

Title: : The Role of Citizens in the Defense of Baltimore during the War of 1812

Lesson Developed by: Jennifer Jones Frieman

Grade Level: 4 - 8

Duration: 60 minutes

MARYLAND VSC:

History: Grade 4

C. Conflict between Ideas and Institutions

2. Explain the political, cultural, economic and social changes in Maryland during the early 1800s
 - a. Describe Maryland's role in the War of 1812

History: Grade 8

C. Conflict between Ideas and Institutions

2. Analyze the emerging foreign policy of the United States
 - b. Explain how the continuing conflict between Great Britain and France influenced the domestic and foreign policy of the United States

Skills & Processes: Grade 3-5

D. Acquire Social Studies Information

1. Identify primary and secondary sources of information that relate to the topic/situation/problem being studied
 - c. Locate and gather data and information from appropriate non-print sources, such as music, artifacts, charts, maps, graphs, photographs, video clips, illustrations, paintings, political cartoons, interviews, and oral histories

Skills & Processes: Grade 6-8

D. Acquire Social Studies Information

1. Identify primary and secondary sources of information that relate to the topic/situation/problem being studied
 - a. Gather and read appropriate print sources, such as journals, periodicals, government documents, timelines, databases, reference works, and websites

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Use primary sources to describe the contributions of Baltimore citizens to the defense of Baltimore during the British attack in September 1814
- describe the impact of the attack on Baltimore businessmen.

Vocabulary:

militia – a group of private citizens who perform military service during emergencies

pile – a thick wooden pole driven into the ground

privateer – a privately owned ship given permission to attack enemy ships during time of war

ropewalk – a long narrow building where ropes are made

sundry – various

vessel – ship

vigilance – watchfulness, alertness

works – fortifications, barriers built to defend a position and block the enemy

Materials/Resources::

- Photocopy the primary sources:
 - “Civilian Defense in Baltimore, 1814-1815: Minutes of the Committee of Vigilance and Safety”, ed. by William D. Hoyt, Maryland Historical Magazine, Vol. 39, pp 205-206
 - 26th August 1814, paragraphs 5 and 6
 - 27th August 1814, paragraph 3 and 6
 - 27th August 1814, paragraph 4
 - "Report of the Committee of Claims on the petition of John Chalmers, Jun., ropemaker in Baltimore: November 7, 1814," PAM 2305, Maryland Historical Society
 - "Vessels sunk - Baltimore harbor: To accompany Bill H.R. No. 412, Feb. 4, 1829. Mr. Degraff, from the Committee on Commerce, to which the subject had been referred, made report," PAM 444, Maryland Historical Society
 - “Committee of Vigilance and Safety to _____. 1814 Sept. 17,” MS1846, Maryland Historical Society

Teacher Background:

The War of 1812 between the United States and Great Britain began as a result of the Napoleonic Wars between Great Britain and France, which began in 1793. Both of those European powers were intent on crippling the other’s trade, while the young United States struggled to assert its neutrality and trade freely. With its stronger navy, Britain was especially bold in harassing American merchant vessels, regularly boarding them and impressing their sailors. Finally, in June 1812, the United States declared war on Great Britain.

Because the United States was militarily unprepared for war at the time, one strategy it employed was the use of privateers. Private merchant vessels were given letters-of-marque, which authorized them to stop and seize enemy ships and their contents. During both the American Revolution and the War of 1812, Baltimore, a major center for American shipbuilding, was the home port of a great many of these privateers. As a result of this privateering activity, the British nicknamed Baltimore “a nest of pirates” and made it a primary target for attack.

During the summer of 1814, the British focused their attentions on the Chesapeake region. In August, they attacked a poorly defended Washington, D.C., burning the White House and other public buildings in retaliation for the destruction of the Canadian city of York at the hands of the Americans. Their real aim was the destruction of Baltimore, however. On September 11, the British anchored at the mouth of the Patapsco River the largest invasion fleet ever to enter U.S. waters. But Baltimore was ready. Over the past several weeks and days, its Committee of Vigilance and Safety had been directing the construction of fortifications and other measures for the defense of the city, including sinking vessels in the channel leading to the inner harbor and stretching chains across their masts to block the advance of enemy ships.

