

HISTORY 141
AMERICAN HISTORY
The War of 1812

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The War of 1812

Causes of the War

- The methods of peaceful coercion against Britain and France employed by Jefferson were continued by Madison.
- Madison also tried negotiation without success.
- In 1810, a group of young Republican Congressmen from the West known as the “**War Hawks**” were elected.

The War of 1812

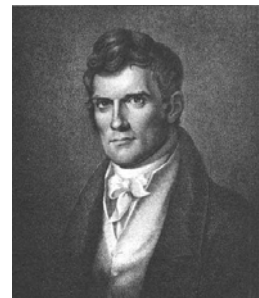
Causes of the War

- The term “War Hawk” was coined by Virginia Congressman John Randolph, a staunch opponent of entry into the war.
- The term to describe about a dozen members of the Twelfth Congress and the group’s leader was Speaker of the House **Henry Clay** of Kentucky.
- **John C. Calhoun** of South Carolina was another notable War Hawk.

Henry Clay



John C. Calhoun



The War of 1812

Causes of the War

- Both Clay and Calhoun would eventually become giants on the American political landscape for decades.
- Like its leaders, the 12th Congress’ War Hawks were mostly young Republicans filled with the ideals of the American Revolution as youths.
- They were also primarily from southern and western states.

The War of 1812

Causes of the War

- Besides Britain’s interference with American shipping, the War Hawks advocated going to war against Britain for a variety of reasons:
 - 1) They believed this interference hurt the American economy and injured American prestige.
 - 2) War Hawks from the western states also believed the British were instigating American Indians on the frontier to attack American settlements.
- So, the War Hawks pushed for the invasion of British Canada to punish Britain and end this threat.

The War of 1812

Causes of the War

- Their impatience to break the stalemate pushed Madison into a war the country was unprepared for and ended without victory.
- In addition to the War Hawks, many other Americans resented Britain's enforcement of its rules of international law.
- Most Americans saw Britain's actions as violations of American rights in several areas:

The War of 1812

Causes of the War

Causes (cont.)

- 1) the seizure of American ships and other interference with American trade;
- 2) the impressment of American seamen;
- Moreover, interference with American commerce aroused the ire of Western settlers because it interfered with the marketing of their produce.
- As a result, it brought depression to the Ohio Valley.

The War of 1812

Causes of the War

- British diplomats' insolent attitude and British contempt for the American people kept Americans antagonistic toward Britain.
- Moreover, Native American attacks in the West were attributed to British encouragement and British arms.
- The notable **Shawnee Chief Tecumseh** and his brother, the Prophet, inspired Native American tribes in the Northwest to unite and take a stand against further land cessions and demoralization by whites.

Shawnee Chief Tecumseh



The War of 1812

Causes of the War

- **Gen. William Henry Harrison** fought an initial battle at **Tippecanoe** and the Indians rose all over the frontier.
- Meanwhile, the War Hawks believed that war against the British in Canada would stop this source of Indian incitement.
- They also saw this as an opportunity for thorough destruction and pacification of the Native Americans.

The War of 1812

Causes of the War

- Some Americans hope to annex Canada and Spanish Florida.
- Thus, these attacks were intended to pacify the Indians as much as to annex.
- The War Hawks loudly proclaimed that Canada could be taken merely by marching into it.

The War of 1812

Causes of the War

- While the demand for war was not unanimous, when it did come, it was definitely with a national majority in Congress favoring it.
- The younger members from the West and South provided much of the leadership for the war, those sections could not do it alone.
- Support came from every section of the country.

The War of 1812

Lack of Preparedness

- Despite all the clamor for war, Congress could not get more than a small number of the soldiers authorized.
- Americans disliked national military service and preferred to enlist in the less demanding and poorly disciplined militia.
- The militiamen were incompetently led by men too old, too young, or chosen by political influence.

The War of 1812

Lack of Preparedness

- Regardless, the men themselves refused to leave their home states.
- The navy consisted of about a dozen warships in contrast to Britain's 800.
- Financially, the nation was also unprepared due to the structure of its revenue-producing avenues.

The War of 1812

Lack of Preparedness

- Revenue was produced chiefly by tariffs on imports and had been insufficient for some time due to the trade stoppages.
- Jefferson's hated internal revenue taxes had to be used to help finance the war.
- Furthermore, New England opposition left the country badly divided.

