

This book is packed full of facts you wouldn't think still exist!

I loved reading it. 1812 The War That Forged a Nation by Walter Borneman

It has endless stories that come alive and I've zeroed in on 4.

1. Madison's decision
2. Brig. Gen. Wm. Hull
3. NEWARK, Canada
4. Dr. Wm. Beans

### 1. Madison's Decision

The facts were the U.S. was blocked from trading. We did not have freedom of the sea and on top of that from 5,000 to 9,000 American sailors were impressed off American Ships.

Madison's congress barely agreed on a yes vote for war.

President Madison thought war was essential but there was absolutely no planning in the decision.

It just did not make sense to me that we would blindly enter a war. But Madison's decision hinged upon his belief that the U.S. could easily and quickly defeat Canada. He knew the British would want Canada back at any price. And England would meet his demands.

Madison misjudged ! Many Loyalists had gone to Canada and sided with the British. Many thought they'd side with the Americans. WRONG

With no planning our 1812 campaigns were unmitigated disasters – inexperienced officers, undisciplined men and ineffective chain of command.

The land war went badly which brings us to story #2

### #2 Brig. Gen. Wm Hull

Wm. Hull was born in Derby, Conn. In 1753.

He attended Yale – became an attorney. He fought bravely throughout the Revolutionary War – rising to Lt. Col. He even received a commendation from Gen. George Washington.

After the Revolutionary war Hull practiced law – became a model citizen and in 1805 was appointed Gov. of the Michigan Territory.

After the beginning of The War of 1812 somehow he became Brig. Gen. ---  
- Probably seeking the title. During this time, it is believed he suffered a stroke ~ causing him to slur his words and at times drool. His men did not respect him ~. He did not have the image of a leader.

He had command of the North Western American Army. He led a force of one regiment of regulars and 3 Ohio volunteer regiments. From Ohio he and his men were marching to Michigan.

Marching got old and Hull decided to hire the Cuyahoga American ship on Lake Erie – to transport his heavy supplies to Michigan. Hull even put his own trunk on the Cuyahoga which held all his personal papers ~ including all his correspondence outlining an invasion of Canada.

**GUESS WHAT!!!!!!**

The British captured the Cuyahoga. It was quite a coup. They now held plans for a key American strike ` complete with troop strength and insight into the enemy commander's state of mind.

The British turned the tables on the Americans. They were more than ready for Brig. Gen. Wm. Hull and his men when they arrived in Michigan. And Hull was never swift and decisive.

Needless to say Hull failed. He also was an alcoholic and it is believed he was in a stupor during the surrender of Detroit. He ordered his 2188 men to fly the white flag (white table cloths) and Detroit was surrendered without firing a shot.

We lost this city temporarily ~ the only time American soil has been lost to an enemy.

The nation – was humiliated.

Brig. Gen Wm Hull was court marshaled – charged with cowardice, duty unbecoming an officer, dereliction of duty and treason.

He was found guilty of all but treason. And was given the death penalty.

This is the only time in American history an American General has been sentenced to death.

Madison spared his life. And for the rest of his life, he tried to explain what happened. He wrote 2 books on the subject – and died in 1825.

A good ending to the story is that Wm Hull's nephew Cpt Isaac Hull commanded the U.S. Constitution ~ gloriously ~ was a genuine hero and became the toast of the nation.

And of course we know a lot about the U.S.S. Constitution thanks to Dawn's talk in September.

Another interesting fact was when Capt. Isaac Hull transferred the crew of the Guerriere to the U.S. Constitution ~ he found 10 impressed American sailors.

### # 3 NEWARK, Canada

The end of 1813 brought cataclysmic news from the Niagara frontier.

Ft. George Canada was a hard won post by the Americans but General George McClure abandoned it ~ retreating across the Niagara River to Ft. Niagara on the American side.

As McClure and his men retreated he ordered the burning of the nearby Canadian village of Newark.

In a blinding snow storm and amid bitter cold, the inhabitants were put out in the streets 1 among them many widows and wives with small children.

Mrs. Dickson lay ill in bed but was carried out ~ bed and all ~ tossed in the snow while the 1,000 books of her husband's library ` arguably one of the finest in Canada ~ were turned to ashes.

IN all 98 houses burned that night ~ almost the entire town of Newark, Canada. It was hard to say who was more dazed – the 400 refugees fleeing the town or the British troops and Canadian militia arriving on the scene.

They remembered this. This was much different from the government buildings the Americans had torched at York the previous spring. This was personal ~~~ all the way to Washington DC the next year.

On Dec 30 ~ The British burned the towns of Black Rock and Buffalo to the ground. In Buffalo only 3 buildings were left standing.

The war became more bitter and vindictive.

In the spring of 1813 ~ accidental or misguided Americans burned British government buildings at York (now Toronto) The result was a series of escalating reprisals that crossed the line between military operations against military objectives and open warfare on Civilian lives and property.

When the British burned Washington, D.C. ~ there was nothing strategic at the Capital ~ it was revenge and they made a point to burn the library of Congress. They had not forgotten Newark.

#### **# 4 Dr. Wm. Beans**

Washington DC had not prepared for an invasion. The city was too new; People really did not feel it was the capital. Washington DC wasn't loved the way Philadelphia had been.

So when the British came most of its citizens ran. One man said his niece told him that our militia was running faster than she to get away.

40 miles from Washington DC – sat Baltimore.

Baltimore was a city rich for plundering. It emitted a siren's song of invitation. It was the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest city in the U.S. about 45,000 people.

