



## Harford, Cecil counties tell their stories from War of 1812

### ***Havre de Grace was burned after British sailed up bay in 1813***

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Dozens of early American flags hang from the rafters of the F. W. Haxel Flag Co. in Harford County. They bear the traditional alternating red and white stripes but only 15 stars, in a salute to that flag that flew over Fort McHenry in 1814 and inspired Francis Scott Key to write the poem that became the national anthem.

Surrounded by those replica banners, officials from Harford and Cecil counties began their role Tuesday in the state's bicentennial celebration of the War of 1812.

"The flag you see here today is the flag that Francis Scott Key saw that night of the bombardment," said Harford County Executive David R. Craig. "It is key to the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812."

Cecil County Commissioner Jim Mullin said, "We have a tremendous history here that needs to be told."

Havre de Grace is already flying a bicentennial banner at City Hall, said Mayor Wayne Dougherty, who purchased three Haxel flags Tuesday for his family. Craig bought one, but will not fly it until June, the month the war actually began, he said.

Less than a year later, on May 3, 1813, the British fleet sailed up the Chesapeake Bay and set fire to Havre de Grace homes and businesses. The invaders razed the nearby Principio Furnace, which had manufactured some of the first cannons for the U.S. Navy.

The counties and their towns will tell such stories through their museums, battle recreations, site tours and a Star Spangled trail. The limited-edition sewn nylon flags with appliqued stars will kick off a collaborative effort to bring history to life in the two counties and to celebrate Maryland's pivotal role in the war that brought British invaders to Maryland's shores.

The company, established in 1935 and located on Pulaski Highway, will sell only 1,000 commemorative flags. Owners have pledged 20 percent of the sales to three nonprofits: the American Flag Foundation, the Friends of Fort McHenry and The Star-Spangled Banner Flag House.

"This flag embodies the aspirations and dreams of our forefathers," said John A. Butler, president of the American Flag Foundation, which encourages patriotism and appreciation for the flag.

As the flags enter the marketplace, organizers of what will be a two-year, statewide celebration hope residents will want to learn more about Maryland's most significant heritage story, said Bill Pencek, executive director of the Maryland War of 1812 Commission, which will launch its own bicentennial effort Nov. 17 at Baltimore's Inner Harbor.

"We want to bring awareness to the front door of everyone in Maryland," Pencek said.

Winifred J. Roche, Harford's tourism manager, said, "We realize that a lot of the bicentennial story will focus on Fort McHenry and Baltimore, but we have a rich history here in Harford. This flag will help us shine a light on our pockets of the story."

Craig said he hopes the bicentennial events and the flag will educate children on the significance of the era.

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