Fighting Back

WITH ALEXANDRIA UNDER BRITISH CONTROL in August 1814, top-ranking U.S. military men gathered at this high point above the city. President Madison conferred with Secretary of the Navy William Jones, Brigadier General John Hungerford, and U.S. Navy Captain David Porter, Jr. The men decided to harass the British ships as they withdrew down the Potomac.

"The town of Alexandria, with the exception of public works, shall not be destroyed, unless hostilities are commenced on the part of the Americans; nor shall the inhabitants be molested in any manner whatever, or their dwelling-houses entered, if the following articles are complied with."

British Captain Gordon, in the introduction to his articles of capitulation

Captain James Gordon
Oil by Andrew Morton, National Maritime Museum, UK

William Tatham's 1813 map shows the Kettle Bottom Shoals that slowed the British as they sailed up the Potomac toward Washington and Alexandria.
Maryland State Archives

A SCARE

To save their town, the Alexandrians had promised not to challenge or attack the British. But a group of U.S. naval officers, unauthorized, assaulted a British soldier. Fearing retaliation, the city fathers rushed to apologize. Fortunately the British officers decided to dismiss the incident with a warning.

www.StarSpangledTrail.net
www.NPS.gov/STSP
Cultural Tourism DC.org

In the summer of 1814 the United States had been at war with Great Britain for two years. Battlefronts had erupted from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. On August 24, following their victory over the Americans at the Battle of Bladensburg, Maryland, British troops marched on Washington with devastating results.

The Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail reveals sites of the War of 1812 in Washington, DC, Virginia, and Maryland. Visit **ChesapeakeExplorerApp.com** or download the **Chesapeake Explorer app.**