

**Museum on Main Street, Smithsonian Institution**  
**Stories: Yes | Student Digital Storytelling Project**  
**The Battle of St. Leonard Creek During the War of 1812, Maryland**

Speaker 1: The battle of St. Leonard Creek occurred on June 26th, 1814. The British had control over St. Leonard Creek and the flamboyant revolutionary war veteran, Joshua Barney was having none of it. So he hastily formed a flotilla of barges to take the British down and gain the Creek back. When the 1st of June ended Joshua, after a hard battle with the British had to retreat to the Bay, but was followed by his enemies who started attacking him twice a day until June 8th and ninth. when Joshua decided to take the defensive. On June 10th, when the British came into the Bay to continue their routine that had been going on for days, they were surprised to find Joshua was flotilla dismantled and thus faster than ever charging at them.

Speaker 1: [0:42] The fight was on with Joshua's flotilla, overpowering their enemies almost as quickly as their boats could out speed the enemies, forcing the British to retreat to the Patuxent as they weren't prepared to the flotilla's forces. For a moment, the Americans were victorious, but soon the British came back and chased the flotilla to their anchorage. The first battle had ended on June 26th. Joshua's horses escaped to the Patuxent, and when they were ready to fight again, they came back stronger than ever being a thorn to the British' sides until August 22nd, when the British gave up fleeing to the big point and leaving their ships behind.

Speaker 2: [1:22] Question is what are these artifacts? And we're looking at two different cannonballs. One is from the town of Benedict on the Patuxent river. And the other one is from St. Leonard's Creek, which is located right here where the Maryland Archeological Conservation Center is located. So these are both related to the war of 1812. And so you might ask yourself, well, how do we know that for sure? And one of the ways is that you can measure the diameter of the cannonballs, and that will tell you the size of what the canon was. And so through historical times, different canons were used in different times. And so this is just one way that we can try to help to verify that almost certainly, yes, both of these cannonballs come from the war of 1812.

Speaker 2: [2:08] Who uses the artifacts? Well, these are part of the Maryland Archeological Conservation Center. So these are all kept here. And then if let's say an exhibit is being requested by a particular museum or whatever, they may ask for this to be borrowed. They're also on display here so that when groups come in, they can also take a look at it. So it's essentially a place where these are preserved for the benefit of the public, but they can also be loaned to other institutions when required.

Speaker 2: [2:39] How old are the artifacts? Well, in this case, because they're from the war of 1812, they were probably manufactured maybe slightly before the war, but more probably during the war of 1812. But other artifacts here could date from prehistoric times, they could be 1000s of years old. And then they have other artifacts here from, let's say, for example, Baltimore City, that may only be a 100 years old.

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Speaker 2: [3:03] How are these artifacts used? Keep in mind that during the war of 1812, there were two different military groups that were fighting one another England and the United States. So the question might be, do we know if that cannonball right there was fired by an American cannon? Or was it fired by a British cannon? And so a good archeologist, a good historian would do all the research they could to try to find out where these cannon positions were located. What were the sizes of the cannons that were used? And then based on the diameter of that particular cannonball, they can determine hopefully whether it was a British cannonball or whether it was an American cannonball.

Speaker 2: [3:44] We have a cannonball here that's already been conserved. Keep in mind, cannonballs are made out of iron and over time they're gonna rust and they're gonna start to decay. So the purpose of the archeological conservation laboratory here is to make sure that this does not decay anymore than it already has. So this has already been conserved. It's in really good shape. And here's one that's in the process of being conserved. So it's in a chemical solution. It'll probably be in the solution for many, many months. You have to get out salts because it might've been in the Marine environment. And you also want to make sure that it does not continue to oxidize that it does not continue to have this rust that's on it. So that's what's going on right here with this particular cannonball. So pre-conservation, current conservation, eventually this will be taken back out, it'll be coated, and hopefully it'll be preserved for many, many generations.

Speaker 2: [4:37] Paper is called, "The United States Gazette," and it was published in July of 1814. And what's interesting from an archivist or from a historian standpoint, is it has an article in here about the British coming up the Patuxent river, landing and marching inland to the town of Huntington, where they actually destroyed a warehouse and a whole bunch of hogsheads of tobacco, and even burnt some of the homes that were located there.

Speaker 1: [5:02] The battle of St. Leonard Creek might not be as famous as other battles for our independence, but it's still important fight from American history. If Joshua Barney hadn't taken a stand, we wouldn't have had a chance to research the wonders of the Bay as it would still belong to the British. And while the fight might not have been as impactful as say, the Battle of Yorktown, it was still a big step in gaining independence for America.