twenty-seven monuments worldwide commemorating twentieth-century American wars.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Bill Olbrich

See also *Vietnam War Memorial*.

**WAR OF 1812**, fought under the motto “free trade and sailor’s rights,” was the result of British maritime policies during the wars between Great Britain and France, the desire of President James Madison to strengthen republicanism, and the American belief that it could secure possession of Canada as a bargaining chip against Great Britain.

Neither Britain nor France cared much about the rights of neutrals in their struggle, which lasted with only short interruptions from 1793 to 1815. Britain’s major asset was its navy, which contained France by closing off large stretches of the European coastline. The British blockade from Brest to the mouth of the Elbe River; Napoleon’s Berlin Decree of 21 November 1806, declaring a blockade of the British Isles and prohibiting ships from entering French harbors if they previously had been in British waters; the British Orders in Council of 1807 that all neutral ships coming from France would be seized if they had not previously visited British harbors; and Napoleon’s Milan Decree of 17 December 1807 that all neutral ships that concurred with the British demands would be seized had little impact on the war in Europe but affected the United States and its profitable maritime trade. Americans were in no position to do anything about this sort of war. Great Britain, straining for sailors on their warships, insisted on the right of its naval officers to “impress” from American ships deserters from the Royal Navy or other British subjects liable to naval service. British sailors had deserted by the thousands to the American merchant marine. Many who had taken out naturalization papers were nonetheless the victims of the British policy.

Anger over the British practices reached a climax on 22 June 1807, when the USS *Chesapeake* was stopped by the British frigate *Leopard*. When the American captain denied the British request to search his ship for deserters, the *Leopard* shelled the American vessel. Not prepared for a military engagement, the *Chesapeake* suffered casualties quickly. After firing one shot, the American captain allowed the British to board his ship. They took four sailors prisoner and put out to sea again. This arrogant provocation injured American national pride. Although President Thomas Jefferson seemed ready to go to war, he resorted to economic warfare. At his request, Congress passed the Embargo Act of 1807, which was intended to prevent additional entanglement in European affairs by prohibiting the export of American goods on both American and foreign vessels. While the British and French embargoes had led to seizures of American merchantmen, they had provided an opportunity for traders to reap huge profits by counting on the fast and sleek American ships to run the blockades. Prohibiting the ships from leaving harbor prevented seizure and impressment, but it also put an end to a lucrative situation. Although smuggling became routine, the Embargo Act severely hurt communities in New England and cotton planters and farmers in the West and South who depended on the European markets, particularly the British markets.

The embargo had little impact on Great Britain and France. Amidst growing protests against the embargo, under the impression of election victories by the rival Federalists, and with New Englanders airing secessionist ideas, President Jefferson asked for a modification of the Embargo Act shortly before he left office. Congress repealed the act and on 1 March 1809 passed the Nonintercourse Act. The new law prohibited trade with Great Britain and France and banned British and French ships from U.S. waters, but it permitted trade with the rest of the world. Great Britain had found ready suppliers in Central and Latin America, and like the embargo, nonintercourse did not change British naval conduct. Having
accomplished nothing, the United States backed down and replaced the Nonintercourse Act with Macon's Bill No. 2, a bill introduced by Representative Nathaniel Macon that barred armed vessels of the belligerents from entering American ports but reopened trade with France and Great Britain. Macon's Bill promised that, if either England or France revoked the blockade, nonintercourse would be imposed against the other.

Napoleon reacted swiftly. He instructed his foreign minister, Jean-Baptiste Nompère de Champagny, duc de Cadore, to notify the Americans that the Milan and Berlin Decrees were revoked. Although the note the Americans received from Cadore was vague and stated that repeal of the decrees was contingent on resumption of American nonintercourse with Great Britain, President James Madison proclaimed the French in compliance with Macon's Bill. This gave the British until February 1811 to revoke the Orders in Council.

