

Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail



October 2009

National Park Service | U.S. Department of the Interior

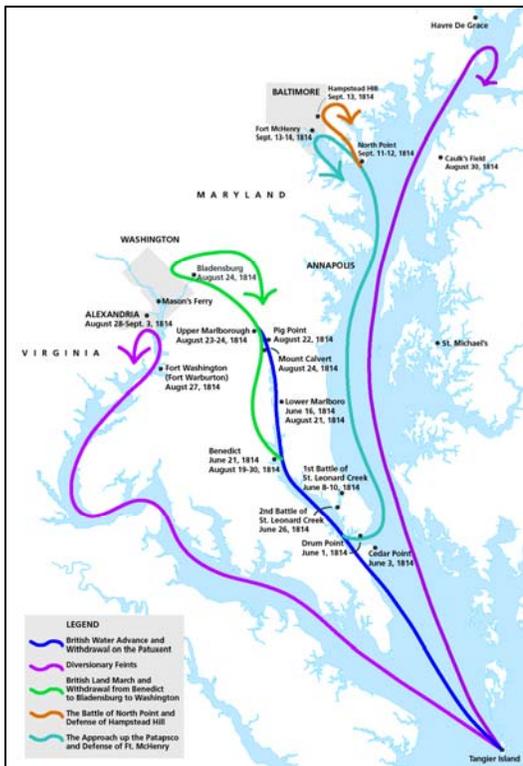
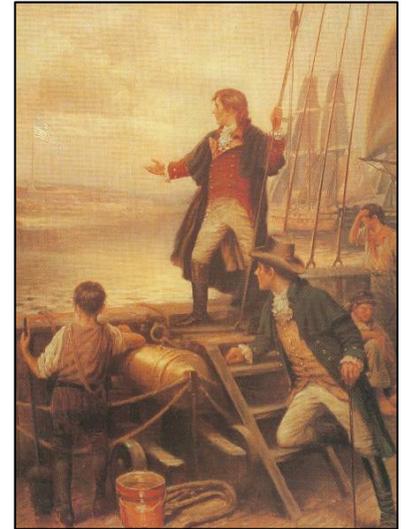
New National Trail Commemorates Chesapeake Campaign of the War of 1812 and the Birth of Our National Anthem

On May 8, 2008, the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail (Trail) was designated through an amendment to the National Trails System Act. The Trail, as defined in the Act, consists of

“water and overland routes totaling approximately 290 miles, extending from Tangier Island, Virginia, through southern Maryland, the District of Columbia, and northern Virginia, in the Chesapeake Bay, Patuxent River, Potomac River, and north to the Patapsco River, and Baltimore, Maryland, commemorating the Chesapeake Campaign of the War of 1812 (including the British invasion of Washington, District of Columbia, and its associated feints, and the Battle of Baltimore in summer 1814).”

The National Park Service (NPS) must plan, develop and maintain the Trail in partnership with other Federal, state and local governments, landowners, volunteer groups, and residents.

The Trail commemorates the people, places and events that led to the birth of our National Anthem. In perhaps the most well-known event of the Chesapeake Campaign, Francis Scott Key witnessed the defense of Fort McHenry and the Battle of Baltimore from a truce ship in Baltimore harbor. Upon seeing an enormous American flag flying over the Fort after 25 hours of British bombardment, Key was inspired to write his now-famous poem. The Campaign, near the culmination of an often controversial and divisive undertaking for the new federal government, enhanced its international standing, influenced future defense policy, and irrevocably shaped the young nation’s cultural identity.



Where Is the Trail?

The route of the Trail traces five segments of the 1814 Chesapeake Campaign — as identified in the 2004 *Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail Feasibility Study* — which have national significance, integrity, and the potential for recreation and/or interpretation. These five segments include the advance and withdrawal of the British on the Patuxent River; various diversionary feints; the British land march and retreat; the Battle of North Point and defense of Hampstead Hill; and the approach up the Patapsco River and defense of Fort McHenry. The people, places and events related to the flight of the Madisons, rescue of national documents from the nation’s capital, and the American movement toward Baltimore will also be interpreted along the Trail.

The land- and water-based Trail will provide and enhance visitor and resident access to Trail sites and segments. Through interpretation of the causes, events, and outcomes of the War, the Trail will provide a richer context for understanding what happened, why, and how these events affect our lives today. The Trail complements the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network—a partnership of water trails, parks, museums, wildlife refuges, and other sites that provide Bay interpretation and water access. The Trail also connects what happened at Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine with the stories and places around the Chesapeake that positioned the fort to play its pivotal role in the War and in the shaping of a new American identity.

Why Was the Trail Created?

The Trail, as established, reflects strong public and private interest in the bicentennial of the War of 1812 and, in particular, the valiant efforts of the people of the Chesapeake region to fight the “Second War for Independence.” The Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail offers outstanding opportunities for the NPS and its partners to connect the public with historic landscapes of the Campaign, the varied natural landscapes and how they have changed, and the War’s timeless themes and lessons, which continue to shape our nation today.

Understanding the context and consequences of the War of 1812 encourages appreciation for this important period in our nation’s history and fosters protection and stewardship of significant war-related resources. It also enables residents and visitors to understand the continuum of influences of the Chesapeake Bay’s geography and location on the nation’s physical and cultural development, from John’s Smith’s 1607-09 voyages up the Chesapeake Bay through today. The State of Maryland, City of Baltimore, Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine, and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network in particular are already building awareness of the natural and historic features along some segments of the Trail. The National Historic Trail designation provides a framework to coordinate these efforts with hundreds of organizations throughout the watershed that preserve and interpret Bay resources.



What Is the Role of the National Park Service?

A feasibility study completed in 2004 recommended that the NPS take the lead federal role in administering the Trail, in joint management with a non-profit Trail organization and other federal, state, and local agencies in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia, businesses, non-governmental organizations, and landowners and residents. Based on the administrative authorities of the National Trails System Act, the NPS coordinates resource protection and Trail route marking, ensures interagency consultation, manages cooperative agreements with partners, inventories and certifies significant sites and segments, coordinates interpretive themes and media, ensures compliance with existing environmental laws and regulations, provides limited financial assistance (when such funds are available), and supports the Trail’s advisory council. Beginning in late 2009, the NPS will lead a highly collaborative planning process to develop a management plan that identifies the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders to making the Trail a success. These many partners are necessary to enhance Trail stewardship, interpretation, and visitor experiences and make the Trail a vibrant part of the larger Chesapeake story.



What Happens Next?

The National Park Service will involve residents, landowners along the Trail, Trail groups, and government agencies at all levels in workshops, meetings, and discussions that direct the development of a comprehensive management plan for the administration, development, and maintenance of the Trail. The plan will describe the Trail’s purpose, significance, vision, goals, interpretive themes, activities, desired impacts, and preferred management structure. The plan, which is subject to public review and comment, is intended to reflect the consensus of the broad range of interests among Federal, State, and local jurisdictions, landowners, and partners, and help these entities develop the Trail in a coordinated manner that achieves a clearly articulated vision for the Trail.

Where Can I Learn More?

For more information on the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail, including the status of Trail planning, historic information about the people and events of the Chesapeake Campaign and the Star-Spangled Banner, and links to places to visit, go to www.nps.gov/stsp. The following websites also provide Trail-related information:

Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine: www.nps.gov/fomc
Maryland Office of Tourism: www.starspangled200.org