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Russ did the first 10 pages, Zack the rest.

**Privateering in the War of 1812: An Emerging United States**

 The War of 1812 was fought between the United States and Great Britain from June 1812 to February 1815 and occurred along the Canadian border, in the Chesapeake Bay region, and also along the Gulf of Mexico. The United States had declared war as a response to Britain’s trade restrictions, as well as their failure to evacuate the Great Lakes region after the American Revolution and for supporting American Indians in their struggle for expansion.[[1]](#footnote-1) The war was fought in three geographic areas. The Chesapeake Bay region and the southern Atlantic coast held battles between warships and privateers while the British strategically blockaded the shoreline of the United States. The Canadian border held mainly land battles on the frontier, which ran along the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. The battles in the South along the Gulf Coast region were also mainly land battles in which the United States defeated the British Indian allies.[[2]](#footnote-2) Although there were land battles, this paper will illustrate how the battles at sea, particularly involving American privateers, were more significant and transformed America from a western nation into a world power.

 The United States had defeated the British once before during the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) where the Americans fought for liberation from Great Britain. During the War of 1812, though, America had its advantages. The war was fought on their own soil. The Americans knew the land quite better than the British. Also, Great Britain had to ship their supplies across the Atlantic Ocean to reach their troops while the Americans could easily transport men and supplies on caravans to reach certain destinations. America utilized these advantages to win the war. Contrary to the Revolutionary War, in the War of 1812, America had little to no advantages over Great Britain with the war being fought in open waters. Here, it was naval strength versus naval strength.

 Prior to the declaration of war against the British Empire in 1812, it was said when commenting on the United States Navy that “between 1801 and 1812 the people of the United States in general, and those of New England more especially, had lost all adequate sense of national pride.”[[3]](#footnote-3) In 1807, the distinguished naval commander French Ensor Chadwick spoke of why the American sense of nationalism decreased during this period of time. He states, “…a navy was a ruinous folly…Our ships were being seized at the rate, for a long time, of three a day.”[[4]](#footnote-4) The United States navy was weak and insufficient during this time, and for a naval commander to call the U.S Navy a “folly” showed his distraught emotions and portrays how ineffective the navy was.

 During the naval period where nationalism diminished, in 1803, the USS frigate *Philadelphia* was captured and burned while its crew was contained in Tunis at the hands of the Barbary pirates. The loss heavily reduced the U.S. Navy’s Mediterranean forces and increased its enemies’ offensive power.[[5]](#footnote-5) The loss of the *Philadelphia* caused President Jefferson to undergo heavy criticism, even from members of his own cabinet. [[6]](#footnote-6) Interestingly enough, even before the capture of the *Philadelphia*,Jefferson was receiving criticism in regard to the U.S Navy. A *Newburyport Herald* newspaper article entitled “War with Tripoli” from February 1, 1803, criticized Jefferson for continuing the fight against the Barbary powers. The article stated, “the poor American captain, after watching through wind and storm, wet and dry, and at last fighting and capturing the Tripolitan with the loss of half his own crew, is only to disarm his enemy and fend him back to refit for a second attempt.”[[7]](#footnote-7) The public was outraged because in addition to losing several lives, the Americans were not destroying the Barbary pirate ships and were giving them a second chance to return and destroy U.S. frigates. Just fifteen days after this article was published, the *USS* *Philadelphia* was captured, and unlike the American tactics of seizing, the Barbary pirates sank the frigate and captured its crew. It was almost as if the Americans were fighting with no incentive to win. With an attitude like this, it would be hard to acquire a sense of nationalism while American enemies were capitalizing on the American’s inefficiency to destroy their opposing vessels. This attitude toward American involvement on the seas would remain until the first American victory in the War of 1812.

 Charles Francis Adams believed that on Wednesday, August 19, 1812, at 6:30PM, the United States became a world power. Adams, the great grandson of President John Q. Adams and a captain of a Massachusetts regiment during the American Civil War, derives his military knowledge from first hand experiences. On August 19th, Captain Isaac Hull, aboard the frigate *Constitution*, defeated the British frigate *Guerriere*.[[8]](#footnote-8) This was the moment that the United States proved they could compete with a superpower such as Great Britain and this is when attitudes toward United States naval power transformed.

