

DEFENDING NORFOLK

*An Early Battle with the British in 1813
Saves a Thriving American Port*

BY STUART L. BUTLER

*“Virginia . . . hangs on
the fate of Norfolk”*

—Gen. Robert Barraud Taylor on the
Defense of Norfolk, 1812–1813

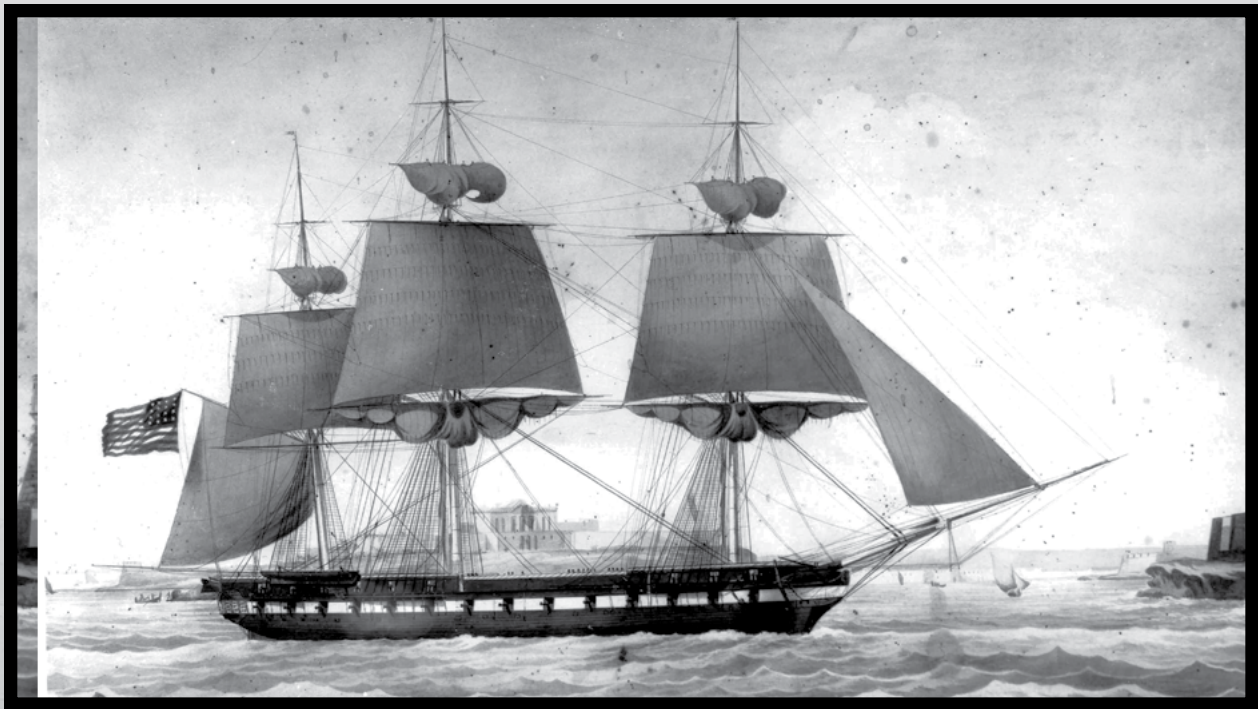
Governor James Barbour of Virginia was getting nervous. Very nervous. Could he get help from Washington to defend the port of Norfolk against any attempt by the British to seize it and gain a foothold in the American South?

“We have an entire Confidence that the General Government will be disposed to extend to us our due portion of National Defense,” he wrote on April 17, 1812, to Secretary of War William Eustis in his plea for help.

Then Barbour took off on a tour of several weeks to inspect Virginia’s Tidewater area, the commonwealth’s southeast portion, and in particular the exact strength of Norfolk’s defenses.

He had very good reason to worry about Norfolk’s defenses. They were important not just to Virginia and northeastern

A detailed map of the Norfolk area shows the critical American defenses at Forts Norfolk and Nelson and at Craney Island.



The frigate *Constellation*, anchored on the Elizabeth River, eluded capture by the British. Their warships could not enter the river, and three nighttime attempts to board her failed.

North Carolina but to the United States of America, then in its 36th year of independence from Great Britain.

Norfolk was an important port. Cotton, flour, and tobacco were shipped from there to points around the world. Although it ranked below New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore in overall foreign trade, it was still important for trade and for its strategic location.

The British certainly thought so.

They knew that if they could capture Norfolk, they could destroy the USS *Constellation*, one of two American frigates in the Chesapeake Bay. And they could seize large quantities of goods headed overseas and halt Virginia's and North Carolina's foreign trade.

If they could capture Norfolk, they could make it an entry point to the Chesapeake, a jumping-off point for military action in the South and for troops heading north to Washington and to other cities.

Barbour knew that it would be a catastrophe if Norfolk fell into British hands. And he pleaded with officials in Washington and with Secretary Eustis for help in defending it. He had even expressed his concerns to a fellow Virginian, President James Madison.

Eustis told Barbour that President Madison was acutely aware of Virginia's vulnerability and told him that a company of regulars would soon be marching toward Norfolk. But he was vague about any future commitments.

Meanwhile, Norfolk remained in the British Navy's crosshairs.

