



Key Notes

Fort McHenry Guard Has Unprecedented Year

It was a busy 2007 for the living history component of our Volunteer-In-Parks Program, the Fort McHenry Guard! Forty-eight active volunteers participated in over sixty formal events, from regular program days at the fort to special programs with over a dozen historical sites and organizations!

This past year the Guard instituted a “back to basics” approach which enabled visitors to Fort McHenry to better understand the daily life of the soldiers who inspired *The Star-Spangled Banner*. VIPs such as Brian Alexander, Jim Brooks, and Chris Boyle took on an increased leadership role within the program by implementing a more accurate version of the historical drill. Getting the entire volunteer program to learn and implement these new features of historic drill, while not easy, was a rewarding challenge. “Teaching the new drill to other volunteers really helped me appreciate how hard the soldiers worked to prepare for the battle [in 1814], and I think this experience has helped me explain their role at Fort McHenry better,” said volunteer Chris Boyle. Dr. Wendy Alexander also helped train several new volunteers to interpret social history in the Company of Baltimore Citizens.

In addition to maintaining a regular presence at the fort every weekend throughout the summer, the Guard also took the story of Fort McHenry and *The Star-Spangled Banner* on the road. Highlights included a special commemoration for the bicentennial of the Congressional Cemetery, living history at North Point State Park, Maryland, and a large gathering of 1812 living history organizations at Old Fort Niagara State Park in New York.

Many Guard members have already expressed their eagerness for the coming



Fort McHenry Guard Volunteers-In-Parks were given the honor of raising and lowering the Star-Spangled Banner each day at the War of 1812 event at Old Fort Niagara, NY, July 2007.

season: “I can’t wait for 2008,” said volunteer historical music director Tim Ertel. “The Fort McHenry Guard Fifes & Drums are working on their first 1812 CD, and I look forward to another season working with them and the rest of the Guard, preparing for the bicentennial in 2014.”

The following is a short sample of organizations with which the Fort McHenry Guard partnered over the past year:

US Navy; US Air Force; US Marine Corps; Dundalk Patapsco Neck Historical Society; American Flag Foundation; Chesapeake & Ohio Canal NHP; Hampton NHS; Old Fort Niagara State Park; Baltimore Basilica; Office of the Governor of Maryland; City of Baltimore; The Flag House & Star-Spangled

Banner Museum; Antique Arms Collectors; Congressional Cemetery; Old St. Paul’s Church & Cemetery; Liberty Hall Fifes & Drums; 119th New York Fifes & Drums; Baltimore Brass; Chesapeake Orchestra; Friends of Fort McHenry; Living Classrooms; American Legion; the U.S. Marine Corps Historical Company; and the Maryland State Parks.

To volunteer with the Fort McHenry Guard, contact VIP Coordinator Jim Bailey:
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Upcoming Events

Civil War Days at Fort McHenry "Battle Cry of Freedom!"

Saturday, April 19, 10 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Sunday, April 20, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

What did it mean to live in "The Land of the Free and Home of the Brave" in 1861? Explore various ideas of freedom by attending a special Civil War weekend at Fort McHenry. Find out why people were arrested for singing "Maryland My Maryland," and how Union soldiers imposed martial law in Baltimore City and County. See the large Union encampment at Fort McHenry! Activities include a morning dress parade, cannon firing demonstrations, Confederate prisoners, and ongoing fife and drum music. A highlight of the weekend is the Saturday night candlelight tours from 6:30-9 p.m.

Living American Flag

Tuesday, May 20, 10 a.m. - 12 noon

An event sponsored by the National Flag Day Foundation to foster understanding of the flag as a symbol of national unity. Each year since 1984, up to 4,000 third, fourth and fifth graders from Maryland schools create a 130' x 230' Living American Flag. Participants are limited to schools registered with The American Flag Foundation, Inc. (www.americanflagfoundation.org).

Memorial Day

Monday, May 26, 10 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Join the National Park Service for a day-long program of Memorial Day observances. Events include: historic Memorial Day speeches; wreath-layings; flag demonstration involving veterans at noon; services at Mount Auburn, Baltimore's oldest African-American cemetery, (12:00 Noon); and Moment of Silence (3:00 p.m. in the Star Fort).

Flag Change Programs occur twice daily all year. These are presented at: 9:30 a.m. and 4:20 p.m., weather permitting. Help a ranger raise/lower a reproduction of the Star-Spangled Banner flag.

For additional special events check the Schedule of Events calendar at:

www.nps.gov/fomc

Vivacious Volunteers

My transition to Volunteer Coordinator was, in many ways, effortless thanks to the incredible work of our Visitor Services volunteers. During the past year, this core group of thirty volunteers contributed invaluable time at the information desk in the Visitor Center, patrolling the grounds, conducting bird counts and walks through the marsh, and making themselves available in the Star Fort for historical questions and flag programs.

Because of our long-standing Visitor Service volunteers, we can provide that extra measure of service to each visitor, no matter the day of week or season of the year. Many volunteers, like Bob Boblitz, have served faithfully for over fifteen years!

