



## Star-Spangled Banner NHT is a Focal Point for State Celebration

Did you know that the War of 1812 lasted three years? That our national anthem, officially recognized in 1931, was inspired by the Battle of Baltimore in September 1814? The newly designated Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail will celebrate and promote these stories and others through preservation, recreation, and interpretation along a 300-mile land and water trail network throughout the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia.

The Trail was designated in May 2008 to preserve, protect, and interpret the people, places, and events of the War of 1812 in the Chesapeake region. The designation, occurring only four years before the upcoming War of 1812 Bicentennial, could not have occurred at a more opportune time. Just eight months earlier, Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley, a War of 1812 re-enactor, had issued an executive order creating the Maryland War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission. The Commission, staffed by the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development, has planned a multi-year cultural tourism and educational initiative to commemorate Maryland's unique contributions to the defense and heritage of the Nation including the pivotal clash that ensured American victory, an iconic flag, and our national anthem, *The Star-Spangled Banner*. "The War of 1812 in Maryland is our most important national heritage story, when diverse Marylanders from every walk of life banded together to defeat the greatest military power in the world," says O'Malley.

This past Defenders Day, in the shadow of the ramparts at Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine, Governor O'Malley unveiled the design for a new Maryland license plate that will be available Flag Day, June 2010. The state has launched a new website, [www.starspangled200.org](http://www.starspangled200.org), to provide a portal to information about bicentennial news, history, sites to visit, programs and events, and assistance to Marylanders to plan and implement bicentennial projects. The site draws heavily upon the National Park Service's 2004 Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail Feasibility Study and links to resources throughout the state that are being considered as significant sites along the Trail.

Virginia has also established a Bicentennial of the American War of 1812 Commission, and sites and organizations in the District of Columbia and neighboring counties have established a nascent National Capital Region War of 1812 Collaborative. Baltimore City and several Maryland counties have also established commissions to plan for the upcoming bicentennial.

While the War of 1812 commissions in Maryland and Virginia will sunset in February 2015, the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail and a proposed National Scenic Byway will provide a legacy for the Chesapeake Bay's bicentennial efforts, continuing to strengthen linkages among jurisdictions, historic resources, and new and enhanced interpretive and recreational experiences. For more information on the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail, visit [www.nps.gov/stsp](http://www.nps.gov/stsp).

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Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail



Unveiling the design for the new Maryland license plate at Fort McHenry National Monument. Photo credit: Maryland Governor's Press Office