On September 12, the British landed near Baltimore at North Point and marched toward the city. On their way toward Baltimore, they met and easily defeated a group of American troops. The Americans retreated to a line of earthworks (fortifications) that Baltimoreans had built just outside the city. The

British stopped their advance to wait until their warships could defeat Fort McHenry and sail into Baltimore Harbor to support their attack on the works. During the night of September 13-14, sixteen British warships bombarded Fort McHenry, remaining just out of range of Fort McHenry's guns. By the next morning, the Fort still had not fallen, and the British decided to abandon the attack. With support from the ships now impossible, the British also abandoned their plans to attack by land and retreated. Baltimore was safe. The Battle of Baltimore was a major turning point in the War of 1812, which ended just a few months later.

The Battle of Baltimore also produced our national anthem. Francis Scott Key watched the bombardment of Fort McHenry from an American truce ship anchored near the British fleet. He had recently negotiated the release of his friend, Dr. William Beanes, from the British, but the British insisted that Key and Beanes not be allowed to return to Baltimore until after the bombardment for fear that they would reveal the British plans to the Americans. Key was so inspired by the defense of the fort that he wrote a poem about it, which he called "The Defence of Fort McHenry." Key's wife's brother-in-law had the poem printed in the newspapers, and the poem, with its new name of "The Star-Spangled Banner," was soon set to the tune of an old English song "To Anacreon in Heaven." In 1931, Congress made the Star-Spangled Banner our national anthem.

For more information, consult Fort McHenry's Historical Handbook at http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/hh/5/index.htm.

Lesson Development:

1. Ask students to consider how they might react if they knew an enemy force was approaching their city. Would they try to escape? Would they stay and try to defend the city? Who would be responsible for fighting the enemy? In what ways might the citizens help defend the city?
2. Explain that 200 years ago, the national army and navy were very small, not at all like those that exist today. If an enemy attacked Baltimore, it would be largely up to the people of Baltimore to defend the city.
3. Provide students with a basic understanding of the War of 1812, emphasizing the importance of the Port of Baltimore during this era, the role of Baltimore privateers, and the British desire to punish the Baltimore for its harassment of British vessels. You might read aloud "Why Baltimore?", a publication by Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine (<http://www.nps.gov/fomc/pdf-files/fort.pdf>).
4. Explain to students that in August 1814, the British attacked Washington, D.C., burning the Capitol and the White House. Washington was poorly defended by its militia and citizens, and the British met very little opposition. Following their attack on Washington, the British turned to Baltimore.
5. Tell students that they will be examining documents from almost 200 years ago to discover how Baltimoreans defended their city and how Baltimore businessmen were affected by these efforts.
6. Explain that, from the beginning of the war, Baltimoreans had formed a committee to help organize the defense of the city. This group was called the "Committee of Vigilance and Safety." When it became clear that the British were going to attack Baltimore, the Committee of Vigilance and Safety issued instructions to Baltimoreans about how to help defend the city. Tell students that they will be

reading some of these instructions.