The War of 1812 is Declared; Trouble Among the Troops

Two months later, what's often called the nation's "second war for independence"—the War of 1812—began.

The United States declared war on Great Britain on June 18, and Barbour again pressed both the secretary of war and the President for a strong federal commitment of assistance to defend the Norfolk area.

But Washington didn't give him everything he wanted. It was now clear to Barbour that no regular U.S. forces would be sent anytime soon and that Virginia, for the time being, would have to rely on its own "internal resources."

The best he could get was the federal government's assurance that it would authorize a troop of 500 militia for a six-month deployment for Norfolk's defense and the authorization to call up additional units.

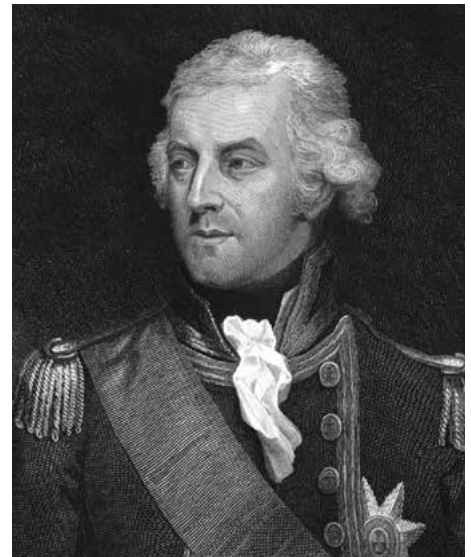
The 500 militia troops arrived in Norfolk on August 11, 1812. They would be the first of many militia troops called into federal service to bolster Norfolk's defenses during the war. Commanding what regular troops there were in the Norfolk area—mostly artillery—was Lt. Col. Constant Freeman, an experienced Revolutionary War artillery officer.



Facing the threat of a British attack in April 1812, Governor James Barbour pressed the secretary of war and the President for assistance in defending Virginia, particularly Norfolk, the state's major port.



Gen. Robert Barraud Taylor assumed command of American regular and militia troops at Norfolk on March 4, 1813. Despite low morale, illness, lack of pay, and desertions, he was able to bolster defenses there before the British attack.



Vice Adm. Sir John Borlase Warren's plan was to blockade the Chesapeake and capture or destroy commercial ships and the primary American warship at Norfolk, the frigate *Constellation*.

Freeman commanded from Fort Nelson, a Revolutionary War fortification built on the south side of the Elizabeth River across from Norfolk. Opposite, on the Norfolk side of the river, was Fort Norfolk, also built in the Revolutionary War era. Both forts had been greatly refortified since then and were the chief river defenses for the town.

Freeman immediately ordered the new troops to Fort Norfolk, many of them having to camp beyond the fort's perimeters in a sprawling peach orchard, a field that became home to many thousands more as the war progressed.

Right away, Freeman encountered disciplinary problems with militia troops who were now under U.S. Army regulations. Some "have taken up the strange opinion that it is not their duty to turn out in fatigue parties . . . because they are not quartered within Fort Norfolk," he observed.

Other problems arose when regular U.S. Army officers tried to enlist some militia troops soon after arriving. But the detachment was to suffer not from the enemy but from a disease that struck many of the militia troops in the late fall of that year. One artillery company suffered most from the sickness, which killed at least seven of its men. Others became deathly ill.

Freeman, in command of all regular U.S. Army troops in the Norfolk area since 1811, was charged with the defenses of Forts Nelson and Norfolk. He consulted with U.S. Army engineers on the best means to defend the city and worked tirelessly so that the forts had sufficient number of guns and ordnance.

General Taylor Takes Over As British Warships Arrive

British warships did not arrive in Lynnhaven Bay until February 1813, long after the war officially began. The governor requested from Secretary Eustis authority to replace the 500 militia troops called up in the summer with a 1,200-man militia force.

Then he ordered into service not only local Norfolk area militia but also volunteer units from Richmond and vicinity to form the new force. Barbour argued that if these numbers were acceptable to the War Department, such a force would require at least a brigadier general to command it.

In that case, Barbour had only one man in mind for the position—Robert B. Taylor.

Taylor was a Norfolk native and brilliant jurist renowned for his organizational and oratorical skills. Barbour had appointed

