

THE BATTLE

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Samuel A. Trufant

You may wonder what battle spurred this paper - was it from the Revolutionary War, the Civil War? The Great War? The Second World War? Vietnam? A battle of the bedroom?

In my New Orleans childhood it was: The Battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812, or as others have referred to it: The Second War of Independence. Some of my very early memories relate to it. I was living with two of my great Aunts, Tante Amelie, more generally known as Tati, and Tante Effi, and my great grandmother - Grandmere. I was taken on picnics to Chalmette, Louisiana, about ten miles downriver from New Orleans. The favorite site was under the Pakenham Oaks, named in memory of Major General Sir Edward Pakenham who commanded the British troops. Family history repeated itself when Ann and I moved to New Orleans in 1978, and our children and grandchildren were taken to the same site. Those of you who've taken a trip down river will have seen the obelisk commemorating the battle. The area was the site of plantations whose land titles date to the earliest days of Louisiana after it was claimed in 1682 by Rene Robert Cavalier, sieur de La Salle for the French crown by erecting a cross three leagues above the mouth of the river. A dear friend of mine, Samuel Wilson Jr., a noted architect and historian, traced the records of the area in the United States and in France. He published a monograph on the subject in which is found a French colonial map dated about 1723 that details the land holdings. Another map shows the disposition of United States and British forces. Wilson's research tells the story of the properties in some detail, especially that of the de La Ronde family which was acquired by Edmond Martin (or Macarty) in 1807. Macarty erected a house of two stories and an attic, (probably designed by the noted architect Jean Hyacinthe Laclotte of Bordeaux, whose passport was issued for going to Louisiana to "practice his art.") Macarty died in November, 1814, by which time Jackson's preparations were well underway and at Christmas he took over the house as his battlefield headquarters.

With the site of the Battle in mind, let me suggest the basis for the War of 1812, it may sound familiar. As a boy I was told of the Great Victory but, for practical purposes, nothing of the causes. I was aware that the British invaded Washington City and that much damage had been done, including torching the White House, the Capitol, and other

government buildings, suggesting that to be the cause of the war. Of course the reality was much more complex, in recent reading it has become obvious that there was no simple explanation of what happened in the years leading up to the James Madison presidency and his decision to declare war on Great Britain. Following the establishment of a constitutional government in the United States there were difficulties with the Indian Tribes, which were supported by the English. These were extensive especially in the Northwest Territory a term then applied to lands between the Allegheny Mountains and the Mississippi River. At one point it was even suggested that a part of the territory be consigned to a gathering of Indian natives with representatives in Congress. This was never acted upon, apparently because the Iroquois confederacy remained loyal to the Great White Father in London. At about the same time Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys crossed Lake Champlain displacing the British and opening a route into Canada. Further was the British blockade of US ports.

In 1809 Madison proposed to restore commercial relations if Britain would repeal its decrees that injured U.S. commerce; and cease the Chesapeake Affair which resulted from the British insistence on searching US vessels for sailors who had deserted. Unfortunately a treaty worked out between Madison and the British ambassador was overruled by London. Madison responded by stubbornly insisting that the National Faith was pledged to France.

On 18 June 1812, in response to a recommendation from Madison, Congress declared war. There were four grounds: 1) an impressment of seamen, 2) repeated violations of U.S. territorial waters, 3) blockade of U.S. ports and 4) orders against neutral trade. Although the "war hawks" prevailed the vote was far from unanimous. The war-hawks were disgusted with the wordy diplomacy; and felt that "national honor demanded a fight". In addition, but not stated in the Declaration, were two additional reasons: 1) a war, if successful, would drive the British from Canada and 2) settle the Indian Question. The settlers in the Northwest coveted the fertile wooded area between Lakes Ontario, Erie, and Huron. The Indian question was more complex. It was thought to have been settled by the Treaty of Greenville, which brought peace in the Northwest after 20 years of battling. Those who favored War believed that U.S. forces would be welcomed by the people of "Upper Canada" (Sound familiar?).

