

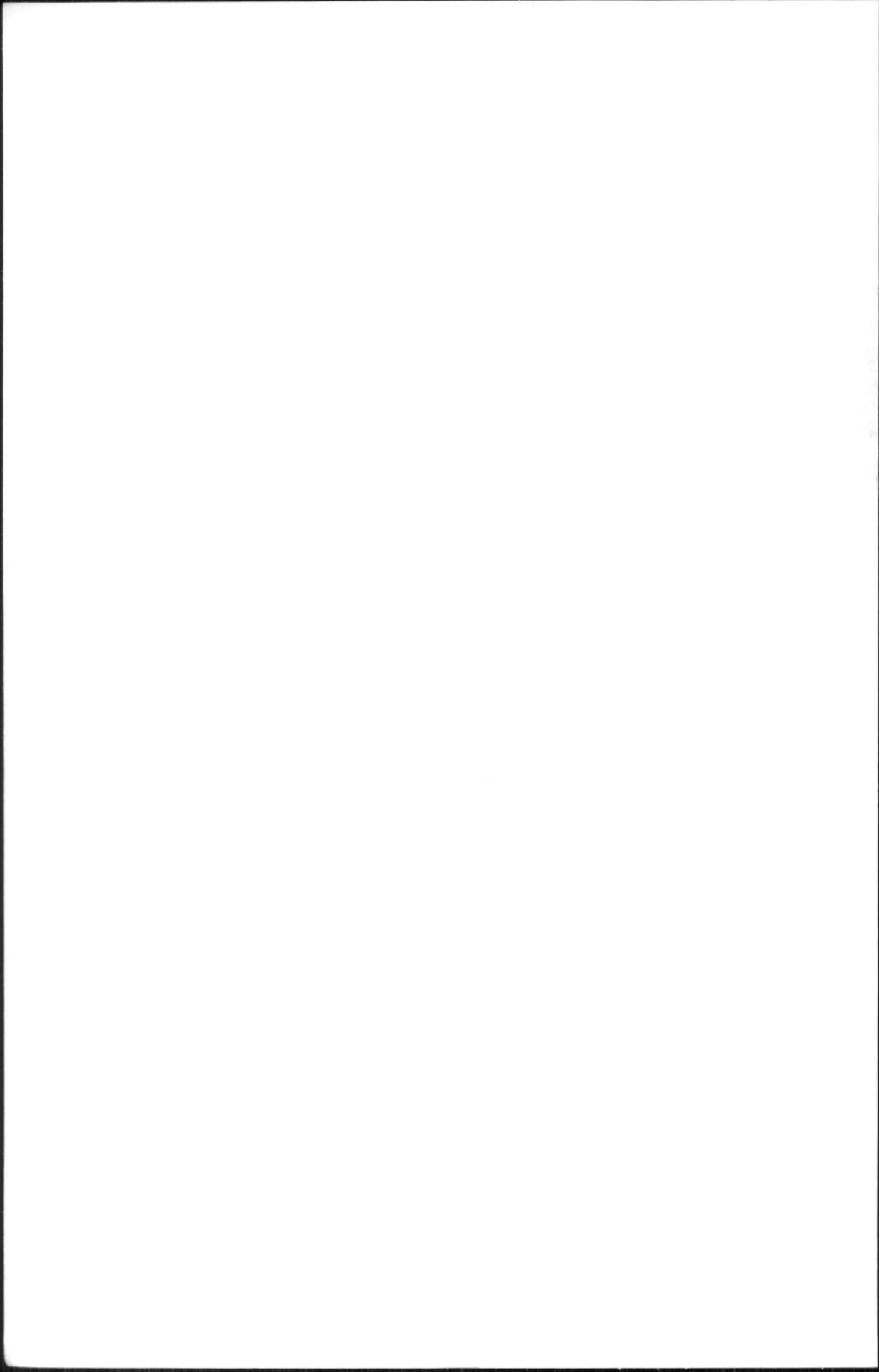
Special Issue

M A R Y L A N D

Historical Magazine



The War of 1812 in the
Maryland Historical Magazine



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Founded 1844

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Editor's Notebook

"From the Lips and Pens"

In April 1854, the officers of the ten-year-old Maryland Historical Society planned to "write and publish a memoir" of the fighting at North Point and Fort McHenry and issued a call for papers, recollections, and anecdotes, particularly "from the lips and pens of those who are still spared from the decreasing roll." The call went out during the fortieth anniversary year of the battles and the heroic defense of the city.*

This year, the bicentennial of the war's beginning, the society opened a breathtakingly provocative exhibit, "In Full Glory Reflected: Maryland During the War of 1812," and published two books—Donald Hickey, *187 Things You Should Know about the War of 1812*, and Ralph Eshelman and Burton Kummerow, *In Full Glory Reflected: Discovering the War of 1812 in the Chesapeake*. The *Maryland Historical Magazine* herewith adds this Special Issue: "Highlights of the War of 1812" to the celebration.

With one exception, all of the pieces selected are reprints, from the journal's inaugural volume in 1906 through 2009, an eclectic sampler of eyewitness accounts, reminiscences, and emerging twentieth- and twenty-first-century academic scholarship. Jim Bailey, Park Ranger at Fort McHenry, deftly interpreted this collection, rightly noting that much work remains toward a fuller understanding of Maryland's role in this "forgotten war." Scott Sheads, also a Fort McHenry ranger, contributed the last piece, a poignant look back at how the heroes of September 1814 became the revered and celebrated Old Defenders of Baltimore. With particular thanks to Dustin Meeker, Assistant Editor, for selecting the articles and organizing this issue—welcome to the masthead.

PDA

Cover

The Great Garrison Flag, Baltimore, 1814

Major George Armistead took command of Fort McHenry in the summer of 1814 as the British fleet sailed toward the Chesapeake. Determined to protect the port city, he commissioned two flags, a standard storm flag and a garrison flag "so large that the British will have no difficulty in seeing it from a distance." Measuring thirty by forty-two feet, this is the banner that Francis Scott Key waited through the night to see as the smoke cleared. His jubilant relief inspired the "Defense of Fort McHenry."

The flag remained in Armistead's family for ninety years, during which time War of 1812 veterans and notables received souvenir snippets, the practice of which reduced the overall size of the flag by more than two hundred square feet. In 1905, Eben Appleton, Armistead's grandson, entrusted the colors to the Smithsonian. Recently conserved, the tattered icon remains among America's most enduring patriotic symbols. (Smithsonian Institution.)

*The MdHS never published the memoir.

Introduction

JAMES BAILEY

ON THE EVE of the bicentennial of the War of 1812, Maryland finds itself in the enviable position of revisiting one of the most celebrated moments in American history, the writing of the national anthem. Over forty years ago, historian Frank A. Cassell argued that although “one might question the necessity and value of returning to such a familiar episode . . . the historical literature on this event appears to be curiously incomplete.” Cassell thought that a focus on the writing of the national anthem too often had become a “hook” for recent work on the war, overshadowing the larger story of Baltimore’s defense. Yet the truth is that even significant personalities such as Francis Scott Key are in need of additional study—Edward Delaplaine wrote the last full-length biography in 1937.

