The Delaware Militia in the War of 1812

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INTRODUCTION

The United States declared war on Great Britain on 18 June 1812. In response the British government proclaimed a blockade of the Delaware and Chesapeake bays on 26 Dec 1812. The British Fleet arrived at Hampton Roads, Virginia, on 4 Feb 1813 and later deployed some naval units to the mouth of the Delaware Bay. The threat of the British fleet off the coast of the Delaware Bay and River necessitated an active militia in Delaware.

Active operations on the Delaware by the British were not begun until March 1813. In anticipation, precautionary measures were taken by Delaware officials in late 1812 to guard against incursions by the enemy. The Delaware Legislature met in special session at Dover on 9 November 1812.

"The Governor announced that six hundred muskets, with bayonets and all the equipments necessary, had been delivered to the militia, and the remaining three hundred contracted for were ready for delivery. In addition to these, the state received five hundred stands of arms from the government and equipments for five hundred muskets, as its quota in the general distribution of 1812, pursuant to the act of Congress of 23 April 1808, for arming the whole body of the militia of the United States." {History of Delaware by J. Thomas Scharf:285}

A build up of arms and munitions continued. In 1813, 250 stands of arms received from the government were sent to Wilmington and 250 to New Castle and 150 to Lewes (Lewistown), along with equipments and ammunition. Five hundred muskets, held by the superintendent of military stores at Philadelphia, were also distributed to New Castle, Smyrna, Milton, and Milford. In February of 1813 Delaware reported 7,451 militia men consisting of 6,475 infantry and the remainder in artillery, cavalry and riflemen.

The British squadron first appeared in the Chesapeake Bay on 4 February off Hampton Roads, Virginia. The fleet consisted of four 74-gun vessels, along with frigates, brigs and schooners. Shortly thereafter the Poictiers, the Belvidera and several smaller vessels, all under the command of Commodore Beresford, were sent to blockade the Delaware. By early March the Delaware Bay and River were in a state of complete blockade. The enemy began committing depredations along both sides of the bay, capturing and destroying small craft.

1. Most of the information contained herein was taken from History of Delaware by J. Thomas Scharf.

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On 16 March 1813 Commodore Beresford sent the following letter to Lewes:

"His Britannic Majesty's ship, Poictiers. In the mouth of the Delaware, March 16.

Sirs: - As soon as you receive this I must request you send twenty live bullocks with a proportionate quantity of vegetables and hay to the Poictiers for the use of his Britannic Majesty's squadron, now at this anchorage, which shall be immediately paid for at the Philadelphia prices. If you refuse to comply with this request, I shall be under the necessity of destroying your town.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your ob't servant

J. P. Beresford, Commodore..."

Following the refusal to comply with the request the fleet began bombardment of Lewes on 6 April. The British fired nearly 800 thirty-two and eighteen-pound shot into the town in addition to shells and congreve rockets. The bombardment lasted 22 hours. On the afternoon of the 7th, sailors from the fleet attempted to land in a small boat but were beaten back by the militia at the beach. On the 8th the fleet withdrew having inflicted some damage to a few houses. None of the citizens of Lewes or its defenders were injured. A few weeks later, the Governor discharged the militia defending Lewes, with the exception of a company of the inhabitants of the area who manned the batteries, and a small detachment of cavalry.

Defensive measures continued throughout the State, strongly influenced by the attack on Lewes. Fort Union was built at Wilmington, commanding the Christiana. Gun-boats patrolled the area around Bombay Hook.

Commodore Beresford's squadron sailed for Bermuda late in April, leaving the Statira and the Spartan, frigates, and the Martin, sloop-of-war, with some tenders and barges. On 29 May this contingency set sail up the Delaware. Militia expresses were sent out to alarm the country and activate militia units. The Philadelphia Independent Blues were ordered to march from Camp Staunton to New Castle. Other company stood ready. The British forces moved as far up the bay as Reedy Island, where they captured and burned some shallows and small craft, and the returned down the bay.

In response to the British threat, militia companies were marched from Philadelphia: Philadelphia Blues, Capt. Henry Myers; Independent Volunteers, Capt. Samuel Borden; and the Washington Guards. Each company consisted of 100 privates, 15 officers and 2 musicians. In four days they reached Staunton, on the Baltimore road, 6 miles below Wilmington. Here a permanent encampment
was formed under the command of General Bloomfield. These and other militia units were continually re-positioned while British vessels remained in the Delaware Bay and River. By the 28th of July most of the militia had been discharged.