When the United States invaded Iraq I wrote to our children that war followed one rule: that of unintended consequences. In the case of the War of 1812 a prewar ditty

went thus:

"Since war is the word, let us strain every nerve
To save our America, her glory increase;
So shoulder your firelocks, your country preserve
For the hotter the war, the quicker the peace."

The first phase was attack through the Great Lakes area. General Hull of Michigan, a veteran of the Revolutionary War was ordered to move north from Dayton, Ohio, to Canada. He offered the promise of liberty to the Canadians, under the United States flag, but they were less than impressed; the Indians fell in with them. Hull retreated. The next attempt was through the Niagara front, which was equally disastrous. At Plattsburg, troops led by another veteran of the Revolution, Major General Henry Reardon marched north toward Montreal but the militia refused to go more than 20 miles. Reardon marched them back to Plattsburg.

In the Atlantic Ocean things were more hopeful. Although vastly outnumbered, the US ships found the Royal Navy preoccupied with France and thus unable to fill the North American Station. The US Navy, with the Constitution, the United States, and the President was able to prevail in a series of battles ending with Decatur's capture of the HMS Macedonia, which he took into New London harbor as a prize

Attempts to recruit an authorized 50,000 one-year enlistees managed to sign up only 10,000. The war was unpopular everywhere. A problem was leadership. The Navy was in good order but there were only two general officers of quality, Jacob Bracer and Andrew Jackson. The latter had been eager for service, but was refused a Federal commission by Madison because of his support for Monroe in the election of 1808.

To add to the United States' problems, Napoleon abdicated in April 1814. Britain was now able to reinforce the ground forces in Canada and make available ships to enforce the Atlantic blockade. Their plan was to invade the US successively at three points: Niagara, Lake Champlain, and New Orleans, and simultaneously to raid the Chesapeake area. Things came largely to a standoff at both Niagara and Plattsburg with the US forces, though vastly outnumbered, holding their own, but unable to advance into Canada.

On the East Coast the story was different. British troops from the Peninsular War were transported across the Atlantic under the command of Admiral Sir George Cockburn. The New England Coast was blockaded and subjected to raids on various

towns. However it wasn't until the decision by Cockburn and the land commander, Major General Robert Ross to strike Washington that a real test of strength was undertaken. On the 24 August 1814, the US Army met Ross on the field of Bladensburg, Maryland, five miles north of Washington. The result was an unmitigated disaster for the US forces. The British force of 4500, mainly veterans of the Peninsula War simply rolled over 7500 militia.

Washington and Baltimore were in a state of panic. Administration officials including Madison and his wife, Dolly, left. Their exit was so hasty that a set dinner table in the White House dining rooms was left with a still-warm meal served on plates to be enjoyed by British soldiers (officers only, by some reports). Then they burned it down along with the Capitol and other public buildings, except for some obscure reason, the Patent Office. No private property was destroyed. Admiral Cochrane now turned his sights to Baltimore where the citizens assembled and army of 10,000 to 20,000 men. General Ross was killed by a sniper. The assault was to be supported by the Royal Navy but Fort McHenry held until the "dawn's early light" when Cochrane called off the attack, by which time, private property had been looted, even churches were razed. With that he sailed away.

It is not clear as to what precisely the British government had in mind, though it had tentatively set plans to take New Orleans early in the war. Peace negotiations began almost as soon as the war started. Unfortunately time was lost when the Czar of Russia attempted to mediate. Eventually Lord Castlereagh offered to treat directly with the United States. Madison responded favorably in January 1814. Ghent, Belgium was chosen as the venue. By the time the commissioners had assembled the British government was in no hurry, believing that success on the Canadian border would place them in position to dictate rather than negotiate. Many items proposed for discussion were taken off the table. These included US claims to Newfoundland fisheries, impressment and others. The British wanted revision of the northern boundary to give Canada access to the Upper Mississippi and revived an old proposal on the Indian territory. John Quincy Adams was prepared to terminate the discussion but Henry Clay, described as an "old poker player" prevailed. News from Lake Champlain and Baltimore provided a reprieve for the United States. The Duke of Wellington was victorious in the Peninsular War and Napoleon abdicated. The Duke was asked in 1814 to take over Command in North America with full powers to make peace or continue the war. His

refusal was succinct: if the Great Lakes couldn't be secured, the peace should be signed.