Great Britain remained intractable, and by the time Congress assembled in November, Madison was ready to put the nation on a war footing. Many members of Congress, however, were reluctant to go to war with the mightiest naval power on the globe. The most vocal group calling for war or at least some action was called the War Hawks. They were for the most part a group of young Jeffersonian Republicans from the West and the South who had recently been voted into office. Among them was Henry Clay of Kentucky, who had never served in the House of Representatives before and was only thirty-four years old but was nonetheless elected to the influential position of speaker of the House. Clay made sure that a number of his colleagues willing to go to war were appointed to important committees.

The War Hawks argued that British crimes were not confined to the high seas. On the northwestern frontier, in Ohio and the territories of Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan, Native Americans, led by the Shawnee prophet Tecumseh and his brother Tenskwatawa, resisted the relentless white encroachment on their lands. Tenskwatawa preached a return to the customary way of living, Native American brotherhood, and abstinence. Strongly opposed to the extensive land cessions secured by the Americans and using anti-white rhetoric, he attracted many young warriors. After the Treaty of Fort Wayne, in which chiefs opposed to Tenskwatawa ceded 3 million acres of land to the United States, Tenskwatawa threatened to prevent settlement of the land by force. Tecumseh would supply the necessary military and political leadership. Americans suspected that Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh were agents of British interests, and while Tecumseh traveled into the South to enlist other Native American nations, the Indiana governor William Henry Harrison moved against what he perceived to be a threatening Native American coalition. He destroyed their town at the Tippecanoe River, providing an additional incentive for the Native Americans to seek support from the British in Canada. The attacks against white settlers did not end, and the War Hawks, holding Great Britain responsible for those attacks, advocated ousting the British from North America by conquering Canada. Oth-
Women and War. As in all wars, some women—like this one, shown passing cannonballs to artillerymen—played an unofficial and usually unacknowledged part in the War of 1812, even in battle. Double Delta Industries, Inc.

Invasion of Canada

Despite the long period of debates in Congress, the nation was hardly prepared to actually wage the war it declared on a formidable enemy. Inadequate military, naval, and financial preparation resulted in insufficient and ill-trained troops. Military incompetence and defective strategy led to a series of military disasters, particularly during the first year of the war, when American troops tried to invade Canada. The army was additionally hampered by a militia that generally defined itself as a defensive force and was unwilling to partake in a war of conquest and by obstruction of the war effort in the Federalist-controlled New England states. General William Hull had to surrender Detroit on 16 August 1812, Generals Stephen van Rensselaer and Alexander Smyth failed dismally on the Niagara River in October, and General Henry Dearborn broke off a feeble attempt to march on Montreal in November. On Lake Erie, U.S. forces achieved their greatest success under the command of Oliver H. Perry in September 1813. Detroit was recovered the following year, and Harrison defeated the British at the Thames River on 5 October 1813, a battle in which Tecumseh was killed, breaking Native American resistance. The year closed, however, with the complete failure of a renewed campaign against Montreal by General James Wilkinson on 11 No-
Death of a General. This engraving depicts the mortally wounded Sir Edward Pakenham, the British commander at the Battle of New Orleans, on 8 January 1815. Hulton/Getty Images

November 1813, the British capture of Fort Niagara on 18 December 1813, and the destruction of a number of towns, including Buffalo, New York, by the British during December 1813.

By the summer of 1814 many incompetent officers had been replaced, and under the command of Generals Jacob Brown and Winfield Scott, the northern army, although failing to conquer any substantial territory, stood its ground at Chippewa River on 5 July 1814, Lundy’s Lane on 25 July 1814, and the siege of Fort Erie in August 1814. In September, despite an overwhelming majority, the British broke off an attack against upper New York when their naval support was defeated on Lake Champlain.