7. Divide the class into 3 groups. Distribute one the following excerpts from the Committee of Vigilance and Safety's instructions both in its original form and in its translation to each group. If possible, first have students try to read the excerpt in its original form before turning to the translation. Also, it might be helpful to put boxes around the paragraphs you would like each group to read.
 - 26th August 1814, paragraphs 5 and 6
 - 27th August 1814, paragraph 3 and 6
 - 27th August 1814, paragraph 4
8. Direct the students to read in pairs their excerpt to answer the following FOCUS QUESTION: **IN ADDITION TO FIGHTING, HOW DID ORDINARY BALTIMOREANS HELP DEFEND THEIR CITY FROM THE BRITISH?**
 - They contributed money.
 - They helped build fortifications.
 - They provided tools.
9. Have a representative from each group share their findings with the class. Summarize.
10. Briefly explain the course of the Battle of Baltimore.
11. Explain to the class that some of the measures taken to defend Baltimore hurt the businesses of many Baltimoreans who made their livings through shipping and shipbuilding. Tell the class that they will now examine three more documents that describe some of the defensive measures that had lasting negative impacts on the Port of Baltimore.
12. Distribute one of the following sources and their translations to each of the three groups:
 - Report of the Committee of Claims on the Petition of John Chalmers
 - Vessels Sunk – Baltimore Harbor
 - Letter from the Committee of Vigilance and Safety, September 17, 1814
13. Direct the students to read in pairs their source to answer the following FOCUS QUESTION: **ACCORDING TO YOUR DOCUMENT, WHAT WAS DONE TO HELP DEFEND BALTIMORE, AND HOW DO YOU THINK THIS ACTION MIGHT HAVE HURT THE BUSINESS OF THE PORT OF BALTIMORE AFTER THE BATTLE?**
 - John Chalmers' ropewalk was burned. Not only did this destroy Chalmers' place of business, it also deprived Baltimore ships of one source of rope for their ships.
 - Twenty-four ships were seized by the military and sunk in Baltimore Harbor to prevent the passage of British ships into the harbor. The cargo on the ships was not removed prior to their sinking. The owners of these ships therefore lost huge sums of money. After the battle, these sunken ships also prevented Baltimore merchant ships from entering and exiting the harbor.
 - Piles were driven into the harbor to prevent the passage of British ships. Again, these obstructions would have also prevented the passage of Baltimore merchant vessels after the battle. Mere days after the battle, merchants were requesting the removal of the piles.

14. Have a representative from each group share their findings with the class. Summarize.

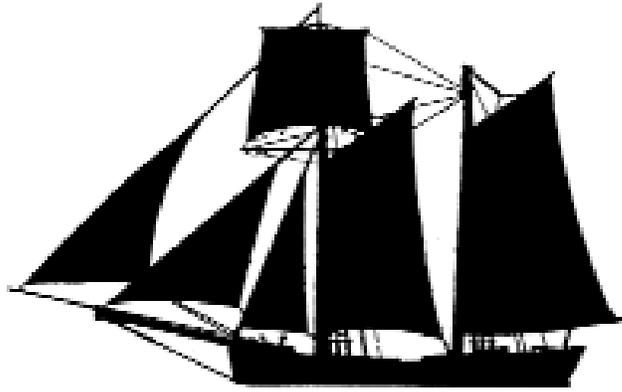
Assessment:

Students should assume the identity of a Baltimore merchant and write a letter dated September 15, 1814 to a friend living in Philadelphia. The letter should describe the contributions of Baltimore's citizens to the defense of the city and the long-term impact of the measures taken on the Port of Baltimore.

Closure:

Have students read their letters in a Living Theater scenario. This would summarize the content covered in this lesson.

WHY BALTIMORE?



In the early 1800's, Baltimore was a fast growing harbor city. The population was close to 50,000. Many of the men worked in the city at skilled jobs such as sailmakers, ironworkers, shipwrights and merchants. Successful shipbuilding and the city's central location for trade helped to make Baltimore an important international seaport.

Meanwhile, France and Great Britain, at war with one another, had set up economic blockades to keep each other from getting important supplies. As a neutral carrier for both countries, America's merchant ships sometimes were caught in the blockades, and all of the goods would be confiscated by one or the other of the two countries. In addition, the British frequently captured American seaman and forced them to serve in the Royal Navy. Also, the Americans thought the British were encouraging the Indians in the West to attack frontier settlements. Shortly, the Americans became so angry with the way they were being treated that the United States declared war on Great Britain in June 1812 to protect "free trade and sailor's rights," and American rights on land.

When news of the Declaration of War reached Baltimore, some shipowners began turning their vessels into privateers. These privately owned ships were given permission from the government to capture British merchant ships. Soon, Baltimore was described as "a nest of pirates," and the British were determined to put an end to privateering.

