

Fort McHenry

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine
Maryland



Armistead & Armistead: Two Battles, Two Heroes, 1814-1863

Library Field Guide No. 7

Was George Armistead related to Lewis A. Armistead?

The answer to one of the most asked questions at Fort McHenry is yes! Lt. Colonel George Armistead is the uncle of Brigadier General Lewis Addison Armistead, C.S.A. of Gettysburg fame.

Lt. Col. George Armistead, USA (1780-1818)



Born on April 10, 1780, in Caroline County, Virginia, George was one of five brothers, all of whom later served in the War of 1812. On May 18, 1813, while serving as an artillery officer at Fort Niagara, New York, he took an active part in the American attack on Fort George across the Niagara River in upper Canada and was accorded the honor of delivering the captured British flags to President Madison. On his taking command of Fort McHenry in June 1813, Armistead ordered a flag made "so large that the British will have no difficulty in seeing it from a distance." He earned his enduring place in American history under that flag at Fort McHenry whose stalwart defense of Baltimore against British attack in 1814 inspired Francis Scott Key to write The Star-Spangled Banner. Armistead remained in command of the fort until his untimely death at age 38 on April 25, 1818.

Brig. Gen. Lewis Addison Armistead, CSA (1817-1863)



Son of Walker Keith Armistead and nephew of George, Lewis is one of the best remembered of the Confederate brigade leaders in "Pickett's Charge" at Gettysburg on July 3, 1863. Wounded by musketry in a brief moment of seeming victory as he and his troops broke through Union lines on Cemetery Ridge, he died two days later of "fatigue and mental anxiety" and was buried on the Spangler farm near where he fell. One month later his remains were re-interred beside his Uncle George in Old St. Paul Cemetery in downtown Baltimore. His father designed and constructed the stone seawall at Fort McHenry in 1817 as well as the entrance gate and brick boundary wall at the northeast park entrance.

For further reading:

Motts, Wayne E. *Trust in God and Fear Nothing: General Lewis A. Armistead, C.S.A.* Gettysburg: Farnsworth House Military Impressions, 1994.

Sheds, Scott S. *Guardian of the Star-Spangled Banner: Lt. Col. George Armistead and the Fort McHenry Flag* Baltimore: Toomey Press, 1999.