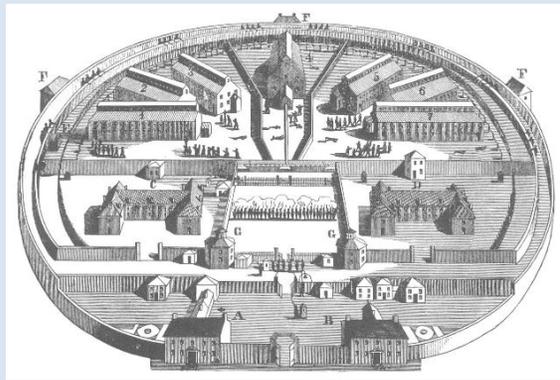contact: Judy Anderson
Marblehead Architecture Heritage
781-631-1762 *See full 2015 schedule*
at: www.MarbleheadTours.com

Talks & Walks ~
Marblehead in 1815
War of 1812

The infamous stone Dartmoor Prison in southwest England, where nearly 500 Marblehead men & boys were held into April of 1815

Continuing to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812 which began officially on June 18, 1812 and lasted into 1815

Summer / Autumn Walking Tours:

Walks & Talks approx. 75 min. each

Thursday, July 2 ~ 4 & 7 pm   *Marblehead Festival of Arts weekend !*
Friday, Sept. 18 & 25 ~ 6 pm to 7:15   *Essex Heritage Trails & Sails weekend !*

Walks begin in front of Abbot Hall   *188 Washington St. / street parking*

The Walks will explore the town and the ways & why houses changed after the Revolution (1775-81/83) & after the War of 1812 (June 1812 – Feb. 1815)

Outdoor Presentations ~ *Over 1,000 Marbleheaders in the War of 1812:*

Up at **Fountain Park** (covered benches):   Out at **Fort Sewall** (benches, no cover):

Saturday, June 20 ~ 9 am & 4 pm   **Saturday, August 1 ~ 4:30 pm**
Sunday, June 21 ~ 4 & 7 pm   **Saturday, Sept. 19 ~ 4:30 pm**
Monday, June 22 ~ 7 pm   **Saturday, Sept. 26 ~ 4:30 pm**

Map it: near 51 Orne Street   *Street parking on Front Street*
opposite entrance to Old Burial Hill   *Stop before or at small parking lot*
Street pkg. / Walk up stairs   *Walk out to end of fort / 10 stairs*

Same Tours & Presentations on each date. No RSVP necessary. Suggested donation $5

The Talks will discuss the **1,121 men & boys from Marblehead** who served, mainly at sea ~ from about 1,000 families living in perhaps 600 houses.

That represented nearly **one-fifth of the population** ~ recorded as 5,661 in 1790, when the very first United States census taken (about the same in 1815), and Marblehead was tied for **tenth largest town in the new nation.**

The conflict's drama and trauma would have impacted every Marblehead family, since nearly every able-bodied male, young and old, sacrificed their livelihoods, lives or limbs ~ too often quite literally.

Fountain Park is off Orne Street, opposite the entrance to **Old Burial Hill**, the "old burying ground." **~** It is located on **Bailey's Head,** which was named after **Captain John Bailey**, Commander of Fort Sewall when the *USS Constitution* took refuge in Marblehead Harbor. It was called **Fort Washington** during the War of 1812, and was the site of a **gun battery** across from Fort Sewall.

The talks **will include ordinary people** as well as **four** from Marblehead in **high political office in 1814** ~ a significant number from one town**:**

✳ the *U.S. Vice President*, ✳ a *U.S. Congressman*, ✳ an associate justice on the *U.S. Supreme Court*, ✳ and *Chief Justice* of the *Massachusetts Supreme Court*. **Fort Sewall** was named after the latter, **Judge Samuel Sewall**, who died in 1814. **U.S. Vice President Elbridge Gerry** also died in 1814 , as did so many in their town.