 The reason this victory is so monument is because the United States was never credited to deserve a chance against the Royal British Navy. On the sea, no other power questioned Britain’s supremacy. The British Empire had an unbroken naval victory record,[[9]](#footnote-9) meaning that they had never lost a war that took place on the water. Numerically, the armed ships of the United States were to those of Great Britain as one to a hundred.[[10]](#footnote-10) Also, the frigates that were built under the Jefferson and Adams administrations were rotting at their moorings so no American vessel was believed to be able to uphold in an encounter with the British.[[11]](#footnote-11)

 After the *Constitution*’s naval victory, American privateers began to venture the waters in hopes of destroying British vessels who dared to blockade the shores of America. The United States found that they had more success when single privateer frigates were on their own, and it was proved that the United States had more maritime power rather than naval power.[[12]](#footnote-12) “These [single ship] successes provided an initially valuable boost to American morale” and an increase in volunteering privateers.[[13]](#footnote-13) By the start of the War of 1812, the United States had a measly 23 naval ships at her disposal.[[14]](#footnote-14) In contrast, privateers contributed 517 ships to the war effort, capturing nearly 1,300 enemy ships in the process.[[15]](#footnote-15) The majority of naval encounters throughout the war actually involved privateers, rather than navy ships.

 Privateers are mariners who apply to receive Letters of Marque, which are commissions or warrants issued to commit what would be considered acts of piracy.[[16]](#footnote-16) In other terms, it allowed the United States to commit acts of piracy on the seas, but these acts were all legal since they were issued by the government, and therefore, no punish.ments would occur from committing these crimes.

 One privateer that is considered to be the most successful in destroying British vessels and therefore declaring United States dominance is the privateering ship *Yankee*. In the New England harbor, the British acquired a habit to raid the coast and attack the barges that were docked and slightly offshore. As a result of this frustration, elaborate plans were formed to outwit the British, and thus, the *Yankee* was created.[[17]](#footnote-17) Twenty one mariners managed to put together six hundred dollars to buy a forty-two foot barge and found Captain Lemuel Burrows to command the ship.[[18]](#footnote-18) The Yankee was fixed to resemble as closely as possible a hated British barge, and the boarding master, Peter Washington, who was British, completed the disguise with his accent to make others believe the ship was a party of Britain’s Royal Navy.

 Wilfred Harold Munro stated that the *Yankee* was immediately and immensely successful and not only inflicted enormous damage upon the British but was also enormously profitable to her owners.[[19]](#footnote-19) Munro bases his essay on the journal from a captain’s clerk named Noah Jones, who was on board the *Yankee*. Jones describes in his journal entries that the *Yankee* did very well for itself in battle. When describing an attack on an enemy ship, he states, “In six minutes she had possession of the prize and immediately made sail... the Captain instantly surrendered himself and his vessel.”[[20]](#footnote-20) His entries show how efficient the crew on board the *Yankee* worked to conquer its enemies in a surprisingly short amount of time.

 On the *Yankee’s* first voyage, the Barge cruised off of Fishers Island. In unmistakable British speech, Peter Washington hailed the first vessel they met, the sloop *Nancy*, which had stopped to welcome what appeared to be the usual naval inspection.[[21]](#footnote-21) Kimball states that the sloop was “captured without a struggle,”[[22]](#footnote-22) and this is something we will further see through a series of newspaper reports and journal entries chronicling the privateer *Yankee*.

 A newspaper article taken form *The Investigator* described the *Yankee’s* capture of the British privateer ship *Royal Bounty*, a thirty five person barge manning ten carriage guns, with powder, shot, muskets, and pistols. The battle between the two is said to have lasted for about an hour, much of which was in pistol range.[[23]](#footnote-23) The article, which gives an excerpt from the *Journal of the Privateer Yankee*, provides an example of how battle between two ships at the time took place. It stated:

The officers and marines poured into the enemy a full volley of musketry, and the three divisions at the same time gave her a broadside. We then bore away, run athwart her bows, gave him another broadside, which raked him for and aft, and discharged all the small arms-during this time, the enemy kept up a well directed fire, shot away some of our rigging and wounded two of our seamen. But we soon destroyed the ship’s standing and riging sails, killed the helmsmen, and kept up so warm a fire of round, language, canister and grage shot, musket balls, buck shot and pistol bullets, that the enemy’s ship became unmanageable, and she came right down bows upon us…The firing then ceased, and we gave the enemy three cheers. Sent Lieut. Sweet, with an armed boat’s crew, on board and took possession of her.[[24]](#footnote-24)

In this particular encounter, the *Yankee* stumbled upon some difficulty. They took fire, and two of their men were injured. Future reports though will show that the *Yankee* dominated their rivals and rarely came out of a clash having taken fire and injuries.

