

A dramatic painting of two large three-masted sailing ships on a turbulent sea. The ship on the left is the USS Constitution, flying the American flag. The ship on the right is the HMS Cybele, flying the British flag. The sky is filled with heavy, white clouds, and the water is dark blue with white-capped waves. The ships are shown from a low angle, emphasizing their scale and the power of the elements.

Prelude to 1812

by
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United States and Napoleonic Wars

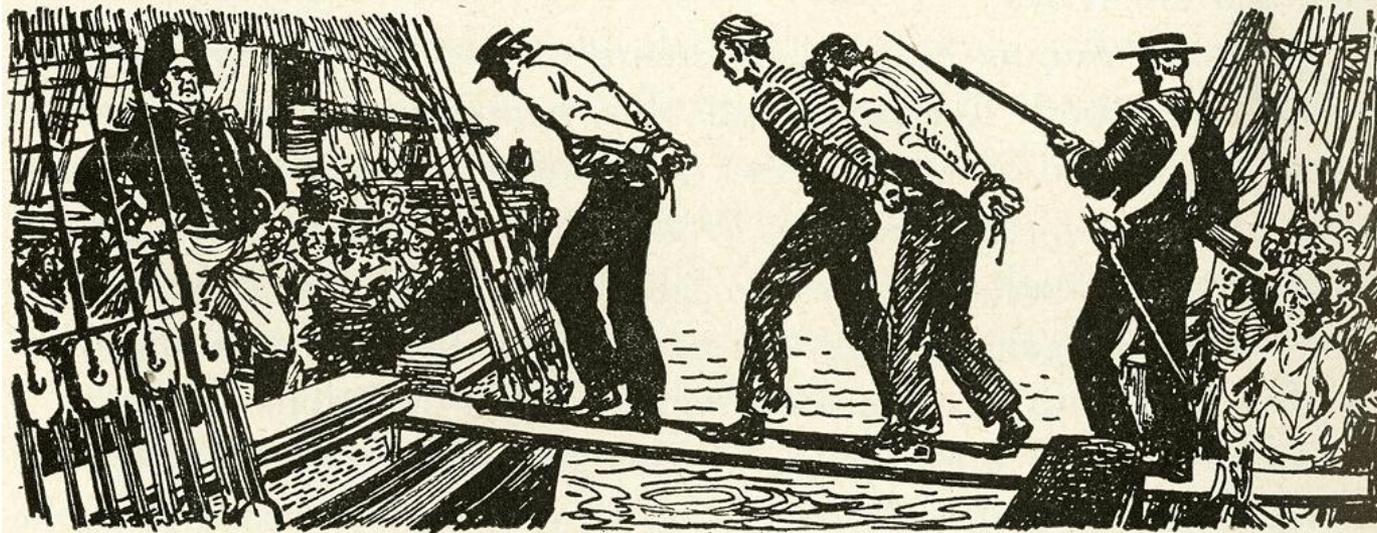
- France declared War on Great Britain and Holland on Feb. 1, 1793; and Spain on Mar. 1.
- Washington was just starting his second term.
- US government was in its fourth year under the new Constitution and still working out its details.
- The foodstuffs the neutral US sold and the ships we transported them on made the US a participant.
- Both warring sides needed US foodstuffs and tried to deny them to the other side.
- The British also wanted to control shipping.

- Each side pushed the US to the brink of War.
- The Union of States was fragile and couldn't afford or probably survive war.
- Both times last moment negotiations initiated by the President averted War.
- For 19 years the US went from crisis to crisis but avoided War.
- On June 18, 1812 President Madison and the US Congress ran out of patience and declared War on Great Britain.

Royal Navy Goes to War

- In peacetime most warships kept in “Ordinary”.
- Officers were put on half pay.
- Sailors were discharged.
- At onset of war ships were made ready for use, officers recalled, and British sailors obtained by “volunteering” or impressment.
- “Volunteers” chose the Navy instead of worse choices.
- They got signing bonus of two months pay.

Impressed



Impressment

- Few British merchant sailors wanted to serve in the Royal Navy.
 - Pay was poor and slow in coming.
 - Conditions on ships were crowded and hard.
 - Discipline harsh.
- Desertion rate was about 25%.
- Impressment from British ships and ports common
- US ships attractive to avoid impressment.
- Large numbers of British sailors served on US ships.

