



IMAGE COURTESY OF THE MARINERS' MUSEUM

Becalmed off Old Point Comfort shortly after the British blockade of the Chesapeake Bay in February 1813, the six-gun schooner Lottery put up a ferocious two-hour fight before surrendering to Royal Marines.

# WAR COMES TO HAMPTON ROADS

War of 1812: Fear grips the countryside as British ships enter the Chesapeake Bay on a mission to blockade, raid and burn

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No one could mistake the intent of the British warships that appeared at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay early on the frosty morning of Feb. 4, 1813.

Just one of the immense 74-gun ships in this advance squadron boasted more firepower than all the cannons defending the Elizabeth River in Norfolk — and within weeks the number of tall masts and Union Jacks commanding the waters between Lynnhaven Bay and Old Point Comfort would multiply many times over.

Not for several days, however, did the nature of the threat become clear to mariners, shopkeepers, farmers and militiamen sizing up His Majesty's might from afar.

About noon on Feb. 8, a lookout aboard the HMS Maidstone spotted a sail approaching from the northwest. An hour later, after eluding several smaller British ships, the six-gun schooner Lottery out of Baltimore found itself becalmed off Old Point and beset by a swarm of enemy vessels.

That's when the first cannon shots rang out, signaling the start

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