The role that Marylanders played during the war is at once simple and complex. In 1812 intricate political, social, and racial divisions were reflected in the contested reasoning for going to war over “Free Trade & Sailors’ Rights,” but by late summer of 1814 a visceral response to British invasion entwined ideas of honor, bravery, home, and hearth into a unity of purpose that overcame those divisions. The articles in this issue survey the breadth of Maryland’s experience during the War of 1812 while demonstrating the possibilities for further research and the continued need for more comprehensive and inclusive analysis. In other words, enough has not been written about Key, let alone the battle for Baltimore or Maryland and the Chesapeake’s wartime experience. Richard Chew in 2009 revealed that Baltimore first marched into war, not against the British, but against itself.

The Baltimore Riots began in June of 1812 over the publication of Alexander Contee Hanson’s *Federalist Republican* and its anti-war and anti-Madison administration rhetoric. Chew demonstrated that political partisanship was simply the spark that inflamed “emerging racial, social, and economic divisions in the early republic.” In Baltimore specifically, a “nascent manufacturing class had already begun the process of reconfiguring the prevailing social order.” What began as a traditionally accepted way to silence divergent political views (the public destruction of symbols such as the printing house) soon descended “into small, chaotic, and violent” episodes of Irish and German immigrants attacking free African Americans who competed for the same jobs. The rioting revealed that traditional social deference was waning fast.

Although political sparring over the war revealed developing cracks in

the established social order, it also brought to the forefront once more the unfulfilled promise in the Declaration of Independence. The United States found itself in the disagreeable position of arguing for the rights of its seamen pressed and forced to serve against their will while maintaining the system of slavery. Christopher George (1996) showed that while the British campaigns in the Chesapeake in 1813 and 1814 were hailed as the work of barbarians, thieves, and rogues, thousands of African Americans saw the enemy as liberators.

But here too the lines of racial and national identity were blurred. Two hundred former slaves fought for the British at North Point and Baltimore against free blacks manning heavy artillery in the American defenses—and both made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of, or against, the flag Key hailed as flying “o’er the land of the free.” As George argued, the British “were not offering freedom from humanitarian reasons but purely for their own ends, to use the slaves’ manpower and local knowledge, as well as to sap the economic strength of the region. When it was not convenient to aid them in their escape, the slaves were turned away.”

Although the War of 1812 was primarily fought in the United States and Canada, it took place against the larger backdrop of the global conflict known as the Napoleonic Wars. This international struggle came to American shores with Wellington’s veterans and the technology they brought with them. Ralph Robinson (1945) argued that even the battle-hardened troops of Europe were unnerved by the use of Congreve rockets at the battle of Leipzig. When they appeared in Britain’s Chesapeake campaigns, Americans viewed the weapon as “cowardly” and “unfair.” Perhaps most intriguing, Robinson argued that “the employment of rockets in the War of 1812 most familiar to Americans” came at the battle of Bladensburg, not the “rocket’s red glare” over Fort McHenry that Americans know so well.

But the battle of Bladensburg is worth another look. Following the battle the secretary of war was forced into retirement and the commanding general, William Winder, superseded in command of Baltimore’s defenses. The “Battle of Bladensburg” (1906) is an early attempt to look at the factors that brought about defeat rather than simply blaming untried militia and argued that “the blunders of the battle of Bladensburg are so appalling, that it certainly does rob the victors of any credit which might have come to them.” British skill did not win the day so much as incompetence in the American command structure. Indeed, inexperienced American citizen-soldiers fought well at Bladensburg, but the prior planning and effective leadership necessary for victory were not present.

As Frank Cassell argued in “Response to Crisis: Baltimore in 1814” (1971), the opposite was true in Baltimore. The city had leadership and resources to spare, and Cassell’s survey of Baltimore’s preparations and execution of its

defense serves as an appropriate complement to Chew's introduction to the city's role at the beginning of the war. If division marked Baltimore in June of 1812, unity was the watchword two years later in September 1814. Again, advanced preparation and determined, unified leadership prior to the British attack helped overcome the social, economic, and racial tensions in the city. The enemy at the door also lent an emotional weight to the need to stand together, as Key put it, "between their lov'd homes and the war's desolation." Cassell argued, "the great wealth acquired through trade, the strength and flexibility of local political institutions, and superb leadership exercised by an intelligent and aggressive business elite" resulted in victory. Nevertheless, "in the final analysis, the authorities would have been helpless had it not been for the spirit of voluntarism and citizen participation that characterized Baltimore in these critical days," a telling counterpoint to the turmoil in the streets during the summer of 1812.

None of these articles is the final word on Maryland's pivotal role during the War of 1812. Baltimore's growing pains, the courageous service of Maryland's citizen-soldiers, the harrowing struggle for equality by African Americans, and the experiences of Key and other prominent Marylanders cry out for fresh analysis. But this selection of articles does let the reader glimpse the breadth of Marylander's experiences. In 2012 they demonstrate the true complexity of Key's immortal lines. They remind us that individual emotions, political beliefs, social and economic concerns, proper leadership, and racial tension can appear to be overwhelming. But long nights of struggle can give way to a new dawn—and reveal the inherent strength of a diverse people unified in common purpose.

Jim Bailey is a Park Ranger at Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine.

The Origins of Mob Town: Social Division and Racial Conflict in the Baltimore Riots of 1812

RICHARD CHEW

[104 (2009): 272–301]

Through the grating of his prison cell in the Baltimore City Jail, John Thompson could see the rioters swing their hatchets against the door opposite his. As they hacked through the wooden barrier, John Hall, another witness to the scene, remembered Thompson calling out that it was “a pity they should kill those poor devils instead of us . . . you are at the wrong door—here we are.” The taunt worked, and the rioters’ fury quickly turned toward Thompson’s cell. Once the rioters were through the door, however, they were surprised to see Captain Daniel Murray inside, brandishing a gun at their heads and warning the rioters, “my lads, you had better retire; [otherwise] we shall shoot some of you.” For what seemed an interminable moment, the shadows of the rioters’ hatchets and Murray’s pistol danced silently on the wall as both sides glared at each other. Thompson and Murray finally rushed the door and several prisoners made it outside, but they quickly ran into a throng of angry rioters in the streets. John Hall, another of the prisoners, later stated that “two rough looking men” had seized him and “tore my shirt leaving my bosom bare.” Hall was beaten and tossed onto the bloody pile of victims from which he could see “several of my friends knocked down and their blood scattered all over the pavement.” One of them, Thompson, had been struck from behind and tumbled down the stairs of the jail into the streets. A half-a-dozen rioters seized him, beat and then dragged him away to be tarred, feathered, and lashed. Thompson later reported that several rioters also wanted to gouge his eyes out, and others wished to break his legs with an iron bar. The rioters ultimately decided to set him ablaze, but Thompson rolled on the ground and put out the flames.¹ Violence continued until about 10 o’clock on the evening of July 28, 1812, in the worst riot that Baltimore or any other city in the republic had ever witnessed until that date.