The War of 1812

Lack of Preparedness

- When the rechartering of the national bank came up in 1811, it would have passed if President Madison had publicly asked for it.
- Madison regarded such activity as improper, so the measure failed in the Senate by VP George Clinton's tie-breaking vote.
- State banks were left free of necessary discipline over issues of bank notes.

The War of 1812

American Campaigns against Canada

- Such a flood of paper was issued that specie payment had to be suspended before the end of the War.
- Military action began in 1812 with three separate invasions of Canada; none of which were successful.
- The overcautious General Hull panicked and surrendered his forces at Detroit.

The War of 1812

American Campaigns against Canada

- Court-martialed and sentenced to be shot, he was pardoned by Madison because of his record in the Revolution.
- The invasion across the Niagara River failed because the militia refused to follow the regular army across the border.
- General Dearborn's planned invasion at Lake Champlain failed to cross the border when his militiamen refused to set foot on Canadian soil.

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American Campaigns against Canada

- In 1813, the Americans achieved success after Gen. William Henry Harrison succeeded Gen. Hull in the Northwest.
- Secondary to Harrison's preparation for the capture of Ft. Malden was the construction of a fleet on Lake Erie.
- On September 10, 1813, **Commodore Oliver Perry** defeated the British fleet at the Battle of Lake Erie.

Gen. William Henry Harrison, Gov. of NW Territory



The War of 1812

American Campaigns against Canada

- The hard-fought battle was a total defeat for the British by the Americans.
- After the battle, Perry sends his famous message to his commander: "**WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY AND THEY ARE OURS.**"
- Thus, Lake Erie became an American lake, cleared of British vessels and this threat to American communications in Canada was eliminated.

Battle of Lake Erie



The War of 1812

American Campaigns against Canada

- On Oct. 5, 1813, Harrison won a decisive victory in the **Battle of the Thames**.
- At the battle, **Tecumseh**, leader of the Indians allied with the British was killed and Native American power broken.
- Meanwhile, planned invasions to the east of Lake Erie all failed or soon turned back.

The War of 1812

The War in 1814

- The British entered American soil at five points in 1814.
- An effort against the American post at Niagara was turned back in July.
- A similar attempt was stopped at Plattsburg, when American lake vessels sunk the British ships supplying their troops.

The War of 1812

The War in 1814

- On August 24, 1814, a British force led by General Robert Ross and Admiral George Cockburn attacked Washington D.C.
- They burned Washington's main government buildings, including the Capitol, containing the Library of Congress, and the White House.
- A similar attempt at Baltimore immediately afterwards failed.

Burning of Washington D.C. (Oct. 24, 1814)



The War of 1812

Battle of New Orleans

- The final British effort in the War of 1812 was directed at New Orleans.
- In the Southwest, the war began in 1813 when the Creeks, stirred up by Tecumseh, massacred a large number of whites.
- These settlers had taken refuge at Ft. Mims, Alabama.

The War of 1812

Battle of New Orleans

- Gen. **Andrew “Old Hickory” Jackson** led troops in a resounding victory against the Creeks at Horseshoe Bend in Alabama.
- After this, Jackson was given command of all American forces in the Southwest.
- He ordered his forces to New Orleans to counter the British invasion under Gen. Pakenham.

Andrew “Old Hickory” Jackson



The War of 1812

Battle of New Orleans

- A force of 10,000 veterans of the Napoleonic campaigns marched across an open field against Jackson's Tennessee sharpshooters.
- American losses at the **Battle of New Orleans** were negligible, but the British lost 2,000 men.
- The battle was more decisive in promoting Jackson's political career than in ending the war – the victory came *two weeks after* the peace had been signed.

Battle of New Orleans (1814)



The War of 1812

The War at Sea

- The overwhelmingly outnumbered American navy fighting alone was doomed to defeat.
- No fleet engagement occurred at sea, but numerous ship-to-ship encounters ended in victories for the American vessels.
- This was because they carried more guns and sail than did British warships.

The War of 1812

The War at Sea

- British commerce suffered frightful losses from both American warships and numerous privateers.
- The British blockade, beginning in 1813, confined most American ships to port by that summer.
- However, there were exceptions to this: the *U.S.S. Constitution* ("Old Ironsides") and intermittent offensives by five other warships.