- The Royal Navy could not afford a haven from impressment.
- At the war's peak Royal Navy needed 140,000 men to crew 600 ships.
- The Royal Navy stopped US ships and impressed sailors believed to be British.
- Inevitably US sailors were also taken. The numbers will be argued forever.
- Ending impressment was not negotiable from Royal Navy's point of view.

Jay Treaty

- In June 1793 Britain issued an “Order in Council” and started capturing US merchant ships.
- By the spring of 1794 about 250 merchant ships had been captured and 150 condemned.
- The US public was enraged and wanted War with Britain.
- As a last resort President Washington sent Chief Justice John Jay to Britain to negotiate a Treaty.
- The Treaty fell far short of what was wanted but gave US ten years of relative peace with Britain.

Marbleheader Loses Cargo

Marblehead July the 5 1794
This is to Certify that James Trifry Had on
Board the Schooner Ladward 10 Quentles
of Jamaco Cod fish & the Said Schooner was
taken by the Spaniards and his Cargo was
Condemn'd at the port of Savannah
My Self master at that time
John Trison

Quasi War

- The French Directorate interpreted the Jay Treaty as an alliance between Britain and the US.
- France issued Letters of Marque for privateers to take US merchant shipping.
- By spring of 1797 about 300 ships had been taken.
- In May 1797 President Adams appointed Pinckney, Marshall, and Gerry to negotiate with France.
- The French refused to receive the mission.
- The XYZ affair resulted.
- March 1798, dispatches arrived announcing failure.

- On April 8 Representative Samuel Sewall called on Congress to prepare for War.
- Department of Navy created, merchant ships purchased and converted, new construction authorized, ships built by subscription.
- US prepared to build six 74 gun Ships of the Line.
- On July 7, 1798 Congress authorized attacks on Armed French ships.
- By summer of 1800 US had 50 ships manned by 5000 sailors and the organization to support them. The US was ready for War with France.

Constellation (38) vs. L'Insurgente (40)