On April 21st 1813, an alarm was spread among the people living in the vicinity of Little Creek when the British schooner Pilgrim anchored off the creek and sent a barge with 22 men up as far as Taylor’s Gut.

In December a barge belonging to the British sloop Jason entered Milford Creek with a lieutenant and 7 men, and captured 2 shallows. They were cut off, however, and taken prisoners by the militia.

On June 20, 1814 the British frigate Nieman sent several barges with 60 men into Indian River, burning two or three coasters and shallows loaded with lumber, and securing a ransom for two others. Governor Rodney ordered a company of 50 men to Lewes to assist Captain Holland in defending the surrounding country. In July the Secretary of War, in compliance with continued requests from the Governor of Delaware, authorized the Governor to station a company of detached militia at Lewes under Major Charles Hunter.

MILITIA ORGANIZATION

The militia organization of Delaware appears to have been organized in the following manner:

1st Brigade (New Castle Co.):
   At least two troops of cavalry
   1st, 2nd and 3rd Regiments

2nd Brigade (Kent Co.):
   A troop of cavalry
   Capt. Holland’s Artillery Company
   Capt. Davis’s Artillery Company
   4th, 5th and 6th Regiments

3rd Brigade (Sussex Co.):
   Captain Rodney’s Artillery Company
   1 or 2 troops of cavalry
   7th, 8th, 9th and 10th Regiments
noted) {Kent Co.}

Bonwell, George, Pvt., 6th Co., 5th Regt., 1813 (exact date not given, absenteeism noted) {Kent Co.}

Boone, Jacob, Pvt., 6th Co., 5th Regt., 1813 (exact dates not given, absenteeism noted); Ensign, 6th Co., 5th Regt., comm. 13 Apr 1813; on rolls dated 28 Nov 1814 {Kent Co.}


Booth, John, Capt., 6th Regt., 2nd Brigade, 1812; Capt., Detached Militia Co. called into the service of the U.S. on 7 May 1813; Capt., 7th Co., 6th Regt., 12 May 1813; Major, 2nd Batt., 6th Regt., 3 Dec 1814 {Kent Co.}

Booth, Joseph, 2nd Lieut., 6th Co., 2nd Brigade, detached for the service of the U.S., 14 Sep 1814 (order date) {Kent Co.}

Booth, Joseph, Capt., 2nd Co., 6th Regt., comm. 21 May 1814 {Kent Co.}

Booth, Levin, Pvt., 3rd Co., 9th Regt., 1813 (payroll, exact date not given) {Sussex Co.}

Booths, Thomas, Pvt., 8th Co., 2nd Regt., enrolled 25 Jul 1812 {New Castle Co.}

Boram, Henry, Pvt., 1st Co., 3rd Regt., Oct-Nov 1812 (exact dates not given, absenteeism noted) {New Castle Co.}

Bostick, John, Pvt., Capt. C. P. Bennett's Artillery Co., paid for 4 months service beginning 1 May 1813 {New Castle Co.}

Bostick, Jonathan, Pvt., 6th Co., 5th Regt., 1813 (exact date not given) {Kent Co.}

Bostick, Solomon, Pvt., 6th Inf. Regt., by 28 Nov 1814 (Detached Militia Co. called into the service of the U.S. by order of the Adjutant General on 14 Sep 1814) {Kent Co.}

Bostick, Thomas, Pvt., 4th Co., 4th Regt., 1813 (exact date not given, absenteeism noted) {Kent Co.}

Bostick, William, 4th Cpl., Light Inf. Co., 5th Regt., 1813 (exact date not given); Pvt., 5th Regt., 1814 (exact date not given, absenteeism noted) {Kent Co.}

Boswell, Richard, Pvt., 4th Co., 5th Regt., 1814 or 1815 (exact date not given, absenteeism noted, "not able") {Kent Co.}

Boswick, Joseph, Pvt., 5th Co., 3rd Regt., 1813-1814 (exact dates not given, absenteeism noted) {New Castle Co.}

Boughman, Jesse, Pvt., Volunteer Co. of Artillery, 1814; Pvt., Capt. C. A. Rodney's Artillery Co., 25 Aug to 5 Oct 1814 (muster roll); attached to 42nd U. S. Regt. from 5 Oct 1814 to 11 Feb 1815 {New Castle Co.}

Boughman, William, Pvt., 6th Co., 3rd Regt., 1813-1814 (exact dates not given, absenteeism noted) {New Castle Co.}