Other newspapers that detail the detail the *Yankee’s* prizes include *Farmer’s Repository*, which stated, “The privateer *Yankee*…captured the British ship *Royal Bounty*, of 700 tons, after an engagement of 40 minutes.”[[25]](#footnote-25) The *Essex Register* reported, “Arrived at New York on Wednesday - The British brig *New-Liverpool*…from Minorca bound to Quebec, with a full cargo of red wine, prize to the privateer Yankee of Bristol, R.I., after a 15 minute chase.”[[26]](#footnote-26) The *Centinel of Freedom* alleged “The privateer *Yankee*, of Bristol, has made three prizes in her last cruise. The brig Andelusia, with 10 guns, 20 whites and 90 negroes…after an action of two hours and a half…The *Yankee* took 452 oz. of gold dust, 5 tons of ivory, and sundry bales of goods.”[[27]](#footnote-27) *The Native American* published that the *Yankee* had also captured the British brig *Harriot and Matilda*, a 262 ton, 8 gun brig, carrying an assorted cargo of salt, crates, iron, butter, and cheese. The article then summarizes the *Yankee’s* second cruise of one hundred and forty six days, where she had “captured 8 valuable prizes, 52 cannon, 196 prisoners, 406 stand of arms, and property to the reported amount of 296,000 dols.”[[28]](#footnote-28) At the end of the article, the author stated that the ship had not lost a single man on either of her two cruises, which shows its prominence as a privateer. The *Yankee* was never defeated, and throughout its career, never lost a life while souls were on board.

 After articles such as these were published, readers understood how effective privateering ships such as the *Yankee* were for the United States during the war. Writers then began to praise the *Yankee*, and were glorifying the ship for its success against the British. In an article from November 3, 1813, the author begins by reporting that the *Yankee*, through September 10 to October 29, took nine British ships, seven of which she had manned out while the other two gave up to the prisoners.[[29]](#footnote-29) The article then stated, “This is her fourth cruise, during which she has captured THIRTY SIX vessels.”[[30]](#footnote-30) The capitalization of “thirty six” shows how degree of damage the *Yankee* was implementing on the British. Capitalizing the number of vessels captured gives the sense that the British did not stand a chance against the *Yankee*. The British Royal Navy had an outstanding naval record against its enemies, but when against the *Yankee*, they would not leave victorious. The War of 1812 a time for American ships to dominate the open waters.

 The article then went on to praise how the *Yankee* was able to maneuver in British waters. It stated:

The Yankee, on the 26th of Sept. in a fog, fell in with the Quebec and Newfoundland fleet, having lost their convoy, and succeeded in capturing nine sail, seven of which she manned and ordered in, two were given up to the prisoners after taking out some English goods, which the *Yankee* has on board. The he *Yankee* was very near being taken by two sloops of war, but escaped in the night, by strategy.[[31]](#footnote-31)

Although the *Yankee* mistakenly found its way into British infested waters, because of their skill and brilliant strategies, they were able to not only escape but conquered nine brigs on their voyage away from the Quebec and Newfoundland fleet. A later article describing the same cruise called the *Yankee* a “truly fortunate vessel” for having returned back to port after such a successful cruise.[[32]](#footnote-32) The *Yankee* triumphs, even when in what seems to be an unfortunate situation, and is a staple in American privateering during the War of 1812.

 Other significant privateer ships during the years of 1812 and 1813 include *The York*, of Baltimore, who cruised through the West Indies, captured prizes accumulating to $1,500,000. The *Snapdragon* captured a single brig valued at $500,000. The *Governor Tompkins*, of New York, captured the *Nereid*, with a cargo estimated at roughly $375,000. One of the most valuable single prizes taken throughout the war was captured by the *General Armstrong*. The *Queen*, a sixteen gun brig, was valued at $500,000.[[33]](#footnote-33) Many privateers other than the *Yankee* contributed to American success on the water. One of the most prominent privateering vessels was the *Comet*, out of Baltimore, M.D.

