

War of 1812 battle scene relived at site

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History is often repeated — it is not, however, always repeated right where it took place.

On Saturday large crowds of both re-enactors and spectators came out to Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum to relive the Battle of St. Leonard Creek in the War of 1812.

The day consisted of an opening ceremony; a tactical demonstration; a guided tour of the area; two sea chantey workshops; a sailor's life program; a guided archaeology tour of JPPM; a shoreline tactical demonstration; and a "Tavern Night" celebration.

According to a program from JPPM, the museum holds the War of 1812 Re-enactment each year "to share the significance of this war to American history."

It said during the War of 1812, when the British invaded American soil, the Battle of St. Leonard was the largest battle in Maryland's history and took place where St. Leonard Creek meets the Patuxent River, property that now belongs to JPPM.

Mike Seufert of Essex portrayed a unit commander on the side of the British and said Saturday was his 10th year re-enacting that particular battle at JPPM.

"It's close to home; it's Maryland history," Seufert said of the War of 1812, adding that he also re-enacts The Revolutionary War.

Chris Ward of Annapolis, who also "fought" on the British side, said JPPM was one of his favorite sites to do re-enactments.

"It's a gorgeous site with lots of land and it's where the War of 1812 actually was," Ward said.



Five-year-old Hannah Wilt of St. Leonard bonds with the horse ridden by Jan Chrypinski of Harwood. Chrypinski "fought" with the American side in a re-enactment of the Battle of St. Leonard Creek in the War of 1812 on Saturday at Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum. Staff photo by LAURA BUCK

On the American side, Myron Peterson of Severn said he had re-enacted the War of 1812 for more than 20 years.

"I think it's significant how it impacted American politics and American thought," Peterson said. "Prior to this, even though we were the United States, we were 18 separate identities. ... This gave them a national identity and this is also where the thought of secession came up."

When asked what his favorite part of the day was, Peterson chuckled, "I think I enjoy Tavern Night," where he said he was performing.

Despite the "positions" of the American and British sides, Peterson said there was a "mutual respect and mutual trust."

He said this had to be there as both sides were facing each other with weapons and even though they weren't loaded, the potential to get hurt was there.

"Mostly this is a hobby; we're here to have fun," he said.

Despite being on a different side — the British Artillery Crew — Lindsay Fisk of Annapolis shared Peterson's point of view.

"If it wasn't fun we wouldn't wear wool coats in the summer and carry all this heavy equipment around," Fisk said.

The re-enactors weren't the only ones having fun; John Wilt of St. Leonard said he had been attending for nearly a decade.

"This is the only one I've been to because it hits close to home," Wilt said.

John Hegamy of Yorktown, Va., said the young spectators were the most crucial ones.

"Kids need to be exposed to living history," Hegamy said. "And it's too nice outside to be in the house."



Members of the American forces march during the opening ceremonies of Saturday's War of 1812 Re-enactment at Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum in St. Leonard. Representatives from both the British and American armies put on a show which included musket shots and firing cannons, their plumes of smoke covering a hill near the park's pavilion as visitors watched. Staff photo by MEGAN SNIDER

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Nine-year-old Samantha Plumley of Owings said she was impressed with what she was witnessing.

"I like the fencing and the horses; this place is awesome," she said.

When asked for whom she was rooting, Samantha answered, "The Americans, definitely."

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