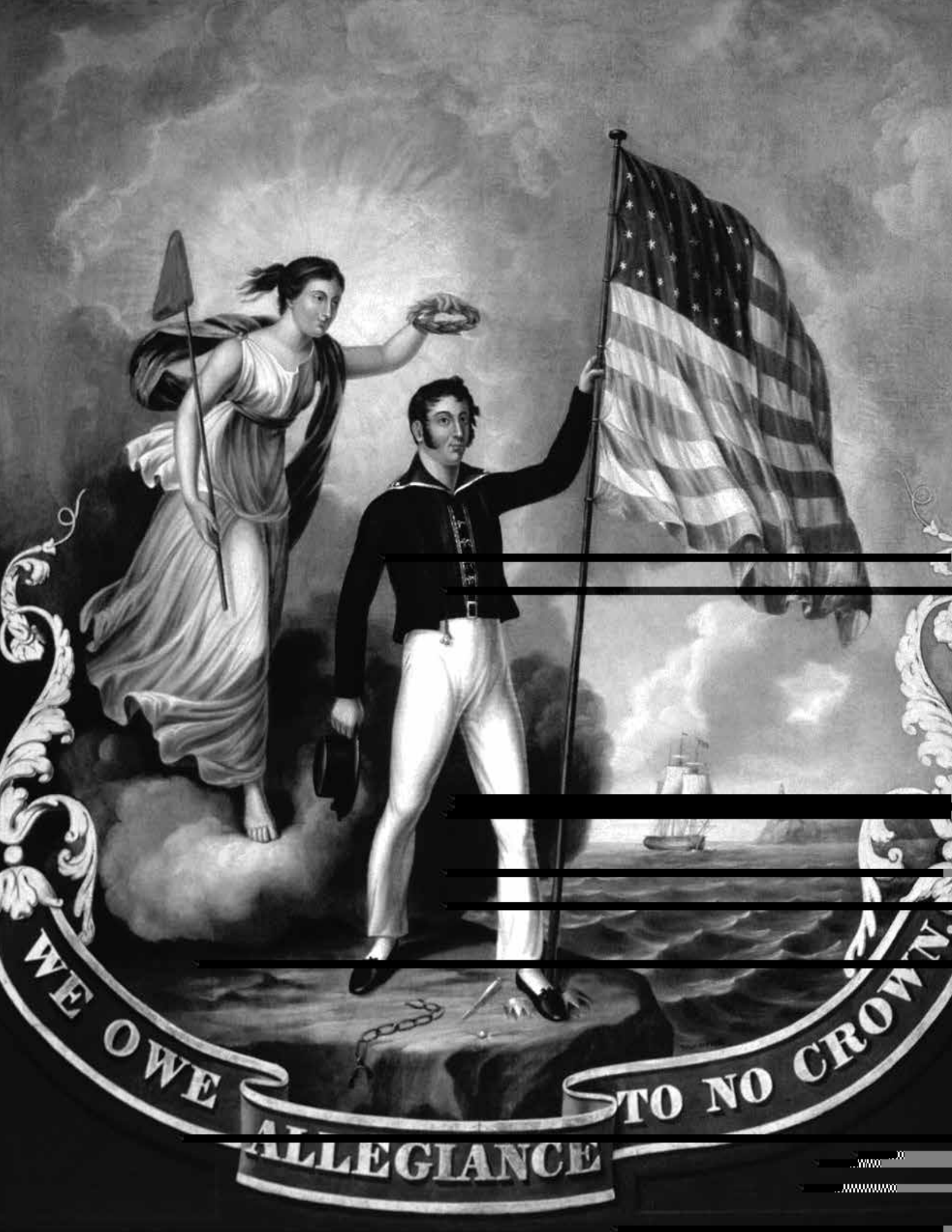
him colonel of the First State Cavalry in April 1812 and promoted him to brigadier general to command the Ninth Brigade (encompassing all of southeastern Virginia) the month before the British warships arrived.

Ironically, Taylor had opposed the war and helped to form the Federalist convention that met in Staunton in October 1812. But Barbour would not be deterred. He needed the best man for the job. Taylor, regardless of his political views, would remain in command for only a year—but an important year.

Still in command of the regular forces at Norfolk, however, was Colonel Freeman. Not until the new militia brigade was incorporated into the federal establishment would Freeman have to step aside for Taylor to command all the troops defending Norfolk. This was a delicate matter, as Freeman was far more experienced in military matters than the new militia general.

Barbour had already dispatched two of his top aides to Washington to confer with then acting Secretary of War James Monroe on the transfer of state troops to federal control and Taylor's assumption of command. Barbour in-