More information:

In June 1815, **the last prisoners of war would likely have arrived or had at least been making their way home from imprisonment in the bleak and miserable stone prison of Dartmoor in England, where they had been held ~ many consolidated there from prison ships ~ into April of 1815. The peace treaty had been signed by England in December 1814, and by the United States in mid-February 1815.**

By the end of May 1814, the eastern seaboard was essentially blockaded and **patrolled by enemy British vessels,** after extensive bloody action in the Atlantic and on the Great Lakes. ☙ It was particularly difficult because when the war began, Marblehead and its residents had still not recovered from the adversity and social losses of the Revolution a generation earlier (1775 to 1781 with a peace treaty in 1783) and the economic distress that had followed, as merchants and seamen alike struggled for more than two decades to rebuild the town's largely Atlantic and new Baltic trade, in **precarious commercial conditions** and in a **dangerous physical environment**. (*Far fewer ships from Marblehead than from Salem traded in Pacific Asian ports*.)

The volatile relations between the new United States and both France and England in the 1790s and the first decade of the 1800s created the **stifling trade conditions** and the **perils for seamen in the Atlantic** and elsewhere that led to the war.

The presentations will also include**:**
- ✳ the **international causes** of the war
- ✳ the **locations for trade** before and after the Revolution, and why
- ✳ the **principal engagements** and battles that involved Marbleheaders
- ✳ the **U.S.S. Constitution** into Marblehead Harbor by Fort Sewall in April 1814
- ✳ the **burning of the White House** and U.S. government buildings in August 1814
- ✳ the **four Marbleheaders in high public office** in Massachusetts & Washington City
- ✳ the **drama of the U.S.S. Essex in the Pacific**, and M'head's Lt. John Glover Cowell
- ✳ the **ordeals of a typical seaman** from Marblehead, Philip Brimblecomb

Burning of Washington City (DC) in August 1814

On 24 August, the British would invade and attack the new nation's capital, and burned its government buildings, including the **White House**. Also the **Capitol building** (which still lacked its rotunda and dome), and **most public buildings**, including those that housed the **Senate**, the **House** of Representatives, **national archives**, the first **Library of Congress**, and the **Treasury**. The **Patent Office** was the only government building left untouched ~ since its contents could benefit England as well ~ though a disastrous accidental fire in 1836 would later destroy all 10,000 patents, 9,000 drawings, and several thousand patent models.

Prominent Marbleheaders in high political office

During the war, and specifically in 1814, three men from Marblehead were in high political office in the nation's capital, which by that time was in **Washington City.**

Another occupied perhaps the highest position in the state: Attorney Samuel Sewall, after whom Marblehead's Fort Sewall was named, was **Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court**, appointed in 1814, after 14 years on that judicial body, following four years in the United States **Congress** (1796-1800) in Philadelphia, the U.S. capital at that time.

Merchant-turned-statesman Elbridge Gerry had been appointed **U.S. Vice President** by fourth President James Madison, after two terms in the **U.S. Congress** (1789-93) in Philadelphia, then a **diplomatic mission to France** (1797-98), and a term as **governor of Massachusetts** (1810-12). Gerry would die in Washington in November 1814, and is the only **signer of the Declaration of Independence** buried in our nation's capital.

Another son of Marblehead, attorney Joseph Story, had been appointed to the **U.S. Supreme Court** in 1811, still the youngest ever; he would retain that position until his death in 1845.

And from 1811 to 1815, merchant William Reed served as a **U.S. Congressman** through the entire war, participating in the deliberations about the war in June 1812, and **voting against it**. Reed had been born in 1776, the year of American independence. He and his wife Hannah, daughter of merchant Robert Hooper (the Patriot, not "King" Hooper), both spent some time in Washington and, with others, were involved in **vital women's and family relief** in Marblehead.

Napoleonic Wars in Europe impacted the U.S.

