

with Monroe in 1796, and had stayed there to become a commodore in the French naval service. He had directed depredations of French privateers upon English commerce and possibly upon some American ships as well. He was a symbol of the American-French connection and a seasoned hater of England. Inasmuch as he had been the commander of a trading vessel at the age of sixteen, he was at fifty-five a highly qualified sailor.

By April 1814 Barney was in command of 26 barge-gunboats and 900 men, based on Baltimore. While cruising in the bay on the lookout for vessels engaged in illegal commerce, he encountered a 74, 3 schooners, and 7 barges sailing together. Hopelessly outclassed, he made for the Patuxent River where the heavy ships could not follow him. The British flotilla took station off the mouth of the Patuxent and burned a schooner to try to lure Barney out. He would not come out. Next, on 6 June, Captain Sir Robert Barrie brought his light ships into the river, whereupon Barney worked his way out of reach six miles up Leonard's Creek. Since gunfire could occasionally reach him, he decided to attack his molesters. So vigorous was his strike that the British flotilla retreated, and *St. Lawrence* grounded on her way downstream. Only by stationing officers in the tops to direct fire from the other ships was Barrie able to keep the stranded ship from falling into American hands. On 10 June he counterattacked up Leonard's Creek with 21 barges, a rocket ship, and 2 schooners, but Barney assailed them so fiercely with 13 barges that they withdrew. Barrie now decided to send out a detachment of marines and Negro troops to harry the countryside. Even though this detachment destroyed 2,500 hogsheads of tobacco and penetrated to Marlboro, 18 miles from Washington, it still did not force the Americans out to fight.²

Secretary Jones considered the American flotilla to be hopelessly bottled up in Leonard's Creek, and he gave the order to destroy it. But just at that moment Commissary General of Ordnance Decius Wadsworth volunteered to try to liberate it. With 600 men he advanced to the mouth of the creek and emplaced two 18-pound long cannon on the reverse side of a hill where they were free from counterbattery fire. Under the protection of their fire, he attacked with a small fleet of barges. Notwithstanding that his cannon recoiled halfway down the hill with each discharge, his attack was so effective that on 26 June a part of Barney's flotilla was able to sail out of Leonard's Creek into the Patuxent. This backed the British out into the Potomac. There they captured Leonardtown on 18 July without firing a shot, but they did not destroy it. Two days later they met sharper resistance on the Nominny River, but in the end they captured two schooners, quantities of

tobacco, and four prisoners. In addition, 135 slaves followed them. At the Yeocomico River they also had to fight. By this time Cockburn with only 500 men had penetrated 10 miles inland in heavily wooded country. He was forming the conclusion that his detachments could go anywhere they chose in the bay area, that all the American forces must be clustered around Washington, Annapolis, and Baltimore.³

"Jonathan is so confounded," Captain Joseph Nourse reported to Cockburn, "that he does not know when or where to look for us, and I do believe that he is at this moment so undecided and unprepared that it would require little force to burn Washington, and I hope soon to put the first torch to it myself." He was about right. The American government could not decide whether there was need to make provision to defend its capital. Certain observers expected an attack there. If the British struck Washington, they could disrupt government, disgrace the administration, destroy the Navy Yard and two important iron works, and adversely affect the peace negotiations already in progress. To counter such an attack, the Americans needed to maintain an advanced defensive posture. The British fleet could be blocked in if it passed too far up the crooked, shoal-water rivers. Fire rafts, amphibious infantry, and active cavalry detachments ought to be employed, and a telegraphic system should start at once. In contrast to this point of view, John Armstrong acknowledged no grounds on which the foe would find it worthwhile to attack the capital. He assured the President that he would take any action necessary to defend the place. In fact, however, he kept his attention turned so consistently elsewhere that it was difficult to provide even for such irregular troops as did turn out in the vicinity. He never considered the British prisoners brought before him as anything but foragers.⁴

President Madison announced at a cabinet meeting on 1 July that he expected an attack upon Washington. The next day the Tenth Military District was created. Secretary Armstrong wanted Moses Porter to command it, but Madison himself chose Brigadier General William H. Winder. Winder had been captured in 1813 at Beaver Dam, and was released early in 1814 to go to Washington to negotiate the exchange of prisoners. While he was there, he received from the President appointment as the United States representative in all negotiations for the exchange of prisoners. Through his efforts a convention was agreed upon 16 April 1814, and the machinery for a general exchange of prisoners was set in motion. A personal connection made Winder especially available: He was the nephew of Levin Winder, Federalist governor of Maryland, who was hypercritical of the conduct of the war. If kinsman William commanded in the bay area, the governor