Expecting a British attack, the people of Baltimore strengthened the city's defenses at Fort McHenry.

that it is their wish that Maj. Genl. Smith be requested to take the Command of the Forces which may be called into service for the defence of the city, therefore—Resolved, That, Col. John E. Howard, Mr. Frisby and Mr. Stewart be appointed to wait on Maj. Genl. Smith and to communicate to him the information this Committee have received, to state that they unanimously concur with the same, and to request that he would at this important crisis take upon himself the command of the Forces that may be called out for the defence of our City—

5—Resolved, That the gentlemen named in the forgoing resolution wait on Maj. Genl. Smith and report his answer to this committee forthwith—

The gentlemen who were so appointed accordingly retired and after a short time reported that Maj. Genl. Smith was at this time willing and would take upon himself the command of the Forces that might be called out for the defence of the City, but that he wished to be sanctioned in so doing by the Executive of this State and that his powers might be extended; whereupon it was

6. Resolved That Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Bland & Mr. Frisby be and they are hereby appointed to address a letter to the Governor of this State requesting him to invest Maj. Genl. Smith with powers in every respect commensurate to the present exigency, which shall be forwarded immediately by express; and that they report to this committee at their next meeting—

The committee then adjourned—

Baltimore 26th August 1814

The Committee of Vigilance and Safety met according to adjournment—The proceedings of yesterday were read and the first, second, & fourth Resolutions and the names of this Committee were ordered to be published—(Mr. Bland from the Committee reported that the Goaler had agreed to receive hold & maintain in a comfortable manner any Deserters that might be committed to him for the sum of twenty five cents per day—

On motion it was—Resolved, That four seamen who have presented themselves as deserters from the enemy be placed under the care of a Constable and at the expense of this Committee conveyed beyond the Susquehanna where there shall be given to each out of the funds of this Committee the sum of two dollars—

2—Resolved, That Mr. Daniel Conner ⁴⁷ be and he is hereby requested to place himself in the service of this Committee for a compensation to be hereafter agreed upon; and that it be his duty, vigilantly to search for all suspected strangers or other persons, and in a discreet exercise of this authority, to report such persons to, or bring them before the mayor—

3. Resolved, That the Mayor be and is hereby authorised and directed to employ an additional watch, to guard the City and precincts, and that the expense be paid out of the funds of the Committee of Vigilance and

⁴⁷ Daniel Conner (d. 1822), merchant, 68 Albemarle St.



Safety; and that the city commissioners and the companies of the Eastern and Western Precincts, be requested to aid him in the execution thereof—

4—Whereas in the present exigency, money will be wanted for various purposes, therefore,

Resolved, That the inhabitants of the City and Precincts be and they are hereby invited to contribute thereto by calling at the Mayors Office, who will receive such contributions, and will publish the names of the contributors and the sums by them severally given, to be appropriated to such objects as the committee of vigilance & safety may authorise and direct—

Ordered that the third and fourth of the foregoing Resolutions be published—

Mr. Buchanan from the committee appointed to address a letter to the Governor reported that they had forwarded a letter by express a copy of which was read and approved—

A Letter from the Governor in answer to that which was address[ed] to him from this committee respecting Maj. Genl. Smith's command was received & read—

Baltimore 27th August 1814

The Committee of Vigilance and Safety met pursuant to adjournment—
The proceedings of yesterday were read—

On motion the following resolutions were adopted to wit—

Whereas the Commanding officer has requested the aid of the citizens, in the erection of works for the defence of the city, and the Committee of Vigilance and Safety having full confidence in the patriotism of their fellow citizens, have agreed on the following organization for the purpose of complying with the request of the Major General—

The inhabitants of the city and precincts are called on to deposit at the Court House in the third ward, Centre Market in the fifth ward, Riding School, in the seventh ward, Market House Fells Point, and take with them to the place required all wheel barrows, pick axes, spades & shovels that they can procure—

That the city and precincts be divided into four sections the first section to consist of the Eastern precincts and the eighth ward, the second to comprize the 5th 6th and 7th wards, and the third to comprize the 2d. 3d. and 4th wards, and the fourth to comprize the 1st ward and the Western precincts—

That the exempts from militia duty and the free people of colour, of the first district, consisting of the 8th ward and the Eastern Precincts, assemble tomorrow, *Sunday morning*, at 6 o'clock, at Hampstead Hill, with provisions for the day, and that Arthur Mitchell,⁴⁸ Daniel Conn,⁴⁹ Henry Pennington,⁵⁰ John Chalmers,⁵¹ William Starr,⁵² Thomas Weary,

⁴⁸ Arthur Mitchell, cooper, 93 French [Front] St.