Boulden, Levi, Quartermaster, 2nd Regt., appointed 12 Apr 1808; Capt., 2nd Co., 2nd Regt., comm. 10 Oct 1811, on rolls dated 21 Sep 1812; Light Inf. Co., 8 May 1813; Capt., 2nd Co., 2nd Regt., 8 May 1814; Capt., Detached Co., 2nd Regt., 1st Brigade, 6 Oct 1814 and in service to at least 28 Nov 1814 {New Castle Co.}
Apr-Nov 1813 (exact dates not given, absenteeism noted); on roll dated 5 Jun 1813, age 28; Pvt., 5th Co., 2nd Regt., class roll 4 Aug 1814 {New Castle Co.}

Chambers, James, Lieut., 4th Co., 3rd Regt., comm. 11 Jul 1812; 3rd Lieut., 3rd Co., 1st Brigade, detached for the service of the U.S., 14 Sep 1814 (order date); 3rd Lieut., 3rd Co., 2nd Regt., 28 Nov 1814; Capt., 4th Co., 3rd Regt., 8 May 1815 {New Castle Co.}

Chambers, John, Pvt., 5th Co., 2nd Regt., enrolled 1 Aug 1812, age 31; Pvt., 5th Co., 2nd Regt., Nov 1812 (absenteeism noted); Pvt., 5th Co., 2nd Regt., Apr-Nov 1813 (exact dates not given, absenteeism noted); on rolls dated 5 Jun 1813, age 32; Pvt., 5th Co., 2nd Regt., class roll 4 Aug 1814 {New Castle Co.}

Chambers, John, Pvt., 7th Co., 5th Regt., 1813 (exact date not given, absenteeism noted) {Kent Co.}

Chambers, Joseph, Pvt., 5th Co., 2nd Regt., enrolled 1 Aug 1812, age 42; Pvt., 5th Co., 2nd Regt., Nov 1812 (absenteeism noted); Pvt., 5th Co., 2nd Regt., Apr-Nov 1813 (exact dates not given, absenteeism noted); on rolls dated 5 Jun 1813, age 42; Pvt., 5th Co., 2nd Regt., class roll 4 Aug 1814 {New Castle Co.}

Chambers, Richard, Pvt., 5th Co., 2nd Regt., enrolled 1 Aug 1812, age 37; Pvt., 5th Co., 2nd Regt., Nov 1812 (absenteeism noted); Pvt., 5th Co., 2nd Regt., Apr-Nov 1813 (exact dates not given, absenteeism noted); on roll dated 5 Jun 1813, age 37; Pvt., 5th Co., 2nd Regt., class roll 4 Aug 1814 {New Castle Co.}

Chambers, Samuel, Pvt., 5th Co., 2nd Regt., enrolled 1 Aug 1812, age 43; Pvt., 5th Co., 2nd Regt., Nov 1812 (absenteeism noted); Pvt., 5th Co., 2nd Regt., Apr-Nov 1813 (exact dates not given, absenteeism noted); on roll dated 5 Jun 1813, age 44; Pvt., 5th Co., 2nd Regt., class roll 4 Aug 1814 {New Castle Co.}

Chambers, William, Pvt., 4th Co., 2nd Regt., volunteer roll 30 Jul 1812; enrolled 1 Aug 1812; Pvt., Capt. Massey's Detached Co., 2nd Regt., at Christiana, 12 Sep 1812; on rolls in May 1813 {New Castle Co.}

Chance, John, Pvt., Detached Militia Co. called into the service of the U.S. on 7 May 1813 for 6 months; Pvt., 7th Regt., 31 Aug 1813 (paid for 3 months service and discharged at Ceaders on 22 Sep 1813) {Sussex Co.}

Chandler, Asahel, Pvt., 4th Co., 2nd Regt., enrolled 1 Aug 1812; Pvt., Capt. Massey's Detached Co., 2nd Regt., at Christiana, 12 Sep 1812; on rolls in May 1813; Pvt., Detached Militia Co., 20 Jul to 31 Jul 1813 {New Castle Co.}

Chandler, Benjamin, 2nd Lieut., Brandywine Cavalry, enrolled 17 Jul 1813 {New Castle Co.}

Chandler, Benjamin, Cpl., Volunteer Inf. Co., called into the service of the U.S. from 28 Aug 1814 to 11 Feb 1815 {New Castle Co.}

Chandler, David, Pvt., 3rd Co., 1st Regt., May-Nov 1813 (exact dates not given, absenteeism noted) {New Castle Co.}