 The *Comet* made a remarkable cruise in early 1913 on the coast of Brazil and the West Indies. On January 14, 1813, the ship overhauled a Portuguese brig which was accompanied by one British ship and two brigs. The *Comet’s* captain, after informing the British ships that they had no right in protecting the Portuguese, decided to take arms and fight. Although well undermanned and outsized, the *Comet* chose to battle against four opposing ships. The fight, which began at half past eight and continued into the moonlight, ended with the capture of one of the British brigs while the other three fled.[[34]](#footnote-34)

Although the British Navy outnumbered the lonely *Comet*, they could not match the American efforts on the water and were forced to retreat.

[AMERICAN PRIVATEERS FOUGHT WITH NATIONALIST PRIDE, WHICH MADE THEM HARD TO DEFEAT].

*Third draft will require better transition between Russ's and Zack's part.*

 The General Armstrong provides one of the best examples of privateers as national heroes. On September 26, 1814, the General Armstrong, a ship of 90 men commanded by Captain Samuel Reid, was anchored peacefully in the neutral harbor of Fayal, in the Azores.[[35]](#footnote-35) A British squadron captained by Robert Floyd and composed of the Plantagenet, Rota, and Carnation came upon the American privateer. Despite his orders to rendezvous at Fayal with the frigates Thais and Calypso, and then proceed directly to the Louisiana coast where the buildup for the Battle of New Orleans invasion was about to begin, Captain Floyd decided to attack the General Armstrong.[[36]](#footnote-36)

 Four well-manned boats from the *Carnation* tried to sneak up on the *General* *Armstrong* and take her quietly by assault. They were quickly spotted and pushed back. Next, twelve armed barges from the *Rota* and *Plantagenet* attacked the privateer. The British managed to reach the privateer and climb on board the ship before being forced over the side and driven off. After this second failure, Captain Floyd sent the *Carnation* at the privateer. After exchanging fire for three hours, she too retreated, her main topmast down, her bowsprit shattered, and fifteen of her men dead. At this point, Captain Floyd sent all three ships at the *General Armstrong*. Realizing the hopelessness of the situation, Captain Reid ordered the *General Armstrong* scuttled and burned while the crew retreated to land.[[37]](#footnote-37)

 As John Van Duyn Southworth points out, “Captain Lloyd had made a serious mistake. He had lost 65 men killed and 117 wounded. *Carnation* was so badly damaged that she could not proceed. *Thais* and *Calypso*, when they arrived, had to be used for transporting the wounded to British bases. The invasion [of New Orleans] had been delayed nearly a month.”[[38]](#footnote-38) Theodore Roosevelt also commented on the importance of the *General Armstrong's* actions when he said “The British squadron was bound for New Orleans, and on account of the delay and loss it had suffered, it was late arriving, so that this action may be said to have helped in saving the Crescent City [New Orleans].”[[39]](#footnote-39)

 When word reached American shores, the *General Armstrong* and her crewwere lauded as heroes. An 1815 article in *The Columbian* echoed these sentiments: “The defence [*sic*] of the General Armstrong...ranks among the most glorious achievements of the late war, and justly entitles the names of our valiant defenders to be inscribed on the roll of heroes, whose deeds have shed lustre [*sic*] on the American republic.” The same article praised Captain Reid as possessing “consummate skill” and “undaunted valor.”[[40]](#footnote-40) Another article from 1815 declared that “No one conflict during the war has placed the American character in so proud a view.” The crew “demonstrated a combination of talents, skill and heroism, seldom equalled [*sic*], and never surpassed.”[[41]](#footnote-41)

 News of the *General Armstrong's* exploits eventually reached Congress. In an unprecedented move, Congress considered rewarding the *General Armstrong* and her crew for their service. After noting that they had never bestowed rewards upon men not serving in the public sector, the Committee chairman giving the speech asserted that “...on mature reflection, apprehensions from the precedent which may be established by this case are much diminished. It will not be going too far...to say that among all the achievements which embellish the annals of the late war, there was not one which surpassed that now under consideration.”[[42]](#footnote-42) After praising the “valiant deeds” of the crew for nearly a page, the committee chairman recommended “the passage of a bill...to divide among officers and crew of the Armstrong the sum of ten thousand dollars.”[[43]](#footnote-43)