⁴⁹ Daniel Conn (d. 1836), carpenter, Aisquith St.

⁵⁰ Henry Pennington (d. 1825), inspector of lime, 74 Green St.

⁵¹ John Chalmers (d. 1817).

⁵² William Starr (d. 1819).

**TRANSLATION OF
COMMITTEE OF VIGILANCE AND SAFETY MINUTES
26TH AUGUST 1814
Paragraphs 5 and 6**

ORIGINAL TEXT

Whereas in the present exigency, money be will wanted for various purposes, therefore, Resolved, That the inhabitants of the City and Precincts be and they are hereby invited to contribute thereto by calling at the Mayors Office, who will receive such contributions, and will publish the names of the contributors and the sums by them severally given, to be appropriated to such objects as the committee of vigilance & safety may authorise and direct. . . .

TRANSLATION

Because, in the present emergency, we will want money for various emergencies, The inhabitants of the City and Districts are invited to contribute money to the effort by going to the Mayors Office, who will take the contributions, and will publish the names of the contributors and the sums they gave, to be used for such purposes as the committee of vigilance and safety may authorize and direct . . .

**TRANSLATION OF
COMMITTEE OF VIGILANCE AND SAFETY MINUTES
27TH AUGUST 1814
Paragraphs 3 and 6**

ORIGINAL TEXT

Whereas the Commanding Officer has requested the aid of the citizens, in the erection of works for the defence of the city . . .

That the exempts from militia duty and the free people of colour, of the first district . . . assemble tomorrow, Sunday morning, at 6 o'clock, at Hampstead Hill, with provisions for the day . . .

TRANSLATION

Considering that the Commanding Officer has requested the aid of the citizens in the construction of fortifications for the defense of the city. . .

The people not required to perform militia duty and the free African Americans, of the first district . . . should assemble tomorrow, Sunday morning, at 6 o'clock, at Hampstead Hill, with food for the day . . .

**TRANSLATION OF
COMMITTEE OF VIGILANCE AND SAFETY MINUTES
27TH AUGUST 1814
Paragraph 4**

ORIGINAL TEXT

The inhabitants of the city and precincts are called on to deposit at the Court House in the third ward, Centre Market in the fifth ward, Riding School, in the seventh ward, Market House Fells Point, and take with them to the place required all wheel barrows, pick axes, spades & shovels that they can procure –

TRANSLATION

The inhabitants of the city and districts are asked to take all the wheel barrows, pick axes, spades and shovels that they can obtain to the Court House in the third ward, Center Market in the fifth ward, Riding School in the seventh ward, and Market House in Fells Point –

REPORT.

The committee of claims, to whom was referred the petition of John Chalmers, jr. report:

That on the 29th of March, 1814, the petitioner and the secretary of the navy, entered into a contract for the manufacture of cordage, for the United States' frigate *Java*, upon the following terms: The navy department was to furnish him, at Baltimore, with Russia hemp, and Kentucky yarns, in such quantities as might be found convenient, and he should require, which was to be manufactured in good navy cordage, sufficient for the complete equipment of the frigate: for every pound of hemp and yarn delivered to the petitioner, he was to return a pound of cordage to the navy agent, free from expense to the United States, so that his profit and compensation, for his labor and art in manufacturing, consisted in the difference in the weight of the hemp and yarns, increased by the quantity of tar used in the manufacture. It was also understood by the secretary of the navy, and Mr. Chalmers, that the raw material thus delivered, was to be at the risk of the United States, in the event of loss by fire.

The petitioner commenced manufacturing the cordage, and had prepared and delivered to the navy agent at Baltimore, upwards of nine tons, and had a considerable quantity ready to deliver, when, on the approach of the enemy towards Baltimore, in the month of September last, the ropewalks in which the cordage was manufacturing and then deposited, was set on fire by order of general For-

man, who then commanded the Maryland militia at that place; in consequence of which the ropewalks were destroyed, and with them, about thirty tons of Russia hemp, belonging to the government, and all the labor and profit of the petitioner, except that part of the hemp which had been delivered. He asks of congress to reimburse him to the amount of his actual expenditures, in the purchase of tar, and the money which he has paid to persons employed in the manufacture of the cordage.

