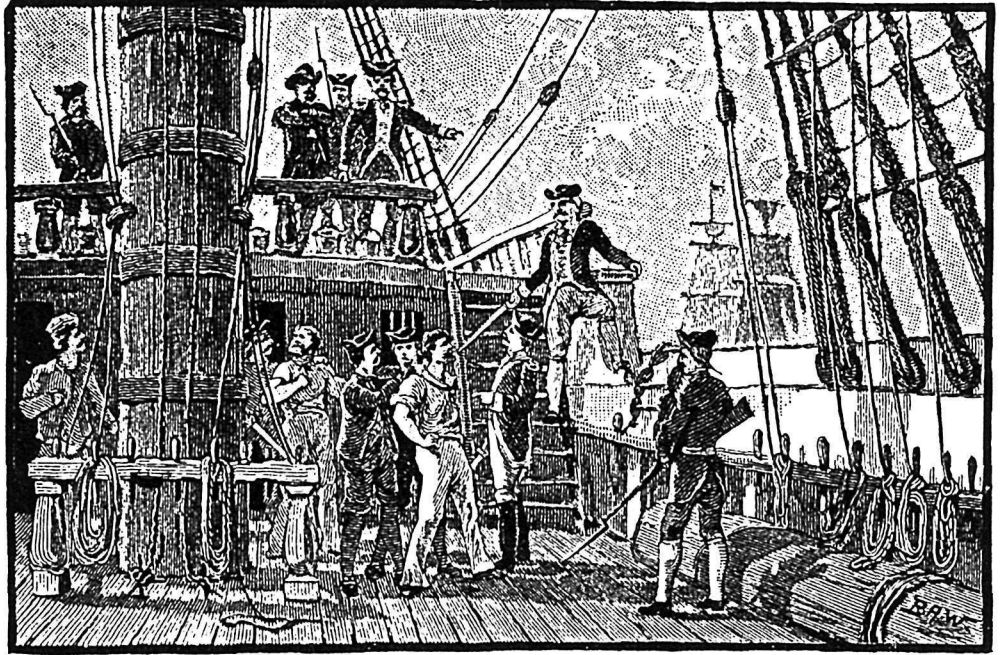




The War of 1812

Free Trade and Sailors' Rights!

Animosity best describes the relationship between Britain and America in the decades after the American Revolution. As Britain struggled in a war against France, Americans perceived Britain's economic and politically protective measures as coercive to the young republic's free trade. A key grievance was impressments. Forcibly boarding American ships, British naval officers would search and seize presumed British subjects (sailors) for return to *the King's Service*. Numerous outrages led to war.



On June 18, 1812 President James Madison signed a congressionally approved declaration – America's *Second War of Independence* began.

Mere Matter of Marching

Excitement ebbed and great disappointments marked the nature of America's progress in the war. Although there were limited successes at sea, land operations were dismal as the attempt to capture Canada proved. The two year and eight month war cost the lives of an estimated 20,000 Americans, mostly by disease. The national debt ballooned to \$127,000,000.

Fayette County was spared from flame, sword, and tomahawk as its location was well away from combat theaters and corridors. Regardless, over 800 county residents enlisted into twelve militia companies raised to serve far from home. It was on Lake Erie that members of the Fayette militia gained recognition as volunteer **Landsmen** aboard Master Commandant Perry's fleet. The September 10, 1813 naval



battle was an epic victory for Perry as he won control of Lake Erie for the United States.



From "The Rat – in the Treasury" to able Statesman abroad

As Secretary of the Treasury, Albert Gallatin thought the war declaration necessary to 'scare' Britain out of its effort to retard American free trade. Gallatin struggled though, to meet the financial demands of war, only to antagonize his growing legion of critics. Looking for a change Gallatin writes, "*I have made up my mind that I could in no other manner be more usefully employed for the present than on the negotiation of a peace.*"



The first peace attempt failed as Britain refused to negotiate through a third party. By October 1814 British and American commissioners were meeting in the Belgium city of Ghent. The British made extraordinary and harsh demands for peace. Sensing the British were bluffing, the adroit American

camp was able to bring the British back to reasonable terms for discussion. Amazingly, the main cause for war, impressment, was dropped from debate and not included in the final treaty. On the afternoon of December 24, 1814 agreement was reached and the Treaty of Ghent signed.

Although Gallatin was a last minute addition to the American delegation he was the even keel that kept his team on task. Fellow commissioner, John Quincy Adams, praised Gallatin as contributing the largest and most important share to the conclusion of the peace. In a war noted for few American triumphs its greatest victory was won at the peace table.

The peace treaty ended the war status quo ante bellum (same condition as before the war) with the following significant outcomes for America:

- An increase in respect as an emerging nation
- Important trade and boundary treaties with Great Britain
- Development of a professional army and navy
- The story and lyrics of our National Anthem
- Increase in sectionalism (leading, eventually, to secession & civil war)
- Industrialism
- Severe economic cycles of boom and bust
- Destruction of the pan-American Indian movement under Shawnee Tecumseh and continued erosion/displacement of other native nations

Image Credit

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