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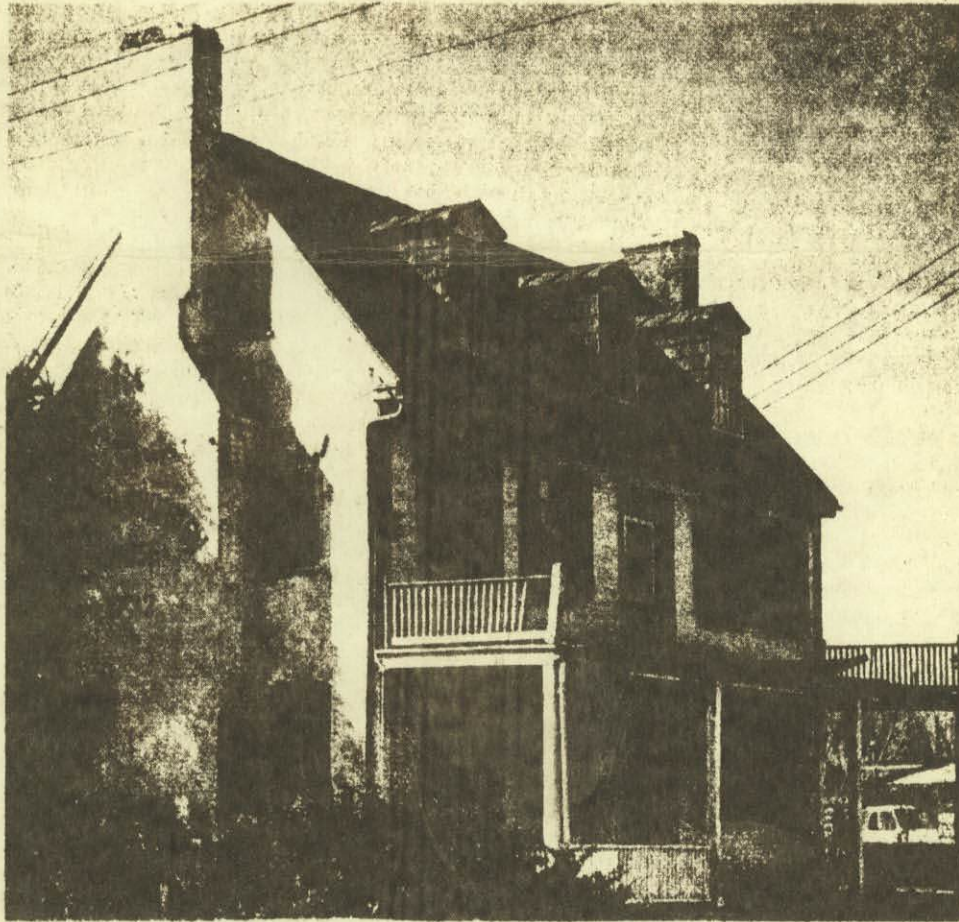
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## ABOUT ANTIQUES

Orva Heissenbuttel



**THE INDIAN QUEEN TAVERN** in Bladensburg, recently saved from demolition by the Prince George's JAYCEES, who will hold a commemorative ceremony of the War of 1812 Battle of Bladensburg at Fort Lincoln Cemetery on Sunday, August 27th at 2 p.m.

The War of 1812 had been going on for two years when the scene of battle moved to Southern Maryland, and the British decided to march on the nation's capital. The weather in Washington was as bad then as it is today, so the events which transpired in August, 1814 in Prince George's County may be in part ascribed to this factor. But it was a factor which should have helped the natives (who were accustomed to it) not the invaders. When the British started up the Chesapeake on August 12, they took a thermometer reading on the quarter-deck of the Tomant, and found it to read 133 degrees. What was more amazing was that "Wellington's Invincibles" (fresh

from their victories over Napoleon) had consumed 3,750 gallons of wine in three weeks.