British Landing Operations
After Napoleon’s abdication in April 1814, Britain was free to transfer battle-hardened troops from Europe to North America, which made landing operations in Maine and the Chesapeake Bay possible. The British were successful in Maine, and their attack against Washington, D.C., brought about the infamous routing of the American militia and troops at Bladensburg, Maryland, and the burning of official buildings in the nation’s capital, including the White House and the Capitol on 24 and 25 August 1814. In early September, the British moved against Baltimore, but there they were driven off. That battle inspired Francis Scott Key to write “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

Blockade of the American Seaboard
During the first six months after the declaration of war, the Royal Navy was slow to use its superiority, but by the end of 1813, the American East Coast was under blockade. Only the New England states were exempted by Admiral John B. Warren until May 1814, because they opposed the war and supplied the British in Canada and the West Indies. American exports dropped sharply, and even coastal trade became increasingly dangerous. Harbor towns were affected severely, but farmers and planters in the West and the South also suffered heavily. Most American ships, navy and merchant marine, were bottled up in port, and single-ship actions on the high seas failed to affect the overwhelming superiority of the British fleet. Even privateers, who had been quite successful in previous years, found few prizes because most British ships now sailed in convoys.

Peace
Both the Americans and the British were eager to enter into negotiations. Russia offered to mediate the conflict, and American and British peace commissioners met in Ghent, Belgium, in August 1814. The American delegation had hoped to put impressment on the negotiation table but soon found that the British would not be moved on this issue. Anxious to protect Canada and their Native American allies, the British first demanded territory, a Native American buffer state, and demilitarization of the Great Lakes. In view of little encouraging news from
North America and increasing opposition at home to war taxes, they agreed to end the war on the basis of a status quo ante bellum. The British navigation rights on the Mississippi River and the American rights to fish in Canadian waters, both guaranteed in 1783, were left out of the Treaty of Ghent, signed on 24 December 1814.

Although the United States had not achieved one thing it had gone to war for, the news that the war was over was received joyously in all parts of the United States. For the United States, it seemed that not to have been defeated by Britain was a victory. News about the most important battle victory of the war arrived almost simultaneously with word about peace and added immensely to an impression of achievement. It did not matter that the Battle of New Orleans, where, on 8 January 1815, General Andrew Jackson inflicted the most crushing military defeat of the war on a British army, took place two weeks after the war was over.

The peace treaty, unanimously ratified by the Senate, led to the final demise of the Federalists and any secession ideas harbored in New England. The years after 1815 saw a sense of national identity in the United States and in Canada that had not existed before or during the war. Capital that lay dormant during the embargo, nonintercourse, and the British blockade found a new outlet in the developing industry in the United States, now protected by high tariffs. Americans learned not to rely too heavily on a militia, making way for a reorganized army that enabled future expansion. The Second War of Independence, as the War of 1812 has been called, was the first step in establishing the United States as a serious, permanent player in international politics.

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Michael Wala

See also *Canada, Relations with; Chesapeake-Leopard Incident; Embargo Act; France, Relations with; Great Britain, Relations with; Great Lakes Naval Campaigns of 1812; Impressment of Seamen; Macon’s Bill No. 2; New Orleans, Battle of; Nonintercourse Act; Tippecanoe, Battle of; Washington Burned; and vol. 9: Madison’s War Message.*

WAR ON POVERTY. Stemming from a decision made in November 1963 to pursue a legislative agenda that economic advisers to President John F. Kennedy had planned, the War on Poverty consisted of a series of programs in the areas of health, education, and welfare that Congress passed in 1964 and 1965. When President Lyndon Johnson declared an “unconditional war on poverty” in his 1964 State of the Union address, he referred to federal aid to education and medical care for the elderly as important parts of that war. Although these measures passed in 1965, an omnibus act, prepared by a special task force of President Johnson’s Council of Economic Advisers, became the legislative vehicle most closely associated with the War on Poverty. The House Education and Labor Committee began to consider this legislation, known as the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA), in April 1964, and the measure passed Congress that August.