While all of this was going on the British Government took the position that Napoleon was never the legitimate ruler of France and thus the Louisiana Purchase was null and void. The British of course coveted control of the central valley of North America and access to the west. New Orleans was the key. It was perhaps the richest city on the continent at that time.

Jackson as we have seen was bypassed for command but William Blount, Governor of Tennessee appointed him Major General of Volunteers. Tennessee's part of the 5000 man goal was 1500, but 2500 including Davey Crockett, joined up in response. He was sent to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast and went down river to Natchez where he received orders from the War Department to disband and go home. Jackson did not disband but, at his own expense, marched his men back to Nashville. There he became embroiled in a barroom brawl and was seriously wounded in the shoulder. He refused amputation. Two weeks into his recovery with his arm in a sling on 22 August 1814, Jackson established his headquarters in Mobile. Shortly afterward Jackson got word that the British had moved into Pensacola "without so much as a by-your-leave"; the Spanish commandante allowed them to raise the British flag to the level of that of Spain. The British commander, Colonel Edward Nicholls, began recruiting disaffected Indians. On 29 August he issued a proclamation to the "natives of Louisiana" that called for them to "assist in liberating them from a faithless, imbecile government (that of Madison)". He went on to threaten by saying "I am at the head of a large body of Indians, well armed and commanded by British offices... a good artillery as well as British and Spanish vessels of war" and concluded "the American usurpation in this country must be abolished."

Jackson sent off two letters: one rebuffing the Commandante and the other to Governor Blount in Nashville to send troops to Mobile. On 12 September he set sail for Fort Bowyer at the entrance to Mobile Bay, but en route he was told the British had already attacked it by sea and effectively destroyed it. Recently the Historic New Orleans Collection research group published a book titled "A British Eyewitness to the Battle of New Orleans, a memoir of Royal Navy Admiral Robert Aitchison." Jackson set about organizing an attack on Pensacola on 2nd November and by the 7th he had surrounded the city. A surrender was quickly arranged. What happened to the "large body of Indians" is not clear but a number of them were found staggering drunkenly around the city in their

British "coats without pants". Jackson pushed on to New Orleans.

The British plan required leadership of the Royal Navy as well as the Army. The assignment was given to Vice Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane. He had served on the North American station during the Revolutionary War and later in Egyptian Campaigns superintending troop landings. He was sent to the West Indies where he met Nelson, helping wrest San Domingo and Martinique from the French. His skill at amphibious landing made him a good choice on the gulf coast. His counterpart from the Royal Army was Pakenham, who although his father was a captain in the Royal Navy, had been gazetted as a lieutenant in the Gordan Highlanders and served for three years when he purchased a captaincy. In 1801 as a Lt. Colonel, he and his regiment were sent to West Indies, where he distinguished himself in amphibious operations. He attended the wedding of his sister to Major General Sir Arthur Wellesley (later the Duke of Wellington). In May 1808 he was again in the West Indies where he was appointed Adjutant General to Wellesley. One writer observed that he had done excellent work and was promoted steadily, but after his sister's marriage his promotions seemed to have speeded up. When Wellesley refused the offer of command in North America, Pakenham was appointed. Among his instructions was not to halt operation until he received orders by a special emissary of the Prince Regent; he was not to believe any rumors. Other key figures included Major General Samuel Gibbs, a veteran of the amphibious attack on Java; Colonel Alexander Dickson, chief of artillery. Major General John Keane, a product of privilege and through patronage, a captain at 13 (!), and a Colonel by 1809.

