks in western Alabama, known later as "Red Sticks" resisted white cultural influence and encroachment on their lands, and feuded with the eastern tribes, known as Lower Creeks, who were more amenable to white influence.

Soon, local militias of Georgia and Mississippi Territory, and Tennessee were drawn into the struggle against the Upper Creeks.

When the Upper Creeks besieged Fort Mims, and later massacred its inhabitants in August 1813, the federal government mobilized nearby regular army units to aid the Georgia, and Tennessee militias.

Throughout the rest of 1813, Georgia militia commander, John Floyd, and Tennessee militia generals, John Cocke and Andrew Jackson, carried out a sustained campaign to destroy the Creek presence in the territory.

The American military effort, however, was constantly plagued by logistical problems in supplying arms and rations. While the militias inflicted small tactical defeats upon the Red Sticks, they were unable to completely defeat them.

On March 27, 1814, at a bend in the Tallapoosa River called Horseshoe Bend, General Jackson inflicted a resounding defeat upon a large body of Red Sticks, completely annihilating most of the 1000 warriors.

The victory proved so decisive that in the ensuing months, most of the Red Stick leaders and warriors lay down their arms or fled to Florida.

A final peace treaty with the Creek Nation was signed at Fort Jackson on August 9, 1814, which, in effect, ceded almost 22 million acres of Creek land to the United States, and opened to white settlers all Alabama land previously closed to Americans.

< N.B. since I had summarized the above I moved this section to later in the paper, this portion was read after the section on central Virginia >

It needs to be pointed out that African Americans, like they have in every war America has fought, served in large numbers in the U.S. military and distinguished themselves on both land and sea. While it is difficult to estimate the exact numbers of African Americans who served it is estimated that about a quarter of the personnel in the American naval squadrons of the Battle of Lake Erie were black, and Admiral Perry wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Navy praising their courage. A large number of African Americans, slave and free, helped to defend Baltimore though some slaves had gone over to the British in exchange of a promise of freedom. Of the 6,000 troops who defended New Orleans in that battle 500 were black. So not only has the War of 1812 been overlooked generally so also has the contributions of African Americans.

CENTRAL VIRGINIA

< N.B., Cham passed out the map showing the march of the VA Brigade with Joel Leftwich historical marker in Bedford county on reverse, at end of remarks just before questions Cham passed out sheet of War of 1812 in VA from the Commission web site >

As I stated at the beginning of the paper Virginia did play a significant role in the War and there is even a central Virginia connection that I think is interesting.

Virginia furnished 65,354 infantry men, 8,803 cavalry men, 7,698 artillery men and 10,036 men in other miscellaneous troops for a total of 91,891 men from Virginia who were engaged at one time or another in the war.

In response to the U.S. Congress Declaration of War and President James Madison's subsequent call to the states of Virginia and Pennsylvania each to provide troops for the war effort VA Governor James Barbour, in an order dated Sept 3, 1812, called-up four VA state brigades of militia, mostly from the western counties that now form West VA.

Their orders were to move northwest into the area of Ohio and to join forces with General William Henry Harrison and his Northwestern Army in his efforts to retake Detroit which had been captured by the British. General Harrison in turn would order them to march to a military camp and help build Fort Meigs which was to become the largest wooden palisaded fort ever built in the United States.

This same order appointed Brigadier General Joel Leftwich of Bedford County who was commander of the VA Twelveth Brigade from the counties of Bedford, Campbell, Patrick, Franklin and Henry counties, to lead the two regiments of what would be called the Virginia Brigade, with no numerical designation. Leftwich's family were some of the earliest settlers in Bedford County. He was a veteran of the Revolutionary War, had served in the VA House of Delegates and had been a Brigadier General since 1809. In his later years he lived at the home of his nephew Augustine Leftwich located at 614 Federal St where the African American Star of the West Mason Hall is currently located. I also must confess Joel Leftwich is one of my fourth great grandfathers and I am fortunate enough to have inherited one of his firearms, a KY long rifle.

In response to the order from General Barbour General Leftwich and his staff quickly started to organize the brigade and on September 18, 1812, after a large send-off event which included speeches and a dinner, they headed west on a journey of about 250 miles to Point Pleasant (which is where the Kanawha River merges into the Ohio River) where they would join the two regiments which comprised the brigade. Leftwich's staff included his younger brother Major Jabez Leftwich who served as Inspector General and later served in the U.S. Congress from Bedford County, Major Claiborne Watts Gooch as Quartermaster and Hugh Mercer as Brigade Surgeon.

