

Croghan could of course do nothing but leave Mackinac in British hands. On his way south however he paused to attack the blockhouse at the mouth of the Nottawasaga River. The garrison of the place, being hopelessly outnumbered, themselves blew up their stronghold and with it the schooner *Nancy*. What hurt was that *Nancy* had six months' supplies aboard for Mackinac; these could in no way be replaced. Despite the victory at Mackinac, British control of Lake Huron was now endangered, for Croghan left *Tigress* and *Scorpion* to cut communications between Mackinac and the rest of Canada. On the other hand, these two vessels and nothing more constituted the military power of the United States on the lake.⁷

Less than two weeks after the destruction of the blockhouse and of *Nancy*, Lieutenant Andrew H. Bulger led a detachment out of Mackinac in two boats. On the night of 3 September, he worked his way undetected within 100 yards of *Tigress*, then his men rushed and overpowered her 30-man crew. Now he used *Tigress* to approach *Scorpion* which was anchored 15 miles away. Once more the crew rushed and overpowered the unsuspecting men. In this manner American power was altogether eliminated from Lake Huron.⁸

General Benjamin Howard, in command of the Eighth Military District since Harrison's resignation, wanted an effort made to establish American control at the headwaters of the Mississippi River. He prepared eight large gunboats protected against musketry by heavy planking with rifle slits along the sides. About 350 men were put on the boats under the command of Major Zachary Taylor. This flotilla proceeded upstream until forced by a heavy wind to tie up on an island just north of the mouth of the Rock River. A force of 1,200 Indians and 20 English soldiers gathered to strike at them there. Lieutenant Duncan Graham, the British commander, was able to emplace three small cannon within 300 yards of Taylor's island anchorage, and he opened fire with them on 5 September. While the enemy cannon barked, Taylor held a council of his officers. It voted not to continue up the river. Accordingly, they weighed anchor and dropped down to the mouth of the Des Moines River, harassed all the way by the enemy Indians. At this point the crews of five of the boats erected what they called Fort Johnson, to replace Fort Madison which had been abandoned the year before. The British expected the new fort to be used as a staging area against Prairie du Chien, but in fact it was abandoned within a few weeks.⁹

In September 1814 General Benjamin Howard died. The administration moved swiftly to fill the vacancy, and a month later Colonel William Russell turned up at St. Louis to take command of the Eighth

Military District. He found no United States military force at all north of the mouth of the Illinois River, and a lack of resources throughout his entire command. Governor William Clark of Missouri Territory asserted that there was not a field officer of the regular service left in either Missouri or Illinois Territory. Russell, as commander of the United States Mounted Rangers, designed his defense around them. By moving constantly along critical lines of communication, the Rangers were to try to awe the Indians into keeping quiet. If more was necessary, he planned to cut down the Indian corn in the fields. His eye was upon the Mississippi River, down which British influence radiated from Mackinac. He was in favor of pulling his outposts in quite close and relying on mobility.¹⁰

The legislative council for Missouri saw no hope for their territory, or so they represented matters to the Congress, unless a substantial body of regulars was sent at once to their aid. Missouri, they insisted, was ringed about with 6,000 warriors, whereas the whole number of their enrolled militia came only to 3,400.¹¹

Washington

Chesapeake Bay was continuously attractive to the British because it enabled them to project their sea power deep into the United States. Admiral Sir George Cockburn had in 1813 gradually learned the Chesapeake waters better than most American pilots, and had become incidentally a devil figure in the area. When he was promoted from rear admiral of the blue to rear admiral of the white, *Niles' Register* grumbled, "The ruffian will be anxious to deserve this distinction by some act of great atrocity and meanness. . . ." To guard against him and the likes of him, Congress authorized the construction of a special flotilla of gunboats, called barges, for use in the upper bay. In August 1813 Captain Joshua Barney had been made a commodore to supervise the building of them, to raise their crews, and to command the flotilla. Using the new tool, he was expected to keep the foe below the Potomac River well away from Washington.¹

Barney was a naval veteran of the Revolution. He had gone to France