On the US side the command structure was essentially at the discretion of Andrew Jackson. In 1780 he, at age 13, joined his 16 year old brother. Both were captured. There is a story, likely apocryphal that on the day he was taken prisoner he was ordered to clean a British officer's boots and when he refused, the officer struck him on the head with his sword, leaving him with a permanent scar and a permanent hatred of the British. Two years after the war ended he decided to become a lawyer, earning a license to practice at age 20. He settled on the western side of the Alleghenies in Tennessee where there was great opportunity settling boundary disputes, drawing up wills and deeds. He was appointed territorial prosecutor, and later United States attorney and then judge. He acquired vast land holdings, built a large mansion and a fine stable of racehorses. In 1796 he was elected to the US House of Representatives and in 1797 to the Senate. In 1802 he became General of the Tennessee militia. He had a quick temper and

frequently engaged in duels, gaining a reputation as the "best shot in Tennessee." While in Washington he formed a close relationship with William C.C. Claiborne who was appointed governor of the Louisiana territory, a post that Jackson coveted.

Jackson's army was in no way comparable to the British, but they were an interesting lot. Regular troops were 876, Louisiana militias and volunteers, 910, other militias (mostly from Kentucky and Tennessee) 3,910. Under Major General Jean Baptiste Plache was a battalion of local businessmen, lawyers, planters and their sons; two regiments of Louisiana State Militia, poorly armed, some un-uniformed, and undisciplined, and a battalion of free men of color, mostly displaced Haitians commanded by Major Jean Daquin, a baker. Jackson issued a proclamation informing the colored soldiers that they would be given the same amenities as whites Jackson began a tour of the city's approaches and fortifications. The first approaches were from Mobile and the Gulf Coast, along Chef Mentuer Road which had been built through an almost impassable swamp He blocked this with trees and other debris and left troops. Further along through Lake Borgne into Lake Ponchartrain was Bayou St. John which led almost into the heart of the city, fortified by a fort of colonial design. From the south were any number of bayous, creeks, and canals. These were ordered blocked by felled trees with guards from the State Militia. Finally there was a huge waterway, the Mississippi River, too shallow for ships of the line. An old structure, Fort St. Philip, was about 60miles below New Orleans, which Jackson ordered strengthened, and left a garrison of trained artillery. On the trip upriver he came to Le Tour des Anglais - (English Turn), about 2 miles downriver from New Orleans, where the first incursion into Louisiana by the British took place in 1699.

This deserves a short diversion: In 1694 LaSalle he undertook an ill-fated venture, seeking the mouth of the river. It was a failure as his four ships were lost and he was killed by his crew. The next French colonials were led by Pierre LeMoyne, Sieur DTberville, and by his younger brother Jean Baptiste, Sieur de Bienville, who formed a colony at Biloxi. Iberville returned to France and in his absence Bienville often left the fort to explore the coast. On one of these excursions he encountered an English corvette, Carolina Galley, loaded with settlers. It had dropped anchor 75 miles up from the mouth. When the officer in charge asked for directions, Bienville told him that the Mississippi was much farther west and that he was in French Territory which was heavily guarded by forts. The Carolina weighed anchor, turned around and left. Bienville must have been a

great poker player. Had the British called his bluff and persisted, they might have put a colony on the site of New Orleans. A small fortification on the Turn remains.

On the British side, Cochrane decided on an amphibious landing on Cat Island, a marshy windswept desert. Meanwhile word had gotten to Jackson of the British. He sent a flotilla of five gunboats from New Orleans to the Rigolets, a narrow pass between Lake Ponchartrain and Lake Borgne, with the hope that it would deter the British. It didn't. On 14th December the flotilla was wiped out in a bloody encounter lasting an hour and a half. Jackson meanwhile on 16th December put Louisiana under martial law with himself as supreme commander. One writer noted "the man had met the hour." His power was absolute - even to the extent of executing civilians caught as spies. He later admitted that this was probably unconstitutional.