General Leftwich and his staff arrived at Point Pleasant at about 3:00 on Sept 26 1812 to find only one lieutenant and 18 men present at the encampment.

The next several weeks saw the men trickle into camp, allowed supplies to arrive and provided Leftwich with time to organize the brigade which eventually numbered a total of 1,350 men.

On October 18 the first regiment crossed the river into Ohio and was followed by the second regiment on October 20.

They then embarked on what was to be a very challenging march in a northwesterly direction of approximately 235 miles, and hence the title of this paper, to the military camp called Ft Meigs (named for the then Governor of Ohio) in the northwest corner of Ohio and which was on the Maumee River as it flows into Lake Erie. The town is now called Perrysburg and is a suburb of Toledo, Ohio.

The march was over roads, if you could call them that, which were actually more like cow paths. The march went through the towns of Gallipolis, Chillicothe, Franklinton, which is present day Columbus, Delaware and Upper Sandusky. They stayed for multiple nights in some of these areas while they received additional supplies and coordinated their activities with other units of Harrison's army. The march can be very closely retraced on present roads basically going right up the middle of Ohio.

Towards the end of the march the infamous Black Swamp had to be traversed. The Black Swamp was nearly impassible especially in view of the incessant rains and very cold temperatures,

General Leftwich wrote it was the coldest weather he had experienced since Valley Forge in the American Revolution. The soldiers had to march over ten miles in knee deep high water.

They finally arrived, after almost four months, at the encampment that was to become Fort Meigs on February 2, 1813. During the course of the march a total of 22 of the soldiers died, almost all in the last legs of the journey.

Under the supervision of two West Point trained regular U.S. Army officers the Virginia Brigade started digging trenches, felling trees, splitting logs, setting up pickets and raising the block houses necessary to fortify the fort which covered nine acres. During this time period the brigade was under constant surveillance by Indians aligned with the British . At least six soldiers died either due to weather related issues or Indian ambushes during the construction of the fort. When finished the circumference of the fort was 2,500 yards with eight blockhouses and four artillery batteries made of fifteen foot timber of ten to twelve inches in diameter set firmly three feet into the ground.

The weather conditions continued to be brutal with snow on the ground and frequent storms. The ice on the river was nearly two feet thick.

General Harrison visited the fort several times to confer with General Leftwich. Leftwich was anxious to have his troops directly engage the British and their Indian allies but Harrison did not want them to stop working on the fort as it was to be a key operational base for Harrison's planned offensive in the spring of 1813.

When the Brigade was formed the enlistment period was for six months so after about six weeks at the encampment the Brigade needed to make preparations to leave the fort and return home. Leftwich and the Brigade left on March 27, 1813. Most of the work on the fort had been finished though there was some additional work done by regular U.S. Army soldiers who relieved the VA Brigade. Leftwich considered staying for an additional time period but he had no authority to do so from VA Governor Barbour plus there had been no pay since the previous October which had the soldiers in no mood to continue their enlistment.

Fort Meigs was subsequently besieged twice by the British and their Indian allies. The first time was from April 30 to May 5 and the second was from July 28 to August 2, both times the attacks / sieges were unsuccessful.

Leftwich and the Brigade took a different route home that avoided the Black Swamp and then they followed the original route home with Leftwich back to Bedford County by the early spring of 1813. During their service a total of 44 men died, about 3 % of the total force. It is not possible to establish exactly how many deserted or were court marshaled but they lost about 7 % of the men to desertion and 10 % to medical discharge.

On May 22, 1813 Governor Barbour wrote Leftwich and congratulated him on a "safe return and fidelity in which you performed." Leftwich himself wrote of his men that in spite of not having fought directly with the enemy that, because of the challenges they had overcome to help build the fort, they had become "real patriots and heroic soldiers".

General Leftwich was called back into active command by Governor Barbour when on July 28, 1814 he was tasked with leading a brigade in defense of Richmond and then ordered to Baltimore to do the same. Leftwich was the only VA General who had two brigade commands during the course of the War of 1812.

TREATY OF GHENT AND THE WAR'S LEGACY

Although a search for peace between Great Britain and the United States started soon after war was declared, serious negotiations did not begin until President Madison appointed a delegation to follow up on Russia's offer of mediation in March 1813.

While the British dismissed Russia's help, it signaled that it would continue to discuss the issue.