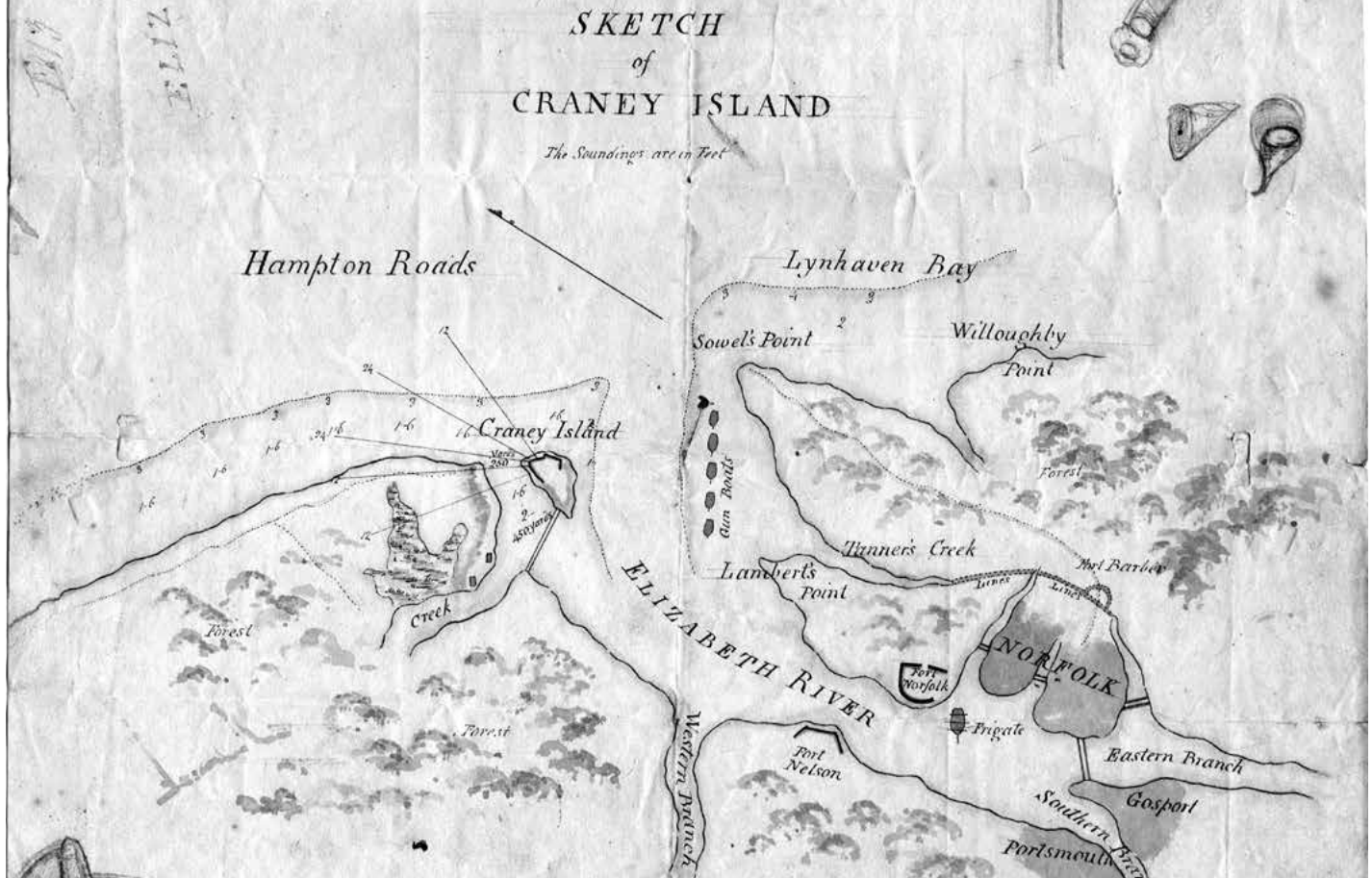
An oil painting by John Archibald, ca. 1814, celebrates America's resistance to the British during the nation's "second war for independence."



WE OWE

ALLEGIANCE

TO NO CROWN



By fortifying Craney Island at the entrance to the Elizabeth River, American forces were able to repel the British attack there on June 22, 1813, and thus protect Norfolk and its vital shipyard.

structed his aides to “do justice to the high military pretension of that Gentleman [Freeman].”

In late February, John Armstrong, a respected former member of Congress who had been called up to command troops defending the port of New York, became secretary of war. He instructed Freeman not to surrender command of Norfolk until the militia troops passed inspection.

Taylor presented Freeman with unmistakable evidence that the British squadron in Lynnhaven Bay was not only ready to enforce a rigorous blockade of the Chesapeake Bay at the Virginia Capes, but also more than capable of launching an invasion of Virginia with the clear intent of seizing Norfolk and the nearby Gosport Navy Yard.

In early March, Freeman told Barbour that he “was induced to believe that the British squadron intended to attack Norfolk” and that up to 2,000 militia troops should be placed under federal control to protect Norfolk and vicinity. It was at this point that Taylor assumed command of all regular and militia troops at Norfolk.

A few days later, Barbour arrived in Norfolk to confer with Taylor and see for himself the militia preparations under way at Norfolk. Barbour was very pleased to learn that the transition between Freeman and Taylor had gone well. Although now in the federal service, Taylor continued to maintain close relations with Barbour.

However, Taylor now was reporting more regularly on his plans to Secretary Armstrong. Taylor made an extensive inspection of Forts Nelson and Norfolk and requested from the War Department the services of Lt. Col. Walker K. Armistead, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, to help plan the defenses of the area. He also embarked on a program to sink hulks in the Elizabeth River to thwart any British attempts to go up the river and attack Norfolk.

Taylor remained uncertain about British intentions as the enemy had been reinforced by two more large warships. Except for a few forays on the coast for provisions and water, Taylor concluded, the enemy was waiting for reinforcements to invade.

“I can venture to promise you,” he told Armstrong, “that the means within my pow-

er shall be exerted to the utmost and that I will not forget what is due to the honor of the United States.”

A Top British Commander, Admiral Cockburn, Arrives

By mid-March, the British force consisted of three 74-gun ships and two frigates. Aside from harmless movements of small enemy vessels in Hampton Roads, Taylor concluded that an invasion was probably not imminent.

“His boats are cavalry to him,” Taylor surmised, “till he lands and gives him great advantages in selecting his point of attack.”

Taylor may have felt that an invasion was not imminent, but the British were getting ready for one.

Rear Adm. George Cockburn arrived in the Chesapeake Bay on March 4, 1813, to take command of the British squadron. Before his arrival, the British had already seized several commercial ships in Hampton Roads, but had not yet ventured up the Elizabeth River to locate the *Constellation* or survey the land defenses.

Cockburn’s instructions from Adm. John

An 1869 map shows the advance of British troops from Hampton, Virginia, on June 25, 1813, as they forced American militia forces under Maj. Stapleton Crutchfield to retreat.

