The War of 1812 and America's Navy

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'America's Navy: Keeping the Sea Free Since 1812.'

THE SECOND WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

FREEDOM OF THE SEAS: CORE CAUSE FOR WAR
Great Britain threatens American rights by:
- prohibiting U.S. exports
- blockading U.S. ports
- impressing American Sailors into the Royal Navy

The United States declared war for the first time in our young nation’s history to protect “free trade and Sailors’ rights.”

Our small U.S. Navy took on the world’s most powerful fleet and, through successful ship to ship action, proved its importance to our national security.

BY THE NUMBERS...

U.S. Navy in 1812
- 15 warships
- 62 gunboats
- 1,000 officers and men

Royal Navy in 1812
- 600 ships
- 130,000 men

Major Events Throughout the War

JUNE 18, 1812
War Is Declared
Congress and President James Madison supported a declaration of war against England. While our young nation may have been underprepared for war, we had a capable Navy including six exceptional frigates, U.S. merchant men who volunteered for service, and outstanding Naval leaders.

AUGUST-OCTOBER 1812
A Noteworthy Navy
- August 19: USS Constitution, commanded by Capt. Isaac Hull, destroys HMS Guerrière off the coast of Nova Scotia and earns its nickname “Old Ironsides.”
- October 25: USS United States, commanded by Capt. Stephen Decatur, captures the HMS Macedonian off the coast of North Africa.

SEPTEMBER 10, 1813
“We have met the enemy and they are ours…”
Master Commandant Oliver Hazard Perry uttered this famous phrase during the Battle of Lake Erie off the coast of Ohio. One of the largest battles of the war, 10 U.S. Navy vessels captured six British vessels, securing American control of the Northwest Territory.

JANUARY 8, 1815
Meanwhile, On The Mississippi...
The Battle of New Orleans was the final major battle of the War of 1812. Sailors and Marines under Commandant Daniel T. Patterson fought in General Andrew Jackson’s lines on the eastern side of the Mississippi River and defeated British forces attempting to seize New Orleans.

DECEMBER 24, 1814
War is Over: Status Quo Ante Bellum
The War of 1812 was officially brought to a close by the Treaty of Ghent, with both sides agreeing to go back to the way things were before the war, or “status quo ante bellum.”

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1814
We Win Some, We Lose Some
- August 24: The Americans were defeated at the Battle of Bladensburg, Md., allowing the British to advance into Washington, D.C. and burn the nation’s capital, including the White House and the Washington Navy Yard.
- September 12-14: During the Battle of Baltimore, the Americans retreated from the British at North Point but held strong at Fort McHenry and secured the port city of Baltimore.

Did You Know?
The defense at Fort McHenry inspired professional lawyer and aspiring poet Francis Scott Key to write the Star-Spangled Banner, which was recognized for official use by the Navy in 1819. In 1931, it officially became the National Anthem of the United States.

The flag seen here is the original garrison flag that flew in the dawn sky over the ramparts of Fort McHenry. The flag, commissioned by Joshua Barlow and his committee, was made out of wool bunting and the stars out of cotton. Mary Pickering, with the help of her mother and daughter, sewed and charged a grand total of $405.90 for their labor.

Francis Scott Key