



1812: The War That Forged a Nation

By *Walter R. Borneman*

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Although frequently overlooked between the American Revolution and the Civil War, the War of 1812 tested a rising generation of American leaders; unified the United States with a renewed sense of national purpose; and set the stage for westward expansion from Mackinac Island to the Gulf of Mexico. USS Constitution, "Old Ironsides," proved the mettle of the fledgling American navy; Oliver Hazard Perry hoisted a flag boasting, "Don't Give Up the Ship"; and Andrew Jackson's ragged force stood behind its cotton bales at New Orleans and bested the pride of British regulars. Here are the stories of commanding generals such as America's double-dealing James Wilkinson, Great Britain's gallant Sir Isaac Brock, Canada's heroine farm wife Laura Secord, and country doctor William Beanes, whose capture set the stage for Francis Scott Key to write "The Star-Spangled Banner." During the War of 1812, the United States cast off its cloak of colonial adolescence and - with both humiliating and glorious moments - found the fire that was to forge a nation.

This P.S. edition features an extra 16 pages of insights into the book, including author interviews, recommended reading, and more.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This thoroughly readable popular history of the War of 1812 may exaggerate in its claim that the war forged America's national identity; after all, there were enough regional identities left lying around after the conflict to cause a national civil war. But otherwise it's a fine narrative history that traces the major events of the war, from the preliminary plots by James Wilkinson and Aaron Burr that revealed the ambitions of Westerners for territorial expansion, through New England's secessionist Hartford Convention to the Battle of New Orleans, which wrapped up the war in 1815. Borneman makes clear that the performance of the American army was mostly disgraceful, that the Canadians can pat themselves on the back for courage and endurance and that the decisive victory of the American navy was not the famous frigate duels but the Battle of Lake Champlain in 1814. Borneman (*Alaska: Saga of a Bold Land*) is also strong in vivid personal portraits (the gigantic Winfield Scott and the diminutive and sickly James Madison) and evenhanded as far as atrocities (too many, by all parties) are concerned. Even the annotation and bibliography of this sound introduction will propel those whose curiosity is piqued to read further in all directions.

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From [Booklist](#)

From the ample literature about the War of 1812, which includes Theodore Roosevelt's minor classic *The Naval War of 1812* (1882), Borneman extracts people and events and integrates them into a popular narrative of the conflict's campaigns and battles. Ultimately, the war with Great Britain became a stalemate, lending the conflict the appearance of futility, but historians such as Andrew Jackson biographer Robert Remini regard the war as a second American war of independence. This is generally Borneman's stance as he relates the major American grievance against Britain--its seizures of American sailors and ships. However, Borneman also makes clear that the drive of aggressive "war hawks" to declare war was rooted in their desire to capture Canada and Florida. Toss in the horrifically remorseless Creek War, plus Shawnee warrior Tecumseh's exhortations for a last stand against white settlement, and the result is a geographically spacious and violent drama. A lively narrator and explainer of a war fought with muskets and sailing ships, Borneman will be welcomed by military-history readers. *Gilbert Taylor*

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About the Author

Walter R. Borneman is the author of *Alaska: Saga of a Bold Land*, *1812: The War That Forged a Nation*, and several books on the history of the western United States. He lives in Colorado.

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