B. Warren were many: blockade the bay, seize or destroy as many commercial ships as possible, take or destroy the American frigate *Constellation*, and prepare plans for the eventual assault and possession of Norfolk.

Soon after his arrival, Cockburn ordered his vessels to probe deeper into Hampton Roads to the mouth of the Elizabeth River to determine the extent of fortifications along the way and locate and take the *Constellation*, if possible. Virginia militia carefully followed the ships in anticipation of their landing an invading party, but none occurred.

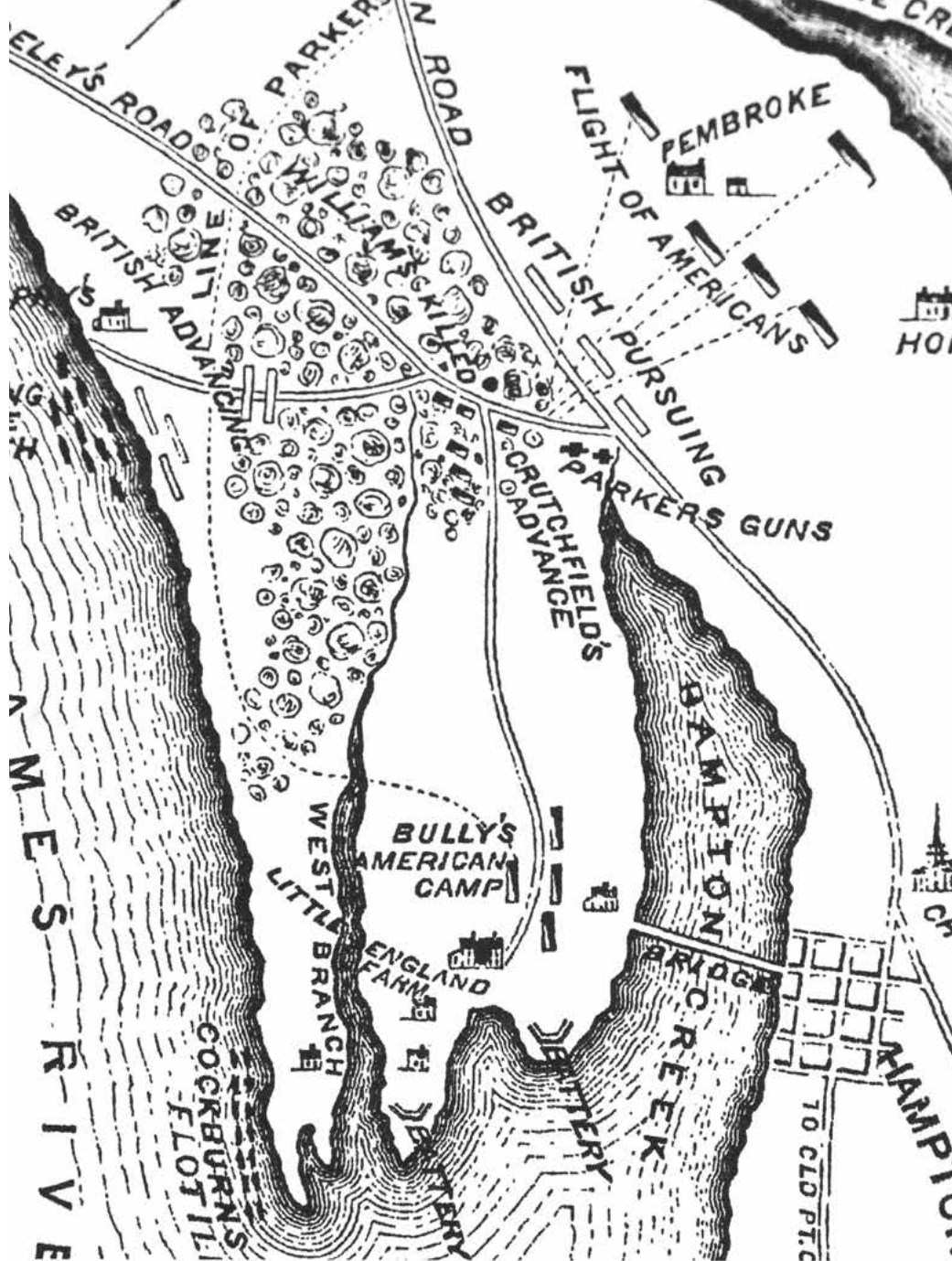
Nonetheless, Taylor immediately informed the War Department and Governor Barbour of the enemy's latest moves.

British ship crews laid marking buoys along the way, signifying the location of the shallow depths as they carefully made their way toward the Elizabeth River. They noted that their measurements around Sewell's Point and Craney Island barely indicated four fathoms. Based on what he found, Cockburn concluded that he had to "to give up at once all further idea of carrying our Ships into Elizabeth River."

Several stealthy plans were hatched to seize the *Constellation*, but after the British made three unsuccessful attempts at night to board her, no further attempts were made.

While he worried about the latest moves by the British, General Taylor faced a monumental problem in receiving, supplying, equipping, and organizing the nearly 1,500 troops allocated for Norfolk's defense. He immediately organized them into three regiments and assigned to command them commandants from several adjoining counties.