The committee are not in possession of facts, which would authorize them to determine whether the destruction of this property was necessary; if it was not, however much they might regret and deprecate that event, yet they are of opinion, that under the circumstances of this case, the individual who sustained the loss, should at least be reimbursed by the government, to the amount of his claim. They therefore report by bill, and submit to the house the following resolution:

Resolved, That the prayer of the petitioner is reasonable, and ought to be allowed.



"Report of the Committee of Claims on the petition of John Chalmers, Jun., ropemaker in Baltimore: November 7, 1814," PAM 2305, Maryland Historical Society.

Baltimore
PAM
444
Sts
41334 (2)
20

20th CONGRESS,
2d Session.

[Rep. No. 70.]

Ho. OF REPS.

VESSELS SUNK—BALTIMORE HARBOR.

To accompany Bill H. R. No. 412.

FEBRUARY 4, 1829.

MR. DE GRAFF, from the Committee on Commerce, to which the subject had been referred, made the following

REPORT:

The Committee on Commerce, to which was referred a memorial of certain owners of vessels that were sunk for the protection of Baltimore during the late war, make the following report:

That, during the late war with Great Britain, and when the city of Baltimore was attacked by the enemy's sea and land forces, twenty-four vessels, of all descriptions, belonging to the petitioners, were seized on, by order of the commanding general, and sunk in the channel way, to prevent the enemy's ships from passing into the harbor. To this judicious procedure, which was effected at a moment of great exigency, neither admitting of a selection of vessels, nor the removal of all the materials from them, has been ascribed the preservation of the port and city, including public vessels, forts, and other public property. The vessels remained sunk a considerable time after the war terminated, and, according to the testimony adduced, sustained great injury. They were finally raised by the United States at an expense of \$ 38,154 21.

Under the act of 29th April, 1816, making appropriation for the military service of the United States, there was paid to the petitioners (prior to any demand having been made by them) the sum of \$ 15,188 50, for damages sustained, and "for articles lost from and on board of said vessels." There was also granted to the petitioners, by the act of 26th April, 1822, the sum of \$ 40,363 82, being for detention from the date of peace with Great Britain until the vessels were raised and restored to their owners, and a reasonable time allowed for repairing the vessels; and a further sum of \$ 10,680 33, for detention of the ship Fabius, brig Aid, and schooner Ann, was provided by the supplemental act of March 3, 1825, for the relief of John S. Stiles. These several sums make an aggregate of \$ 66,232 65, paid for damages and detention of twenty-four vessels, which, according to the testimony, were worth \$ 188,679 30.

The petitioners having complained that justice was not done them, the House of Representatives, on the 23d of January, 1823, referred their memorial to the Secretary of the Navy, with instructions to make report thereon. The District Attorney at Baltimore, in pursuance of instructions from the Secretary of the Navy, took the depositions of many witnesses, whose credibility he declares to be unquestionable. Upon the testimony so taken, the Secretary of the Navy made a report to the House on the 7th of May, 1824, dividing, in substance, the subject into the following points, viz:



"Vessels sunk - Baltimore harbor: To accompany Bill H.R. No. 412, Feb. 4, 1829. Mr. Degraff, from the Committee on Commerce, to which the subject had been referred, made report," PAM 444, Maryland Historical Society

Sir,

To aid in the defence of the City last summer by your direction a number of piles were drove into the Channell, between Ferry Point, and Mosaled Point, to prevent the passage of the Enemy's Vessels in that direction. The termination of the War having rendered those obstructions no longer necessary, you would confer a favour on the residents of the Western part of the City generally, and on us particularly; if you would procure their removal, so as to admit the free entry of Vessels which the piles in the Channell now prevent.

We are respectfully

Yours &c
Michael Warner

George Warner

Wm. Warner