 Another ship that deserves mention is the privateer *Chasseur*, otherwise known as the “Pride of Baltimore.”[[44]](#footnote-44) Following a capture in the English Channel, the captain of the *Chasseur*, Thomas Boyle sent a note on shore, “declaring the whole coast of England, Scotland and Ireland, in a state of rigorous blockade!”[[45]](#footnote-45) While this was certainly an exaggeration, Captain Boyle's exploits, along with his warning, were enough to elicit a response from British merchants. A letter from British merchants to a British Admiral stated that “a privateer had blockaded them for five days, doing so much damage....” In response, they asked for at least a “heavy sloop of war” to be sent to protect them. Instead, the admiral sent a frigate, a much larger and more powerful vessel.[[46]](#footnote-46) When word of his actions reached America his exploits were glorified and embellished. An 1815 article credits Captain Boyle with keeping the “whole of the English Islands in a state of alarm.”[[47]](#footnote-47) An article run in the *Niles' Weekly Register* claimed that the *Chasseur* “was frequently chased by British vessels sent out on purpose to catch her...but sometimes, out of mere wantonness, [she] affected to chase enemy's men of war of far superior force!”[[48]](#footnote-48)

 Captain Boyle is also well-known for recapturing the *HMS St. Lawrence*, an American privateer turned royal navy schooner. This “gallant achievement” was noted in newspapers with one newspaper headline reading “Brilliant Action!”[[49]](#footnote-49) The same article also praised Captain Boyle's “daring temerity.”[[50]](#footnote-50) *Niles' Weekly Register* proclaimed his capture of the *St. Lawrence* as a “gallant an affair as has yet occurred at sea.”[[51]](#footnote-51) However, his heroic achievements were not his only source of fame. In a letter reprinted no less than a half dozen times, Captain J. E. Gordon of the *St. Lawrence* detailed his humane treatment as a prisoner of war on-board the *Chasseur*. In the letter, he urged any other British ship which were to capture the *Chasseur* to give Captain Boyle the “indulgence and respect of every British subject.”[[52]](#footnote-52) Based on its wide circulation among American newspapers, it is safe to assume that Americans took pride in knowing that prisoners were treated humanely by American captains. It spoke well for the American character and bolstered a sense of national pride.

 However, the *Chasseur* would eventually take on near mythical attributes by the American people. An account in *Niles' Weekly Register* of her arrival at port bears testament to this phenomenon. “She is, perhaps, the most beautiful vessel that ever floated on the ocean: those who have not seen our schooners have but little idea of her appearance. As you look at her, you may easily figure to yourself the idea that she is about to rise out of the water and fly in the air, seeming to sit so lightly upon it!”[[53]](#footnote-53) Another unverified account claims that the *Chasseur* “escaped from 4 men-of-war at once, then nearly fell into a trap set by two brigs, but he [Captain Boyle] 'edged down upon one of them. . . fired a shot to him, displayed the Yanky flag, hauled upon a wind, and outsailed them both with ease.' Over the next three days he escaped groups of 3, 4, and 5 British men-of-war trying to capture him.”[[54]](#footnote-54) While this account is most likely fabricated and borders on boastful, it shows the immense amount of pride Americans had in their perceived victories over the numerically superior British navy.

 The *Prince of Neufchatel*, captained by John Ordonoux provides another prime example of a slightly sensationalized but benevolent American privateering hero. During one battle, Captain Ordonoux is said to have alone “fired *à bout portant* [at close range] upwards of 80 muskets in the engagement off Nantucket, and must have killed or wounded upwards of sixty of the enemy himself.”[[55]](#footnote-55) He was also praised for his “noble and generous act” of distributing “between three and four hundred dollars among the prisoners captured by him during his last cruise.”[[56]](#footnote-56) Another newspaper claims he gave an additional seven hundred dollars a few days after his first donation.[[57]](#footnote-57) Brave, yet sympathetic, the American people rallied behind heroes like Captain Reid, Captain Boyle, and Captain Ordonoux.