1799



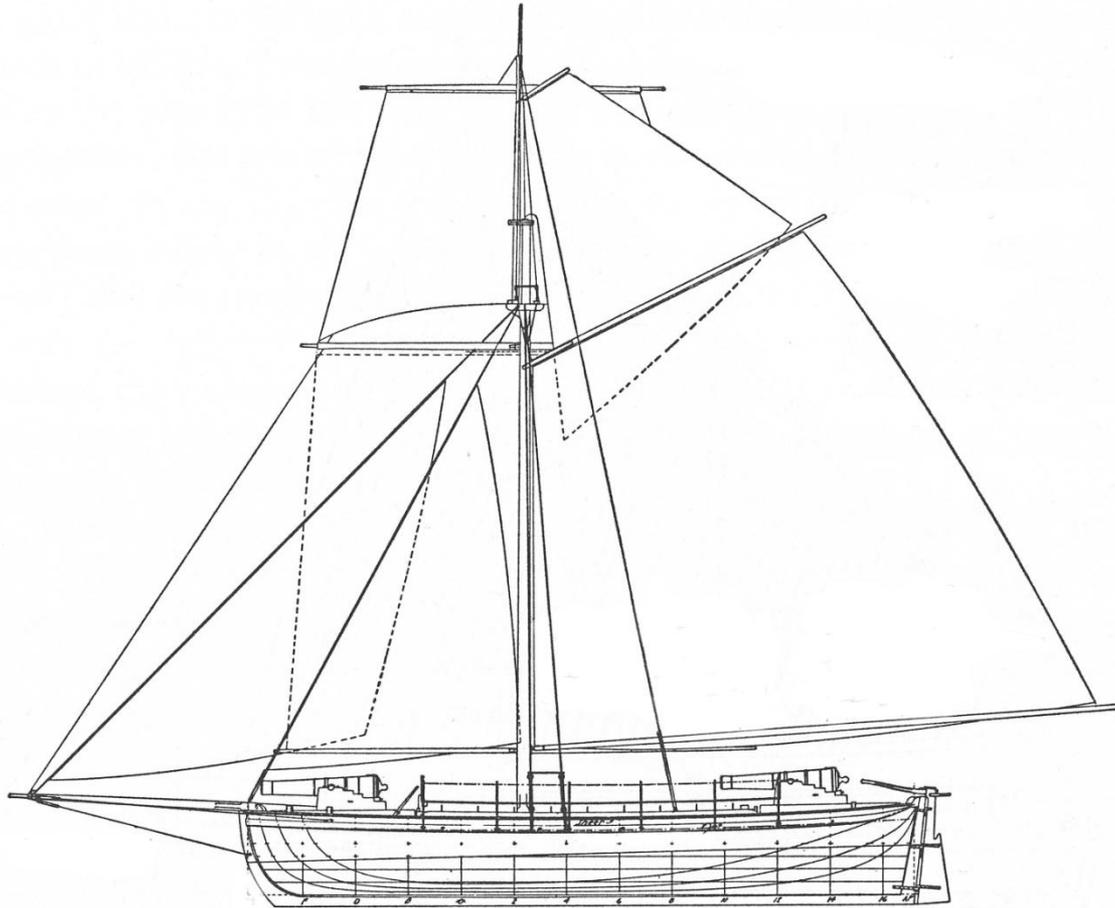
Peace Negotiations

- On Oct. 4, 1798 Gerry, just back from France, informed President Adams French desired Peace.
- On Feb. 18, 1799, in a high-risk move, President Adams announced a Peace mission to France.
- A mission of Vans Murray, Davie, and Chief Justice Ellsworth began negotiations in late 1799.
- On Sept 30, 1800 a Peace Treaty was signed with France, then ruled by Napoleon.
- On Feb. 18, 1801 the US Senate ratified the Treaty.

The US Disarms

- In early March 1801 Congress placed much of the new Navy in storage, sold off the least serviceable ships, and discharged many sailors.
- For the economy minded Democrats; not enough.
- On March 3, 1803 Congress passed an act reducing the Navy to 13 frigates. Only six deployed.
- Until 1812 the little money spent on Navy went to:
 - building 160 small gunboats for harbor defense.
 - a few small warships.
 - minimal maintenance of the existing fleet.

