

# CAPTURE OF THE USS CHESEAPEAKE

## Lieutenant George Budd, USN, to the Secretary of the Navy

Halifax, 15 June 1813

The unfortunate death of captain James Lawrence, and lieutenant Augustus C. Ludlow, has rendered it my duty to inform you of the capture of the late United States' frigate CHESAPEAKE.

On Tuesday, June 1<sup>st</sup>, at 8 AM we unmoored ship, and at meridian got under weigh from President's Roads, with a light wind from the southward and westward, and proceeded on a cruise. A ship was then in sight in the offing, which had the appearance of a ship of war, and which, from information received from pilot-boats and craft, we believed to be the British frigate *SHANNON*. We made sail in chase, and cleared ship for action. At half past 4 PM she hove to with her head to the southward and eastward. At 5 PM took in the royals and top-gallant sails, and at half past 5, hauled the courses up. About 15 minutes before 6 PM the action commenced within pistol shot. The first broadside did great execution on both sides, damaged our rigging, killed, among others, Mr. White the sailing master, and wounded captain Lawrence. In about 12 minutes after the commencement of the action, we fell on board of the enemy, and immediately after, one of our arm chests on the quarter-deck was blown up by a hand-grenade thrown from the enemy's ship. In a few minutes, one of the captain's aids came on the gun-deck to inform me that the boarders were called. I immediately called the boarders away, and proceeded to the spar-deck, where I found that the enemy had succeeded in boarding us, and gained possession of our quarter deck. I immediately gave orders to haul on board the fore-tack, for the purpose of shooting the ship clear of the other, and then made an attempt to re-gain the quarter-deck, but was wounded and thrown down on the gun-deck. I again made an effort to collect the boarders, but in the mean time the enemy had gained complete possession of the ship. On my being carried down in the cockpit, I there found captain Lawrence and lieutenant Ludlow, both mortally wounded; the former had been carried below, previously to the ship's being boarded; the latter was wounded in attempting to repel the boarders. Among those who fell early in the action, was Mr. Edward J. Ballard, the 4<sup>th</sup> lieutenant, and lieutenant James Broom, of marines.

I herein enclose you a return of the killed and wounded, by which you will perceive that every officer, upon whom the charge of the ship would devolve, was either killed or wounded, previously to her capture. The enemy report the loss of Mr. Watt, their first lieutenant, the purser, the captain's clerk, and 23 seamen killed; and captain Broke, a midshipman, and 56 seamen wounded.

The *SHANNON*, had, in addition to her full complement, an officer and 16 men belonging to the *BELLE POULE*, and a part of the crew belonging to the *TENEDOS*.

John Brannan, ed. *Official Letters of the Military and Naval Officers of the United States During the War with Great Britain in the Years 1812, 13, 14, & 15 With Some Additional Letters and Documents Elucidating the History of that Period.* (Washington: 1823), pp. 167-168.