 During the War of 1812, the United States Navy consisted of a mere 23 ships. However, 517 privateers joined the war effort, capturing approximately 1,300 enemy ships.[[58]](#footnote-58) With an inadequate navy, combined with the great disparity of force, any victory by an American privateer served as a morale booster and mobilized support for the war. Embellishment and other tweaks to the stories served to further bolster the American spirit by portraying Americans as stronger, braver, more courageous, and more benevolent than the British. This in turn helped give Americans the confidence that was needed to win the war.

 Jean Lafitte provides another interesting case study regarding American privateers. Lafitte, was a pirate and privateer stationed in the Gulf of Mexico during the War of 1812.[[59]](#footnote-59) In 1814, the British approached Lafitte and offered him British citizenship as well as land in return for his services fighting against the United States. Instead of accepting the offer, Lafitte informed the Americans of the offer and proffered to fight against the British. However, the Americans raided Lafitte's base in Barataria Bay seizing many of his ships.[[60]](#footnote-60) This was met with great enthusiasm by the American people and was greatly publicized immediately following the raid. *Niles' Weekly Register* praised the raid as a “major conquest for the United States.”[[61]](#footnote-61) Lafitte was personally described in another article as “a man who, for about two years past, has been famous for crimes that the civilized world wars against. ... [He] is supposed to have captured one hundred vessels of all nations, and certainly murdered the crews of all that he took, for no one has ever escaped him.” The same article referred to him as an “outlaw, pirate and murderer” and “of a character so infamous and detestable.”[[62]](#footnote-62)

 When Andrew Jackson arrived in New Orleans he found he had only two ships with which to employ defensive measures. In addition, the city also retained possession of the ships captured from Lafitte's men.[[63]](#footnote-63) While many of the Baratarian pirates were not imprisoned, they refused to serve on their ships, harboring much animosity from the raid on their base.[[64]](#footnote-64) In December of 1814, Jackson met with Lafitte and agreed to pardon any of the sailors who agreed to help defend the city. Many former pirates accepted this offer.[[65]](#footnote-65) The Battle of New Orleans would end in a decisive victory for the Americans and is widely regarded as the greatest American land victory of the war.[[66]](#footnote-66) Lafitte would go from “outlaw” to hero nearly overnight.

 In December of 1815, Major Latour published his memoir of the war in Louisiana. In it, he praises nearly every action of Lafitte and the Baratarian pirates. Major Latour begins the memoir by discussing the privateers' actions prior to the war and why they were not as atrocious as they may have seemed.

[T]he agents of government in this country so long tolerated such violation of our laws, or at least delayed for four years to take effectual measures to put a stop to these lawless practices. It cannot be pretended that the country was destitute of the means necessary to repress these outrages. The troops stationed at New-Orleans were sufficient for that purpose, and it cannot be doubted that a well conducted expedition would have cleared our waters of the privateers, and a proper garrison stationed at the place they made their harbour [*sic*], would have prevented their return. The species of impunity with which they were apparently indulged, inasmuch as no rigorous measures were resorted to against them, made the contraband trade carried on at Barataria, be considered as tacitly tolerated.[[67]](#footnote-67)

The base in Barataria Bay was willfully tolerated by American officials and even served economic purposes as traders in New Orleans would routinely give and receive orders to purchase goods from Barataria.[[68]](#footnote-68) The pirates were not only not criminal, they served a vital role in the New Orleanian economy.

 To be labeled a pirate in nineteenth century America was akin to being labeled an outlaw or a murderer in contemporary society. Major Latour quickly dispelled the “myth” that Lafitte and his men were pirates in his memoir.

It has been repeatedly asserted in the public prints throughout the union, that most of those privateers had no commissions, and were really pirates. This I believe to be a calumny, as I am persuaded they all had commissions either from Carthagena or from France... [T]o charge them with the crime of piracy, when on the strictest inquiry no proof whatsoever of any act amounting to this species of criminality has been discovered...seems evidently unjust.[[69]](#footnote-69)

During the war privateers were often highly regarded, and has seen previously, often made out as heroes. By labeling Lafitte and the Baratarian smugglers as privateers, Major Latour is able to praise heroes, rather than nefarious murderers.

