

## **NOAA Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System**

### **Upper Potomac Buoy**

### **Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail Highlights**

In August 1814, a large British naval force that included frigates, bomb vessels, and a rocket ship under the command of Captain James Gordon sailed up the Potomac River toward Fort Washington. Located on the Maryland shore, about 8 miles below Washington, D.C., Fort Washington was the only major fortification on the river. The attack was largely diversionary in nature, intended to distract the Americans from a planned British land assault on Washington via the Patuxent River.

While Gordon's naval force was making its way up the Potomac, British land forces defeated the ill-prepared Americans at Bladensburg, Maryland, entered Washington, D.C., and set fire to the Capitol, the President's Mansion, and other public buildings.

On August 27, Captain Gordon's naval force captured Fort Washington with no resistance. The Fort's American defenders had retreated without a fight, and a delegation asked to surrender.

Captain Gordon dictated his terms of surrender to Alexandria's mayor, Charles Simms. The British captain promised that his men would respect private property as long as the Alexandrians offered no resistance. Gordon also demanded the surrender of all military supplies and commercial goods for confiscation as spoils of war.

At the mercy of the Royal Navy squadron, the town council accepted the enemy's demands, and for the next five days the British looted stores and warehouses. For the most part, the occupation force abided by Captain Gordon's word not to harass or destroy private property. As a result of the port's compliance to the terms of surrender, Alexandria avoided destruction and its residents were unharmed. On September 2, the British weighed anchor and made its way northward to join in on the assault of Baltimore.

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 Upper Potomac Buoy, are located along the Star-Spangled Banner Trail.