

Speaker, Charlestown tour part of War of 1812 celebration

Special to the Whig

As the region celebrates the 200th anniversary of the British attack on the Upper Chesapeake during the War of 1812, some old-timers that have been around for centuries are going to roam around Charlestown, once again.

While they meander streets and gather in small clusters in the beautiful river town, these centuries' old residents will share stories about what it was like to face the all-too-real threat of pillaging, burning and looting by the English right here in Cecil County.

This special bicentennial event, "Footsteps from the Past" walking tour, opened last year to a sold out crowd.

So be sure to get your tickets early for this popular activity that will find history enthusiasts ambling through the streets of Charlestown, along attractive pathways of the historic district on the North East River.

The audience will pause at selected spots to hear firsthand, dramatic stories about the time the second war with Britain came to Elkton, Frenchtown, Fredericktown, Principio and Charlestown. In between stops, the broader historical narrative about troubling times on the Chesapeake and in the county will be shared. Once dusk descends on the charming community, lanterns are going to help chase away the lengthening shadows as the group heads back to its starting point, the



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Robert Gell plays an older timer remembering the first British invasion of Cecil County.

Wellwood Club.

This year's event in Colonial Charlestown steps off at 4:30 and 6:30 p.m. on May 5.

But after last year's program attracted 125 people, organizers have scaled things back a little in order to provide bet-

ter viewing and listening during performances. Each walk is limited to 50 strollers and the cost is \$10 in advance through the Wellwood Club or \$12 at the door. The proceeds benefit the Historical Society and Colonial Charlestown. Generous support of these local non-profit heritage groups is provided by the Wellwood Club, the President and Commissioners of Charlestown, Cecil County Tourism and the Heritage Troupe.

Leading up to this bicentennial activity, Susan Langley, the state underwater archaeologist will speak on maritime archaeology on the Chesapeake during the War of 1812. This free program, supported by the Maryland Humanities Commission and the

Maryland War of 1812 committee, takes place at the Historical Society on Saturday at 2 p.m. The society is located at 135 E. Main St. in Elkton.

The waters of the Chesapeake conceal many hidden treasures, and Langley will help us dive into the subject of those submerged cultural resources. She describes the fascinating process of researching and excavating these artifacts, while investigating the sites of maritime battles. Over the years, her staff has worked on the Elk River a few times, exploring sunken War of 1812 mysteries. During one investigation in 1999, the researchers found a shipwreck site at the scene of a Cecil County skirmish at Frenchtown.