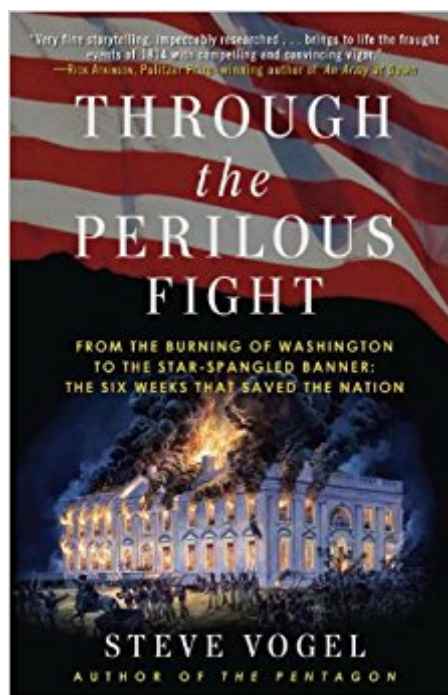


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# Through The Perilous Fight: From The Burning Of Washington To The Star-Spangled Banner: The Six Weeks That Saved The Nation



## Synopsis

In a rousing account of one of the critical turning points in American history, *Through the Perilous Fight* tells the gripping story of the burning of Washington and the improbable last stand at Baltimore that helped save the nation and inspired its National Anthem. In the summer of 1814, the United States of America teetered on the brink of disaster. The war it had declared against Great Britain two years earlier appeared headed toward inglorious American defeat. The young nation's most implacable nemesis, the ruthless British Admiral George Cockburn, launched an invasion of Washington in a daring attempt to decapitate the government and crush the American spirit. The British succeeded spectacularly, burning down most of the city's landmarks—including the White House and the Capitol—and driving President James Madison from the area. As looters ransacked federal buildings and panic gripped the citizens of Washington, beleaguered American forces were forced to regroup for a last-ditch defense of Baltimore. The outcome of that "perilous fight" would help change the outcome of the war—and with it, the fate of the fledgling American republic. In a fast-paced, character-driven narrative, Steve Vogel tells the story of this titanic struggle from the perspective of both sides. Like an epic novel, *Through the Perilous Fight* abounds with heroes, villains, and astounding feats of derring-do. The vindictive Cockburn emerges from these pages as a pioneer in the art of total warfare, ordering his men to "knock down, burn, and destroy" everything in their path. While President Madison dithers on how to protect the capital, Secretary of State James Monroe personally organizes the American defenses, with disastrous results. Meanwhile, a prominent Washington lawyer named Francis Scott Key embarks on a mission of mercy to negotiate the release of an American prisoner. His journey will place him with the British fleet during the climactic Battle for Baltimore, and culminate in the creation of one of the most enduring compositions in the annals of patriotic song: "The Star-Spangled Banner." Like Pearl Harbor or 9/11, the burning of Washington was a devastating national tragedy that ultimately united America and renewed its sense of purpose. *Through the Perilous Fight* combines bravura storytelling with brilliantly rendered character sketches to recreate the thrilling six-week period when Americans rallied from the ashes to overcome their oldest adversary—and win themselves a new birth of freedom. Praise for *Through the Perilous Fight*: "Very fine storytelling, impeccably researched . . . brings to life the fraught events of 1814 with compelling and convincing vigor."—Rick Atkinson, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *An Army at Dawn* "Probably the best piece of military history that I have read or reviewed in the past five years. . . . This well-researched and superbly written history has all the trappings of a good

novel. . . . No one who hears the national anthem at a ballgame will ever think of it the same way after reading this book. — Gary Anderson, *The Washington Times*

— “[Steve] Vogel does a superb job. . . . [A] fast-paced narrative with lively vignettes. — Joyce Appleby, *The Washington Post*

— “Before 9/11 was 1814, the year the enemy burned the nation’s capital. . . . A splendid account of the uncertainty, the peril, and the valor of those days. — Richard Brookhiser, author of *James Madison*

— “A swift, vibrant account of the accidents, intricacies and insanities of war. — Kirkus Reviews

From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

— “[A] fine study . . . Steve Vogel does a superb job of bringing this woeful tale to life. He leavens his fast-paced narrative with lively vignettes of the principal participants. . . . Vogel meticulously sets the stage for the ensuing debacle. — Joyce Appleby, *The Washington Post*

— “The Perilous Fight is probably the best piece of military history that I have read or reviewed in the past five years. . . . This well-researched and superbly written history has all the trappings of a good novel. There is great heroism, treacherous self-interest, cowardice and intrigue. . . . No one who hears the national anthem at a ballgame will ever think of it the same way after reading this book, nor want the national anthem changed. — Gary Anderson, *The Washington Times*