News of the violence spread throughout the country, and details of the mob’s brutality astounded an American public unaccustomed to reading about people being killed

The author, a previous contributor to this journal, is associate professor of history at Virginia State University, Petersburg.

in a riot.² Twenty-first-century sensibilities remain haunted by the barbarous images of the twentieth century's deadly riots, and thus to the modern observer, violence and rioting seem naturally linked.³ Yet Americans in the post-Revolutionary period had a far different expectation of what occurred in a riot. During the eighteenth century riots typically involved small, disciplined groups that advanced recognizable political agendas by humiliating an individual, destroying symbols, or demolishing property. In a typical eighteenth-century mob action, rioters burned a rascal in effigy or tarred and feathered someone. Injuries were thus common, but few people died. Prior to the summer of 1812 no American mob had ever decided to tar and feather someone and then set the person ablaze—as they did with John Thompson outside the Baltimore City Jail.⁴ Several historians have described the more orderly eighteenth-century form of rioting as part of an “Anglo-American mob tradition,” and although this type of rioting never achieved complete political legitimacy in America, its ritualized nature inspired relatively little fear compared to the more deadly riots of later centuries.⁵ The 1812 Baltimore riot differed completely from the typical actions of the “Anglo-American mob tradition,” and thus represents an important transition point into the more violent rioting typical of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

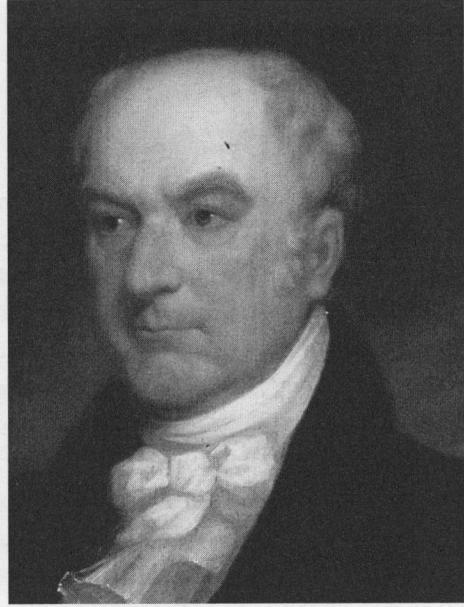
The political dimensions of the 1812 Baltimore riot and its place within the history of American rioting have certainly warranted the attention they have been afforded. The blood-soaked events have been interpreted from a number of different political perspectives and more recently, within the context of the history of rioting in the United States. Yet the riot and the tumultuous events that led up to the violence in the preceding months, can be seen in another way—Baltimore's long troubled summer of 1812 provides a unique window into the blurry and often hidden social, economic, and racial fault lines of Jeffersonian America. Historians have discussed at length the important changes in American market relations and political economy during the Jeffersonian period, but what these analyses have not revealed is how Americans, both individually and in groups, reacted to the social and economic changes happening around them. What fears, hopes, and prejudices emerged in this era? To what extent did the racial, ethnic, and class divisions so recognizable in Jacksonian America actually have their genesis in Jeffersonian America? A study of the Baltimore rioters' actions in 1812 cannot fully answer these questions, yet through a close study of the rioters, the victims, and the authorities who tried, sometimes half-heartedly, to stop the violence, as well as the commentaries of witnesses to the riots and those who later condemned the events, we can gain a better understanding of the social, economic, and racial divisions within American society in the opening decades of the nineteenth century. What emerges is the portrait of a city facing a summer of violence for which there was no single cause or reason. Political partisanship provided the initial spark, but for many it was a convenient cover to contest the emerging racial, social, and economic divisions

of the early republic. The polyvocality of the 1812 Baltimore riots thus can provide some insight into the origins of the more calcified racial and class divisions of the subsequent Jacksonian period.⁶

The Federal Hill Riot of 1807

During the eighteenth century the prevalence of a deferential social order made the use of organized police forces unnecessary. When officials confronted a mob, either the mayor, the magistrates, or the constables addressed the rioters directly, literally reading the Riot Act. By actually reading the act, officials were able to use their personal prestige and position to convince the mob to disperse. Eighteenth-century artisans and journeymen respected the traditional social hierarchy and usually responded to these demands. As long as the riot remained orderly, however, most officials provided enough time for the mob to finish tearing down a building or burning someone in effigy. In England, mobs had the tacit approval to continue their activities for more than an hour after the Riot Act was read. In America, mobs were usually allowed to finish their work and disperse quietly without interference from the mayor, the magistrates, or the militia.⁷ If rioters either refused to disperse or became disorderly, the mayor could call upon the militia for help, an option used sparingly as the militia could not always be relied upon to muster. Even when the militia did muster, officials often found it difficult to convince them to use force against members of their own community. When the militia agreed to fight, the use of force threatened what E. P. Thompson called the "credibility of the gentry and magistracy." The "reassertion of paternalistic authority" thus remained the preferred means of controlling an eighteenth-century mob.⁸

As late as 1807 the Anglo-American mob tradition and traditional methods of crowd control continued to function in Baltimore as they had during the eighteenth century. This is evident in the conduct of the mob during a riot on Federal Hill that year. The *Chesapeake-Leopard* incident had united most Baltimoreans behind the Jefferson administration. Two days after the attack on the American warship a town meeting of more than 3,000 people condemned the British outrage. Militia units began mustering and war had become an acceptable policy. Any treasonable activity risked the vengeance of the mob. In the midst of this charged political atmosphere, Aaron Burr, who was already under indictment in New York and New Jersey for the murder of Alexander Hamilton, was indicted for treason against the United States. Burr had allegedly plotted with General James Wilkinson, the military governor of the Louisiana Territory, to establish the area as a separate nation. Wilkinson then betrayed Burr, arresting the former vice president for leading an armed force down the Ohio River. Although Burr was a Republican, two of Baltimore's leading Federalists, Robert Goodloe Harper and Luther Martin, agreed to defend him against the charge. Chief Justice John Marshall presided over the trial in Richmond, Virginia. After Harper and Martin won Burr's acquittal, however, the Baltimore mob waited



Luther Martin (1748–1826) and Robert Goodloe Harper (1765–1825). (Maryland Historical Society.)

patiently for the lawyers' return to the city.⁹

In late October, Martin returned home, accompanied by Aaron Burr himself. Republican frustrations with the jurists' audacity surfaced quickly. On November 2, Captain Leonard Frailey marched the Patriot's Volunteer company to Martin's house on Charles Street where they played the rogues' march as they passed by. On November 3 the Republican newspaper *Whig* printed "An Earnest Proposal," calling upon "the young men of Baltimore" to "confer a mark of distinction" on Martin "with a suit of tar and feathers." Baltimore's mayor, Thorowgood Smith, himself a Federalist, worried about the mob's intent. That afternoon he took the unusual step of assembling his constables and asking General John Stricker to assemble the militia's cavalry. Captains Samuel Hollingsworth and William Barney, the son of the naval hero, Joshua Barney, agreed to assemble their men, but Captain James Biays of the Fell's Point Troop of Light Dragoons believed that "no mischief would be done by the people," and refused to assemble his men.¹⁰

By late afternoon a mob had gathered at Fells Point and began parading effigies of Martin and Burr on carts, north through Old Town and then west to Jones Falls. Smith's constables were unable to stop the mob from crossing Jones Falls into Baltimore Town, and because the mob had officially defied public authority, at this point the parade became a riot. Yet Smith was reluctant to order the cavalry to intervene because the procession continued in an orderly manner without incident. Hoping that Biays would carry political favor with the mob because of his refusal to muster, Smith convinced him to try and lead the procession away from Luther Martin's

house. Biays agreed and successfully led the mob around the Basin to Federal Hill where they finally set the effigies of Martin and Burr ablaze.¹¹