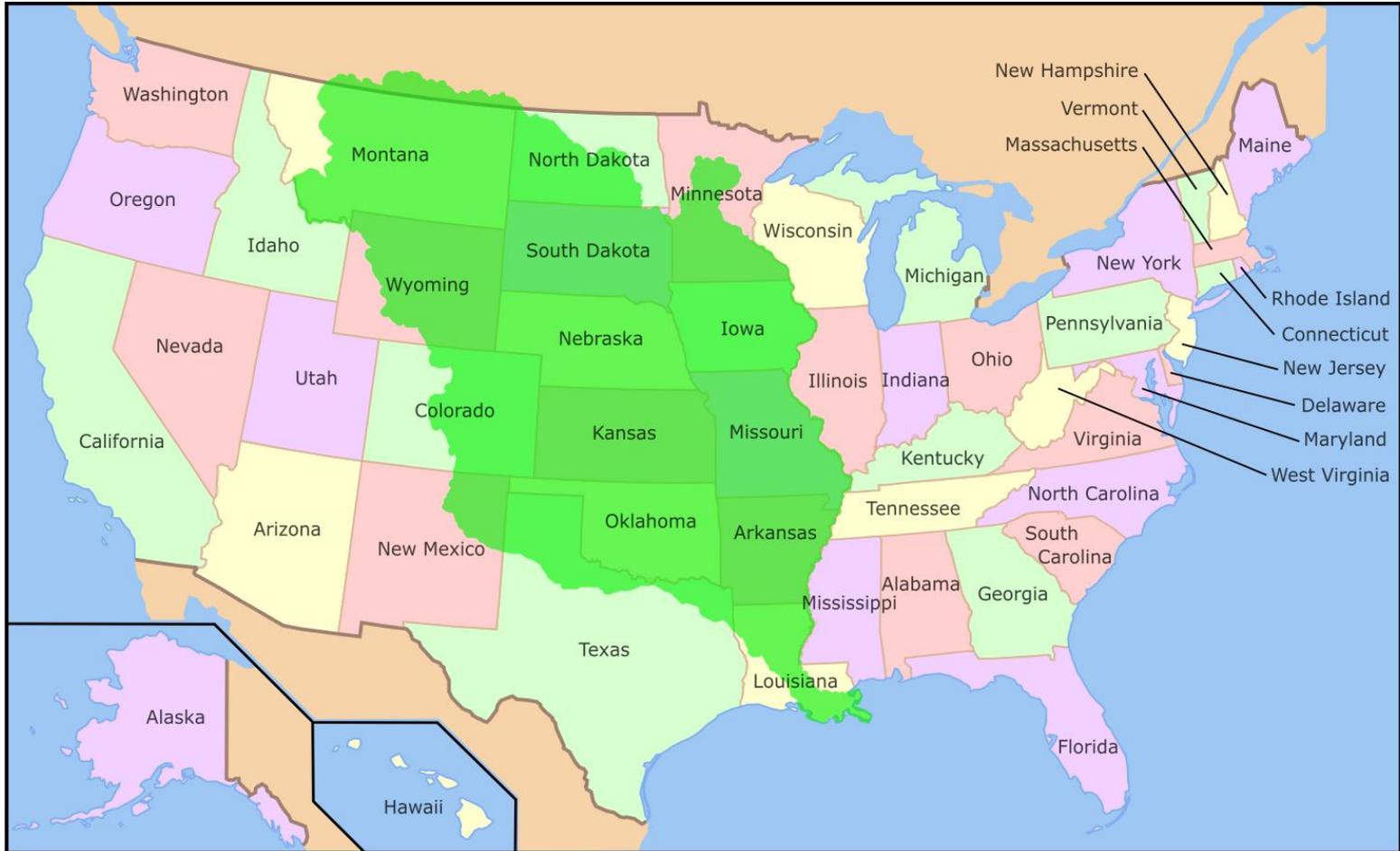
Gunboat



Jefferson's First Term

- President Jefferson's administration was to be one of extreme economy.
- It coincided with a lull in the Napoleonic Wars.
- A Naval squadron was maintained in the Mediterranean to suppress the Barbary Pirates.
- On April 30, 1803 Louisiana Purchase signed.
- On May 18, 1803 Britain declared war on France.
- The French prepared to invade Britain.

Louisiana Purchase



Jefferson's Second Term

- On October 21, 1805 Britain wins Battle of Trafalgar and gains sea supremacy.
- France prohibits trade with Britain.
- In May 1806 Britain Blockaded France.
- US ship seizures and impressment increased.
- In 1806 Monroe and Pinckney were sent to Britain to attempt to resolve US grievances.
- In March 1807 President Jefferson rejected the resulting Treaty and did not submit it to Senate.

Battle of Trafalgar



Chesapeake-Leopard Affair

- British Vice Admiral Berkeley gave orders to HMS *Leopard* to search USS *Chesapeake* for deserters.
- On June 22, 1807 *Chesapeake* left Norfolk for the Mediterranean Station.
- *Leopard* intercepted and asked for courtesy visit.
- A demand was made to muster the crew to search for British deserters.
- *Chesapeake's* Captain Barron temporized.
- *Leopard* fired a warning shot followed by three broadsides. 3 killed and 17 wounded.

- With her decks not cleared for action Chesapeake only managed one return shot.
- Capt. Barron surrendered the *Chesapeake*.
- *Leopard* refused surrender, boarded, and removed four “deserters”.
- US then demanded an apology and return of the “deserters” to no avail.
- On July 2, 1807 President Jefferson closed US waters to British ships.
- In October 1807 King George III signed “Order in Counsel” increasing impressment.

Chesapeake (36) and *Leopard* (50)



The Embargo

- With no military option, Jefferson was forced to look at an economic response.
- The Embargo Act was passed into law on December 22, 1807.
- Ships were idled, sailors and shoremen unemployed, goods left to rot.
- It caused a depression in New England.
- Evasion and smuggling became rampant.
- Additional laws to enforce the Embargo Act only inflamed the situation.

Embargo Political Cartoon



- Federalist support in the election of 1808 increased alarming the Democrats.
- In March 1809 the Embargo act was replaced with the Non Intercourse Act.
- It forbade only trade with Britain, France, and their possessions.
- It was easier to evade, but still hurt New England.
- New England, with its heavy dependence on trade, felt the rest of the country was against them.
- President Madison continued Jefferson's policies.

Macon's Bill Number 2

- Macon's Bill No. 2 replaced the Non Intercourse Act on May 10, 1810.
- It was an attempt to get Britain and France to remove their trade restrictions.
- It turned out to be another failed Non Intercourse bill that only inflamed the already bad relations with Britain.

Ambassador's Protest

Mr. Pinkney to Lord Wellesley

My Lord: Great Cumberland Place, January 15, 1811

I have the honor to inform you that it has been represented to me that two American vessels, (the schooner Polly and the schooner Mary) laden with codfish, and bound from Marblehead to Bordeaux, in France, have been since the 1st instant, been captured and brought into Plymouth, as prize, for an imputed breach of the British orders in council.

It is my duty to demand the restoration of these vessels and their cargoes for their to the American owners, together with compensation for their unjust detention, and liberty to resume the voyages which detention has interrupted.

