

NOAA Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System

Potomac Buoy

Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail Highlights

In April 1814, British Vice Admiral Cochrane issued a proclamation inviting slaves to run away and join the British in the fight against the United States. Recruitment began of a “Corps of Colonial Marines.” Each recruit received a bounty of \$20 and the same red uniform as the British Royal Marines. Recruits were to be trained at Fort Albion on Tangier Island, which became the stronghold of the British in the Chesapeake Bay.

Meanwhile, American Commodore Joshua Barney’s Chesapeake Flotilla was almost ready for its first action. He had envisioned the flotilla as a squadron of 20 shallow draft barges, suitable for fighting on the Chesapeake and built to defend against British incursions. Barney and his flotilla left Baltimore with a plan to take Tangier Island in a surprise attack.

The British sent Captain Barrie with a 74-gun ship-of-the-line, a schooner, and smaller boats, to go find him. As Captain Barrie traveled north up the western shore of the Bay, Barney and the flotilla anchored off Drum Point to wait for favorable conditions for the trip across the Bay to Tangier.

At the mouth of the Potomac, the British spied the flotilla to their north; Captain Barrie planned to make a run at Barney and the Americans.

American Commodore Barney directed his flotilla to strike a meaningful blow against the British. But a sudden squall arose, and Barney found the winds forcing his flotilla into the British fleet. The battle ended in a stalemate, with Commodore Barney running his flotilla into the Patuxent, and the British pursuing to blockade the river. Thus began a summer long cat-and-mouse game on the Patuxent where Barney eventually scuttled his fleet and the British launched their land offensive through Bladensburg and to the U.S. capital.

The National Park Service’s Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail commemorates the people, places, and events of the War of 1812 in the Chesapeake. Several NOAA CBIBS buoys, including the Potomac Buoy, are located along the Star-Spangled Banner Trail.