USS *Constitution* captures HMS *Guerriere* August 19, 1812

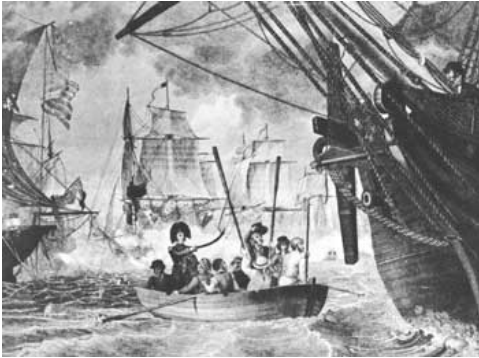


The War of 1812

The War at Sea

- American commerce was effectively blockaded at all ports except in New England where ports were exempted.
- This was because of New England's willingness to trade with the enemy and the outspoken sympathy there with Britain.
- The naval victories on the lakes were subsidiary to land movements, but were crucial to the American victories in Lakes Erie and Champlain.

Battle of Lake Erie



The War of 1812 New England and the War

- As mentioned, it was an agricultural dynasty that came to power in 1801, with Jefferson and his Republican successors.
- They followed policies that were particularly offensive to the commercial interests of Federalist New England.
- The trade stoppages applied against the European belligerents brought depression to seaports everywhere.

The War of 1812 New England and the War

- It was for this reason that New England blamed the American government more than the British.
- New England financiers refused to buy war bonds, merchants and farmers sold provisions to the British forces in Canada.
- New England states also withheld their militia from the campaigns in Canada.

The War of 1812 New England and the War

- Moreover, enlistments were discouraged and open sympathy with England prevailed.
- The **Hartford Convention** (1814) marked the culmination of New England opposition.
- It was an effort by moderate Federalists to soften extreme feelings against the war in some areas, especially western Massachusetts.

The War of 1812 New England and the War

- Massachusetts, along with Rhode Island, sent delegations while New Hampshire and Vermont were only partially represented.
- The convention declared the war intolerable and called for several constitutional amendments.
- Among these was the requirement of a 2/3 vote for declarations of war, embargoes, and the admission of new states.

The War of 1812 New England and the War

- Also, there were resolutions calling for no more counting of slaves for representations, and no successive presidents from the same state.
- These resolutions were presented shortly after the news of the victory at New Orleans and the **Treaty of Ghent** had arrived in Washington.
- Thus, this latter news came as an anti-climax to what now appeared as a successful war.

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The Treaty of Ghent

- The Federalists were not planning to secede, simply protest, but they managed only to appear ridiculous.
- Armistice negotiations began soon after the declaration of war but deadlocked on the issue of impressment.
- In 1813, Russia offered mediation.

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New England and the War

- Madison appointed American Minister to Russia, **John Quincy Adams**, as head of the delegation.
- Federalists Senator James A. Bayard and Republican Albert Gallatin were the delegations' members.
- Later, two more Republicans were added, one of whom was Henry Clay.

John Quincy Adams



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New England and the War

- The delegation of Americans eventually met the second-rate diplomats that Britain sent to Ghent.
- Negotiations began with extravagant and unacceptable demands on both sides.
- The Americans become more conciliatory when news of defeats, especially the raid on Washington, arrived.

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New England and the War

- Napoleon's surrender in May 1814 turned the war into one for the benefit of Canada.
- The poor British effort there, and the greater importance of European affairs for Britain, caused a similar change of heart by Britain.
- The Treaty of Ghent – as finally signed in December 1814, provided for no territorial changes or concessions.

Treaty of Ghent



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New England and the War

- The rights for which the United States fought the war were abandoned.
- Concrete provisions for the settlement of differences called for the appointment of commissioners to meet later.
- These commissioners would settle questions of boundaries, fisheries, a trade agreement, and rights on the Great Lakes.

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Consequences of the War

- Among the consequences of the war were the following:
 - 1) The war won British respect for the fighting ability of American seamen and the ability of American diplomats.
 - 2) American dislike of Britain was renewed and extended after the war, but the maritime issues ceased to be a problem with the peace.

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Consequences of the War

Consequences (cont.)

- 3) Defeat of the Native American tribes opened the whole area east of the Mississippi to settlement.
- 4) The return of peace in Europe left America free to concentrate on its territorial expansion and other matters.
- 5) The war increased the American spirit of nationalism and overcame disruptive forces of sectionalism

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Consequences of the War

Consequences (cont.)

- 6) Trade interruptions before and during the war forced a significant growth of American manufacturing.