

Contact Us!

Bayside History Museum
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Hours of operation Wednesday-
9:00am-12:00pm
Thursday- 9:00am-12:00pm
Friday- 9:00am-12:00pm
Saturday- 9:00am-12:00pm
Sunday- 9:00am-12:00pm
Additional times available upon request.

America's 250th Anniversary

The Bayside History Museum is excited to celebrate the 250th anniversary of American independence. Some of the items featured this year are:

- The Maryland 400
- Rousby Hall
- The Battle of St. George's Island Lego Exhibit
- The *Totness*
- American Revolutionary Clothing
- A Powder Horn used during the American Revolution and the War of 1812
- USS Constitution 1797
- The Don Shomette Naval & American Revolution Library
- Revolutionary War Trivia Contest

The Battle of St. George's Island

Maryland's largest
skirmish of the
Revolutionary War.



Lord Dunmore

The opening shots of the American Revolution were hurled at the Battles of Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts on April 19, 1775. Royal Governors in each of the colonies found themselves stuck in untenable positions, pitted between their loyalty to the crown and the anger of their respective citizenry. The Royal Governor of Virginia, John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore, was increasingly exasperated by the demands of Patriots in his home colony. Each action, or inaction, raised the ire of these Patriots resulting in his ousting at Williamsburg, Virginia in the summer of 1775. Lord Dunmore took his force of Loyalists to Norfolk, Virginia and tried to reestablish his control of the colony there. By the end of 1775 Norfolk was surrounded by Patriot troops who forced Dunmore and his supporters to flee the city on a fleet of 70 to 80 ships. Dunmore ordered his fleet to bombard Norfolk on New Year's Day 1776 and departed for Gwynn's Island. The island proved to only be a temporary refuge and the fleet was forced to move on July 10 due to Patriot artillery fire. By July 14, 1776 Dunmore's ragtag fleet of ships had anchored across the mouth of the St. Mary's River off St. George's Island in southern Maryland. The fleet was in desperate need of fresh water and wood for repairs to the ships. The island offered both resources in abundance and it was here that the British focused their foraging expeditions. The British movement up the Potomac River had been watched with alarm by the Patriots and several detachments of militia made their way to the mouth of the St. Mary's River.



Revolutionary Spirit

The Battle of St. George's Island was not a single action but at least five distinct skirmishes occurring between July 16 and July 28, 1776. A British watering party attempted to land on July 16 but was heavily opposed by Patriot militia under Captain Rezin Beall, who was wounded during the fighting. A second action occurred on July 20 when a British landing was successfully repelled by Patriot forces. These fights convinced the British to send a detachment up the Potomac River to secure much needed water and supplies elsewhere. A third action occurred on July 23 when Patriot militia successfully drove off another British landing party. The fourth action occurred on July 25 when American troops ambushed a British landing party and filled in the best well on the island. Later in the day another British landing party came ashore unopposed and burned the remaining houses on the island. The fifth and final major action at St. George's Island occurred on July 28 when Patriot artillery fired upon the anchored British ships while Maryland Navy ships attempted a pincer attack from the opposite side. The attack fizzled out once the wind calmed and the Roebuck, Lord Dunmore's flagship, returned to the anchorage.

The End is in Sight

Realizing that the Patriot positions grew stronger as time went on and he could no longer secure water, Lord Dunmore prepared to move his fleet back down the Chesapeake Bay. On July 30 the British began destroying their excess and damaged vessels. The last landing on St. George's Island occurred the next day without incident. Between July 30 and August 7, the British fleet departed the Potomac River with a small contingent, including Lord Dunmore, headed for New York and the remainder toward St. Augustine, Florida. With the withdrawal of the last British ship from the area, the Patriot forces began immediate salvage operations of the wrecked ships. This effort continued into November 1776 and several vessels were brought to the West River where they were outfitted to serve the Patriot navy. Total forces for the British numbered about 70 to 80 ships and between 500 and 650 men. Patriot forces totaled approximately 600 men and 2 ships. The exact number of casualties is unknown. Records indicate that several men were wounded on each side and at least one member of the Roebuck's crew may have been killed on July 20. The British fleet was racked with smallpox coming out of Norfolk and several smallpox victims were said to have been buried on St. George's Island.

Be sure to visit the Bayside History Museum to view our Battle of St. George's Island Lego exhibit.