After rejecting Gothenburg in Sweden, both nations settled on Ghent, Belgium, as the site for talks. Terms presented by the respected representatives at the negotiations softened and hardened as news of either American or British victories reached the negotiators.

With the impressment issue settled by the end of the war in Europe, Indian and territorial issues remained to be worked out.

Finally, on December 24, 1814, the American team, which consisted of Henry Clay, Senator James Bayard, and John Quincy Adams, signed the treaty.

Congress ratified the treaty on February 15, 1815 and its provisions became effective two days later.

The treaty recognized the pre-War boundaries between Canada and the U.S. In many ways, all of the belligerents got something out of the war, except for the Native Americans, who lost their British protection and were now at the mercy of a new expansionist America.

The Canadians saw the war as a victory over the Americans which kept them within the British Empire; and the British, despite initial losses at sea and on land, thought their military and naval forces performed admirably, especially when considering they were at war with France for the past twenty years.

The War of 1812 was not the seminal event that the Revolutionary War, Civil War, or World War II were to American history.

As wars go, the war was short, only lasting two and a half years, but the war left its impact, especially on the American people at the time. Despite the fact that the nation did not achieve the ends it sought in war, and despite the intense internal dissention over the declaration of war, the country as a whole felt a renewed pride of accomplishment and strength at the war's end.

Militarily, the war was a transforming event. American leaders saw that the militia, although effective in certain situations, was not enough to defend the country from attack, and that a professional army was necessary to defend the nation.

The American navy on the lakes and seas proved that it was an equal to the British frigates. It, too, needed to become a larger and better trained navy if it were to maintain the nation's trade and commerce and project growing American power.

Politically, the end of the war also saw the decline and fall of the Federalist Party as well, and a renewed Democratic-Republican Party that would dominate American politics for the next twenty years.

Six future American Presidents participated in the war politically or militarily: James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, William H. Harrison, John Tyler, and Zachary Taylor.

It is always interesting to get the perspective of one's opponent's viewpoint of a war. In the case of the War of 1812 Winston Churchill in Book IX of his monumental four volume A History of the English-Speaking Peoples, had a relatively short ten page chapter on the war. He identified the causes of the war as impressments, violations of the three-mile limit, blockades and Orders-in-Council though he added the land hunger of some Americans to seize Canada. He also stated that though the war did not change any boundaries it did ensure that "the United States were never again refused proper treatment as an independent power". So Churchill's views are very consistent with those of our own as to the causes and effects of the War of 1812.

< review questionnaire results, Tray indicated no votes for World War One, ½ write-in vote for the Seminole War, ½ write in vote for American Indian Wars, 1 and ½ votes for the War of 1812, three votes for the Korean War, three votes for the Spanish American War, 3 and ½ votes for the French and Indian War and 7 and ½ votes for the Mexican American War, >

In conclusion I hope this evening's presentation has helped you gain a fuller understanding of the War of 1812 and I would be happy to try and answer any questions.

Comments and questions included one from Robin Wood about what a wide area the war covered (Robin told Cham after the meeting he had considered a paper on the War of 1812 but concluded it was too much to cover in the typical 45 minutes of Sphex), Hermina Hendricks said she had gone to college at Fort Defiance in Ohio and it was good to better understand why this area identified with the War of 1812, Michael Gillette asked a questions about exactly how the British decided who they were impressing into service, Jim Houston made a comment about a large hog, an American general capturing it in Canada and that is how we got the term Canadian Bacon which brought a laugh from everyone and Cham announced with that show stopper he concluded his presentation. After the meeting George Dawson talked with Cham about the

painting of St Luke at VA Baptist Hospital painted by William De Leftwich Dodge and Graham Gilmer asked how the Clark cemetery that Cham had restored was where General Leftwich was buried and Cham explained about Mt airy etc.

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- Also there are many web sites including: www.va1812bicentennial.dls.virginia.gov



KM

6

**JOEL LEFTWICH
(1760-1846)**

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.

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES, 2010

THE COMMISSION

The 2008 Virginia General Assembly created the Virginia Commission on the Bicentennial of the American War of 1812 to prepare for and commemorate the bicentennial anniversary of Virginia's participation in the American War of 1812.

Legislation creating the Commission was co-patroned by Del. M. Kirkland Cox (HB1391) and by Senator Stephen H. Martin (SB383). The Commission plans commemorative events and activities, encourages research to promote historical literacy and understanding of the war, and supports organizations throughout the state as they plan commemorative events.