— “Complementing Donald R. Hickey’s *War of 1812* and Alan Taylor’s *The Civil War of 1812*, this title will contribute to making this war no longer one of our forgotten conflicts. — Library Journal

— “Vogel . . .

superbly dramatizes a campaign whose legacy is ÆœThe Star-Spangled Banner,Æœ both the anthem and the flag for which it stands, today displayed in Washington.Æœ•Æœ Æœ•Booklist Æœ Æœ Æœ•Æœ Æœ“The experienced author knows how to write about the military and its human and martial conflicts. . . . A swift, vibrant account of the accidents, intricacies and insanities of war.Æœ Æœ•Æœ Æœ•Kirkus ReviewsÆœ Æœ•Æœ Æœ“Very fine storytelling, impeccably researched . . . Through the Perilous Fight brings to life the fraught events of 1814 with compelling and convincing vigor.Æœ Æœ•Æœ Æœ•Rick Atkinson, Pulitzer PrizeÆœ Æœ œwinning author of *An Army at Dawn* Æœ Æœ Æœ•Æœ Æœ“Before 9/11 was 1814Æœ Æœ•the year the enemy burned the nationÆœ Æœœs capital. Steve Vogel gives a splendid account, fast-paced and detailed, of the uncertainty, the peril, and the valor of those days.Æœ Æœ•Æœ Æœ•Richard Brookhiser, author of *James Madison* Æœ Æœ Æœ•Æœ Æœ“*The War of 1812* remains one of the most important and least appreciated events in American history. In these engaging pages, Steve Vogel does much to rectify that, telling the story of a critical episode of the conflict with eloquence and insight.Æœ Æœ•Æœ Æœ•Jon Meacham, Pulitzer PrizeÆœ Æœ œwinning author of *Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power*From the Hardcover edition.

Steve Vogel is the author of *The Pentagon* and a veteran national reporter for *The Washington Post*. He has written extensively about military affairs and the treatment of veterans from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. His reporting on the war in Afghanistan was part of a package of *Washington Post* stories selected as a finalist for the 2002 Pulitzer Prize. Vogel covered the September 11 terrorist attack on the Pentagon, and the buildingÆœ Æœœs subsequent reconstruction. He covered the war in Iraq and the first Gulf War, as well as U.S. military operations in Rwanda, Somalia, and the Balkans. A graduate of the College of William and Mary, Vogel received a masterÆœ Æœœs degree in international public policy from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.From the Hardcover edition.

I bought this book to read during the 200th anniversary of the British burning the White House. As our government did nothing to mark the day, I thought I would, albeit in a small way. This is a gripping retelling of the fateful British invasion during the War of 1812. While packed with a lot of information (it is much more detailed than any books I’ve read about this) it moves right along and doesn’t drown the reader in trivia. All the major players are here: James and Dolley Madison, James Monroe, Joshua Barney, John Armstrong and Francis Scott Key, among many. The British are well represented here as well with Robert Ross, George Cockburn (a guy who never tired of taking

revenge it seems) and Alexander Cochrane. Fascinating people, with human foibles and incredible bravery. The book also has detailed maps and some pictures of these areas the way they look today, which was much appreciated. You don't have to be a history geek to enjoy this one. Just read it for the compelling story if nothing else.

Excellent! This was a superbly written account of one of the most dangerous periods of time in our nation's history! Our country teetered on the brink of disaster due to our leaders' lack of preparedness and underestimating our enemy during the War of 1812. An exciting and interesting read every American should read. After reading this book you will appreciate the words in our national anthem and the rise of our young nation from the hands of near disaster!

I enjoyed this book immensely. Mr. Vogel has written a page turner that brought a part of US history to life for me that I had previously known little about. Well sourced without getting bogged down in historical references and details, the story is told through the eyes of the participants. While I am predisposed to favor the American point of view, I was amused to find myself admiring many of the British characters, and I enjoyed their use of the term "Johnathan" when referring to the Americans in their official reports. I had the fortune of reading this book 200 years to the day after the events occurred- great way to relive a dark but important point of our history. I highly recommend this book.

I am not normally interested in history, but this book was great! The research and detail were incredible. Highly recommend it

A good read about a war most everyone has forgotten about. Hard to understand as the British burned down the White House and lots of Washington buildings. Of course, our National Anthem was written in the throes of a battle during this war of 1812.

About 3/4 of the way through this book - very good read on the war of 1812, America's second war for independence!

This is the most interesting non-fiction I have ever read. It is a real page turner. Good job, Author Steve Vogel.

Purchased as a reference book to a Star Spangled Banner Unit I'm doing for my music class. LOTS

of research about the events leading up to the battle which led to Key writing the Star Spangled Banner.

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