Chandler, George, 1st Sgt., Wilmington Artillery Co., 26 Aug 1814 to 11 Feb 1815 (payrolls) {New Castle Co.}

Chandler, Jesse, Pvt., 6th Co., 3rd Regt., 1813-1814 (exact dates not given, absenteeism noted) {New Castle Co.}
absenteeism noted) {Kent Co.}
Redden, Stephen, Capt., 7th Regt., appointed 12 May 1813; Capt., 5th Co., 7th Regt., 1813 (payroll, exact date not given); Capt., Detached Militia Co. called into the service of the U.S. on 15 May 1813 for 6 months; Capt., 7th Regt., 31 Aug 1813 (paid for 3 months service); Capt., 5th Co., 7th Regt., to at least 28 Nov 1813 {Sussex Co.}
Redden, Thomas, Ensign, Light Inf. Co. attached to 6th Regt., 24 Aug 1812; Ensign, 1st Light Inf. Co., 6th Regt., 1813 (payroll, exact date not given); Ensign, 2nd Brigade, stationed at Lewes Town, 2 Mar 1813 {Kent Co.}
Redden, William, 5th Sgt., Capt. Kollock’s Detached Co., appointed 6 May 1813 and in the service of the U.S. on 12 Jun 1813 (muster roll); 1st Cpl., 31 Jul 1813 (payroll) {Sussex Co.}
Redden, William, Pvt., 1st Light Inf. Co., 8th Regt., 2 Jun 1813 (payroll) {Sussex Co.}
Reddings, Charles, Pvt., 5th Inf. Regt., by 28 Nov 1814 (Detached Militia Co. called into the service of the U.S. by order of the Adjutant General on 14 Sep 1814) {Kent Co.}
Redgrave, Peregrine, Pvt., Light Inf. Co., 5th Regt., 1813 (exact date not given) {Kent Co.}
Redmon, John, Ensign, 6th Co., 2nd Regt., until 10 Aug 1812 when he removed out of the district {New Castle Co.}
Reece, Joseph, Pvt., 5th Co., 2nd Regt., enrolled 1 Aug 1812, age 20; Pvt., 5th Co., 2nd Regt., class roll 4 Aug 1814 {New Castle Co.}
Reece, Thomas, Pvt., 4th Co., 2nd Regt., enrolled 1 Aug 1812; on rolls in May 1813 {New Castle Co.}
Reed, Charles, Pvt., 1st Co., 8th Regt., stationed at Lewes Town, 19 Mar to 24 Mar 1813 and from 5 May to 11 May 1813 when discharged (payroll) {Sussex Co.}
Reed, David, Ensign, 5th Co., 6th Regt., 27 Aug 1814 {Kent Co.}
Reed, Ezekiel, Pvt., 8th Co., 1st Regt., 1813-1814 (exact dates not given, absenteeism noted) {New Castle Co.}
Reed, James, Pvt., Capt. Harrington's Troop of Cavalry, 2nd Brigade, stationed at Lewes Town on 3 Jun 1813 {Kent Co.}
Reed, James, Pvt., 2nd Co., 7th Regt., 1813 (payroll, exact date not given); Pvt., 3rd Co., 7th Regt., stationed at Lewes Town, 8 Jan 1813 (payroll); Pvt., Capt. Read's Co., 8th Regt., by Jan 1814 (payroll) {Sussex Co.}
Reed, James, Pvt., 2nd Co., 5th Regt., 24 Apr 1813 (absenteeism noted) {Kent Co.}
Reed, James Jr., Adjutant, Cavalry, 1st Brigade, 20 Nov 1813 {New Castle Co.}
Reed, Joel, Pvt., 1st Light Inf. Co., 1st Regt., 28 Nov 1814 {New Castle Co.}
Reed, John, Pvt., 5th Co., 3rd Regt., 1813-1814 (exact dates not given, absenteeism noted) {New Castle Co.}
Reed, Josa., Pvt., 1st Co., Grenadiers, 8th Regt., 1813 (payroll, exact date not given) {Sussex Co.}
Reed, Mathew, Pvt., 1st Co., 8th Regt., stationed at Lewes Town, 19 Mar to 24 Mar 1813 {Sussex Co.}
Reed, Peter, 4th Cpl., 5th Co., 8th Regt., stationed at Lewes Town by June 1813 (payroll) {Sussex Co.}
Reed, William, Pvt., 7th Co., 8th Regt., 1813 (payroll, exact date not given)