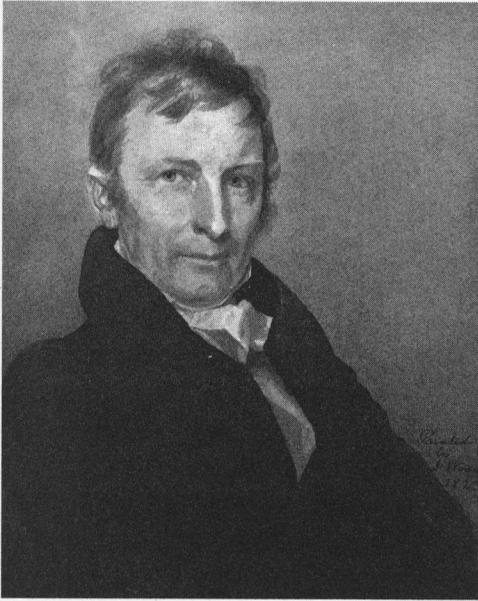
The procession from Fells Point and the reaction of the local government on November 3 provided a near-textbook example of a traditional eighteenth-century American riot. Biays's personal ability to take command over the rioters is a clear example that the Anglo-American mob tradition had survived into the nineteenth century. Although the *Whig* had urged Baltimore's young men to tar and feather Luther Martin, the mob opted instead to burn him in effigy. A symbol, rather than a person, was therefore the target of the mob's vengeance. When confronted by the constables at Jones Falls, the mob ignored the order not to cross into Baltimore Town, but remained peaceful. Mayor Smith considered using the militia, but, in a fashion typical to eighteenth-century crowd control, opted instead to use the mob's deference for James Biays as a means of containment. The mob reacted positively to Biays's position, indicating their recognition of the prevailing social order, and the subsequent bonfire recalled the Boston tradition of parading and then burning effigies of the Pope on November 5—appropriately just two days after the Baltimore mob had paraded the effigies of Martin and Burr from Fells Point to Federal Hill.

The Baltimore Riots of June 1812

Five years later, during the summer of 1812, Baltimore faced several months of chronic mob violence. Unlike the Federal Hill riot of 1807, the mob's actions in 1812 often seemed uncontrolled and undirected by eighteenth-century standards of rioting and riot control. Yet there was structure and purpose in the disorder. Baltimore rioters often targeted specific ethnic groups, African Americans, and symbols of wealth, both person and property. Although none of these actions could be easily summarized as a "race riot" or by a similar trope, the violence did reveal the growing fault lines of class and race in the early republic that would later calcify into the more rigid divisions of the Jacksonian period.

Alexander Contee Hanson, like most elites at that time, was unaware of the simmering cauldron of social and economic animosities brewing in Baltimore in 1812. His interests lay only in advancing the Federalist Party. Thus in the wake of the 1807 Federal Hill riot, Hanson, a young Federalist zealot, had established the *Federalist Republican*. The newspaper specialized in character assassinations and the shrillest Federalist rhetoric, thus attracting the immediate disdain and resentment of the city's Republican majority. A harbinger of the troubles ahead occurred in 1809 when the Republican-dominated Baltimore militia sought to court martial Hanson, then a lieutenant in a volunteer company, for one of his rancorous editorials. The effort failed in court, but the incident demonstrated that the upstart Federalist publisher had already worn down much of the patience of Baltimore's leadership just two years after his arrival in the city.¹²

The bitterness between Hanson and Baltimore's Republicans bubbled over after



William Winder (1775–1824). (Maryland Historical Society)

Congress declared war on Great Britain on June 18, 1812. The declaration of war was not a unanimous vote, and the split in the Congress reflected the disunity of the American nation. Nowhere was this disunity more evident than in Maryland, where the Congressional delegation split by a margin of six to three. In Harford County, in northern Maryland, government authorities could not accommodate all those who wished to join the militia and the army. A new regular army unit commanded by Colonel William Winder, and funded in part by Baltimore Republicans, needed to be created.¹³ In Montgomery County, Maryland, south of Baltimore, the public greeted the declaration of war as a menacing and foolhardy decision. Hanson was one of the most outspoken of Montgomery County's critics.

On June 20, two days after Congress declared war, the *Federalist Republican* publicly condemned the action, calling it "unnecessary," "inexpedient," and showing the "marks of undisguised foreign influence." Hanson declared that "we will never breathe under the dominion direct or derivative of Bonaparte."¹⁴ Federalists had been claiming for months that the movement towards war was the work of Irish immigrants and Napoleon Bonaparte, who were together trying to drag the United States into conflict with the British to serve their own ends. Federalists frequently criticized President James Madison as a "dupe" to Napoleon. Many Republicans at Fell's Point wanted to make an example out of Jacob Wagner, Alexander Hanson's partner. A crowd of several hundred met at Myer's Gardens, and discussed plans to clothe Wagner in a terrapin shell, sheep skins, and a pair of horns. The use of the terrapin shell indicates the traditional nature in which the 1812 riots began. Maryland had strict laws against tar and feathering people, and the mob's avoidance of these tactics demonstrates their intent to conduct extralegal, though not necessarily criminal, actions.¹⁵ These

plans soon changed, however, and the mob decided instead to tear down the house on Gay Street where Hanson published the *Federalist Republican*.

Rather than act immediately against the Gay Street property, the mob waited two more days, until the evening of June 22, 1812. Although it may be coincidental, this date marked the fifth anniversary of the *Chesapeake* incident in 1807. That the mob waited until the anniversary suggests an overt political agenda in keeping with the Anglo-American mob tradition. The subsequent behavior of the mob clearly reveals the persistence of that tradition in the early evening of June 22, when a group of laborers and young mechanics gathered outside the Gay Street property. A few witnesses to the riot, later referred to as "boys," implies that they were teenagers or even younger. Yet in their depositions to the special commission set up by Maryland's House of Delegates, John Diffenderfer claimed to have seen no boys present on Gay Street, and William Barney and Samuel Hollingsworth claimed that the majority of the early rioters were laborers and young mechanics. Taking into consideration the subsequent orderly behavior of the mob, the latter observations provide the most plausible explanation of the rioters' identities.¹⁶

The attack on the property "commenced before dark," with the mob "throwing stones at the house." Captains James and Samuel Sterrett's militia "had sufficient influence" over the rioters "to drive them off, and induce the men to withdraw," but the mob soon reassembled with greater numbers and purpose.¹⁷ Just after dark, the mob began pulling down the house. According to William Gwynn, a prominent Federalist publisher who assumed ownership of Baltimore's *Federal Gazette* the following year, "the work of the destruction [was] performed with great regularity and but little noise." Gwynn described the work as being ritualistic, with approximately thirty to fifty rioters "constantly employed in destroying the property," and another three to five hundred spectators "in the street near the office" who did nothing to aid the local authorities in stopping the riot.¹⁸

Mayor Edward Johnson soon arrived on the scene and, according to Charles Burrall, the Federalist postmaster in Baltimore, "pressed forward into the crowd, remonstrating against their conduct."¹⁹ One of the rioters quickly rebuffed him, "Mr. Johnson, I know you very well, no body wants to hurt you; but the laws of the land must sleep, and the laws of nature and reason prevail; that house is a Temple of Infamy, it is supported with English gold, and it must and shall come down to the ground!"²⁰ The workmanlike conduct of the demolition and the exchange with the mayor underscored the guiding force of the Anglo-American mob tradition in this earliest stage of the riot. The rioter knew the mayor, and despite a veiled threat, treated him with respect. That the rioters refused to stop their activities immediately should not be taken as a lack of deference—rioters on both sides of the Atlantic expected officials to allow a riot to continue for a short period as long as the activities remained orderly.

