



# The Burning of Washington: The British Invasion of 1814

*Anthony Pitch*

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In the hot and humid summer of 1814 British troops completed a fifty-mile march to capture the young American capital, putting to rout along the way pitiful citizen militiamen (some in winter gear, others barefoot) while President James Madison galloped out of town to safety. Among those remaining, a realization spread that Washington had been "abandoned to a horrid fate". In no time, British arsonists set off an inferno whose glow was seen miles away and from which burn marks are visible today on original stones of the White House. This attack was one of the defining moments in the coming-of-age of the United States, and Anthony Pitch tells the dramatic story with all the immediacy, of an eyewitness account.

Painstakingly tracking down firsthand sources and tattered letters, diaries, journals, and newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic, Pitch has brought this key episode of American history to life in a gripping narrative filled with vivid details. He describes how, after the catastrophe in Washington, a hostage on a British warship named Francis Scott Key wrote an epic poem that later became the national anthem as he viewed the Star-Spangled Banner still flying over embattled Fort McHenry in Baltimore Harbor Readers of Anthony Pitch's book will experience again the sense of pride and honor felt by Key and all Americans in 1814 as they underwent this national trauma and finally celebrated victory in this Second War of Independence.

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