

## Department of Historic Resources

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## STATE HISTORICAL HIGHWAY MARKER "BRITISH NAVAL BLOCKADE AND CAPE HENRY LIGHTHOUSE" TO BE DEDICATED

*—Fort Story / Virginia Beach marker recalls British naval blockade of  
Chesapeake Bay and attack on Cape Henry Lighthouse during  
War of 1812—*

*—The marker's text is reproduced below—*

**Please Note:** Media representatives who wish to attend the ceremony should contact Lauren Gwaley ([lgwaley@preservationvirginia.org](mailto:lgwaley@preservationvirginia.org)), associate director of public relations and marketing at Preservation Virginia, by COB Wednesday, Aug. 5, to arrange security clearance at Fort Story

RICHMOND – A state historical marker issued by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources highlighting a British naval blockade of the Chesapeake Bay and an attack in 1813 on the Cape Henry Lighthouse during the War of 1812 will be dedicated this weekend.

The dedication ceremony begins at 10 a.m., Saturday, August 8, at the marker's location near the Cape Henry Lighthouse, located within the Fort Story military base. The event is open to the public; however, attendees must pass through security gates at Fort Story, located at 89<sup>th</sup> Street and Atlantic Avenue. All visitors aged 16 years or older are required to have a photo identification card, meaning either a student or state or Federal issued ID card. Proof of vehicle insurance and current vehicle registration is also required to gain entry into Fort Story.

Speakers at the ceremony will include Nancy Dabney, site coordinator for the Cape Henry Lighthouse; historian Christopher Pieczynski, of Tidewater Community College, who specializes in the War of 1812 and naval history; and Lena McDonald, of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. Joseph Burroughs, a descendant of lighthouse keeper Travy Burroughs will unveil the marker. A presentation of wreaths will be made by Audrey Skutnik of the Fort Norfolk Daughters of 1812 and Col. Carter Furr of the War of 1812 Society in Virginia.

The ceremony is being hosted by Preservation Virginia, the first statewide historic preservation organization established in the U.S.

Fought between the U.S. and Great Britain, the War of 1812 is viewed by some historians the nation's second war of independence.

The new marker, titled "British Naval Blockade and Cape Henry Lighthouse," recalls that during the war a British naval blockade of the U.S. East Coast, which eventually extended to the Chesapeake Bay, "disrupted foreign trade and interfered with commerce."

In early 1813, when the British extended their blockade to the Chesapeake, "the Cape Henry Lighthouse was extinguished to prevent British ships from using it as a navigational aid," the marker states. In February 1813 the British attacked the lighthouse, "and thereafter British scouting parties often visited the area to obtain fresh water from local wells," in the marker's words.

The Cape Henry Lighthouse sign marks another stop on a War of 1812 heritage highway route linked by historical markers created to commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war, fought between 1812 and 1815. The signs—now numbering 19 approved, with 16 erected—result from collaboration between the Department of Historic Resources and the Virginia Bicentennial of the American War of 1812 Commission.

Each of the bicentennial signs features on one side general information about the causes of the War of 1812 and its impact on Virginia, especially the Chesapeake Bay and Tidewater regions. The signs also note that “more than 2,000 enslaved African Americans in Virginia had gained their freedom aboard British ships.”

According to the legislation enacted by the General Assembly to establish the bicentennial commission, "An estimated 70,000 Virginians served during the War of 1812. There were some 73 armed encounters with the British that took place in Virginia during the war." The 2008 legislation also states, “The nation's capitol, strategically located off the Chesapeake Bay, was a prime target for the British, and the coast of Virginia figured prominently in the Atlantic theatre of operations.”

A 12-page booklet that lists all the historical markers in Virginia relating to the War of 1812, including each sign’s text, is available online for downloading (as a PDF) from the Department of Historic Resources’ Website ([www.dhr.virginia](http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/pdf_files/War%20of%201812%20Markers%20publicationFINAL.pdf)). The direct link to the publication is [http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/pdf\\_files/War%20of%201812%20Markers%20publicationFINAL.pdf](http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/pdf_files/War%20of%201812%20Markers%20publicationFINAL.pdf)

Virginia’s historical highway marker program, which began in 1927 with the installation of the first historical markers along U.S. Route 1, is considered the oldest such program in the nation. Currently there are more than 2,400 official state markers, most maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation, as well as by local partners in jurisdictions outside of VDOT’s authority, such as Norfolk.

### **Texts of the marker:**

#### **British Naval Blockade and Cape Henry Lighthouse**

During the War of 1812, a British naval blockade along much of the U.S. East Coast disrupted foreign trade and interfered with commerce. On 4 Feb. 1813, the blockade was extended to the Chesapeake Bay. At that time, the light at the Cape Henry Lighthouse was extinguished to prevent British ships from using it as a navigational aid. The British attacked the lighthouse early in Feb. 1813, and thereafter British scouting parties often

visited the area to obtain fresh water from local wells. On 14 July 1813, Capt. Richard Lawson of the Princess Anne militia captured 20 British marines nearby.  
Department of Historic Resources, 2010

## **Reverse**

### **The War of 1812**

Impressment of Americans into British service and the violation of American ships were among the causes of America's War of 1812 with the British, which lasted until 1815. Beginning in 1813, Virginians suffered from a British naval blockade of the Chesapeake Bay and from British troops plundering the countryside by the Bay and along the James, Rappahannock, and Potomac Rivers. The Virginia militia deflected a British attempt to take Norfolk in 1813 and engaged British forces throughout the war. By the end of the war, more than 2,000 enslaved African Americans in Virginia had gained their freedom aboard British ships.

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