For two centuries prior, the Atlantic Ocean had been a highway for North American commerce.

But as the 1700s ended and the 1800s began, an extended war in Europe, Russia, and the Baltic, propelled largely by the ambitions of Napoleon Bonaparte of France, brought trade to a virtual halt.

The young United States claimed its neutrality, but each of the belligerent nations (France and England) endeavored to pull America into the fray, first against France and then against England.

Much of the confrontation took place between the navies of France and England, mostly in the Atlantic, and both were growing short of manpower. Losses on both sides were often replenished by accosting and boarding American ships to abduct or "impress" seamen from them.

The danger was enough for Marblehead to build a **gun house**, **c.1809** – still on today's Elm Street.

America declared war against England in June 1812   *Information ends next page >*

Although most of New England had opposed going to war, it appeared more and more essential for restoring America's economically vital commerce. And to many people, it seemed like the only way to end more than two decades of that "impressment" or kidnapping of American seamen, which had been happening since the time of the Revolution and after.

President Madison had widely advocated for war, and after the very close Congressional and Senate votes in favor in early June, he signed the official declaration on June 18th 1812.

What was not known, however, was that *just five days later*, on 23 June, after months and years of diplomacy and negotiations abroad (and the unrelated assassination of the previously unyielding British prime minister in May), the British government finally repealed most of its aggressive and restrictive policies relating to neutral (mainly U.S.) vessels and foreign trade. *But it was too late.* The U.S. declaration of war was already on its way across the Atlantic.

Nearly 3 years of conflict ensued, mainly at sea and on the Great Lakes, **claiming more than 20,000 British and American lives**, in addition to severe economic and social losses for their families, grave impacts on Native Americans, and extensive destruction of ships, property, and government infrastructure. **In the long run, however,** Canada benefited most, and **the United States gained its first real sense of national unity, identity and pride**.

But in 1812, Britain's hundreds of navy vessels far out-numbered America's roughly 16 Navy ships – including 6 large frigates that had been built late in the 1790s, though more were added later – and scores of vessels privately built, outfitted and sent out from coastal Atlantic ports.

By 1814, Britain's blockade of nearly the entire Atlantic coast further crippled the U.S. economy, and made it difficult for American ships to venture out to seek and engage enemy vessels ~ or to return after horrifically brutal battles at sea.

Just as in most wars, multiple sons and brothers served, and many families, American or British, and to a lesser extent Canadian or Native American, **gave up fathers as well as sons.**

And at the war's end in early 1815, just as in Korea and Vietnam and the earlier World Wars as well, **more than 500 seamen from Marblehead remained in British prisons**, even if not for very long – an almost unfathomable percentage of the total from Marblehead who saw action.

Many of those who did return were maimed and could no longer work to support their families. Some languished in generally ineffective military hospitals, and many would never recover from their wounds, despite their families' care at home. Others were lost, never to return – just as in the Revolution and the Civil War to come. But the proportionate numbers in 1815 were greater.

With such significant losses in Marblehead's population of able-bodied men and boys, countless families were destitute, and scores of widows and orphans had no means of live-lihood. Many were in the town's **work house** and **poor house (built 1808)**, and aid organiza-tions were established – such as Marblehead's **Female Humane Society**, **founded in 1816**.

It is difficult to imagine the appearance of the town and the conditions in Marblehead between the two wars. **Some new homes were built** (but few compared to Salem, Newburyport or Charlestown) and **others were enlarged** and **remodeled in new styles.** But **many were run down** and *crowded* – filled with **women, children, and older men,** facing shortages, nursing wounded husbands, brothers & fathers, and so many others waiting for loved ones to return ~ many they would never see again. **A national economic crisis in 1819** added to the distress.

But despite the traumatic times, young people came of age and married, raised new families, and would help rebuild the fishing economy to **prosperity that would dramatically transform the town** in the **1830s**, before new **economic challenges in 1837** and **losses in 1846** and after.