



## Planning for War of 1812 events ongoing

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One of the 36 geocaches hidden as part of the Star-Spangled Banner Geotrail, this tub in North Point State Park contains a log book indicating recent discoveries, including a visit by 'Evenspack' on Friday. *photo by Randy Leonard*

### North Point sites, trails are considered

by Randy Leonard

Not far from the shore of Back River in North Point State Park – specifically, at 39.21647 degrees north and 76.41948 degrees west – sits one of the most recent commemorations to the area's history.

Known as a geocache, the bread-loaf-sized plastic tub with an orange, rubberized lid is one of the first aspects of the Star-Spangled Banner National Historical Trail to be implemented in the area.

Ongoing national, state and county efforts to commemorate the bicentennial of the War of 1812 include events and sites in the North Point Peninsula area.

### Bicentennial

In June, stakeholders and members of the public who are interested will meet and be given a tour of the North Point sites that relate to the British invasion and the Battle of North Point,

according to Bill Pencek, executive director of the Maryland War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission.

The fifth of six similar events across Maryland, the tour is intended to encourage involvement with those associated with historical sites outside the area and will be open to the general public as space allows.

The new standard Maryland license plate will commemorate the war with a star-spangled theme with the flag over Fort McHenry. The plate is expected to begin being issued in June and run through 2015.

To kick off the bicentennial celebration in June 2012, Pencek's office is "very seriously exploring" the prospect of hosting tall sailing ships from the U.S. Navy, he said Monday. The waters off North Point Peninsula are among those being considered for displaying the vessels, he said.

Baltimore County is on the verge of announcing a committee to coordinate bicentennial events, according to Jill Feinberg, director of conference and tourism for the county's Department of Economic Development.

The Baltimore County War of 1812 Bicentennial Committee, expected to be announced at the June meeting, will explore how to highlight the aspects of sites and locations in the county that relate to the war, Feinberg said Monday.

The committee will evaluate how to enhance the already successful Defenders Day celebration at Fort Howard Park and work to coordinate promotional efforts with Baltimore City, Feinberg said.

### **National trail**

The Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail was designated by an act of the U.S. Congress in May 2008. As part of a series of workshops, the National Park Service held a meeting at North Point State Park in December with local historians and stakeholders to collect input on the sites and stories of historical significance in the area.

Attendees listed a series of over 20 sites in the area, including Todd's Inheritance, the Defenders Day reenactment in Fort Howard Park, the Shaw House and Battle Monument.

A contractor is using the information to produce an interpretive plan. The plan will list some of the major sites but is intended to give a general concept to guide development of the trail, according to Suzanne Copping, National Park Service project manager for the historical trail.

Copping said she sees the local planned project of the Heritage Trail as a spine connecting the area's historical sites.

"It's inspiring to see how that's coming together," she said of the local trail, an effort led by North Point Peninsula Community Coordinating Council vice president Fran Taylor and Jay Doyle with Baltimore County Office of Community Conservation.

Stansbury resident Patricia Paul has been working to get area schools involved in teaching the history of North Point that is "just out your back door," Copping said.

A draft interpretive plan for the national trail is due out in a couple weeks and the final one in June, Copping said Monday.

### **SSB Geotrail**

Opened in February, the Star-Spangled Banner Geotrail consists of 36 hidden caches at sites including Fort McHenry and the Baltimore National Heritage Flag House.

Arising from the popularity of global positioning system units, geocaching is a technical spin

on the age-old activity of seeking out locations of interest. Like standing on the quad-intersection of states at Four Corners in the Southwest or finding a monument to the geographic center of the U.S., geocaching provides designated sites for the curious to the avid to seek out.

Discoverable using GPS-equipped phones or units, over a million geocaches are listed at Geocaching.com, which is accessible with a free membership.

Simple geocaching cell phone applications allow for manual latitude and longitude input, while for a moderate monthly fee, services such as Trimble Outdoors will allow users to look up and download cache coordinates directly from their phones.

Using a GPS-equipped phone to reconnoiter can enhance the challenge of finding a geocache, as a reporter who experienced spotty coverage recently found.

“It’s a nice ‘sport,’” said Kathy Saturday of Delaware.

Saturday, who is known by the Geocaching.com user name Minpin, found the North Point cache Sunday.

Friends of Chesapeake Gateways, a sponsor of the SSB Geotrail, is offering a “geocoin” to the first 400 geocachers who find at least 20 of the 36 SSB sites, documented with a code word from each site and a picture of themselves.

“The goal is the coin,” but Saturday geocaches for the exercise and to enjoy being outside, she said. Lately she has been hunting at least one geocache every day.

Having never been to the area, Saturday said she enjoyed North Point State Park.

The North Point cache was Saturday’s 21st from the Star-Spangled Banner Geotrail. She plans to claim her geocoin next weekend in Annapolis, doing some geocaching on the way, she said.

Since opening late last month, geocachers have logged 75 visits to the SSB cache at North Point State Park.

“First [Star-Spangled Banner Geotrail cache] of the day – pretty hike out and a nice view. Nice history too,” wrote member Evanspack last week. Evanspack is listed on the Web site as being from Wilmington, Del., and having recorded over 8,500 found geocaches since September 2006.