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SPECIAL EVENTS

SPRING 2011 - Madison & Monroe Wreath Laying.

JANUARY 11, 2012 - A Symphonic Tribute, in cooperation with the Richmond Symphony, will begin the commemoration of the bicentennial in Richmond.

JUNE 1-12, 2012 - OpSail Virginia 2012 and the U. S. Navy will bring tall ships to Hampton Roads to commemorate the War of 1812 in Norfolk.

SUMMER 2013 - Chesapeake Bay Tour retracing British invasion of Hampton Roads and battles along the Chesapeake and Northern Neck.

JUNE 2014 - Legacy Symposium, a family-friendly, educational symposium will be held at Fort Monroe.



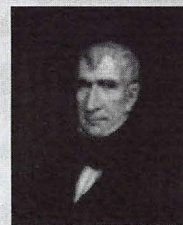
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Division of Legislative Services
910 Capitol Street
General Assembly Building, 2nd Floor
Richmond, VA 23219

BRENDA H. EDWARDS
Senior Research Associate

EMAIL:
bedwards@dls.virginia.gov

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VIRGINIA WAR OF 1812

HERITAGE TRAIL SITES

The American War of 1812 was fought between the United States and Britain from 1812 through 1815.

The strategic location of the Chesapeake Bay near the nation's capital made it a prime target for the British, and the coast of Virginia figured prominently in the Atlantic theatre of operations - there were some 73 armed encounters with the British that took place in Virginia during the war.

An estimated 70,000 Virginians served during the War of 1812 and actively fought in Maryland, Virginia, and Ohio, as well as in several naval engagements.

The War of 1812 helped forge a national identity among the American states and laid the groundwork for a national system of homeland defense and a professional military within the United States.

If you wish to learn more about Virginia's role in the war please visit these historic sites on the Virginia War of 1812 Heritage Trail:



◆ **Ash Lawn-Highland**—This historic house located near Charlottesville, was home to President James Monroe and his wife, Elizabeth Kortright Monroe. Visit this working farm, museum year round.

◆ **Berkeley Plantation**—Tour the birthplace of President William Henry Harrison, the major general of the Army of the Northwest during the War of 1812. Harrison won a key victory at the Battle of the Thames which saw Tecumseh killed and the war on the Lake Erie front effectively ended. Knowledgeable and enthusiastic guides in period costumes conduct tours of the original 1726 mansion in Charles City.

◆ **City of Hampton**— In addition to Fort Monroe, there are several sites throughout the City of Hampton related to the War of 1812. These include the Old Point Comfort Lighthouse, where British forces under Rear Admiral Sir George Cockburn used the lighthouse as an observation post, and Fort Wool, which was constructed following the War of 1812 to protect Hampton Roads from the British.

◆ **Craney Island/Hoffler Creek**— British forces landed here in June 1813. American armed militia under the command of Gen. Robert B. Taylor blocked their 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. The Battle of Craney Island represents one of the few American-won battles during the War of 1812. Visit the site of this Battle and spend some time at Hoffler Creek Wildlife Preserve.

◆ **Fort Monroe**—This military installation is located in Hampton Roads, Virginia, on the Peninsula overlooking the Chesapeake Bay. During the War of 1812, British forces under Rear Admiral Sir George Cockburn used the lighthouse at Fort Monroe, the Old Point Comfort Lighthouse, as an observation post. The fort was constructed as part of a coastal defense strategy developed by the U.S. Army following the War of 1812.

◆ **Fort Norfolk**—Fort Norfolk is the last remaining of 19 harbor-front forts authorized in 1794 by President George Washington. This Fort helped protect the city of Norfolk during the War of 1812. Visit Fort Norfolk in the Ghent section of Norfolk.

◆ **Lynnhaven Roads**— Visit First Landing State Park to learn about Lynnhaven Roads, formerly known as Lynnhaven Bay, where the British blockaded the Bay with a line of 72 gun ships and other ships during the War of 1812.

◆ **Montpelier**— In the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Orange, Virginia, Montpelier was the lifelong home of James Madison. You can spend all day, or an hour or two, visiting the grounds and learning more about the Father of the Constitution.

◆ **Tangier Island**— 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.

The sites included in this brochure are part of the Virginia War of 1812 Heritage Trail and just a snapshot of the many historical places in Virginia.



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