The composition of the mob during the early evening also highlighted the Anglo-

American mob tradition. Although a few immigrants, most notably the French druggist Philip Lewis, and a number of individuals from outside the city were among the most boisterous rioters, the majority were natives of the city. Only one witness, Samuel Sterrett, believed that immigrants and outsiders represented the majority, and he made his claim on the basis of overheard dialects, not direct identification. Seven other witnesses, including several Federalists, professed to have some idea of the composition of the mob, and all of them recalled either a mix of immigrants and native-born Americans, or that the native Baltimoreans outnumbered all others. According to William Gwynn, "many of them, from their dress, appeared to be of the middle class of society."²¹ Paul Gilje identified fifteen of the rioters in the dockets of the Court of Oyer and Terminer, and his analysis lends weight to the accuracy of Gwynn's observation over Sterrett's. At least nine of the fifteen leaders could be considered mechanics or retailers and likely represented the leadership of the mob at Gay Street. Six of the fifteen appeared in 1813 tax records and averaged \$427 in assessed property. Their residential distribution placed four in Old Town, three in Baltimore Town, two in Fell's Point, and one from Annapolis. The strong percentage of natives among the rioters, as well as numerous mechanics, shopkeepers, and grocers, and people from the center of the city provides very strong evidence that politics alone motivated this mob.²²

By midnight June 22 the mob finished the demolition of Wagner's house on Gay Street and most of the rioters dispersed. In the Anglo-American mob tradition, the rioting should have ended at this point, but in the early morning hours of June 23 parts of the mob scattered throughout the city, continuing the violence. The records demonstrate no clear and consistent pattern to the subsequent mob actions. Some of the men continued to attack Federalists or Federalist symbols, ostensibly in protest against that party's opposition to the war. Yet other rioters directed their violence against ethnic minorities, African Americans, signs of affluence, and commercial property. These new targets suggest that racial and ethnic tensions and economic and social disaffection rather than politics motivated these rioters.

The new direction of the violence is not surprising given the significant economic and social changes that had occurred in Baltimore and throughout the United States in the previous generation. Since the Revolutionary War, and perhaps earlier, Americans had struggled with the question of how to reconcile social change and economic growth with their commitment to republican institutions and democratic aspirations. This question gained increasing relevance after the Panic of 1797, when, for the first time, many Americans began earnestly investing in banks, internal improvements, and manufacturing. The question then became acutely important after 1807 when the Jefferson administration imposed an embargo. By the War of 1812, a nascent manufacturing class had already begun the process of reconfiguring the prevailing social order in port cities like Baltimore. The viability of many artisan occupations was increasingly at risk, and the city's workforce was slowly yet inexorably moving

away from apprenticeship, journeymen, and enslaved laborers toward a working class comprised of wage earners. The continued pressure of manufactories on workshops, and the renewed commercial frustrations following the Embargo of 1807 accelerated the breakdown of the household economy. The city's deferential social order, intimately linked to the household economy, was therefore being slowly undermined, and by 1812, Baltimore was poised for a major conflagration.²³

Throughout the early morning hours of June 23 the conflicted and multi-faceted nature of the rioters' actions was in evidence. The lack of organization to the rioters' actions should not be surprising—they acted outside the traditional forms of Anglo-American mob action, and the racial and class divisions that led to violence in Jacksonian-era riots had not yet fully calcified. Many rioters claimed to be searching for Jacob Wagner, the co-publisher of *Federal Republican*. This ostensibly political reason suggests that for at least some rioters, a consistent anti-Federalism continued to guide their actions, albeit in a more chaotic way than earlier in the evening. Wagner's brother-in-law, Christopher Raborg, feared that violence against the family might occur that night. He arrived at Wagner's father's house in time to see a group of rioters demand to search the property. Raborg testified that there had been a "mixture of foreigners and natives among the rioters" on Gay Street, indicating that he was not predisposed to believing all rioters were immigrants. Yet he was certain that the leader who demanded entrance to Wagner's father's house was "from his appearance and dialect . . . a new imported Irishman." Between 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning this Irishman finally gained entrance to Wagner's father's house, and being satisfied that Jacob Wagner was not inside, departed without making further trouble.²⁴

Despite the incidents at Wagner's father's house, most rioters were not interested in finding him, nor did anti-Federalist political sentiments guide their actions. Instead, many turned their hostility towards symbols of Baltimore's growing though unevenly distributed commercial affluence, or towards African Americans who seemed to benefit from the city's changing fortunes. Charles Burrall saw "a considerable number of people march up St. Paul's Lane," and halt "opposite the office of the *Federal Gazette*," Baltimore's moderate Federalist newspaper. Burrall heard that "the word was given to attack," but others "called out no, no!" The mob subsequently abandoned the idea of demolishing the property and Burrall heard no more from them that night.²⁵ By contrast, towards midnight Robert McClellan, a shoemaker, warned Captain James Sterrett that some members of "the mob intended to attack the bank" on Second Street in downtown Baltimore "after they had destroyed the office" of the *Federal Republican*. The information proved correct, and just after midnight, a mob assembled outside the bank. Through the efforts of Andrew Boyd and Doctor John Owen, who "addressed the mob," and "induced them, after some time, to withdraw," the property was saved. Although the deposition did not indicate which bank was threatened, it was almost certainly the Baltimore Office of Discount and Deposit, the city's branch of the Bank of the United States (BUS).²⁶ The BUS

was established by the Federalists in the 1790s, but the bank had since 1800 been under Republican administration, which discounts the idea that partisan politics played a role. Rather, the bank's long history of stingy lending and circulation policies distinguished the institution from other commercial banks, making it a primary target of violence. After the Panic of 1797 the ratio of notes in circulation to specie held at the BUS plummeted from better than 2:1 to just 0.96:1, meaning that the bank had more specie in its vaults than the value of the paper currency it circulated. This did not present much of a problem for merchants who could still rely on short-term credit and whose bills of exchange could still be discounted at the bank, but for farmers, mechanics, and especially those working for wages, the lack of a circulating medium made for hard times. The bank's policies may have been understandable during the panic, but the BUS remained miserly throughout the following decade. As late as 1810, the ratio of paper currency in circulation to specie held by state-chartered banks in the U.S. stood at 2.36:1, while the ratio at the BUS was 0.93:1. Given such a glaring and continuing disregard for the needs of Baltimore's working people, the gathering of an angry mob outside of the Office Discount and Deposit is not surprising.²⁷

There were other indications of the city's emerging socio-economic divides in the early hours of June 23. The mob harassed a man named Prior on Fish Street, allegedly for having a sign on his business with the words "From London." Although Republicans often accused Federalists of being pro-British, political considerations did not motivate the attack on Fish Street. According to William Gwynn "the private animosity of some of his neighbors," who resented Prior's success in the midst of the city's commercial difficulties, "had induced them to excite the mob to attack."²⁸ Another part of the mob also dismantled a brig in the harbor that night, allegedly because it contained cargo destined for the Duke of Wellington's army in Spain.²⁹

Although politics contributed to the violence on the evening of June 22-23, these actions were also rooted in the city's burgeoning ethnic and religious antagonisms. Parts of the mob attempted to tar and feather several persons, among them Alexander Wiley, who, according to James Sterrett, "was twice forced to leave his residence in Gay Street" that night.³⁰ Samuel Sterrett added that the mob claimed Wiley had assisted the editors of the *Federal Republican*, "which was not true, and this being explained to them particularly by the gentleman who employed Wiley," they initially dispersed. The mob regrouped later that night, however, and attacked Wiley anyway, demonstrating that the alleged connection between Wiley and the Federalists was earlier used as a mask for the mob's true motivation. James Sterrett testified that the mob that attacked Wiley was "principally composed of Irishmen who were after him," suggesting that the assault was rooted in ethnic and religious antagonisms within Baltimore's Irish population.³¹

