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**OPENING A WINDOW INTO THE PAST:  
MARYLAND ARCHAEOLOGISTS SEEK ANSWERS  
TO BLADENSBURG'S ROLE IN THE WAR OF 1812  
Magruder House Reportedly Served as Hospital  
after the Battle of Bladensburg in 1814**

(May 11, 2009) – Surrounded by bustling thoroughfares, light industry and commercial businesses, in Bladensburg whispers of Maryland's past - nearly two centuries old - can still be heard, but they are fading steadily in the face of rapid development and contemporary needs. Looking closely, you will still see remnants of a glorious past, where the soldiers of a young nation valiantly fought against the British during the War of 1812 – a dog-fight that extended to both the nearby waters and land. In preparation for the observance of the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812, a team of archaeologists is leading a research investigation to uncover crucial information about Maryland's role in what is referred to as the Second War for Independence.

"Maryland is committed to telling the untold stories of the past, and preserving the areas and structures that house our history," said Governor Martin O'Malley. "Not only will these archaeology projects reveal additional information that will expand knowledge of the site's history, but they will also yield a renewed interest in preservation along the Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail and the Star Spangled Banner Scenic Byway."

Dr. Julie Schablitsky, Chief Archaeologist at the Maryland Department of Transportation's State Highway Administration (SHA), is heading the archaeological team that includes partners from both the University of Maryland and the Maryland Historical Trust.

The goal of the project is to support research of the War of 1812 as we approach its bicentennial. The project also will help guide maintenance of the Magruder property located along SHA right-of-way, help direct developments to adjacent properties, and reveal new information about key historic Bladensburg sites. These findings will enhance the existing Star-Spangled Banner Byway between Solomons Island and Baltimore that traverses MD 2/4, MD 264, MD 506 and MD 231, in addition to local roads roadways, as part of Maryland's Scenic Byway program. The Star-Spangled Banner Byway celebrates the waning days of the War of 1812, in which Maryland's brave defenders not only stood strong against British invaders up and down the Chesapeake Bay, but also inspired the poem that would become America's National Anthem.

The investigation at the Magruder House is part of the first phase of an archaeological and historical research project of Bladensburg that will be followed by future excavations planned at the Market Master's House and the George Washington House/ Indian Queen Tavern in Bladensburg. Historical research will also begin on the transportation of goods and people on the Anacostia River, the railroad, and various historic and modern roads.

Each day, more than 25,000 people who travel along MD 201 (Kenilworth Avenue) pass the Magruder House, also known as the Old Stone House, important for its architectural attributes as the only representation of an 18th century stone, gambrel-roofed house in Prince George's County. Even more interesting is the role the house may have played, as it reportedly served as a hospital following the Battle of Bladensburg in 1814. Archaeologists hope to uncover archaeological features to substantiate those records and to learn more about the historic landscape of Bladensburg.

These projects support preparations for the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812 and have prompted the selection of Baltimore as the host city of the 2012 International Society for Historical Archaeology Conference which will bring an estimated 1,500 professional archaeologists to Maryland.

The \$50,000 study is being conducted in partnership with the University of Maryland and the Maryland Historical Trust using Statewide Planning and Research funds.

***Editor's Note:** The media is invited to tour the site on May 12 at 11 a.m. Please call SHA Office of Communications to RSVP at 410-545-0303. Attendees must be in appropriate attire and footwear to traverse the dig site.*

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