I have the honor to be, &c

WILLIAM PINKNEY

The Most Noble the Marquis of Wellesley, &c, &c.

President (44) vs. Little Belt (20)

1811



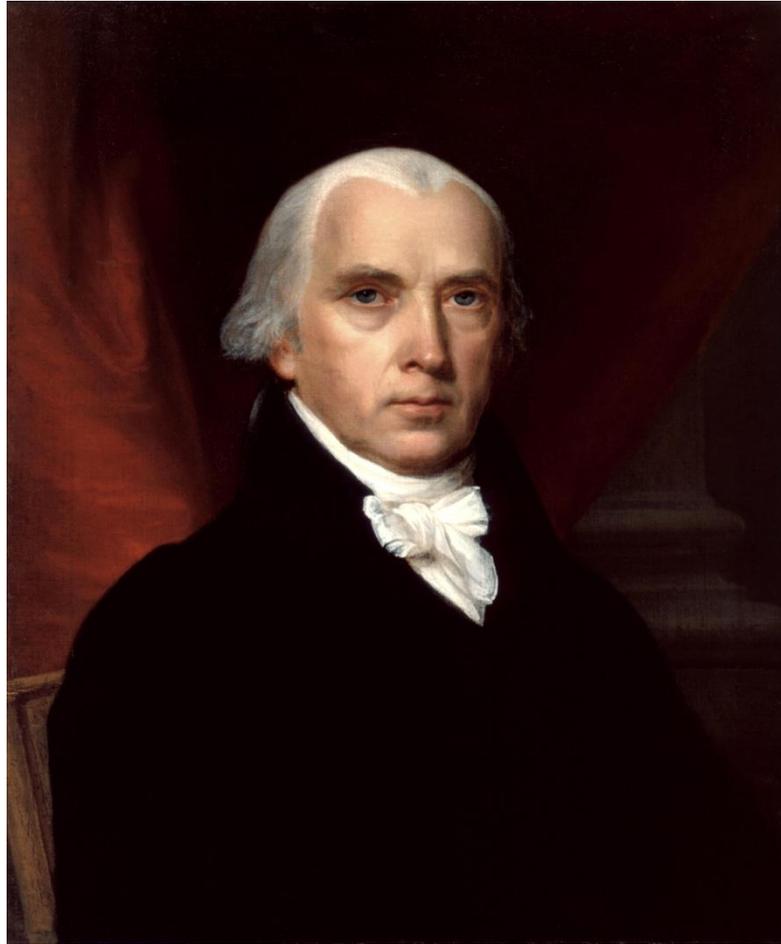
War

- Five years of economic warfare finally caused a depression in Britain in early 1812.
- On April 21 Britain announced a conditional repeal of “Orders in Council”.
- Prime Minister Perceval assassinated on May 11.
- US diplomat presented evidence of April 28 repeal of French decrees for US only to British on May 20.
- On June 1, 1812 President Madison sent a War message to Congress.
- Dispatches on the above events began arriving.

- On June 18 Congress responded and declared War.
 - House voted 79-49; Senate voted 19-13.
 - None of the 39 Federalists voted for War
- On June 19, 1812 President Madison signed the Declaration of War against Britain.
- The new British Prime Minister Lord Liverpool, wanted a more practical relationship with the US.
- On June 23 “Orders in Council” that were the main cause of US grievances were repealed by Britain.
- Napoleon invaded Russia on June 24.
- On August 12 news of repeal reached the US.

- President Madison rushed a mission to Britain.
- The British position was that:
 - They retained the right to re-impose “Orders in Council”.
 - Impressment would continue.
- Insufficient response for US to try to end War.
- On Oct. 13, 1812 Britain issued “Order in Council” enabling British forces to enter War.
- Opponents called the War “Mr. Madison’s War”.