It was a commercial hub. Its many ships were also tempting to the British.

Washington, D.C. had no plunder its burning was revenge.

The Citizens of Baltimore prepared knowing they were a target.

For a year they dug an elaborate system of earthworks ~ where as Washington ran ~ Baltimore dug.

The town was extremely patriotic a hot bed of pro Republicanism pro war and as anti British as possible.

Baltimore devised a plan where citizens could be part of helping defend it – no matter how small.

The British did head to Baltimore ~ it was just too tempting.

Of the 3 commanding British admirals ~ Admiral Ross tried to persuade the others to avoid Baltimore ~ but they would not agree ~ they were too greedy. Admiral Ross knew the British were biting off too much.

The British had huge success burning Washington DC and Admiral Ross knew it was time to go. He did not get his way and the British planned their attack and Ross lost his life in Baltimore.

The British decided to dig a canal for their smaller ships so they could secretly sailed into Baltimore.

They worked and worked ~ digging and digging. The British were expert engineers. They knew what they were doing. BUT they had never worked in Maryland's soil.

When they finished and were ready to put their ships into the trenches – the marsh/ swamp land had filled in the trenches. They had worked for nothing.

When the attack started the British could not rendezvous as planned ~ and it put a huge roadblock in their fight. ~ A huge gift for Baltimore. ~ “love the swampland”.

During the time of secret planning by the British ~ word had spread that the British were coming soon. Upper Marlboro near Baltimore was a town where Dr. William Beans lived ~ a respected doctor and citizen ~ a veteran of the Revolutionary War and a rabid patriot. He was born in Prince George County, Md. To Scottish immigrants. He also was a farmer and land owner. When the British arrived ~ he was the only one at home.

Dr. Beans offered his hospitality to the British – he became the gracious host to the British officer’s. He acted as if he loved the King and had leanings toward the British. He entertained them to find out all he could for the Americans.

The British left the next morning.

The next day Dr. Beans along with the others captured 6 British sailors and these sailors were taken as American prisoners of war.

Word reached Admiral Cochrane that his gracious host had deceived him and had even been involved in capturing some of his men. He made his personal conviction to send a British force specifically to take Dr. Beans prisoner.

When the British arrived at Dr. Bean’s house ~ they also found 2 houseguests. All were taken prisoners.

The 2 houseguests were quickly released in a prisoner exchange. But NOT Dr. Beanes.

He was thrown in a carriage and unceremoniously endured a jostling ride to Admiral Cochrane’s ship the HMS Tohnnant. Dr. Beanes was about 60 years old. When the townspeople found out Dr. Beanes was a prisoner they were exasperated and appalled. They had to do something to gain his freedom.

One of Dr. Bean's most affluent patients was married to Frances Scott Key's sister. Key was an attorney in Georgetown. So Key's brother-in-law, Richard West, rode to Georgetown and asked Frances Scott Key to help Dr. Beanes. Frances Scott Key agreed.

When Mr. Key set off for Baltimore he first stopped in Washington and Bladensburg to shrewdly obtain letters from wounded British soldiers recuperating in makeshift hospitals. They described the good treatment they were receiving from the American captors. The letters went in Key's pocket.

Frances Scott Key met John Skinner an attorney and representative of the government to negotiate prisoner exchanges. They sailed on the American ship Minden under truce to meet Admiral Cochrane on his ship the HMS Tonnant (ship captured from The French in the Battle of the Nile).

The Americans were greeted cordially and were offered to dine with the British admirals Cochrane, Cockburn and Ross. Everything went smoothly until Frances Scott Key brought up the name Dr. Wm. Beanes. Admiral Cochrane went into a tirade. He would not discuss a release of the American doctor. The talks were doomed ~~ until Mr. Key pulled out the letters in his pocket.

Admiral Cochrane was so impressed by the care his sailors were being given that miraculously he agreed to release him after he had finished his business in Baltimore.

The British left their ship at 3 AM September 12. Key, Skinner and Dr. Beanes were united on another British frigate under the guns of Cochrane's main fleet.

The bombardment of Baltimore Ft. McHenry had begun. All thru the day of September 13 and into the night British ships kept up the bombardment.

The 34 year old American Commander Major Armistead of Ft. McHenry stopped firing his cannons because they were not reaching any targets ~ their range only 2,000 yards. The British mortars double that ~ 4,000

yards. From the unnerving constant noise to complete silence from Ft. McHenry ~ Key, Skinne4r and Dr. Beanes were beside themselves. The British frigate was in a position where Key could barely make out the American flag at Ft. McHenry from a tiny porthole.

Dr. Beanes would ask Frances Scott Key ~ “Can you see it? ~ “Is it there?” “Can you see the flag?” And Key could still see the flag in the glare of the rockets and exploding mortars.

Finally in the early light of dawn ` the flag was still there ` wondrously there!

The British could not penetrate the earthworks ~ could not break thru American militia in the forest and did not have back up coming because of the malfunction of their make shift canal/trench.

The British opted to leave! Baltimore had won.

September 16 when they were released Key remembered the words and felt moved to write them.

Isn't it amazing ~ we have Dr. William Beanes to thank for getting Frances Scott Key so near the battle to view the bombardment of Ft. McHenry.

Key would have been home in Georgetown ~ not on a ship in Baltimore's harbor.

Dr. William Beanes ~The Patriot behind The Star Spangled Banner.

The End ~ Book review done by Davena Rigel Liepman for Thomas Bay Chapter #350 November 2012 Chapter Meeting.

