

## Grant will fund Caulk's Field study

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**FAIRLEE** – On the night of Aug. 31, 195 years ago, the Royal Navy's amphibious assault on Kent County turned deadly for Capt. Sir Peter Parker and many of his sailors and marines.

Thanks to research by Scott Sheads, Ralph Eshleman and Donald Hickey, for their upcoming book "The War of 1812 in the Chesapeake," archaeologists will soon take the first-ever look at a small but significant American victory in the War of 1812.

Frigate captain Parker had been sent by his commanders to distract Maryland mili-

tiamen and also prevent men and supplies in boats from reaching Baltimore before the planned attack there.

When he heard that militia under Col. Philip Reed were camping near today's Fairlee, he set out on a nocturnal surprise attack.

When all was over, Parker was among a half-dozen British dead. Reed's forces had three slightly wounded men, one captured. And with that American victory, good news to the young nation, the farm fields in front of Isaac Caulk's brick house near Fairlee slipped quietly into obscurity.

According to Bill Pencek, director of the state's War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission, "Caulk's Field has long been

recognized" for its historical value. Unlike other War of 1812 battlefields it is in near-pristine condition. Caulk's house is still there.

At an 1812 bicentennial planning meeting in June 2008, said Pencek, Caulk's Field came up in discussion. As a result, he wrote a proposal to have a Phase I architectural study performed.

A June 29 press release announced that the National Park Service's American Battlefields Protection Program has approved \$40,000 for the first step in a thorough Caulk's Field archaeological survey.

(See CAULK'S FIELD, Page A11)

### CAULK'S FIELD

(Continued from Page A1)

Pencek works for Maryland's Department of Budget and Management, where, he said with a chuckle, he is the "Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Division of Tourism, Film and the Arts." He wrote the proposal wearing his "Bicentennial hat," he said, and DBED merely handles paperwork and puts the work out to bid.

The final grant agreement isn't signed yet, he said. Once

it is, "we hope to complete the (initial) archeological survey within the next 12 months."

A Phase I survey will yield a better picture of the battlefield itself, and also data to support a listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

"There aren't (going to be) hordes of archaeologists working in pits for months on end," he said Tuesday. In other words, no Indiana Jones.

It will involve reviewing research that's been done; additional background

research; and predicting, based on that, where the evidence of the battle is most likely to be found.

Then comes field work with "shovel test pits or trenching to test the predictions ... over the course of a month, several days of field work." The scientists might use instruments like ground-penetrating radar or magnetometers, he said.

The final report will recommend where and how to proceed with more archaeology. It also will collect all the historical evidence for National Register designation, said Pencek.

The press release also announced \$60,000 to the State Highway Administration for interpreta-

tion at the Bladensburg battlefield, and \$78,000 given to the Department of Planning to evaluate naval battles in state waters.

The National Park Service, following 1996 legislation, surveyed battlefields and associated sites from the Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and Civil War.

Its 2007 report listed 677 "significant places associated with the Revolutionary War and War of 1812," made up of "43 battlefields and 434 associated historic properties in 31 States, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands."

The national battlefield report in PDF format can be found at [www.nps.gov/hps/abpp/Rev1812Study.htm](http://www.nps.gov/hps/abpp/Rev1812Study.htm).

### Commission holds closed sessions

CHESTERTOWN – At their June 30 meeting, the county commissioners held a closed sessions to discuss personnel.