



AMERICAN
BATTLEFIELD
TRUST ★ ★ ★

*“We fired our guns and the British kept a-comin’
There wasn’t as many as there was a while ago
We fired once more and they began to runnin’
On down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico”*

Decades ago, these lyrics inspired America. Today, I’m hoping they will inspire **you** — to help preserve the last and largest battlefield property from the Battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812 *that we’ll ever have the chance to save* — and have your gift matched **\$4-to-\$1!**

Dear Friend and Fellow Preservationist,

If you’re of a *certain* age, like me, I’m sure you remember, as I do, hearing Johnny Horton’s distinctive voice on your radio many years ago, singing this popular song of the time — “*The Battle of New Orleans.*”

*“In 1814, we took a little trip
Along with Colonel Jackson down the mighty Mississip’
We took a little bacon and we took a little beans
And we caught the bloody British in the town of New Orleans”*

I’ve got to be honest with you — for most of my childhood and early adulthood, that song was my “primary source” about the Battle of New Orleans, the crucial battle that finally solidified our nation’s freedom in the War of 1812.

The Treaty of Ghent had been negotiated and ratified in far-off Europe, but word of the war’s end had not yet reached the swamps and bayous of southern Louisiana. And all indications were that if the British campaign had succeeded, they would claim New Orleans as their territory, and with it, take control of the “*Mighty Mississip.*”

Of course, since then I’ve read and learned much more about that momentous battle and visited the battlefield where General Andrew Jackson and his rag-tag army put an end to British

dreams of restoring their American Empire. But I never dreamed we'd have the opportunity that's before us now — ***to preserve some of the most important acres from the War of 1812 that we will EVER be able to save!***

My friend, it's safe to say that this is likely the LAST and certainly the LARGEST piece of the Battle of New Orleans we'll ever get the chance to save.

These 40 acres are facing an extraordinary threat. The tract is zoned for heavy industrial use and *if we don't save it now*, it will most certainly be developed for that purpose and lost forever (you can see the industry that's built around it on the aerial map I've enclosed). What's also unique about this land is that it's adjacent to a National Cemetery where soldiers from the War of 1812, the Civil War, and even the Vietnam War are buried, making this property even more important to our history and for those who fought and died.

The total cost is \$3.6 million, and I know that's an incredible sum. But thanks to early commitments from a few donors plus anticipated state and federal grants, the amount we need to raise is less than one-third the total cost — \$1,006,582.

Here's the kicker — in order to close on time, we need to raise the funds before Labor Day. I won't sugar-coat this: **It's not going to be easy, but I'm hoping I can count on you to help in any way you can.**

Thanks to the grants we are working to secure, and donations already pledged, every dollar you can give will be multiplied \$4-to-\$1! And as a very special offer, if you give \$50 or more to support this once-in-a-lifetime War of 1812 campaign, **I'll thank you with our NEW Battle of New Orleans Challenge Coin, to keep and cherish forever!**

Johnny Horton had a #1 hit with "*The Battle of New Orleans*" back in 1959; in fact, he won the Grammy that year for Best Country & Western Performance. The song and its story still give me a thrill when I hear it, and I bet it does for you as well:

*“Old Hickory said we could take ‘em by surprise
If we didn’t fire our muskets
‘Til we looked ‘em in the eye
We held our fire*



The Chalmette Monument at the Battle of New Orleans: Chalmette Battlefield. © Wayne Hsieh, American Battlefield Trust

*’Til we see’d their faces well
Then we opened up our squirrel guns
And really gave ‘em, well”*



Drawing of the Battle of New Orleans by Alfred Hoffy.
© Library of Congress

Or perhaps you remember this part:

*“Yeah, they ran through the briars
And they ran through the brambles
And they ran through the bushes
Where a rabbit couldn’t go
They ran so fast
That the hounds couldn’t catch ‘em
On down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico”*

As a kid listening to that song, I was inspired to learn more about our country’s history. What I didn’t know then was, *that was the whole idea ...*

You see, the song was written by an Arkansas high school principal, Jimmy Driftwood, who wanted to help his students learn more about the War of 1812. When Johnny Horton’s recording of the song reached the top of the charts and stayed there for six weeks, Driftwood had succeeded beyond his wildest imagination! (As the son of educators myself, I’m thankful for any song that helps young folks know their history.)

Horton died in a car crash the following year, at age 35. But I’ll bet his songs are still remembered by folks in my generation, and his legacy for commemorating America’s story lives on thanks to the success of *The Battle of New Orleans ...*

Today, you and I have a chance to create our own legacy of preservation. In fact, we have a duty to make sure people remember the War of 1812, and how critical the Battle of New Orleans was for the early American republic ...

Sometimes referred to as the “*Second War of Independence,*” the War of 1812 was the first large-scale test of our new country’s military might on the world stage.

