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MARYLAND GEARS UP FOR WAR OF 1812 BICENTENNIAL

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By Tom George
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BALTIMORE — Maryland is getting ready for a “Star Spangled” bicentennial celebration. 2012 will mark the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812, a critical moment in both U.S. and Maryland history.

Sometimes called the “Second American Revolution,” the War of 1812 saw the U.S. battle Great Britain, for the first time, as an independent country. The dispute centered around maritime rights.

One of the most famous battles in the war occurred in Baltimore’s harbor just off Fort McHenry. It was there that a captive lawyer, author and amateur poet by the name of Francis Scott Key, held captive on board a British ship, saw the American flag still flying in the morning following a huge assault on the fort by British ships. It was that event that inspired Key to write what is now America’s national anthem.

To prepare for the celebration, the state has set up a Bicentennial Commission called “Star Spangled 200.” Last year the state began promoting the coming bicentennial by changing Maryland’s license plates from the usual Maryland seal to a “War of 1812” design featuring fireworks and the flag at Fort McHenry. And to prepare for next year, Fort McHenry installed a new, high-tech visitor center earlier this year.

Next year, tall ships will enter the same harbor in Baltimore that Francis Scott Key was held captive in. The Navy also plans on showcasing boats from around the world, to celebrate the role of the Navy in protecting the seas, which began during the role of War of 1812.

<http://cnsmaryland.org/2011/10/25/maryland-gears-up-for-war-of-1812-bicentennial/>

Vince Vaise, a tour guide at Fort McHenry says he's looking forward to the events. Vaise says the bicentennial celebration will benefit the local economy by bringing tourism to Maryland. But more importantly, he hopes it will help Americans appreciate their own history more, and wake up from what he calls "historical amnesia."