The staff of Fort McHenry was delighted to welcome Bob Radtke back into the ranks after an extended absence. Bob had to end his short service as a volunteer because his active service in the United States Air Force demanded all of his time. We're very happy that he has decided to spend his retirement and new-found free time

with us! **WELCOME BACK BOB!**

The staff enjoys how each day of the week brings back a regular volunteer. "It just wouldn't be the same without Beverly's fresh brownies every Wednesday," said Chief of Interpretation Vince Vaise. "More importantly, her ability to handle the front desk in tandem with a ranger during a busy day is unequalled." "I love volunteering here and I love to bake," said Beverly Wiseman, "so naturally I like being able to provide that extra treat each week."

The continued dedication of each volunteer, year after year, inspires not only the younger student volunteers, but the staff as well. I always look forward to the fresh perspective of each volunteer, and of course, brownies every Wednesday!

Jim Bailey



Longstanding volunteer Marty Lavender assists Ranger Iris Beasley in the Visitor Center, 2007.

Editorial - A Perspective

As we approach “The Star-Spangled Banner” bicentennial, there is curiously a forgotten history, which should be pondered before we celebrate our 2012-2015 War of 1812 event.

For over 100 years, historians of intellectual New England and Virginia bombarded us and our educational institutions with treatises highlighting the revolutionary figures, speeches and events from their own backyards. Thus we have long celebrated and preserved the early colonial period of Virginia, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts and their municipalities of Alexandria, Philadelphia and Boston. We have been saturated with the stories of independence and know, as we know our fathers and mothers, the Washingtons, Jeffersons and Ben Franklins of their time and the documents they parented.

Why not the War of 1812 – when similar speeches and events propelled the country to war, not for independence but “for the preservation of our national existence?” There are many compelling stories, personages and speeches that easily rival those of the revolution and pre-empted our



Francis Scott Key observes the bombardment of Fort M'Henry. Library of Congress

nation’s first declaration of war. We seem, somehow, to have lost these precious events and people that are the prologue to the War of 1812.

We all too often only see the date – June 18, 2012 – as the beginning of the bicentennial – but actually it will begin, unofficially on June 22, 2007 – 200 years after the HMS *Leopard* fired upon the U.S. Frigate *Chesapeake* off the Virginia Capes and when

four sailors (two from Maryland) were impressed.

This was the spark that ignited the impending conflict, similar in historic sequence to orator Patrick Henry’s (1736-1799) two famous speeches that ignited the colonies to independence, a year before the Continental Congress declared independence from Great Britain.

Maryland has many similar citizen-soldiers, who also lived or fought during the Revolution (Joseph H. Nicholson, Perry Benson, George Stiles, Hezekiah Niles, and many more). What a great home field advantage for us here to promote awareness of the bicentennial!

As we prepare to celebrate, it would be nice to keep in mind Francis Scott Key’s own request, six years before his death in 1843, as he wrote in a speech: “Let the praise, then, if any be due, be given, not to me, who only did what I could not help doing, not to the writer, but to the inspirers of the song!”

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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine was established in 1925 to provide for the restoration of Fort McHenry ...and its permanent preservation as a national park and a perpetual shrine as the birthplace of the immortal “Star-Spangled Banner,” written by Francis Scott Key.

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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Restoration of the Flowering Cherry Grove at Fort McHenry

As the two-hundredth anniversary of George Washington’s birth drew near in 1932, the American Tree Association collaborated with the George Washington Bicentennial Commission to promote civic plantings as memorials to the first president. According to the published program, these memorials were not to be “monoliths of marble, not statues of static stone, or dun colored copper or bronze, nor a eulogium written upon perishable parchment, but growing things.” Fort McHenry saw this as an opportunity to foster Americanism through collaboration with local civic groups and patriotic organizations.

Tree planting projects included an American elm propagated from the tree in Cambridge, Massachusetts under which Washington assumed command of revolutionary forces then fighting against Great Britain. Alongside these efforts, plans for memorial cherry groves were also pursued, similar to the trees planted at the Tidal Basin in Washington, DC. On October 24, 1931, marking the commencement of the local Washington Bicentennial observation, Baltimore’s school children planted one Japanese Flowering Cherry for each of the city’s public schools.

In April 2006, with completion of the Fort McHenry Cultural Landscape Report, the decision was made to restore one of two cherry groves. Following historic drawings and blueprints, thirty-six ‘Yoshino’ cherry trees, 12-15 feet tall, were planted by park Maintenance Staff south of the historic Star Fort. In addition, several trees propagated from the last original specimen will soon be planted near the water entrance to the park where they once grew.

Paul Bitzel



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

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A Perspective

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The bicentennial will need to be inclusive of all Marylanders who contributed their own moments that led to this inspirational story.”

We have a unique opportunity to be the heart of a national bicentennial in Maryland – we need only to recognize the fact that Key and the flag, for nearly 200 years has been the focus, the guiding light. It is now time to respond to his last wish and to rekindle the memory of events and people of his own time, to once again remember the citizen-soldiers and events that unknowingly inspired a young nation’s new national song.

“The Star-Spangled Banner” is more than a song about “the bombs bursting in air, the rockets red glare” over Baltimore; it is about Maryland, which endured two years of occupation on the Chesapeake. It is about small farms and the towns of Queenstown, Chestertown, Annapolis, Elkton, Benedict and literally hundreds of other sites along

the Chesapeake tidewater – all have compelling stories that have been left untold. We have revealed a few of these in the report to establish [The Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail](#).

We need to celebrate all of Maryland, as they did, with neighbors and friends to provide multi-faceted and inspirational contributions to our story. These are the moments that Maryland gave to the nation. It is a moment to remember.

Scott Sheads