



HMS Euryalus, commanded by Captain Charles Napier (above), was one of seven British vessels carrying a total of 128 guns that sailed up the Potomac to Alexandria. Oil by Thomas Mudge, National Maritime Museum (UK)

Oil by Geoff Hunt, National Maritime Museum (UK)

Raise the White Flag

IN THE EARLY 1800S Alexandria was part of the District of Columbia and an important port with its own militia. In summer 1814, though, Alexandria's militia had been sent to defend Maryland from the British invasion. So on August 28, four days after the British burned Washington's most important federal buildings, defenseless Alexandrians saw enemy warships approaching up the Potomac River. To prevent similar destruction, Alexandria Mayor Charles Simms and members of his "vigilance committee" rowed out with a white flag of surrender.

"[As] there be no sufficient force, on our part, to oppose [the British], with any reasonable prospect of success, [you] should appoint a committee to carry a flag to the . . . enemy . . . and procure the best terms for the safety of persons, houses, and property."

Alexandria vigilance committee's recommendation to the city's Common Council



www.StarSpangledTrail.net
www.NPS.gov/STSP
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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.