He allocated to these regiments the newly arriving companies ordered up by the Virginia adjutant general. In this fashion, he broke up companies that had marched to Norfolk as integral units and reorganized them into new companies according to the best configuration he could obtain.



The result was that the men who had marched with their unit commanders to Norfolk became part of new companies with new company commanders. Although met with initial resistance, the new scheme worked reasonably well despite initial morale problems that resulted in some desertions from the new units.

In April 1813 three new regiments—the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth—were created in the same way.

Dr. Philip Barraud, a resident of Norfolk and keen observer of events unfolding there, observed that "his [Taylor's] system of orga-

nization tho highly approbated by all thinking officers has occasioned a serious desertion . . . Their insubordination will ruin us if not subdued."

British Naval Forces Grow; Norfolk Defenses Strengthened

Although there were an estimated 2,000 militia troops in town, Norfolk's residents were thrown into a mild panic when British warships sailed toward the Elizabeth River. Many of them packed up their belongings and made plans to retreat into the countryside and stay with relatives.



British Adm. George Cockburn arrived in the Chesapeake on March 4, 1813, to command the British squadron.

Dr. Barraud and others did not believe the British had sufficient men to launch a land invasion, but described “the alarm and consternation which ensued. In every direction were to be seen carts & drays moving loaded with furniture &c.”

After the enemy ships returned to Lynnhaven Bay and appeared not to pose an imminent threat, the panic subsided, but the city’s residents remained tense. Taylor and most Virginians assumed—wrongly—that the enemy had about 3,000 men, including 1,500 marines, at their disposal.

In March and April, Taylor continued to sink hulks in the Elizabeth River. He continued to strengthen Norfolk’s defenses by establishing Fort Barbour as a major focal point of its fortifications. Taylor also relied especially on the services of Lieutenant Colonel Armistead, from the Corps of Engineers, to help plan Norfolk’s defenses.

Armistead immediately recommended establishing batteries on Craney Island and Old Point Comfort as the enemy’s presence allowed and informed Secretary Armstrong

of his findings and recommendations.

Despite the additional militia reinforcements, Taylor still worried about his army’s ability to oppose any British landing if the British received reinforcements. He feared that the enemy could mount both a naval and land assault on the city, thereby stretching his forces so thin they would not be able to mount an effective defense.

In late March 1813, Taylor informed the governor that most of the British 74-gun warships had left Hampton Roads and sailed into the Chesapeake for reasons Taylor could only guess. Whatever the cause, the absence of most of the fleet allowed Taylor to continue his fortifications around Norfolk and on Craney Island.

Taylor would learn later that Cockburn, who would lead a raiding expedition to Maryland’s upper bay and Eastern Shore counties, was awaiting Admiral Warren’s reinforcements in order to take Norfolk.

A Headache for Taylor: Troubles in the Ranks

In March 1813, the War Department created the Fifth Military District and appointed Maj. Gen. Wade Hampton as its commander. The district included Virginia and Maryland, and was one of nine military districts that the War Department established to better recruit and administer the war effort.

Hampton did not arrive until mid-April, and until then Taylor was temporarily in command. During the first months of the Virginia militia’s incorporation under War Department control, Taylor tried to establish a consistent method of paying his troops.

Unfortunately, the militia officers assigned to the role of paymasters were totally inexperienced and unfamiliar with the rules and regulations for pay under the U.S. Army paymaster. When the militia troops were not paid soon after arriving at Norfolk, they blamed the problems on U.S. Army mismanagement. Morale among the troops dropped.

At Taylor’s urging, William W. Hening, the Virginia militia’s deputy adjutant general, wrote Secretary Armstrong that “the spir-

it of discontent now prevailing so imminent that I deem it necessary to write you immediately on the subject . . . not a cent has been forwarded as pay there since their arrival and many of them do not possess the means of paying for the most essential items.”

Armstrong was irked at the criticism and maintained that until he had some positive proof of incompetence on the part of his paymasters, the Virginians could not presume that his officers were at fault. He then informed Hening that the troops would not be paid until May at the earliest. Finally, in May they were paid.

Hampton’s command at Norfolk was short-lived, but while there he approved of Taylor’s defensive works.

“Too much cannot be said,” Hampton informed Armstrong, “of the zeal and ardor of my predecessor for his efforts.” Before leaving, Hampton ordered that the defenses on Craney Island be completed as soon as possible. He authorized an armory and ordnance lab at Norfolk, ordered that the smallpox vaccine be available to the troops there, and established a recruiting policy for the regular army there so as not to interfere with militia officers’ control of their men.

Countering the British Assault on Craney Island

Taylor resumed command of the district on June 1, 1813. He had now approximately 4,500 regular and militia to defend Norfolk. Although his militia troops received their first pay in May, a smooth functioning pay system still eluded Taylor’s command then and in the future.

Taylor found the War Department’s Paymaster Samuel Turner’s performance totally unacceptable.

“The Army is threatened with the most serious consequences from the frequency of desertions,” Taylor wrote Armstrong, “if timely & immediate steps are not pursued . . . there is great cause to apprehend that the means employed must be more than of ordinary decision . . . to put a stop to it.”

Besides Admiral Cockburn and the British

warships, Taylor also had another nagging problem: the ever growing numbers of sick troops.