On August 19 the British troops had sailed up the Patuxent River (which was then navigable) and went ashore at Benedict for the march overland thru Prince George's toward the nation's capital. They camped in Nottingham on August 21, then pressed on to Upper Marlboro on August 22nd, passing by the fork which led to Wood Yard (and present day Clinton) and the more direct route to Washington. In Upper Marlboro, General Ross spent a comfortable night at the home of Dr. William Beanes, the only local resident still in town when the British arrived in the old

town about two in the afternoon.

(The house is no longer standing, but was at the site of his tomb adjacent to the Marlboro elementary school). By two o'clock the next afternoon, the British left Upper Marlboro, taking the road westward toward Long Old Fields, (present day Forestville) where the American forces were encamped.

The British halted at an estate called Melwood (still standing) some three miles from Long Old Fields. While General Ross and Admiral Cockburn were sleeping at Melwood, the British Royal Marines were raiding the warehouses in Upper Marlboro of tobacco, and loading this valuable prize for transport

down the river to Benedict. The next morning (August 24) the British forces left Melwood and marched to Bladensburg. Once again the British entered an empty town, and General Ross took over the Bowie house as his headquarters.

### Battle of Bladensburg

In the afternoon of the same day, August 24th, the Battle of Bladensburg took place. The British engaged an estimated American force of some 6,000, most of them militia, untrained soldiers. Wellington's Invincibles routed the American forces, the majority of whom simply dropped their guns and ran. It was a dark day in American history, and a day which saw the British enter the nation's capital. The next day the city was put to the torch, including the White House, and was saved only by a fortunate change in the weather, a severe rainstorm which saved the city.

History students know that our nation's honor was regained, the war won a few weeks later in Baltimore. But not before an event of small consequence had taken place in Prince George's County which would result in the writing of our national anthem. As the triumphant British troops marched back through our countryside to the waiting ships at Benedict, some of the British soldiers deserted. The British filled their haversacks with flour from the grist mills in Bladensburg, and returned by way of Upper Marlboro. A total of 111 men vanished—stragglers, or deserters, they may have wanted a new start in America, as two Irish boys did—Sgt. Michael McNamara, and Pvt. Edward Kelly.

### Governor Bowie

The majority of the deserters became marauders, and pillaged the countryside. They didn't bother the large landowners, however, but concentrated on the poor dirt farmers, robbing their hen houses, their homes, and their crops. Robert Bowie, former governor of Maryland, who resided near Nottingham, decided to do something about the British marauders, and sought out

Upper Marlboro's leading citizen, Dr. Beanes, to help him do something about the problem.

Several local people were recruited to help round up the pillaging British deserters, and 6 or 7 were thrown in jail. Unfortunately, one of them escaped, and made his way to General Ross to report on this bit of American retaliation. On August 28, a group of British troops rode up to Beanes's front door and pulled the elderly doctor out of bed. They also seized Gov. Bowie, and two other locals and carried them back to the fleet as hostages until the jailed stragglers (pillagers) were released. The exchange was soon made, except for Dr. Beanes, who had now enraged General Ross, the former recipient of Dr. Beanes's hospitality.

#### Francis Scott Key

Dr. Beanes was thrown in the brig on the flagship Tonnant, and when a young lawyer by the name of Francis Scott Key went down to negotiate for his release, he was kept along with Dr. Beanes because the British were hatching plans to take the city of Baltimore, and they feared the two Americans would reveal their plans if released. Subsequently, Scott and Beanes were transported against their will where they observed the battle of Baltimore from a distance, and Scott strained to see if "our flag was still there" over Fort McHenry at the dawn's early light on the morning of September 14. The American flag was still there, a sight which inspired Francis Scott Key to write the poem which was ultimately adopted as our national anthem. "The Star Spangled Banner."

The true facts of what happened at the Battle of Bladensburg and other events of the British invasion have been obscured by the years, by intent in some instances perhaps, by negligence more likely. If you are particularly interested in the War of 1812, or in local history, you'll want to read Walter Lord's newest book, **THE DAWN'S EARLY LIGHT**, published just a few months ago. A native of Baltimore, Walter Lord has recalled other momentous events in American history in **DAY OF INFAMY, A NIGHT TO REMEMBER, and INCREDIBLE VICTORY**. Readers familiar with these books will once again appreciate the narrative skill which Lord brings to **THE DAWN'S EARLY LIGHT**, bringing all the events of that period to life with historical accuracy. It is available at the Oxon Hill and Hyattsville libraries.

