

James Madison, Jr. (1751-1836)

Proclamation - Calling All Citizens to Unite in Defense of the District of Columbia

given on September 1, 1814

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Whereas the enemy by a sudden incursion have succeeded in invading the capital of the nation, defended at the
5 moment by troops less numerous than their own and almost entirely of the militia, during their possession of which,
though for a single day only, they wantonly destroyed the public edifices, having no relation in their structure to
operations of war nor used at the time for military annoyance, some of these edifices being also costly monuments of
taste and of the arts, and others depositories of the public archives, not only precious to the nation as the memorials of
its origin and its early transactions, but interesting to all nations as contributions to the general stock of historical
10 instruction and political science; and

Whereas advantage has been taken of the loss of a fort more immediately guarding the neighboring town of
Alexandria to place the town within the range of a naval force too long and too much in the habit of abusing its
superiority wherever it can be applied to require as the alternative of a general conflagration an undisturbed plunder of
15 private property, which has been executed in a manner peculiarly distressing to the inhabitants, who had
inconsiderately cast themselves upon the justice and generosity of the victor; and

Whereas it now appears by a direct communication from the British commander on the American station to be his
avowed purpose to employ the force under his direction "in destroying and laying waste such towns and districts upon
20 the coast as may be found assailable," adding to this declaration the insulting pretext that it is in retaliation for a
wanton destruction committed by the army of the United States in Upper Canada, when it is notorious that no
destruction has been committed, which, notwithstanding the multiplied outrages previously committed by the enemy
was not unauthorized, and promptly shown to be so, and that the United States have been as constant in their
endeavors to reclaim the enemy from such outrages by the contrast of their own example as they have been ready to
25 terminate on reasonable conditions the war itself; and

Whereas these proceedings and declared purposes, which exhibit a deliberate disregard of the principles of humanity
and the rules of civilized warfare, and which must give to the existing war a character of extended devastation and
barbarism at the very moment of negotiations for peace, invited by the enemy himself, leave no prospect of safety to
30 anything within the reach of his predatory and incendiary operations but in manful and universal determination to
chastise and expel the invader:

Now, therefore, I, James Madison. President of the United States, do issue this my proclamation, exhorting all the
good people thereof to unite their hearts and hands in giving effect to the ample means possessed for that purpose. I
35 enjoin it on all officers, civil and military, to exert themselves in executing the duties with which they are respectively
charged; and more especially I require the officers commanding the respective military districts to be vigilant and alert
in providing for the defense thereof, for the more effectual accomplishment of which they are authorized to call to the
defense of exposed and threatened places portions of the militia most convenient thereto, whether they be or be not
parts of the quotas detached for the service of the United States under requisitions of the General Government.

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On an occasion which appeals so forcibly to the proud feelings and patriotic devotion of the American people none
will forget what they owe to themselves, what they owe to their country and the high destinies which await it, what to
the glory acquired by their fathers in establishing the independence which is now to be maintained by their sons with
the augmented strength and resources with which time and Heaven had blessed them.

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In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed to these
presents.

Done at the city of Washington, the 1st day of September, A.D. 1814, and of the Independence of the United States
50 the thirty-ninth.

JAMES MADISON.

By the President:

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JAMES MONROE,

Secretary of State.
(710 words)

Quelle: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65968>