Residents of the Hagerstown area have always stepped forward when their community or their nation was in danger. From the earliest days on the frontier during the French and Indian War to recent conflicts in the Middle East, Hagerstonians have proudly served in defense of the colonies, helped to establish the nation, and fought to preserve the Republic.

June, 2012 begins the bicentennial observance of the war of 1812; a 30-month war with Great Britain, which ended when the Treaty of Ghent was ratified by the U.S. Senate in February, 1815.

The Treaty of Ghent resulted in the release of all prisoners of war and restored all captured lands and ships to both sides. The treaty made no major changes to the pre-war situation, but did end the British practice of “impressing” U.S. merchant seamen (stopping American ships on the high seas and kidnapping crew for service in the Royal Navy). *Sailors Rights* was one of the principal causes cited by the U.S. when it declared war. The resulting relationship has resulted in two hundred years of peace and partnership between the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
Although Western Maryland escaped being a battleground, many area men served in the war. Several local residents served in the army and navy, including Commodore Jesse Elliott, USN; Colonel Charles Boerstler of the 14th U.S. Infantry commanded American forces at the Battle of Beaver Dam, Ontario in 1813. Also, militia infantry companies—the forerunner of today’s National Guard—from five Washington County towns were called up by Governor Levin Winder for service in 1812 and 1813. Some local militia units and members saw action at the Battle of Bladensburg and the Battle of North Point in 1814. Local militia cavalry also served in the defense against the British invasions as well.

Hagerstown’s biggest contribution to the war was the Hagerstown Homespun Volunteers. This unit was attached to the 39th Maryland Militia at the Battle of North Point on September 12, 1814. The Volunteers served honorably and several men were wounded while facing down British soldiers who had seen hard combat against Napoleon. Among the Homespun Volunteers’ wounded was their commanding officer, Captain Thomas Quantrill (Mayor—1820).

Since word had to be brought to America by sailing ship, combat operations did not end until after Major General Andrew Jackson crushed General Sir Edward Packenham’s Royal Army and Marine forces at the Battle of New Orleans, which was fought on January 8, 1815; two weeks after the peace treaty was signed. Maryland was more affected by the maneuvering armies than any other state.