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Newsday

Maryland announcing plans for 1812 bicentennial

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By The Associated Press SARAH BRUMFIELD (Associated Press)

BALTIMORE - (AP) -- Maryland tourism officials hope to draw more than one million people to the birthplace of the "Star-Spangled Banner" next summer as they open a years-long bicentennial commemoration of the War of 1812 with an international maritime festival.

The June festival along [Baltimore's](#) harbor during a Naval fleet week celebration featuring tall ships and gray hulled ships representing navies from around the world and an air show will coincide with the 200th anniversary of the United States' first declaration of war. Organizers, who plan to announce details at an Inner Harbor ceremony Thursday, hope to have top representatives of the U.S. [Navy](#) and the Royal Navy on hand to mark the occasion, according to Star-Spangled 200 spokeswoman Jill Feinberg.

"We expect the largest festival [atmosphere](#) has ever seen," she said. A police crowd count during a 2000 tall ships visit showed about 1.1 million people visited the harbor over a week and they are looking to that number as a goal, she said.

The event will be accompanied by arts projects including a giant mesh of spangles in the form of a flag that will fly from the Francis Scott Key bridge outside the harbor and a new symphonic work. Maryland Public Television is producing a travelogue and accompanying coffee table book and the U.S. Mint will sell gold and silver commemorative coins next year.

The Navy, which sees the war as central to the development of its culture, is taking a large role in the anniversary events in Baltimore.

"So many of our heroes come from the War of 1812," said Capt. Patrick Burns, director of Navy commemorations. After the Revolutionary War, the former colonies lost the protection of the world's greatest [navy](#), he said. With the new nation's commerce at risk, its navy had to step up.

"We had to stand up for ourselves," he said. "It was a small war, but a very significant one."

The Navy and nonprofit Operation Sail are organizing ship visits around the country in 2012 to kick-off the commemoration of the war, including fleet weeks in New Orleans; Norfolk, Va.; [New York](#), Boston and Baltimore, which has never hosted a fleet week. For a week in June 2012, Baltimore's harbor will host tall ships, grey hulls and an airshow with the Navy's Blue Angels.

"Baltimore is shaping up to be one of the premiere sites of the event," Burns said. "You can't beat Fort McHenry, the 'Star-Spangled Banner' and the harbor."

Organizers hope to raise \$25 million to support events and programming and to help tourism sites around the state handle an increase in visitors, Feinberg said. The U.S. Mint will match up to \$8.5 million of the funds raised and the state has committed \$1 million to start-up costs, she said.

In preparation for the anniversary, the [National Park Service](#) recently completed a new \$15 million, 17,000-square-foot center at Fort McHenry.

The events continue beyond next summer with an academic conference on peace in Annapolis in 2013, reenactments at battle sites around the [Chesapeake Bay](#) and the return of tall ships to Baltimore's harbor in September 2014 to mark the anniversary of the battle memorialized in the national anthem.

On the Net: <http://starspangled200.org/>

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