Many of these men he believed were actually sick and needed care. Many soldiers from more northern and western regions of the state often succumbed to sickness caused by the humid and swampy regions of the Norfolk area.

Others, according to Taylor, were just “feigners who have found the access too ready to the new mode of evading duty.” But he hastened to reassure Barbour that there was no epidemic raging about the camps. Taylor ordered that his officers scrutinize the sick lists more diligently to determine who were actually sick and those fit for duty.

Aside from British seizures of several commercial craft and relatively minor enemy landings in Hampton Roads during the early spring of 1813, the enemy’s strength indicated that it was in no way ready to launch the much anticipated assault on Norfolk.

The absence of much of Cockburn’s squadron up the bay provided time for Taylor to continue to position his forces around the Norfolk area and to further beef up the defenses on Craney Island.

In late May, Cockburn’s squadron returned to Hampton Roads. At that time at least 18 British warships lay in nearby Lynnhaven Bay. Admiral Warren himself would not arrive in the bay until mid-June with more ships and men, thereby increasing the likelihood of an attempt to seize Norfolk.

Warren realized that if he could take Craney Island, it could serve as an operating base from which to make the final attempt on Norfolk. Accordingly, he ordered most of his warships to move up into Hampton Roads to prepare for an assault, which did not come until the morning of June 22.

Poised for next day’s expected assault, British frigates *Narcissus*, *Barossa*, and *Junon* anchored off present-day Newport News and opposite the mouth of the Elizabeth River.

When *Junon* became separated from the other two by a mile, the Navy saw an opportunity for his gunboats to attack the *Junon*, under cover of night. Early Sunday morning the gun-

boats attacked and did some measurable harm to *Junon*, but were unable to do further damage before the other two frigates came to *Junon*’s aid.

In the early morning of June 22, British forces launched a two-pronged amphibious attack to seize Craney Island.

One British force landed about 900 soldiers and marines on the Virginia coast a few miles north of the island with orders to march down and attack the island from the shallow waters of Craney Creek. If successful there, they would take Fort Nelson.

The larger force, consisting of some 1,500 seamen and marines in some 50 or 60 barges, attacked the island from the north and west.

Defending the island were approximately 500 to 600 troops of the Fourth Virginia Regiment and about 150 seamen and marines from USS *Constellation*. Among the militia defenders were several volunteer and state artillery units, including Capt. Arthur Emmerson’s Portsmouth Light Artillery under the command of Maj. James Faulkner.

The Battle of Craney Island: A Victory for the Virginians

When the British army forces approached the island from the mainland, the militia artillery companies opened fire and after a sustained volley sent the enemy reeling in retreat. Following the enemy’s repulse on land, the naval attack began almost simultaneously.

Admiral Warren’s own barge, the *Centipede*, led the attack. The British fired off rockets for the first time in Hampton Roads—long before they were made famous at Fort McHenry. As the barges approached the island, its defenders waited impatiently for just the right time to open up with their 18- and 24-pounder guns.

The Virginian troops awaited until the British were close enough to open fire, then did so—with stunning results.

As the barges approached the island, its defenders waited impatiently for just the right time to open up with the 18- and 24-pounder guns. When Captain Emmerson asked if the enemy was close enough to open fire, Major Faulkner was reputed

to have said, “Let them approach a little nearer.” When the time was ripe, Emmerson shouted “Ready, my brave boys!”

The first British casualty was Admiral Warren’s *Centipede*, which began to sink under direct hits. Several naval personnel waded into the shallow waters and pulled the wreck ashore. Numerous barges became grounded on the shallow waters before Craney Island and became sitting targets for the Virginia gunners.

When the lead barges began to turn about to gain more depth, the other barges took that as a signal to retreat. The withdrawal soon became a full rout, the Virginians cheering as the enemy barges returned to their warships a few miles away.

The battle of Craney Island was over. It was the Virginia militia’s finest hour during the war. Miraculously, there was only one American casualty on the island, and that was by accident when an ammunition depot blew up before the invasion.

Virginia newspapers speculated that about 150 of the enemy were killed, but British official reports indicated that only several British attackers were killed, with 10 wounded and 10 deserters.

Whatever the count, the British failed to take Craney Island. Taylor informed Armstrong as soon as he had received his field commanders’ reports. “The courage and constancy with which this inferior force,” he wrote Armstrong, “in the face of a formidable naval armament . . . repelled the enemy with considerable loss.”

The British Take Hampton, But It Has Little Value

Three days after Craney Island, on June 25, 1813, Admiral Warren did the one thing that he could do, and that was to take and occupy the nearby town of Hampton, which had no strategic or military value to him. Defending the town was a militia of about 500, under the command of Maj. Stapleton Crutchfield.

The militia forces were brushed aside, but not without some stiff, but futile, resistance. Pushed halfway to Yorktown, the militia commander reported to General Taylor that he had “to perform the painful duty of apprizing you of my retreat.”

He hoped that Taylor would not harshly judge his actions.

“We have made a miraculous escape and done the best that perhaps could have been done,” wrote Crutchfield. He also informed Taylor that the British still planned to attack Norfolk from the west and had scaling ladders for the assault. Taylor informed Armstrong not to judge the retreat too unjustly given the circumstances: “I do not speak extravagantly when I say that Virginia below the falls hangs on the fate of Norfolk.”

