

Around South County: Kids learn about the War of 1812

By MITCHELLE STEPHENSON, For The Capital
Published 07/02/09

During the War of 1812, there was a famous battle in Baltimore, the 1814 "Battle of Fort McHenry." It wasn't really a battle at all - the fort didn't have cannons powerful enough to reach the British warships, so the fire was only incoming.

During the 25-hour bombardment, all the lights in the city were darkened - the only illumination throughout the night came from exploding shells over the star-shaped fort. For citizens in the city, and one now-famous poet, the light from the exploding artillery was the only thing showing the United States flag still flying within the confines of the fort.

"And the rocket's red glare/ the bombs bursting in air/ gave proof through the night that our flag was still there," wrote Baltimore resident Francis Scott Key.

The poem was later put to the music of English composer John Stafford Smith's, "The Anacreontic Song." We now know it as our national anthem, "The Star Spangled Banner."

For two dozen upper elementary-aged children in south county, they'll learn all about Francis Scott Key, the inspiration for his song, and the War of 1812 battles fought locally during an upcoming week-long workshop.

Georgia Ladd, a fourth-grade teacher at Tracey's Elementary School and a Civil War re-enactor on her days off, will be heading up her third annual Children's Summer Series program at the Capt. Salem Avery House Museum in Shady Side from July 13 to July 17. The program will include hands-on activities, a visit by a historical interpreter portraying Francis Scott Key, courtesy of the Mary Pickersgill House Museum in Baltimore, and a field trip to the flag museum and Fort McHenry.

Georgia has been coming up with programs for south county children for three years at the Capt. Salem Avery House. Each is a week long, summer day camp.

In 2007, she conducted a "Take Me Out to the Barnyard," program, where the children learned about agriculture in Maryland and took a field trip to the National Colonial Farm in Accokeek.

Last year, the program, "Adventures in Archeology" helped children learn about the science of archeology, and included a day trip to the observation lab at Jefferson Patterson Park in St. Leonard in Calvert County.

Both camps offered hands-on activities for children throughout the week to help them to connect with the concepts being taught.

This year is no different. Georgia's theme is the "Star Spangled Summer" focusing on the War of 1812.

"I want to do hands-on activities, the fun things I don't have time to do during the school year," Georgia said.

During the week leading up to their adventure in Baltimore, where they'll visit the Mary Pickersgill House and Fort McHenry, the children will get to immerse themselves in the local history surrounding Maryland's forgotten war. Georgia has painted a map of the Chesapeake Bay onto a room-sized piece of canvas.

"The students will use different boat models to reenact the Battle of the Patuxent," she said.

The students will sew flags in the manner used by Mary Pickersgill, the Baltimore flag maker who sewed the giant Fort McHenry flag that Key wrote about in his famous poem.

The children will also make haversacks, which are the Civil War satchels soldiers and doctors used to carry their rations and provisions.

"We will also examine a Civil War haversack and artifacts brought in from the Maryland Historical Society," Georgia said.

The artifacts will be reproductions, but it will give the children the opportunity to handle the objects. In addition, they'll sample salt pork and hard tack, two staples of a Civil War soldier's diet.

On the grassy waterfront lawn at the Salem Avery House, the children will also "reenact" a battle using water balloons.

"It's usually pretty hot out in July," Georgia said, adding that the museum is air conditioned, and that is usually where the kids want to be during the day.

Interested parents should visit www.shadysidemuseum.org for contact information and details. There is a fee of \$60 for members; \$70 for non-members, plus an additional materials fee of \$7.

The Deale Farmers' Market is open at the Cedar Grove United Methodist Church parking lot from 3 to 6 p.m. every Thursday, beginning today through the end of October at 5965 Deale-Churchton Road. For information, call 410-867-4993.

The Bay Winds 40-piece Concert begins at 1 p.m. Saturday at the Capt. Salem Avery House Museum, 1418 East-West Shady Side Road, in Shady Side. This Fourth of July celebration features the Bay Winds Band, a traditional parade, baking contests and more. Call 410-867-4486 for details.

Revolutionary London Town will be from noon to 4 p.m. Sunday at 839 Londontown Road, Edgewater.

Experience life in the port town during the American Revolution by joining a colonial militia, watching the cannon fire, cooking a meal on an open hearth, and playing colonial games. For more information, Call 410-222-1919.

Send your Around South County news to AroundSoCo@verizon.net.