It was one of those times when South Louisiana can be excruciatingly cold. This was devastating to the British but they bore up amazingly well, perhaps looking to a fabulous sum of prize money in which all would share. On 18th December two officers came upon a small collection of thatched houses, a Spanish fishermen's village where inhabitants who knew the area told them of Bayou Bienvenue and helped with the exploration. British Lt. George Glieg wrote, "where we landed was as wild as is possible to imagine. Nothing can be seen but one huge marsh covered with tall reeds." They slogged on of sinking knee deep in muck until reaching a dark and forbidding cypress swamp, "cypress knees" sticking up and criss-crossed by small streams. As darkness fell, the British emerged into a wide, stable plain covered by stubble from the sugarcane harvest of Jean Villere's plantation. They realized that they were only about a mile from the Mississippi River and the road that led to New Orleans.

The scouting party reported to Cochrane, who, in consultation with Keane, landed an army at Bayou Bienvenue. The first group to go was an 1800 man detachment. The troops climbed into the boats for the thirty mile pull across Lake Borgne. We have a description in the journal of Colonel Dickson: "when we left the slip the current was still favorable...the night piercing cold. The boats continued to row all night and there cannot be too much said for the...818 men who by daylight had pulled at least 70 miles....when we found ourselves at no great distance from the land...north of the entrance to the creek. The coast was nothing but high reeds to the edge of the water....After running along the coast...we made entrances to the creek which was only discernable by a red flag our people had hoisted on a pole as a landmark... It is of good breadth for four or five miles,

and then narrows so much, and is so shallow that the boats cannot row..."

On 23rd December all but one of the scouts placed by Jackson were asleep and captured. The British however did not reckon with young Gabriel Villere, his guards being fatigued, were less than efficient. Villere jumped out of a window, cleared the fence, set out to report directly to Jackson, who relieved him of his sword and put him under arrest for disobeying the order to block the Bayou Bienvenue. He sent Claiborne to hold the area to the north. When General Can-oil's Tennesseans approached, the British line along the edge of the Villere plantation opened fire and US troops fell back upriver to the Rodriguez canal. All this took place in the late afternoon of 23rd December. Jackson had also stationed the USS Carolina just upriver.

Keane ordered a rest period for his troops. At about 7:30 PM the lookouts on the levee sighted a ship drifting forward. They first thought that it would be a supply ship but when it opened fire the camp was in turmoil. Colonel Thornton attempted to restore order but in the dark of night failed as US troops rallied and drove them back. The British were reinforced but by midnight the action was over. Had Keane marched on New Orleans it would almost surely have been successful. All of the forgoing sounds routine but it was not the sort of fight that the British were accustomed to. Quoting Lieutenant Glieg: "now began a battle of which no languages were competent to convey any distinct idea, because it was one to which the annals of modern warfare furnished no parallel." What became known as the Night Battle began was a wild melee. Scores of little fights erupted in the darkness and it was impossible to maintain order. River fog rolled over the field. Bombarding had gone on for six hours.

Jackson's first instinct was to renew the fight at dawn but as more information came in he realized that the additional British troops were well armed and seasoned. His men were ill-equipped. About an hour before dawn he gave the order to retire the army 5 or 6 plantations upriver towards New Orleans, where he would be in his field headquarters and set up a line of defense along the Rodriguez canal. He sent a dispatch to Secretary of War Monroe: "As the safety of the city will depend on the fate of this army, it must not be incautiously exposed." One writer has said this was probably his wisest decision of the entire campaign.

On Christmas Day Pakenham arrived on the field via same mucky route as had his troops. There is evidence that his first impression was that his force was in a bottleneck and should re-embark. For whatever reason, he decided to stay. In essence,

despite various forays on both sides, the following 2 weeks were spent setting up their positions for face-to-face combat, though probes in both directions were made with frequency.