The British Finally Leave; Norfolk No Longer Important

The British occupation of Hampton lasted only three days. After they withdrew to their ships, reports from citizens and the local militia reached the governor’s office of British troops’ barbaric and atrocious behavior towards the citizens of Hampton.

Tales of rape, wanton destruction, and even murder were circulated and then spread by Virginia’s newspapers. Admiral Warren admitted some indiscretions but denied that rape and murder took place. Another top officer blamed such actions on the two companies of two Independent Corps of Foreigners composed of French soldiers taken from European battlefields who had volunteered to fight with the British in North America.

Whatever the extent of the outrages, they were just more evidence that the British were ignoring accepted rules of civilized warfare and would do anything to obtain victory.

Within a few weeks of the British attempt

on Norfolk, most of the enemy ships left Hampton Roads for an expedition to North Carolina.

They still retained a sizeable force to maintain the blockade and to send smaller vessels up the James River on plundering forays to replenish the fleet’s provisions. Its ships still prowled the Chesapeake Bay, seized commercial crafts, and threatened Virginia and Maryland communities along its shores for the rest of the war.

Taylor was perplexed at the enemy’s failure to return to Norfolk but used his time to confer with Secretary Armstrong in Washington and to strengthen the defenses at Craney Island and Forts Nelson and Norfolk. Taylor relinquished command of the Fifth Military District in February 1814 after a year in place. Many Virginia leaders regretted his retirement, but Taylor was discouraged by the lack of militia reform and pressure to step down and make room for other officers to move up.

By mid-1814, British naval commanders, particularly Admiral Cockburn, no longer viewed Norfolk as an inviting target. By then, he had persuaded his new commander, Vice Admiral Alexander Cochrane, that an assault on both Washington and Baltimore was not only achievable but would bring more rewards.

Besides, Norfolk was defended by up to 8,000 militia by the summer of 1814. At the end of 1814, however, up to one-third of the troops were unfit for service, victims of a deadly and debilitating disease that swept through Virginia during the winter of 1814–1815.

On February 14, 1815, Secretary of War James Monroe notified all the state governors that a treaty had been agreed to and was soon to be signed by the President and ratified by the U.S. Senate. Colonel Freeman, the district commander, immediately sent his aides to inform the British ships that the war would shortly be over.

Norfolk would soon become again the bustling port that it had been before the war, but it would never fully recover from the effects of the pre-war embargos and the wartime blockade.

In the eyes of Norfolk’s citizens, however, Gen. Robert Barraud Taylor had saved the city when it was most in peril. **P**

NOTE ON SOURCES

Most of the documentary sources cited in this article are from the holdings of the National Archives and Records Administration. Chief among these are the letters received and letters sent by the Secretary of War (Record Group 107). This correspondence has been microfilmed as National Archives Microfilm Publication M221, *Letters Received by the Secretary of War, Registered Series, 1801–1870*, and Microfilm Publication M6, *Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs, 1800–1889*. Also used was Microfilm Publication M222, *Letters Received by the Secretary of War, Unregistered Series, 1789–1861*. The letters received and letters sent by the Office of the Adjutant General (Record Group 94) were also useful. This correspondence has been microfilmed as National Archives Microfilm Publication M566, *Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General, 1805–1821*, and Microfilm Publication M565, *Letters Sent by the Office of the Adjutant General (Main Series) 1800–1890*. Also important were the letters received by the Office of the Secretary of Navy from captains in Record Group 45, Records of the Office of Naval Records and Library. This series has been microfilmed as *National Archives Microfilm Publication M125, Letters Received by Captains (Captains’ Letters) 1805–1861*.

Other useful archival sources include Governor Barbour’s Executive Papers and Letter Books for 1812–1813 in Record Group 3, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia; and the John Hartwell Cocke Papers at the University of Virginia’s Small Library. Other published primary sources include the U.S. Navy’s multivolume *The Naval War of 1812: A Documentary History*, 3 vols. (Washington, DC: Naval Historical Center, 1985–2002), ed. William S. Dudley, especially volume 2 (1992); *American State Papers: Military Affairs* (Washington, DC: Gales and Seaton, 1832–1861); Sir James Scott, *Recollections of a Naval Life* (London, Richard Bentley: 1834); William E. Maxwell, ed., *Virginia Historical Register and Literary Advertiser* (Richmond, Va., Macfarlane & Fergusson: 1848) Volume 1. Benson Lossing’s *Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1868; Gretna, La.: Pelican Publishing Co., reprinted 2001) volume 2, was also useful in obtaining an overall perspective of the events in Hampton Roads. Two Virginia newspapers, *Richmond Enquirer* and the *Norfolk Herald* provided details of the time period not otherwise obtainable.

Author



Stuart L. Butler retired as assistant branch chief of the National Archives’ former Civil and Old Military Branch in 1999. His most recent book is *Defending the Old Dominion: Virginia and its Militia in the War of 1812* (2013). He has also published a guide to Virginia militia units in the War of 1812 and other articles regarding the war in a number of local and national journals.



To learn more about

- Genealogical records of the War of 1812, go to www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1991/winter/war-of-1812.html.
- A “duel of ships” in Chesapeake Bay during the War of 1812, go to www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2007/spring/.
- The impressment of seamen before the War of 1812, go to www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2012/summer/.