President James Madison



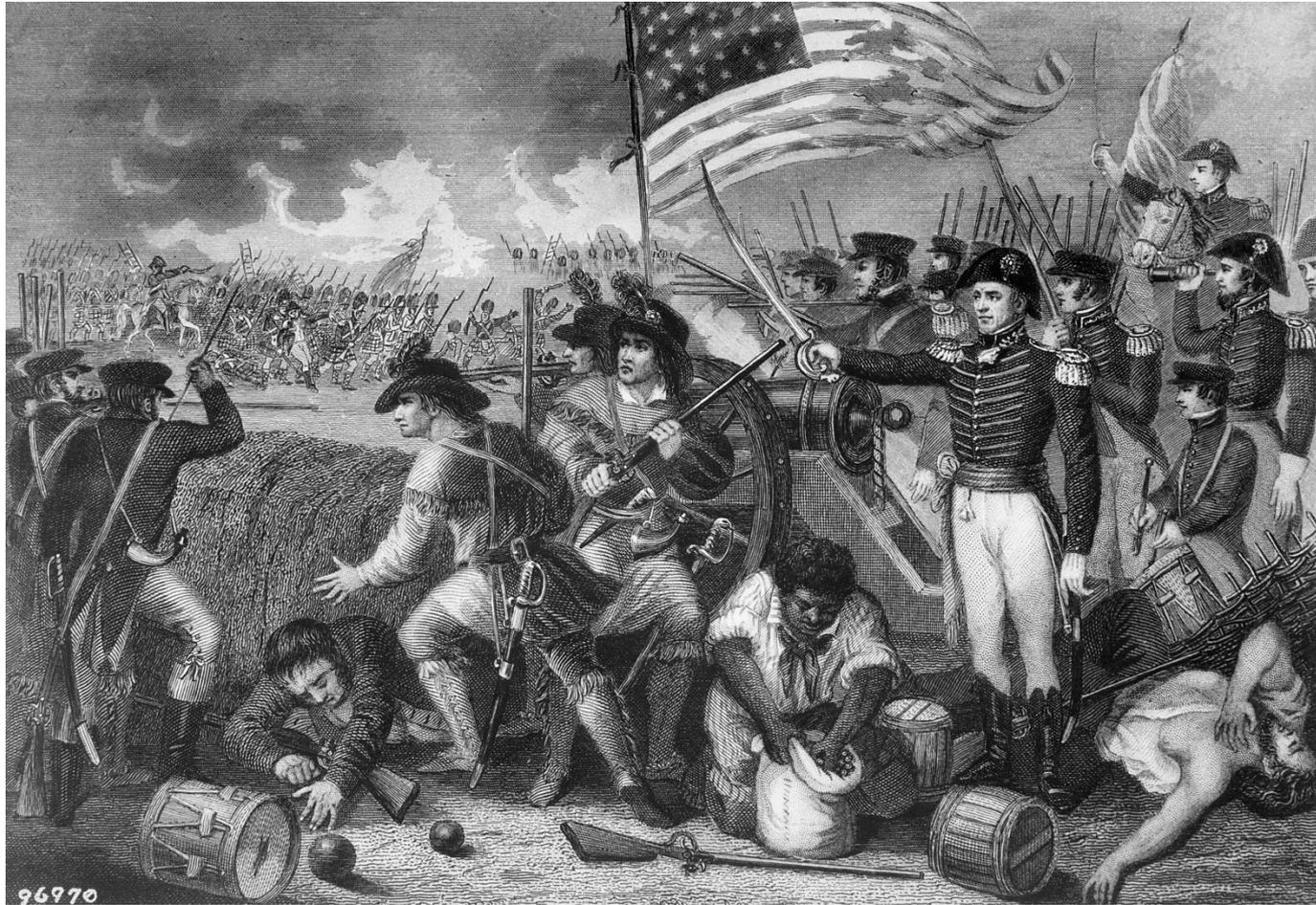
New England Opposition

- After five years of harassment from their own government in addition to British and French provocations, New England opposed the War.
- Massachusetts Governor Caleb Strong gave a message opposing the War to the Mass. House of Representatives on June 25, 1812.
- The message refuted reasons for the Declaration of War, but encouraged citizens to do their duty.
- Northeast Banks refused to lend to the National Government .

War in Summary

- The War was a miserable affair for the US.
- Three failed attempts to invade Canada.
- British Blockade, Washington burned.
- Public credit collapsed in 1814.
- Bright spots: 3 British frigates defeated early on; defense of Lake Erie and Champlain; defeat of Indians in West.
- War ended with New Orleans victory; Jan 8, 1815.
- Peace Treaty proclaimed on Feb. 18, 1815.
- US gained little at a cost of \$105 million.

Battle of New Orleans



Epilogue

- Eight days after the proclamation of the Peace Treaty Napoleon escaped from Elba.
- Thus began the “100 days” to Battle of Waterloo.
- Britain had the majority of her fleet and many of her best soldiers 3000 miles away.
- Britain’s interest immediately turned to France and Europe.
- To the US populace we had held off Britain. The war became the “Second War of Independence”
- Thirty one years of peace followed.