

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sept. 12, 2014

Yvette Singh
410-347-4717

yvette.b.singh@usps.gov

usps.com/news



Battle of Fort McHenry to be Commemorated on Limited Edition Forever Stamps Tomorrow

To obtain high-resolution stamp images for media use, please email yvette.b.singh@usps.gov

BALTIMORE — Tomorrow, Sept. 13, nearly 200 years to the day Francis Scott Key wrote “The Star-Spangled Banner,” the U.S. Postal Service will dedicate a Limited Edition Forever Stamp commemorating the Battle of Fort McHenry. The event takes place inside the [fortress](#) where Old Glory continues to fly today. The 11 a.m. official first-day-of-issue dedication ceremony is free and open to the public.

“We came so close to losing the war, “ said U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors Vice Chairman James Bilbray, the great-great-grandson of a War of 1812 veteran who served in the 10th U.S. Infantry. “Here, 1,000 troops fought valiantly. The defense of Fort McHenry ultimately helped forge America’s national identity. Our victory here was the beginning of the end of the British threat.”

Scheduled to join Bilbray in dedicating the stamp are Sen. Benjamin Cardin (D-MD); Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine Superintendent Tina Cappetta; Fort McHenry National Monument and Historical Shrine Chief of Interpretation Vince Vaise; [stamp artist Greg Harlin](#); and U.S. Postal Service Chief of Staff Mitzi Betman.



The Battle of Fort MCHENRY Stamp Image

A specialist in historical paintings, artist Greg Harlin of Annapolis, MD, depicts the battle from the vantage point of a group of soldiers manning a cannon in defense of Fort MCHENRY. The stamp art also gives prominence to “the rockets’ red glare” immortalized in “The Star-Spangled Banner” lyrics. Greg Breeding of Charlottesville, VA, served as art director and designer for the stamp.



A portrait by of the fort’s commander Major George Armistead, from a painting by Rembrandt Peale, appears on the reverse of the stamp pane (courtesy of the Maryland Historical Society). The selvage engraving on the front of the pane is a black and white version of a painting by Percy Moran depicting Key aboard the ship from which he witnessed the battle.

The Battle of Fort MCHENRY

During the War of 1812, Baltimore was the third largest city in the country and an important commercial hub. Its militia of some 10,000 citizens had constructed an extensive system of earthworks to prepare for a British land assault. The city also was protected by Fort MCHENRY, a star-shaped fortification built in the 1790s at the narrow entrance to Baltimore’s harbor.

After the British Army met stiff resistance on land, Vice Admiral Alexander Cochrane of the Royal Navy attempted to attack the city by getting past the defenses of Fort MCHENRY, which was manned by 1,000 troops under the command of Armistead.

For some 25 hours beginning Sept. 13, 1814, Cochrane’s squadron fired more than 1,500 rounds of shells and rockets at the fort while his ships remained safely out of range of the fort’s guns.

Maryland native Francis Scott Key, a 35-year-old lawyer, witnessed this massive display of firepower from the deck of an American flag-of-truce vessel. He had just completed negotiations with the British for the release of an American prisoner confined aboard a ship in the British fleet.

On the morning of Sept. 14, Key realized that the bombardment had been a failure when he saw the British squadron withdrawing downriver. The garrison flag was run up over the fort at 9 a.m., confirming the post was still in American hands.

Key was so moved that he wrote “The Defence of Fort MCHENRY” to the tune of an old English song, and it quickly gained wider recognition under the title “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

Other War of 1812 Related Forever Stamps



In 2012, the [USS Constitution](#) launched the War of 1812 Forever Stamp series.



Last year, the series commemorated the [Battle of Lake Erie](#) on a Forever Stamp.



In March, the Postal Service issued the [Star Spangled Banner Forever Stamp](#). The picture of the flag was taken in the 1990s at Fort McHenry against a backdrop of fireworks during an annual celebration of Defenders' Day, a Maryland legal holiday commemorating the successful defense of Baltimore on Sept. 12, 1814. Photographer [Gary Clark](#) of Mountain Brook, AL, said it was a challenge to get the fireworks and the flag in the same shot and that "the wind picked up quite a bit that night." Art director Phil Jordan of Falls Church, VA, designed the stamp.

Many of this year's other stamps may be viewed on Facebook at facebook.com/USPSStamps, via Twitter [@USPSstamps](https://twitter.com/USPSstamps) or at beyondtheperf.com/2013-preview.

First-Day-of-Issue Postmarks

Customers have 60 days to obtain the first-day-of-issue postmark by mail. They may purchase stamps at a local Post Office, The Postal Store at usps.com/stamps, or by calling 800-STAMP-24. Customers should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes to themselves or others, and place them in larger envelopes addressed to:

War of 1812: Ft. McHenry
Postmaster
900 E. Fayette Street
Baltimore, MD 21233-9998

After applying the first-day-of-issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. While the first 50 postmarks are free, there is a 5-cent charge per postmark beyond that. All orders must be postmarked by Nov. 12, 2014.

First-Day Covers

The Postal Service also offers first-day covers for new stamp issues and Postal Service stationery items postmarked with the official first-day-of-issue cancellation. Each item has an individual catalog number and is offered in the quarterly USA Philatelic catalog, online at usps.com/stamps or by calling 800-782-6724. Customers may request a free catalog by calling 800-782-6724 or writing to:

United States Postal Service Catalog Request
PO Box 219014
Kansas City, MO 64121-9014

Philatelic Products

Eleven philatelic products are available for this stamp issue:



588224, [Framed Art](#), \$39.95.



588206, [Press Sheet w/Die cuts](#), \$49 (print quantity 1,000).

588208, [Press Sheet w/o Die cuts](#), \$49 (print quantity 1,500).



588210, [Keepsake w/Digital Color Postmark](#), \$11.95.



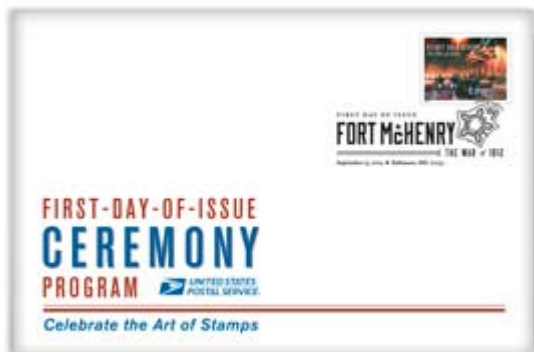
588216, [First-Day Cover](#), \$0.93.

588218, Full Pane First-Day Cover, \$12.30.

588219, Cancelled Full Pane, \$12.30.



588221, [Digital Color Postmark](#), \$1.64.



588230, [Ceremony Program](#), \$6.95.

588231, Stamp Deck Card, \$0.95.

588232, Stamp Deck Card w/Digital Color Postmark, \$1.99.

#

Please Note: For broadcast quality video and audio, photo stills and other media resources, visit the [USPS Newsroom](#).

Reporters interested in speaking with regional Postal Service public relations professionals should visit this [link](#).

Follow us on [twitter.com/USPS](#) and like us at [facebook.com/USPS](#). For more information about the Postal Service, visit [usps.com](#) and [usps.com/postalfacts](#).