Every schoolboy in New Orleans heard that Jean Lafitte had been of key assistance to Jackson; that may be a bit of exaggeration but worth noting. "Lafitte, Pirate of the Coast" it turns out, went to sea only twice: once when he came from France and then when he left this country and on neither voyage did he sail under the "Jolly Roger." He was a blacksmith who had a shop on Bourbon Street. What he did was to realize that the privateers of the gulf had difficulty disposing of their booty. He set up in a small business at the mouth of Barrataria Bay where he bought ill-gotten goods and smuggled them to the city. Barrataria became a thriving community. After the British took Pensacola, the commander there, knowing of the Barrataria colony thought the people might prove useful in the plans for taking New Orleans. A sloop commanded by Captain Nicholas Lockyer was sent out. Lafitte quickly made up his mind to find out what the origin of the ship. In his wily way he did not admit to being M. Lafitte, saying Lafitte was in the port. Lockyer presented him with a package of papers. The gist of these was an offer to Lafitte promising amnesty to him and his followers provided they would help the British in the attack. If the offer was refused the settlement would be wiped out. His response was that he had to consult with his people and get rid of those who would never side with British. Lockyer sailed off promising to return. Shortly thereafter Lafitte was in communication with General Claiborne and sent to him all the documents. He said that he had no intention of fighting against his adopted country and would instead give all the aid he and his men could, but asking that a US raid on Barrataria be cancelled. Claiborne ordered the US attack basically wiped out the colony but Lafitte and his people had fled to the swamps. When Lockyer returned he found no one and went back to Pensacola.

The British documents became public and when it was found that they were authentic. Jackson issued a very savage proclamation against the British method of making war, among these being an effort to employ against the citizens of the US a band of "hellish banditti." Claiborne offered a \$500 reward for the capture of Lafitte who then offered a sum, variously reported as \$1500 to \$5000, for the governor.

Public opinion was much in favor of the Barratarians. Things in New Orleans

looked more serious and Jackson changed his position. An aside: There is still a colony of fisherman at Barrataria, a site for picnickers and a good seafood restaurant.

Back to the Generals - Jackson and Pakenham.

Jackson concluded that the only way the British had to New Orleans was by direct assault across the canal between plantations with the river on his right and the cypress swamps on his left. He had posted General Morgan with 1046 men to establish a line of defense on the west bank in the event that the British crossed the river. He set up "Line Jackson" along the Rodriguez canal. The canal had to be fortified. Men were sent back to the city and surrounding plantations for shovels, picks, hoes, axes, horses, oxen, and wagons and hundreds of slaves to help with the work. There was some resistance from local Creoles at being put to "negro work." But Jackson settled that by ordering shifts of one crew working while the other slept. The design was to widen the canal to at least 10 feet, throwing up spoil dirt across the breastwork that ran from the river into the woods. Artillery positions had to be built, for which bales of cotton were commandeered. The owner complained and the response was, "Well, Mr. Nolte, if this is your cotton you at least not think it a hardship to defend it." Nolte was a volunteer rifleman.

While walking the line, Lafitte pointed out that the end as then projected was to be at the woods. Elsewhere Jackson's troops were behind strong ramparts but here the British had free, if difficult, access. The line was extended into the swamp.

Jackson had stronger artillery than the British and improved that position by wetting down Nolte's cotton to prevent fire. By 31st December he had completed 7 batteries. Artillery, clearly, was seen as likely to be decisive by the British who dragged heavy guns from the fleet, a daunting task as the guns were mounted on naval carriages. Pakenham attempted an attack on New Years Day and several exchanges of fire were made.

On the night of 7th January the two armies were face to face between the cypress swamp and the river. At 5 in the morning Pakenham found the west bank attack badly delayed. However his troops were ready for attack, having been delayed three times as Line Jackson grew stronger. Pakenham, on 8th January, 1815, ordered the planned attack, signal rockets were fired and troops moved forward, despite the fog. Jackson's artillery fired all along the line, using grape shot as well as cannon balls, with deadly effect as the British column moved forward, especially in the center. On the river, the column was split and marched diagonally across to reinforce the center, exposing it to artillery fire on

its flank and head on, because of course the British artillery could not protect it without the risk of what today would be referred to as "friendly fire."

