

RAIDERS AND INVADERS

The WAR of 1812

In St. Mary's County

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 at the peninsula's southern-most 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 Patuxent, the Chesapeake and the Potomac, and intersected by many navigable streams, it is impossible that its thin population can defend it on all sides. The militia of this county repaired to arms with patriotic alacrity, and exerted every nerve in its defense; but, alas! What can a few hundred men, unaided and unassisted, worn out by hard marches, and debilitated by sickness, arising from exposure to every variety of weather during 18 months, effect against the overwhelming forces of the enemy."

Federal Republican, August 2, 1814

St. Mary's County

Charlotte Hall
In 1814, Charlotte Hall Military Academy serves as headquarters for St. Mary's County militia. The existing White House dates from 1802 and was in use as an academy classroom and residence during the War of 1812. Visit the St. Mary's County Welcome Center and the Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail interpretive kiosk.

Chaptico
Eleven days after raiding Leonardtown, Rear Admiral Cockburn carries out raid on Chaptico. Troops destroy homes and tobacco warehouses and vandalize the church. War of 1812 interpretive marker at Christ Episcopal Church.

Leonardtown
A detachment of British troops lands at dawn on July 19, 1814. They march to take part in coordinated raid on Leonardtown. Newtowne Manor is now a state park. Adjacent St. Francis Xavier Church and Manor House may be viewed from the outside.

St. Clement's Bay
July 1814, St. Clement's Bay serves as anchorage for British conducting raids on lower Potomac. July 23, British capture schooners and burn house from which shots had been fired. August 27, near the mouth of St. Clement's Bay, about 1,200 marines and 40 sailors conduct raid on the farm of John Kilgour.

St. Clement's Island
July 19 to July 21, 1813, British occupy island, sinking wells to supply water for raiding activities along the Potomac. Wells also sunk on nearby St. Catherine's Island. November 2, 1813, British raid St. Clement's Island and occupy the following year harvesting timber to build barges. Island accessible by boat and seasonal water taxi. Visit the St. Clement's Island Museum on mainland.

St. George's Island
British invade island on July 19, 1813, and return on November 1, 1813, burning houses, taking slaves and felling most of the large trees for use as ships' masts. At close of war they put island to torch. Island is accessible by car and has visitor amenities. Visit nearby Piney Point Lighthouse Museum and Historic Park.

St. Inigoes Manor
July 19, 1813, U.S. Postal Service begins daily express courier service between Point Lookout and Washington, D.C. to keep the capital informed of British fleet movements. Point Lookout serves as staging area for local militia until British forces occupy the Point in July, 1813. British use the Point as base for raids on the county. Visit Point Lookout State Park.

Ridge
Ridge is site of courier post office stations along the 80 mile route stretching from Point Lookout to Washington.

Point Lookout
April 1814, British at St. Jerome's Creek attempt to take an American sloop. The crew, aided by two men on shore, are able to drive them off.

Clifton/Great Mills
British burn textile factory on August 12, 1814.

Porto Bello
British raid plantation on September 27, 1814.

Carroll Plantation
British conduct raid on plantation on August 31, 1814.

Cedar Point
The first naval skirmish in Maryland between the British Navy and the Chesapeake Flotilla takes place off of Cedar Point on June 1, 1814. Americans, under command of Joshua Barney, are driven back up the Patuxent River. Visit the War of 1812 interpretive marker and exhibit at the Patuxent River Naval Air Museum.

Scot's Neck
August 17, 1814, British troops land at Benedict Heard's plantation at Scot's Neck (now Scotch Neck) to procure cattle. Local militia force British to withdraw. They return the next day and burn the plantation.

Sotterley Plantation
To distract attention from his plan to use the Patuxent to seize the capital, Rear Admiral Cockburn conducts a series of raids along the Potomac. First hit are towns along the Maryland shore, beginning with Leonardtown on July 19, 1814. Visit the Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail interpretive kiosk and exhibit at Tudor Hall and the interpretive marker at the town wharf.

Cole's Landing
Some 500 British sailors land near Trent Hall in July 1814, and march inland. They find and confiscate hogheads of tobacco hidden by William Kilgour in the barn of his neighbor. They burn the barn and return to Kilgour's farm where they plunder anything of value.

The Plains
June 17, 1814, Clement Dorsey and two friends discover a small group of British sailors attempting to break into the Sotheron residence known as "The Plains" with the intent of burning it. They avert destruction by fooling the sailors into thinking they were "in the presence of a great force."

Trent Hall
British conduct raid here on June 18, 1814.

June 1814 mustering site for local militia aiding the Chesapeake Flotilla. British then burn a tobacco warehouse and a house occupied by the militia. More than 40 slaves escape to British vessels. Historic site with visitor tours and programs. Enjoy War of 1812 events and activities.

October 30, 1814, British raiding party attacks and plunders Jesuit manor house and chapel. Visit St. Ignatius Church, dating to 1785. It was part of St. Inigoes Manor.

St. Jerome's Creek
Ridge is site of courier post office stations along the 80 mile route stretching from Point Lookout to Washington.

This exhibit is made possible by the Southern Maryland Heritage Area Consortium and the Maryland Heritage Area Authority, and by the support of the Board of County Commissioners and the citizens of St. Mary's County.

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