The disintegration of the mob into small, chaotic, and violent pieces accelerated

the following day, and encouraged Baltimore elites to take matters into their own hands to strike them down. Rioters threatened the homes and property of several wealthy individuals from both political parties, pulling down a house on Federal Hill, and rumors surfaced during the afternoon that a mob would attack the home of a Mr. Hutchins in Old Town.³² Thanks to advance warning, Mayor Johnson averted a riot at Hutchins's house by arriving before the mob and taking possession of the door. The mayor dispersed the initial crowd of forty or fifty rioters by leading them away from the house. Upon his return, however, an even larger crowd numbering in the hundreds had assembled. In order to control the situation, the mayor allowed several of the men to search the house. Finding that Hutchins had already fled, the mob subsequently disbanded. Remnants of the Anglo-American mob tradition are evident from Johnson's interaction with the Old Town mob, yet "before this assemblage was completely dispersed, Mr. John Diffenderfer informed" the mayor that "a few gentleman, having heard of the riot, had armed themselves, and were probably on their way."³³ Johnson quickly departed Old Town to intercept Samuel Hollingsworth and two other armed horsemen. The mayor was able to convince them to return home, but the eagerness on the part of Baltimore's elite to confront a riot with force significantly departed from custom. According to William Gwynn, Mayor Johnson still clung to the traditional belief that "persuasion would be more effectual than force in dispersing mobs," but others had already graduated to a more typically modern response.³⁴

By the morning of June 24, the mob began to direct its violence against the city's African American population, forgoing even the mask of attacking Federalists to gain political legitimacy. James Briscoe, one of the few free African Americans who owned multiple city properties, became an easy target. Briscoe had allegedly made controversial comments of some nature, but what he actually said, if indeed he said anything at all, was unclear. Major John Abel believed that the mob was under the impression that Briscoe "made declarations in favour of the British, and had declared he would be a king himself." Yet another witness believed that the mob was under the impression that Briscoe had declared "if all blacks were of his opinion, they would soon put down the whites."³⁵ In the end, it did not really matter to the mob what Briscoe had said—the rumor alone provided the rioters with all the excuse they needed, and over the next few days, the mob engaged in a campaign of racial harassment against African Americans, both free and enslaved, starting with Briscoe's two houses.

Briscoe had informed Abel of the threat to his property the night before the attack, giving Judge John Scott an entire day to take care of any legal formalities associated with calling out the militia. The judge, however, ordered Abel not to assemble his troops until a warrant could be produced for the drummer who actually made the threat against Briscoe's house. This action conveniently delayed the militia from assembling until early evening and Abel's troops arrived too late to prevent the mob

from demolishing Briscoe's house. Not satisfied with destroying just one house, they proceeded to demolish Briscoe's property next door where his daughter lived. Judge Scott's inability to produce a legal warrant before dusk may have been the result of poor timing, but it may have been a deliberate strategy to prevent the militia from assembling. Without Abel's interference, the mob's fury would be directed against Briscoe and the African American community, and subsequently, away from affluent Baltimoreans' homes.³⁶

Attacks against African Americans continued with threats to the Sharp Street Church and assaults against a free man named Remier and an enslaved man held by Mr. R. W. Watts. Although only four people were charged with a crime in the destruction of James Briscoe's house and in the beating of Remier, the beating of an enslaved man earned eight indictments from the Court of Oyer and Terminer and the immediate attention of the town leadership.³⁷ Mayor Johnson concluded that the "the treatment received by the blacks," or at least the property of slaveholders, "rendered it indispensable to adopt measures for their protection." The violence might have continued if not for a change in the weather. "It [was] raining excessively hard," and this, according to Mayor Johnson, allowed cooler heads to prevail.³⁸ A troop of horses under Colonel James Biays was subsequently called out the following day to parade the streets, and peace was finally restored.

Into July many of Baltimore's affluent families remained nervous. Almost every night after the Gay Street Riot, the mob continued to roam the streets, and the uncontrolled and chronic violence against persons and property demonstrated that the corporatism that defined eighteenth-century riots and riot control had been swept away. The seeds of further conflict lurked in the shadows of Baltimore's alleys, and the mob only required an excuse for chaos to burst onto the city streets. Samuel Hollingsworth remarked that "many Gentlemen in the City think it expedient to keep their Houses well armed."³⁹ Hollingsworth's admission is revealing as the perceived threat was specific to the city's wealthy elites without further reference to political party. Not surprising, several Baltimore elites decided to re-direct the mob's anger against a third party—the city's African Americans.

As early as June 23 affluent Baltimore residents fueled the idea of a possible uprising by African Americans. Mayor Johnson received "many reports . . . of threats and imprudent observations of the black population, by some of the most respectable inhabitants" of the city. Samuel Sterrett also testified that "in the midst of all this anarchy and confusion, alarms were raised of a conspiracy among the negroes, hostile to the whites."⁴⁰ At best, these fears arose from a legitimate concern that the almost continuous rioting of the past thirty-six hours would encourage a rebellion. At worst, wealthy Baltimoreans manipulated the racism of the mob to deflect attention away from themselves.

Once the specter of an uprising was raised, rioters quickly turned against African Americans. Rising prices and stagnant wages between 1802 and 1812 meant that times

were hard for Baltimore's working people, and much of the city's white working poor, including the substantial population of Irish and German immigrants in Baltimore, competed with African Americans for employment. Many of the city's manufacturers and artisans preferred hiring black laborers, both free and enslaved, over white wage earners, an economic choice that added to the city's racial divide. The relative segregation of the city's immigrants to the most peripheral parts of the city likely contributed to white wage earners' sense of economic disadvantage as well. Unlike African Americans, who did not congregate into segregated neighborhoods until the 1820s, immigrants lived in geographically isolated areas as early as 1812.⁴¹ Baltimore Town, the wealthiest area of the city, accounted for 51 percent of the city's residences in 1812, yet the area housed just 35 percent of the city's immigrants. Almost a third lived in either Federal Hill or the western precincts, compared to just 14 percent of the city's overall population. The location of so many immigrants away from Baltimore Town isolated them from the most lucrative area of the city.⁴²

The composition of the mob that targeted African Americans in June clearly shows that they came from the most marginal parts of the city—socially, economically, and geographically. Paul Gilje could not locate in Baltimore Town any of the sixteen rioters charged with assaulting African Americans. Few of the accused could be called mechanics, only three appeared in militia rolls, and just one, who was assessed at \$50, could be found in the tax records. All of those charged identified themselves as either journeymen or laborers, unlike the rioters on Gay Street, or those who participated in any of the riots during the rest of the summer, where at least one artisan or shopkeeper was present.⁴³ For these workers the merest hint of a conspiracy served as adequate reason for ongoing violence against African Americans after June 23.

By mid-July mob activity had finally abated. Federalists and Republicans peacefully participated together during the July 4th observances, and John Hargrove, a Republican and the city registrar, commented that "the peace of the city was restored, and he dreaded the consequences" of another riot. Colonel James Biays, the Republican commander of the Fell's Point Dragoons, commented that the restoration of Hanson's newspaper "would produce another riot."⁴⁴ Unfortunately, the city's seeming return to peace was temporary—the ethnic, racial, economic, and social tensions that had been slowly heating up in the city for a decade and a half were about to boil over.