Jackson had been riding up and down encouraging the men to stand fast and was reported to have charged them "do not fire until you see the whites of their eyes." The origin of this was Frederick the Great at Prague, 1757, but as New Orleans schoolboys we thought it a Jackson original.

Pakenham now ordered the full frontal assault on Line Jackson only to learn that the regiment designated to bring up scaling ladders had not done so. Despite heavy fire from the US side of the line, the British red-coated army came on in columns to the beat of drums, blare of bugles with higher rank officers, prancing about on horses.

On Jackson's side of the line the apprehension was powerful. Conscious of their inferiority in training and experience they must have become at least subconsciously aware that if they fled they would let down their young country. For some of course it was more personal - they had families in New Orleans.

The British kept coming but Jackson ordered a brief break in the fire to allow the smoke to clear. As they looked over the ramparts they were astounded at the red-coated lumps lying on the field. Soon the fury began again. Pakenham watched in mortification as two regiments streamed back toward the rear. He began rallying them by himself leading the way in the gloom and roar of battle. With a bullet his right arm, a blast of grapeshot hit him. As some of his aides attempted to get him up a blast struck him in the stomach - fatally. He was taken from the field and laid under an old oak tree. In addition two other senior generals were killed.

Lieutenant Glieg complained that "the British soldiers fell by the hands of men they could not see for the Americans without so much as lifting their heads above the ramparts swung their firelocks by one arm over the rampart and discharged them directly upon the British heads...and thus they were destroyed without opportunity.. .of displaying their valor..." Glieg's problem seems to have been that Jackson's men "did not play by the European rules of warfare." (Didn't someone say "all's fair in love and war?") To the US troops gazing over the ramparts the sight beggared the imagination as a scene that might have been from the depths of Dante's hell.

It is tempting to give a detailed description of the moment-to-moment progress of the battle. There are several versions with variations, but the net result was the same:

The British were crushed. Jackson was not to be satisfied and wanted to attack.

However when he convened his senior officers to consider the question, their answer was "NO." Somewhat surprisingly, Jackson acceded.

I should now return to Admiral Aitchison's report as seen from the British side. It is succinct and very much to the point.

1815

The 8 January was the day fixed upon for the assault on the enemy's lines. At daylight the boats were dragged into the canal ready to convey the 85th Reg[iment] and other detachments of troops to the other side of the Mississippi, which were intended to carry the batteries on that side which enfiladed our troops. My boat embarked part of the flank company of the 85th and pulled to the other side, where we landed them and returned for more.

A Rocket at Daylight was the signal for the assault, which took place immediately, but our troops encountered such a murderous fire at the edge of the ditch that they fell back without crossing it and in 15 minutes about 1800 men were put 'hors de combat'. The Commander in Chief Pakenham killed, General Gibbs killed and Keane wounded. On our side of the river the Batteries were carried, but in the course of the day we abandoned them and all returned and occupied the same ground we held in the morning. IT was a disastrous affair from the beginning to end and it was melancholy indeed to listen to the details of all the misfortunes, which had happened to many of those who we had seen in health and strength a few hours before. The 93d Highlanders, a fine veteran Regiment but recently arrived from the Cape stood up as they always did without flinching, and marched to the ditch, as I have heard, in the highest order, but they were compelled to retreat with 600 killed and wounded. Our Naval part of the force suffered but a trifling loss among the small armed men. It was determined to give up any further attempt upon New Orleans."

The US losses were 333 killed, wounded, and missing. The British lost 393 dead, 1514 wounded, and 522 missing.

The Peace Treaty of Ghent had been signed on Christmas Eve, 1814.

The aftermath is interesting, but for another time.