#### Cowardice and Courage

While the Battle of Bladensburg was more one of cowardice

than courage, it is also renowned as the only time an American president actually became the command-in-chief on the field of battle. President James Madison soon realized his inadequacy in the role, and retreated back to Washington. The summer of 1814 in the Washington area was fraught with anxiety and defeat, but in Lord's book we see America, the young country, taking on the British, the most powerful nation in the world, for the second time, and winning—once again.

This Sunday Prince George's JAYCEES will commemorate the Battle of Bladensburg with a ceremony at Fort Lincoln Cemetery in Bladensburg, scene of the battle of 1814. For the second consecutive year the JAYCEES will conduct a wreath laying ceremony at 2 p.m. at the Marine Memorial. After the first line of troops fell back, the Marines, 500 in number, in a second line of defense attempted to hold off more than 4,000 British troops marching on Washington. Most of the local men were killed, but their valiant efforts afforded the capital residents some extra time to prepare for the invasion.

#### Boy Scout Trail Opens

The commemorative ceremony, which begins at 2 p.m. on Sunday, August 27, also includes the official opening of a national historical marching trail by some 400 area Boy Scouts. County Executive William W. Gullett will present a proclamation to officially open the 47-mile "Battle of Bladensburg and Star Spangled Banner Trail" which runs from Benedict to Bladensburg.

During this week, area scouts will have marched the length of the trail and will complete their journey on Sunday with a flag ceremony. Guests at the ceremony will include Rudy Flythe, National Capital Executive of the Boy Scouts of America, U.S. Congressman Lawrence J. Hogan, and Dr. Curtis Carroll Davis of Baltimore. Dr. Davis, a noted author and lecturer, is Vice-President General of the Maryland Society of the War of 1812, and will be the keynote speaker, recalling the events surrounding the Battle of Bladensburg. Dr. Parris N. Glendening, University of Maryland, will act as the Master of Ceremonies. Maryland state Congressman Edward Conroy will lay the wreath.

The Maryland Fifth Regiment, which took part in the battle being commemorated, will participate with a color guard dressed in uniforms worn at the time of the Battle. This is the second annual ceremony to be held by the JAYCEES, with last year's ceremony being attended by some 350 interested area residents. It was the first time in 157 years that any public recognition had been given the historic event.

Sunday's ceremony is one of a series of events planned to focus interest on their project of restoring the old Indian Queen Tavern in Bladensburg. The tavern, commonly known as the George Washington House, was built in 1732, and was saved from demolition to make way for the construction of a roast beef sandwich shop.

The JAYCEES were successful in raising enough funds to purchase the old tavern, and are now appealing to the public for help in raising funds to restore the building. The restoration will be more extensive than they had planned on since vandals set a fire in the interior and firemen broke all of the original windows out in putting out the fire.

One of the leaders in the drive for restoration funds has been John Giannetti, who as Project Chairman (and immediate past president of the JAYCEES) has probably learned more about fund raising than he ever could have anticipated. His enthusiasm is contagious, and with the help of other JAYCEES and interested county residents, the restoration will go forward. Those attending the County Fair last weekend had an opportunity to meet John and see a display of interesting old Bladensburg photographs. The Chapter hopes to establish in a portion of the structure a museum which would house items of historic value relating to Prince George's County. This could take the form of a War of 1812 museum, of local colonial history, or others of a similar nature. The JAYCEES are interested in community-wide participation in the restoration and subsequent use of the building. The old Indian Queen Tavern was a stopping place between Baltimore and Alexandria, and this is one of those places where "George Washington Slept", but so did Jefferson and other noted statesmen. If you are interested in helping in the JAYCEES project, call John Giannetti at 345-1790. And plan to attend the ceremony this Sunday and learn still more about local history in Prince George's County.