



# Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

## Out of the Attic

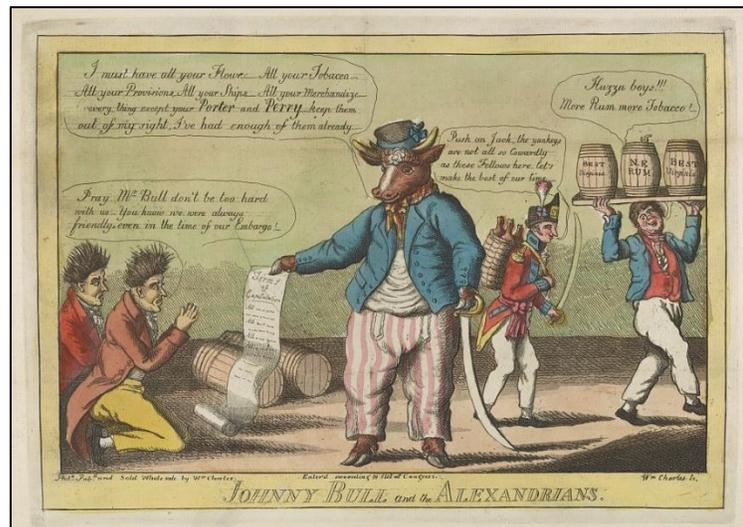
### When Johnny Bull Came to Town

*Alexandria Times*, April 10, 2014

Image: *Johnny Bull and the Alexandrians*. Library of Congress.

Unlike Alexandria's occupation during the Civil War, which was documented extensively through the then new medium of photography, few depictions of the Port City during the War of 1812 survive to this day.

One of the few is a satirical caricature drawn by political cartoonist William Charles in Philadelphia. Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1776, Charles immigrated to the United States around the turn of the century. Here, he became best known for a series of engravings that documented the War of 1812, produced just a few years before his untimely death in 1820.



In what became one of his most famous cartoons, “Johnny Bull and the Alexandrians,” seen here, Charles captures the arrogance and might of the conquering British forces as they plundered the city following its surrender in late summer of 1814.

On the left side, two Alexandria gentlemen, portrayed as shivering cowards (note the spiked hair), beg a manly bull clothed as an English seaman for mercy: “Pray Mr. Bull don’t be too hard with us — you know we were always friendly, even in the time of our embargo!”

By way of reply, the bull presents a written list of the “[Terms of Capitulation](#),” which actually was presented to Mayor Charles Simms on August 29, 1814. The terms arrived just before British ships appeared along the city’s waterfront.

Since Charles’ portrayal of the document is too small to read, he helpfully has Johnny Bull list his terms for the terrified Alexandrians: “I must have all your flour; all your tobacco; all your provisions; all your ships; all your merchandise; everything except your Porter and Perry — keep them out of my sight, I’ve had enough of them already.”

Porter and Perry referred to Capt. David Porter and Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, who had become legendary American naval commanders over the course of the war. On the right side of the etching a British soldier proclaims, “Push on Jack, the yankees are not all so cowardly as these fellows



## Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

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here. Let's make the best of our time." His prancing sailor companion answers "Huzza boys!!! More rum, more tobacco!"

Charles' characterization of Alexandria as a city of cowards contrasted sharply with his depiction of its trading competitor fifty miles to the north in "John Bull and the Baltimoreans." That companion piece portrays the brave people of Baltimore repulsing British forces at Fort McHenry as the now meek John Bull proclaims, "Mercy! Mercy on me. What fellows those Baltimoreans are. After the example of the Alexandrians I thought I had nothing to do but enter the town and carry off the booty. And here is nothing but defeat and disgrace!!!"

*"Out of the Attic" is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as "Marking Time" and explored Alexandria's history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into "Out of the Attic" and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.*

*These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by Amy Bertsch, former Public Information Officer, and Lance Mallamo, Director, on behalf of the Office of Historic Alexandria.*