



Lewes- Spring 1813- An Exchange of Letters

HOME LESSON PLAN #1- Monday March, 23

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1812, many citizens of the United States, a nation of only 15 states at that time, did not wish to again go to war with Great Britain. Some leaders in the United States Congress, called **war-hawks**, saw a war with Britain, as an opportunity for a “Second War of Independence”.

In March of 1813, citizens of Lewes, Delaware watched off the coast as British ships set up a **blockade** to prevent access in and out of the mouth of the Delaware Bay.

On March 16th, 1813, British Commodore J.P. Beresford sent a letter demanding supplies, including 20 live **bullocks**, hay, and vegetables.

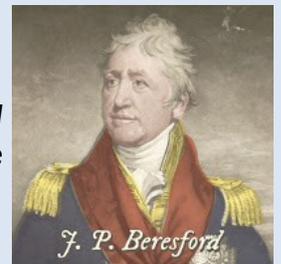
A local reporter wrote, “The people of Lewistown refused the requests as they ought”. The British commander threatened to be “Under the necessity of destroying your town”.

The below March 23, 1813 exchange of letters between the Delaware Governor and the British Commodore explain how each felt toward their enemy. OBSERVE and DISCUSS with family:

Note: In the past Lewes was often written as Lewistown. Which do you prefer?

Joseph Haslet (DE):

You continue resolved to attempt the destruction of this town...if that demand is still insisted upon, I have only to observe to you, that a compliance would be an immediate violation of the laws of my country, of which I am a citizen: a compliance therefore, cannot be acceded to.



Beresford responded (UK):

The demand I made upon Lewistown is in my opinion neither ungenerous nor wanting in that which one nation ought to observe to another with which it is at war. It is in my power to destroy your town...I must therefore persist: and whatever sufferings may fall upon the inhabitants of Lewes must be attributed to yourselves by not complying with a request so easily met.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS:

- ◆ Have you ever been in a tough position, where you have had to **defend** your thoughts, actions, or opinions?
- ◆ WRITE a short letter, email, or even drawing of the situation.
- ◆ How did this situation make you feel? Were you angry? Scared? Confident? DESCRIBE your feelings...
- ◆ How do you THINK Governor Haslet and Commodore Beresford felt at the time? SHARE your thoughts.

VOCABULARY:

war-hawks- A person who shouts, usually very loudly for war. Especially know around the War of 1812.

Blockade- Sealing off a location to prevent goods or people from entering or leaving.

Bullocks- A full grown male bull, deal animal for draft work, and used for edible beef by the British Royal Navy.

Defend- Speak or write in favor of an action, idea, or person.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES : To better understand the effects of the War of 1812 blockade on DELMARVA.

PLEASE WATCH this short 5 minute PBS online video:

<https://www.pbs.org/wned/war-of-1812/essays/british-perspective/>