St. Mary’s County is a peninsula surrounded by the mighty Patuxent and Potomac Rivers and the majestic Chesapeake Bay. This location destined the area for a rich and eventful history. In 1612, Captain John Smith explored what is now Point Lookout on the peninsula’s southernmost tip. Twenty-two years later, with the landing of the Ark and the Dove at St. Clement’s Island in 1634, Leonard Calvert proclaimed the land as Maryland and went on to establish Maryland’s first colony and capital at St. Mary’s City. The peninsula proved to be of strategic value in times of war. The first skirmish of the Revolutionary War in Maryland took place at St. George’s Island and British raids and harassment of inhabitants were frequent. History would repeat itself during the War of 1812, when this agrarian population of 15,000 was again subjected to repeated raids and invasions by the British.

There is no part of the United States more exposed, and none that has suffered more severely, from the ravages of the enemy, than the county of St. Mary’s. Being bounded by the Potomac, the Chesapeake and the Patuxent, and intersected by many navigable streams, it is impossible that this population can defend it on all sides. The militia of this county repaired to towns with patriotic ardor, and were enveloped in their defense... but alas! What can a few hundred men, untrained and unaccustomed, worn out by hard marches and labors, be destined to resist?... From falling to the road, where they could pick anything of value.

The first naval skirmish in Maryland between the British Navy and the Chesapeake Fleet occurred place off Cedar Point on June 21, 1814. Amurals of the Chesapeake Fleet under the command of Commodore Barney, were driven back up Chesapeake Bay from Point Lookout to the War of 1812 opinion and attack at the Patuxent River Naval Air Station.

British invasion on July 19, 1813, and return on November 13, 1813, burning houses, taking stores, and killing most of the inhabitants of the town... From this town to the capital of the Potomac, they passed the town of Gaithersburg... Visit nearby Point Lookout Lighthouse Museum and Historic Park.