It’s remarkable to think that some American soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War were only in their 60s in 1812. That’s when Congress, for the first time in our history, declared war on Great Britain, the very same foreign nation we fought in the 1770s-1780s, and one that still stood among the world’s greatest military powers.

We had to fight. The British Navy was impressing American sailors, and the British government was aiding Native American tribes in their attacks on Americans on the frontier.



The Battle of New Orleans and death of Major General Pakenham. Print by Joseph Yeager. © Library of Congress

The first battles raged on the high seas. More than *30 fierce naval battles in all*, in places like Niagara, Lake Erie, and Plattsburgh — as well as across the open north Atlantic Ocean.

But the Second War of Independence unfolded on land as well. One battle occurred outside our new capital city, Washington, D.C., where the British burned the White House and other government buildings. Another was in Baltimore, at Fort McHenry, where Francis Scott Key was inspired to write the lyrics of “*The Star Spangled Banner*.”

And the final was in New Orleans. Much was at stake. Despite their recent repulse at Baltimore, the British believed taking New Orleans and seizing the Mississippi River would give them a potential stranglehold on American trade and transportation in the West. And so, they gathered their forces and prepared for battle on the lands of *Chalmette Plantation*.

That’s where the land is that we’re striving to save. It was the site of the British position and offers the opportunity to interpret the battlefield from the British perspective and help complete the story. It’s adjacent to land preserved by the National Park Service at Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve.

And it’s been a top preservation priority in the U.S. since the national park was created in 1939!

Here’s what happened *on this site*. During the Battle of New Orleans, U.S. and British forces maneuvered around and through the tract. Elements of Jackson’s army marched past and likely over the tract prior to an engagement with Col. William Thornton’s British force on the night of December 23, 1814.

Jackson later withdrew over the tract and established a position along the Rodriguez Canal. In the days that followed, the Americans began building earthworks that became known as “Line Jackson,” successfully repulsing two attempts by the British to breach the line.

Then, on January 8, 1815, the British launched a major assault led by Gen. Sir Edward M. Pakenham, brother-in-law of the Duke of Wellington. About 400 yards separated the British from Jackson’s position. As the infantry moved forward, they came under intense American artillery fire, and the British ranks withered away. Among the casualties was Pakenham himself, mortally wounded in a futile attempt to rally his troops. The British lost around 2,000 men in a space of 30 minutes, forcing them to call off any further efforts.

The British withdrew from New Orleans a few weeks later. Word of Jackson’s victory reached Washington on February 4; news of the Treaty of Ghent (ratified in late December 1814) arrived ten days later and was approved by the Senate on February 16. The fledgling nation had proved victorious in its second struggle for Independence, and the land we are trying to save today became symbolic of that victory.

It's *that* important! But more than two centuries of development in the area have altered the battlefield landscape. As a result, much of the Chalmette Battlefield and the land that witnessed the Battle of New Orleans has been lost to modern encroachment.

But now, these 40 acres can be preserved to tell the full story. If we can save this land today, not only would success in our campaign significantly improve the historic viewshed from the cemetery, but we would permanently save land hallowed by the men who fought, bled, and died, and those who have died in defense of America since.

If I live to be 100, I still don't believe we'll ever have another chance like this. There's almost no other remaining land from the War of 1812 that is this important. **It's the last of its kind.** And it will soon be gone forever unless we act!

That's why I'm writing to you now. We're facing a September deadline to raise the funds to buy it or lose it to industrial development forever. I know we have a challenge before us, but I believe that we can do it — and we must do it — because this land is crucial to understanding our nation's story. Just as Jackson's rag-tag army demonstrated fortitude and perseverance to protect their nation, so we, too, must show the same fortitude in protecting their legacy.

I'd be so grateful for your help that I'll thank you for giving \$50 or more with our limited-edition **Challenge Coin** — our first for the Battle of New Orleans and the War of 1812, and one that's soon to be a collector's item.

So please, if you can, send back the enclosed reply form with your check or go to **battlefields.org/orleans** to have your support matched \$4-to-\$1, to help me save this one-of-a-kind battlefield.

I'll close my letter to you with great thanks and in the hope that by protecting this land, we will create more reasons for this and future generations to say they "took a little trip" to see the battlefield at New Orleans.



With warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David N. Duncan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David N. Duncan

President

P.S. When something is the last of its kind, like this piece of land, you treasure it that much more because you'll never see another one like it. It becomes that much more valuable. ***You'll do almost anything to protect it!*** Well, the British may have underestimated our will to defend our new nation, but we fought and won, and now we're continuing the battle to preserve this extraordinary place. Please send whatever donation amount you can to help us save it in the envelope provided or by going to **battlefields.org/orleans**. With a gift of \$50 or more, I will send you our very special Battle of New Orleans Challenge Coin! Thank you in advance for all you do to help us save battlefield history forever!