



ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

ALisa Casas, Communications Director
SMCG TV 95 Station Manager
Media Inquiries: 301-475-4200 ext. 71342 or pio@stmarysmd.com

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NEWS RELEASE *for Immediate Release*

No. 2020 – 255

November 24, 2020, 8:30 a.m.

**St. Mary's County Museum Division Partners with Local History Enthusiast
for Temporary War of 1812 Model Ship Exhibit at Old Jail Museum**

LEONARDTOWN, MD – The St. Mary's County Museum Division, has partnered with a local model ship aficionado and builder to install a temporary exhibit at the Old Jail Museum about the *HMS Albion*, the flagship of the flotilla of British ships that raided Leonardtown and St. Mary's County during the War of 1812 Chesapeake Campaign in 1814.

This enthusiast, Robert Ballard, a retired Colonel with the United States Marine Corps, loaned the stunning and intricate model of the vessel to be on display at the Old Jail Museum so the public can enjoy the piece and learn more about a trying time in the town's, and county's, history. Several display panels describe the history behind the ship, her raids in Southern Maryland, and Admiral Cockburn, the British Admiral who commanded the British fleet. The exhibit can be seen during regular museum hours, daily from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m., or 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. during Leonardtown First Fridays.

Col. Ballard has always been fascinated with the "Age of Sail" ever since he was young, and that interest caused him to want to translate that passion into physical art – model shipbuilding. "My first attempt at this hobby came in 2018 when I ordered a scale wooden model kit of the *USS Constitution*, our nation's oldest commissioned vessel," says Ballard, reminiscing on his first project. "After countless hours of learning the skill and building the vessel, I was hooked."

Armed with this new skill set, he set out to build the *HMS Albion* after a visit to Tudor Hall in Leonardtown. "This model was even more complicated, intricate and challenging than the *USS Constitution*, and It took almost a year to complete." Once finished, Ballard wanted to share his passion with the local community as he believed keeping this model behind closed doors made no sense. He reached out to the Town of Leonardtown, who suggested it go in the Old Jail Museum, which also houses the Leonardtown Visitor Center, where it now resides. The St. Mary's County Museum Division worked with Col. Ballard on the exhibit pieces, set up, and installation so the public can learn more.

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Col. Ballard's enthusiasm for model shipbuilding has only gotten stronger following this project. He articulates, "I have recently started my third kit, the *Cutty Sark*. She is a fully rigged clipper ship which still exists today in the South Hampton seaport in Great Britain."

He hopes the *HMS Albion* and the story of the raids in Southern Maryland contribute to the rich history of the town and that visitors find the model and the story interesting. For more information about this exhibit, the Old Jail Museum, or the St. Mary's County Museum Division, please contact Andrew.ponti@stmarysmd.com.

About the St. Mary's County Museum Division

The St. Mary's County Museum Division was established by the Commissioners of St. Mary's County to collect, preserve, research and interpret the historic sites and artifacts which illustrate the natural and cultural histories of St. Mary's County and the Potomac River. With this as its charter, the Museum Division serves as a resource, liaison and community advocate for all St. Mary's County public and private cultural assets. For more information regarding hours of operation, programs, events, admission prices and more, visit the St. Mary's County Museum Division's social media pages on Facebook at [Facebook.com/SCIMuseum](https://www.facebook.com/SCIMuseum), [Facebook.com/1836Light](https://www.facebook.com/1836Light), [Facebook.com/DraydenSchool](https://www.facebook.com/DraydenSchool) or [Facebook.com/TheOldJailMuseum](https://www.facebook.com/TheOldJailMuseum), or on Twitter at [@StClemIsMuseum](https://twitter.com/StClemIsMuseum), [@OldJailMuseum](https://twitter.com/OldJailMuseum) or [@PineyPtLHMuseum](https://twitter.com/PineyPtLHMuseum), or at Museums.StMarysMD.com.

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