The Charles Street Riot of 1812

Alexander Hanson remained unsatisfied with the outcome of the Gay Street riot. Contrary to the wishes of many Maryland Federalists, he intended to return to Baltimore under arms and re-establish the offices of the *Federal Republican* in a house rented to Jacob Wagner at No. 45 Charles Street. A few hot-tempered Federalists, including John Hanson Thomas, the Federalist leader in Frederick County, sup-

ported Hanson's scheme. One Federalist, Colonel John Lynn, went even further to recommend that Hanson recruit "a full quantity of gallant men to defend" the house on Charles Street and that the men be armed with muskets, buckshot, bayonets, hatchets, and tomahawks. Lynn assured that he would himself "join those gallant spirits, going on that noble enterprise," but when the time came just a few days later, he did not go to Baltimore.⁴⁵

Hanson recruited a dozen people to help defend the house, and John Howard Payne, a twenty-year-old actor from New York City for whom Hanson was a benefactor, rode through the countryside to muster additional support. Generals "Light Horse" Harry Lee and James Lingan, both of whom were Revolutionary War heroes, also arrived in Baltimore to join Hanson on the night of July 26, 1812. On the morning of July 27, Hanson had the latest edition of his newspaper circulated throughout the city. Although the paper had been printed in Georgetown, it carried the address of the Charles Street house and criticized the local government for its failure to prevent the June 22 demolition of the Gay Street office.⁴⁶ Lee hoped that the house's armaments would only be needed in the most unlikely circumstances, but Hanson's brash decisions to antagonize the populous and let them know exactly where to find him suggests that he wanted a fight. During the morning and early afternoon, numerous Federalists from Baltimore joined Hanson, and by late afternoon, almost thirty armed men were prepared to defend No. 45 Charles Street from the mob.⁴⁷

A number of Baltimore officials had advance warning of Hanson's activities and could have acted to preserve the peace before the mob's arrival. On the afternoon of the twenty-seventh, at least four people related concerns over the security of the Charles Street property either to Mayor Johnson or to the city registrar, John Hargrove. The residents included Mrs. White, the owner of the Charles Street property that Jacob Wagner had rented and then turned over to Alexander Hanson, Mrs. White's son Peter White, Dennis Nowland, and Richard Heath, a Federalist and a major in the Fifth Baltimore Regiment under the command of Joseph Sterrett. Hargrove expressed almost no concern about the situation on Charles Street when Nowland confronted him. He promised to "inform the Mayor . . . [as] soon as he had shut up the office and eat a bit of dinner." Hargrove finally informed Johnson of the report late that afternoon as the mayor was making preparations to take his sick child into the country. The mayor "doubted there would be an attack," and repeated the same line to Mrs. White, Peter White, and Richard Heath before leaving the city.⁴⁸ During the riots in late June, Johnson had been quick to react when property was threatened, and his actions earlier in the summer make his cavalier attitude on July 27 very troubling. He may have honestly believed that no attack would occur, but it seems highly unlikely that his political instincts would have been that far off.

The preparations on Charles Street began drawing a crowd in the late afternoon of July 27. The distribution of the *Federal Republican* that morning clearly attracted

the first of those who showed up in the streets. Dennis Nowland observed "a number of boys, of various sizes, in number of twelve or fifteen . . . and a few men in the middle of the street encouraging the boys." Violence ensued in the early evening when the boys began throwing rocks and bricks at the doors and windows of the house. Nowland approached the men "and begged of them to make the boys desist," because the house belonged to a widow. One of the men replied "no, Hanson, the damnd tory is our object, and we will have him." Nowland pleaded that "this was not the way to get him," but his words had little effect. Inside the house, Hanson was already prepared to throw caution to the wind and attack, but General Lee gave strict orders not to fire at the crowd. Instead, Ephraim Gaither, one of the defenders of the house, launched a stove plate out the second-floor window that hit Nowland, cutting off part of his left foot. Nowland later recounted that the injury "was so severe as to prevent me from walking, and I was carried home."⁴⁹

As the mob steadily increased in size, the defenders of the Charles Street house decided to take action. In an attempt to scare off the mob, General Lee gave the order to those on the second floor of the house to fire over the heads of the crowd. Surprised by the gunfire, many members of the mob momentarily backed off, but it was at this point that the French druggist Thaddeus Gale decided to lead a rush to the front door. Along with several other rioters, Gale made it to the entrance hallway as far as the staircase when the defenders of the house opened fire, killing the druggist and severely injuring two other men.⁵⁰ After Gale's death several justices of the peace circulated through the crowd, trying with little success to calm the situation. Several concerned citizens called on General John Stricker, whose house at 15 South Charles Street was easily within earshot of the events down the block. Stricker, although commander of the Baltimore Brigade, refused to act unless two magistrates signed an order that legally called out the militia.⁵¹ Meanwhile, the violence continued to escalate.

Between nine and ten o'clock, the defenders of the house fired additional shots from a second-floor window in an attempt to scare off the mob and clear the streets. Although they aimed over the rioters' heads, one of the blasts accidentally struck John Williams, a stonecutter who had been standing across the street as an idle spectator.⁵² The deaths of Gale and Williams enraged the mob and several defenders fled the house in an attempt to escape their wrath. Several of these hapless deserters were quickly apprehended and beaten. Although none of the escapees from the house were killed in these actions, many could have been if not for the timely intervention of family members who pleaded for their lives.⁵³

By midnight, after two deaths and many injuries on both sides, General Stricker finally received written authorization from two magistrates to call out the militia. By this point, the mob had grown to over six hundred, most of whom were engaged in rioting, and many of whom were "much intoxicated."⁵⁴ The general chaos of the scene stood in marked contrast to the workmanlike demolition of the Gay Street office the

previous month. Stricker ordered out just one troop of cavalry, commanded by his nephew, Major William Barney. Barney approached the mob but failed to persuade them to desist. Unwilling to attack, the major placed his cavalry between the mob and the house and waited for the city officials to arrive.⁵⁵

By three in the morning, Mayor Johnson had returned to the city, and together with General Stricker and Judge John Scott, organized the surrender of Hanson's Federalists. At seven o'clock, the militia formed a hollow square in which the Charles Street defenders were protected from the mob while being conveyed to the Baltimore City Jail for their own protection. Despite an armed escort and the combined authority of Johnson, Stricker, and Scott, violence against the defenders was barely contained. As the procession continued to the jail, Major Barney's cavalry constantly fended off rioters attempting to break the square, and one rioter, whom Barney recognized as an Irishman, directly accosted the major. The city officials and their prisoners managed to reach the jail without further casualties, and the crisis was momentarily abated.⁵⁶

On the afternoon of July 28, the mob reassembled at the jail. The prisoners inside became increasingly apprehensive about their safety as the day progressed, despite the assurances of Mayor Johnson that they would be protected. Otho Sprigg decided to save himself by moving to a different cell and lodging with common criminals. General Stricker gave orders for several hundred militia to muster, but by late afternoon only twenty to thirty troops had convened.⁵⁷ With no cavalry blocking their way and unarmed prisoners inside, the mob rushed the jail and forced the door.

