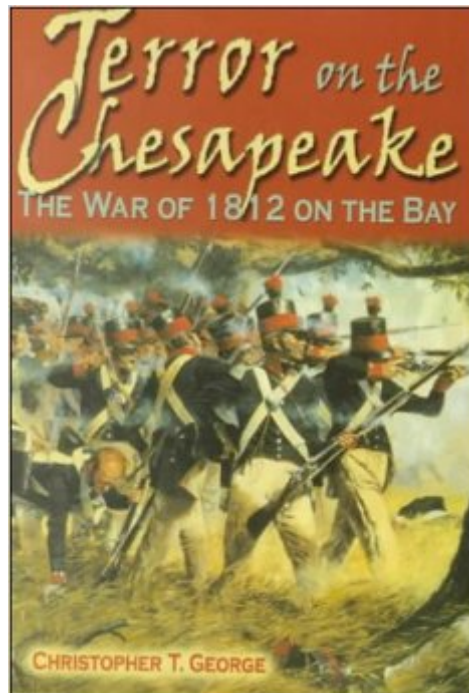


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Terror On The Chesapeake: The War Of 1812 On The Bay



Synopsis

This title traces the abuses of the inhabitants of the Chesapeake Bay by Royal Navy raiding parties under arrogant Rear Admiral George Cockburn.

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When the War of 1812 began, President James Madison and other U.S. government officials understood that British warships might be able to reach Baltimore and other strategic Maryland and Virginia ports via the Chesapeake Bay. However, the bay made the political and economically vital Chesapeake Tidewater region far more vulnerable than they had ever imagined. Even Washington, D.C., the nation's capital, was open to attack from the sea, and as it turned out, couldn't be adequately defended by poorly trained militia. By 1813, British warships had free run of the Chesapeake, where they blockaded ports, raided coastal communities, and expropriated supplies. The Americans attempted unsuccessfully to fight back using state militia and coastal gun emplacements, but U.S. naval resources were so limited that they had no reasonable hope of keeping the powerful British fleet out of the Chesapeake Bay. By the summer of 1814, British commands had begun to believe that they might be able to exploit the obvious weakness of American defenses in the Chesapeake Bay to bring the war to a swift and favorable conclusion. It was all but inevitable, therefore, that the War of 1812 would reach its climax in the Chesapeake Bay region. It was also here that the war

would acquire what became, for America at least, its defining image-that of a flag flying in the dawn over Fort McHenry outside Baltimore on 13-14 September 1814.

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