



TOUR REVIEWS WAR SITES

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British re-enactor Ed Seufert demonstrated troop movements at the 1814 Battle of North Point to a group of about 70 people standing on a portion of the battlefield Tuesday. *photos by Randy Leonard*

County appoints locals to 1812 committee

by Randy Leonard

About 80 county, state and national government employees, war historians, history buffs from out of state and local community members took part of an event Tuesday intended to draw attention to North Point and Dundalk sites related to the War of 1812.

The attendance was the largest of five such events held so far, as the region prepares to celebrate the bicentennial of the war, according to Kate Marks, event organizer and outreach coordinator for the Maryland War of 1812 Commission.

National Park Service chief interpreter Vincent Vaise described the significance of the September 1814 Battle of Baltimore, which he said had three crucial elements: the Battle of North Point, the defenses set up at Hampstead Hill (now Patterson Park) and the bombardment of Fort McHenry.

A militia force of over 2,600 was sent to North Point “to slow the British down,” Vaise said.

The ensuing skirmish cost the British time and about 300 casualties, including a general, and could be considered a strategic victory, Vaise said.

The rarely-sung last stanza of Francis Scott Key's poem describes the courage of men standing between their homes and the enemy.

That is something to think about when singing the national anthem, Vaise said.

North Point battle sites

Attendees visited the landing site at what later became Fort Howard, where British troops stole ashore in the pre-dawn hours of Sept. 12, 1814.

Next the group stopped at Todd's Inheritance house along North Point Road. After abandoning plans to sack Baltimore, the British burned the house, two residents of which were military men, said Larry Leone, vice president of Todds Inheritance.

The next stop was the Aquila Randall Monument, where commanding British Maj. Gen. Robert Ross was shot while riding ahead of the bulk of his men in what was perhaps the single most critical moment of the battle and the war.

Then the group visited the Battlefield State Park, nine acres of grassland spotted with trees, where British re-enactor Ed Seufert presented the action of the battle on a large splayed map, showing how the British advanced up North Point Road (then, Long Log Lane) and met American militia forces.



A group of about 70 people toured North Point and Dundalk sites associated with the War of 1812, including the Randall monument, erected near the location where British Maj. Gen. William Ross was shot. photos by Randy Leonard

The group then traveled to the Methodist Meeting House Monument where the American troops had camped the night before the battle and the British camped the night after, treating their wounded and making preparations for attacking Hampstead Hill.

Considering the failing of a naval assault on Fort McHenry on Sept. 13 and 14 and the size of the force entrenched at Hampstead Hill, the British troops turned back along North Point.

The last stop of the tour was Battle Acre, a section of the battlefield designated in 1839. Charles Ives of the Society of the War of 1812 said his group has long had plans to replace the site's deteriorating fencing and vandalized monument and hoped that the bicentennial would provide the needed funds.

Bicentennial preparations

For comparison, Bill Pencek, deputy assistant secretary of the Maryland War of 1812 Bicentennial Committee described the investment Virginia made in the 2007 quadrennial celebration of Jamestown, which he said brought in \$1.2 billion in revenue and resulted in 12 billion media impressions such as Web visits.

The state is hoping to raise \$8.5 million from commemorative coin sales, to be matched and exceeded by \$11.5 million in private funds, Pencek told the group at North Point State Park before the tour.

“This is not a tax-payer driven ... party,” he said. About \$10 million would be spent on preparations and \$8 million on events, Pencek said.

Pencek talked about reaching an European and world audience with the events planned around the upcoming bicentennial.

Baltimore County executive Jim Smith announced the county’s newly-formed War of 1812 Bicentennial Advisory Committee, which will be chaired by North Point Peninsula Community Coordinating Council vice president Francis Taylor, who has been instrumental in the Heritage Trail project. Bay-Vanguard Federal Savings Bank president Carolyn Mroz, who is president of the Todd’s Inheritance Historic Site, will serve as vice chairwoman. The committee also includes NPC president Harry Wujek, Defenders Day organizer Harry Young and Stansbury resident Patricia Paul.

Last week, Maryland started issuing its new standard license plate, which celebrates the War of 1812 theme with the Star-Spangled Banner flying over Fort McHenry and bombs bursting in air.

Jeff Butler of Baltimore did not know about the new plates until he was handed his June 15 at the Glen Burnie MVA office. Currently-plated vehicle owners can get the new plates for \$20.



The Maryland War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission hosted the tour, which stopped at the British landing site that later became Fort Howard.