 When approached by the English to fight against the Americans Latour portrayed Lafitte as a loyal, patriotic, American citizen. The English offered Lafitte the position of Captain in the British Navy, $30,000, land in the British colonies, and British citizenship if he would fight for them.[[70]](#footnote-70) He informed the British he would need a few days to contemplate the offer. According to Latour, “his object in this procrastination being to gain time to inform the officers of the state government of this nefarious project.”[[71]](#footnote-71) Lafitte wrote to the governor of Louisiana and a state representative following the British offer and “the contents of these letters do honour [*sic*] to Mr. Lafitte's judgment, and evince his sincere attachment to the American cause.”[[72]](#footnote-72) Lafitte was “persuaded that the country was about to be vigorously attacked, and knowing that at that time it was little prepared for resistance, he did what his duty prescribed; apprising government of the impending danger; tendering his services, should it be thought expedient to employ the assistance of his crews, and desiring instructions how to act; and in case of his offers being rejected, he declared his intention to quit the country, lest he should be charged with having co-operated with the invading enemy.” Lafitte was altruistic and benevolent, caring only for the American cause while sharing an immense hatred for the British. The British approached the Baratarian smugglers expecting them to fight against the country whose laws they had long violated, however, “this calculation of the British proved fallacious...they found in every individual in Louisiana, an enemy to Britain, ever ready to take up arms against her....”[[73]](#footnote-73)

 Mr. Latour's memoir provides a striking example of how quickly American attitudes could change and histories could be re-written nearly overnight. Murderous pirates were now heroic privateers who would never even consider fighting for the British. The Baratarian smugglers were selfless compatriots with an unwavering love for America and the American cause. National pride, not selfish greed, motivated their actions.

 Even most contemporary historians would agree that “the Baratarians served well and earned their pardons.”[[74]](#footnote-74) Their service during battle was described as “of great value,” and of “infinite use.”[[75]](#footnote-75) Jackson himself praised their exploits in his general orders of January 21, 1815 stating: “The general cannot avoid giving his warm approbation of the manner in which these gentlemen have uniformly conducted themselves while under his command, and of the gallantry with which they have redeemed the pledge they gave at the opening of the campaign to defend the country.”[[76]](#footnote-76) Jane Lucas DeGrummond concluded in 1961 that the “arms, men, and intelligence contributed by Lafitte and the Baratarians gave Jackson a clear tactical advantage over the British invaders.”[[77]](#footnote-77) In 1969, General Wilbert S. Brown affirmed DeGrummond's position and added that “It is possible that Jackson might have defended the city successfully without the aid of the Baratarians, but it is probable that he could not have done so if Laffite and his men had accepted British offers of amnesty, alliance, and bribe money and had thrown their weight against the American defense.[[78]](#footnote-78)

 The War of 1812 transformed Lafitte and the Baratarians from pirates to heroic privateers. While not every historian agrees on whether Lafitte was motivated by selfless national pride, there were people both then and now who saw Lafitte as a national hero.

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 While not a very popular war from the start, the War of 1812, through war heroes and privateers, became a unifying war, bringing America as close as a nation as they would ever come in the antebellum period. A strong sense of national pride, combined with a buildup in the armed forces, launched America on its path to becoming a world power. Defeating Britain, one of the world's most powerful nations, not once, but twice left America with a renewed sense of achievement and confidence as well as a substantially strengthened navy.

 Following closely on the heals of the ratification of the Treaty of Ghent, Naval ships were dispatched to Algiers in response to pirate attacks on American vessels. Within months the U.S. Navy forced the Dey of Algiers to capitulate. The Second Barbary War as this was called, combined with the War of 1812 demonstrated American strength and showed that world that America would not be intimidated.

1. “Background,” *The War of 1812*. http://www.gatewayno.com/history/war1812.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “The War of 1812,” *The War of 1812*. http://www.gatewayno.com/history/war1812.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Charles Francis Adams, “Wednesday, August 19, 1812, 6:30 P.M.: The Birth of a World Power,” *The American Historical Review* (1913): 513-521, 514. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Proceedings of Massachusetts Historical Society, XLVI. 205-206, quoted in, Charles Francis Adams, “Wednesday, August 19, 1812, 6:30 P.M.: The Birth of a World Power,” *The American Historical Review* (1913): 513-521, 515. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
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