

Battle of St. Leonard Creek

“Thus, we have beat them and their rockets, which they did not spare... The monument the enemy ran off, we moved up the river, so that thanks to hot and cold shot, the blockade is raised” – Joshua Barney, quoted in American & Commercial Daily Advertiser, June 29, 1814.

During the War of 1812, dramatic events took place on JPPM grounds. The British had controlled the Chesapeake Bay since the beginning of the war. In an attempt to open the Bay, a flamboyant ex-privateer, Commodore Joshua Barney, assembled a rag-tag fleet of eighteen small gun boats, barges, and sloops and headed down the Bay in June of 1814. Barney’s Chesapeake Flotilla clashed with the British on June 8 – 10 and again on June 26th in the Battle of St. Leonard Creek. The battle, which is the largest naval engagement in the history of Maryland, took place where the Patuxent River meets the mouth of St. Leonard Creek, right off the shore of JPPM.



The naval engagement was supported on land by American Army, Marine, and militia units, including a gun battery which was located on JPPM property. Both the land unit and the flotilla engaged the British, and hundreds of shots per hour were exchanged between the two forces. Archaeological evidence of the battle has been discovered on JPPM grounds in the form of cannonballs, musket shot and other military artifacts. Eventually the British retreated and Barney’s fleet was able to escape from St. Leonard Creek.

Local Figures

Several noted figures in the War of 1812 were tied in some way to the JPPM property, including John Stuart Skinner, farmer, journalist, and owner of Point Farm during the War; Joshua Barney, the commander of the Chesapeake Flotilla; and Charles Ball, one of at least three African American crew members of the Flotilla and a Calvert County native.

Archaeology of the Battle of St. Leonard Creek



Both terrestrial and underwater archaeology surveys have been conducted in and around JPPM, searching for artifacts from the Battle of St. Leonard Creek. Some of these artifacts are conserved and curated in the MAC Lab.