Impressment is another serious grievance. With over 650 ships spread throughout the world, the Royal Navy’s manpower needs are huge. To man their ships, the British resort to impressment: seizing any sailor they think might be British, regardless of their true citizenship, and forcing them to serve for indefinite periods.

"We consider a neutral flag, on the high safeguard to those sailing under it.” - James Madison

Blockades were a major tool of war, as each side tried to stop the flow of food and supplies to the other. The British ‘Orders in Council’ and the French ‘Milan Decrees’ interfered with the commerce of any neutral country, so American ships and cargoes were being seized by both sides. The U.S. fought a ‘Quasi War’ at sea with France in 1798 over such seizures, and now interference with our trade by both sides is having disastrous effects on the U.S. economy. Between 1805 and 1811 diplomatic efforts and self-imposed embargoes failed to resolve the impasse. Ships were laid-up, exports sat on the docks, and U.S. merchants lost fortunes.

These were the issues that provide the rallying cry for war with Britain that overshadows all the others:

FREE TRADE
AND
SAILORS’ RIGHTS

Next: The War and Privateering Begins