The rioters vastly outnumbered the prisoners, and Thompson and his cellmates stood little chance of escaping. From his hiding place inside, Otto Sprigg, who had fired the first shot at the Charles Street riot, could see General James Lingan fall to his knees and beg for his life. The general had neither pulled the triggers on the guns that killed Williams and Gale, nor had he given the order to fire on the mob—yet none of that mattered. The mob held him and the other prisoners responsible for the deaths and paid little attention to the general's desperate pleas for mercy. Sprigg could only watch as the mob viciously clubbed, kicked, and stabbed Lingan in the chest until the old soldier slumped over.⁵⁸ David Geddes, a witness to Lingan's murder, remembered John Mumma, a butcher, glowering over Lingan's lifeless body and snarling "Look at the damn'd old tory General." Geddes could scarcely believe the words. Lingan was a hero of the Revolutionary War who survived imprisonment aboard one of the notorious British prison barges in Wallabout Bay off Brooklyn. Geddes found the butcher's comments "shocking to the feelings of humanity." Yet there was Mumma, spitting the words at the old general who did not survive this brutal assault by the Baltimore mob.⁵⁹

Just a few feet away from Lingan, another rioter thrust General "Light Horse" Harry Lee against a wall and pummeled the general until he collapsed onto the ground. Lee was a renowned cavalry officer who, like Lingan, had served in the Revo-

Revolutionary War hero General "Light Horse" Harry Lee (1756–1818) suffered gruesome and debilitating injuries during the riot. (Maryland Historical Society.)



lution with distinction. Yet his reputation did not prevent the rioters from thrusting pen knives into his face, slashing and stabbing him until he went unconscious from the pain. The mob then dragged Lee's seemingly lifeless body outside and tossed him onto a bloody pile of dead and dying prisoners. Lee survived the brutal attack, but he had been struck so many times in the face with such fury that he never fully recovered from his injuries.⁶⁰

Mayor Johnson hurried to the steps in a vain attempt to disperse the mob, but the rioters protested against his interference. One barked at the mayor, "you damn'd scoundrel don't we feed you, and is it not your duty to head and lead us on to take vengeance for the murders committed."⁶¹ The contrast to the comments made during the Gay Street riot of June 22 are striking. From his statement, the rioter clearly knew who the mayor was, but displayed no respect for him or his duty to uphold the laws. Several gentlemen quickly pulled the mayor away from the scene to save his life.⁶² Once inside the jail, the mob displayed the unbridled cruelty that led to the stabbing of General James Lingan and the vicious beating of General "Light Horse" Harry Lee.

Once outside the jail, the mob viciously attacked the prisoners. This, of course, is when John Thompson was tarred, feathered, lashed, and then set ablaze while several other prisoners were beaten until unconscious. After extinguishing the flames, Thompson was subsequently carried off by calmer heads to the Bull's Head Tavern where he was encouraged to reveal the identities of all those people who had been in the house on Charles Street the day before. Not surprisingly, Thompson broke down and provided several names. After some time, Dr. Richard Hall intervened, and pronounced that most of the prisoners were dead and that the others would

soon die of their wounds. The latter claim was not true, but Hall hoped that this declaration would encourage the mob to disperse. His words did not have the intended effect. For some time the rioters debated hanging or burning the bodies, or possibly throwing them all into the Jones Falls. Eventually the rioters decided to let Hall have the bodies for dissection. After the mob had gone Hall and other doctors moved quickly to save the lives of those badly wounded.⁶³

Even after the surviving Federalists left the city, rioters continued to roam Baltimore's streets. On the pretense of searching for copies of the *Federal Gazette*, some rioters approached the post office. Although General Stricker proved reluctant to act against the mob when it seemed the primary targets were Hanson and the Federalists, he moved decisively on July 29 to stop the violence from spreading any further. Stricker finally called out the entire Baltimore Brigade to protect the post office and ordered a cavalry charge to disperse the mob. For the next several days, armed militia patrolled the city to insure no additional rioting occurred.⁶⁴

Politics, Race, and Class

In the wake of the Baltimore riots commentators around the republic condemned the barbarity of the mob. The death of General Lingan, in particular, represented an especially appalling episode, and reactions to it were swift and scathing. In an address honoring Lingan's death, George Washington Parke Custis of Arlington bemoaned the republic's loss of innocence, and as George Washington's grandson, he garnered a national audience. Custis lamented that in the wake of the riots, "even sanguinary France now cowers to our superior genius in iniquity." He further bemoaned that France "is no longer supreme in sin," and "my soul sickens at the thought." The *Boston Repertory* went even further to suggest that Baltimore "now contains within itself the fiery materials of its own destruction." The riots foreshadowed a dismal future for the city, which, the *Repertory* predicted, "will continue to break out in eruptions of anarchy and crimes."⁶⁵ The Baltimore riots in 1812 indeed marked the breakdown of the "Anglo-American mob tradition," and signaled the beginning of a transition to the more bellicose and deadly rioting of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Baltimore earned the nickname "mob town," a pejorative term that would trail the city for more than a generation. Yet contrary to the prognostication of the *Boston Repertory*, Baltimoreans would not be alone in experiencing this more virulent type of rioting—they were simply the first.⁶⁶

Federalists around the country decried what they claimed was the inevitable result of Republican radicalism, and used the incident to gain political advantage. Alexander Contee Hanson was elected to Congress from Montgomery County and was later elected to the U.S. Senate from Maryland. More important, the October 1812 elections returned a Federalist majority to the Maryland House of Delegates that immediately launched an inquiry into the recent riots in Baltimore. The major focus of this highly politicized investigation by the Federalist-dominated House

was to answer whether or not the city's predominantly Republican leadership had acted responsibly during the riots to protect the city's Federalists. The questions were therefore directed more toward the actions of public officials and the rioters themselves than toward the underlying causes for much of the violence.

The most conspicuous example of the committee's political agenda was the twenty-fourth question that specifically asked whether or not the deponent knew of any officials who were guilty of misconduct. The legislators used the question to solicit responses concerning the conduct of General William Stansbury, a Republican who arrived at the jail just before the mob burst through the doors to attack the prisoners inside. General Stricker, not Stansbury, was the commander of the Baltimore Brigade, and Stansbury had no power to call out the militia. Thus the focus on Stansbury's conduct served little purpose other than to embarrass the city's Republicans by trying to connect Stansbury's actions or inactions to the mob's savagery. Several witnesses testified that Stansbury addressed the mob and had said "the persons in the house in Charles-Street, were all a set of rascals, and ought every man of them to have perished." Further, that "if he [Stansbury] had been present, he would have been the first man to have fired the gun [cannon] . . . in defiance of the civil authority."⁶⁷ Such language provided tacit approval for an attack against the jail, but with one exception, none of the deponents indicated that the general's words had an effect on the rioters, one way or the other. The mob did not require the approval of a Republican general to proceed. Other witnesses defended Stansbury's conduct. John Wooden and Abraham Hatten testified that far from inciting violence, Stansbury had entered the jail to help defend General Lee.⁶⁸

The House Federalists were not alone in limiting the focus of the inquiry into the riots. Eager to shift blame onto Hanson and his Federalist comrades, Baltimore Republicans also dismissed lawlessness that seemingly had no direct connection to the publication of the *Federal Republican*. Although Edward Johnson, Baltimore's Republican mayor, testified that "a number of inferior disturbances took place, confined to the Irish alone," and that he feared repercussions against African Americans and shipping on the city's docks, he maintained that "I have never believed that a spirit of insubordination to the civil authority existed" in Baltimore. In his mind, "the late unhappy disturbances in the city are certainly to be traced to the violent and inflammatory publications in the *Federal Republican* newspaper, which produced a general spirit of indignation."⁶⁹

The ostensibly political focus of the House investigation ignored any direct questioning of witnesses about the underlying causes of the riot. The committee recognized that more occurred on Baltimore's streets than a simple partisan altercation, commenting that "private revenge sought its gratification under the imposing garb of zeal against reputed enemies of their country." As the committee was only interested in ascertaining the causes of what it believed to be political intolerance and whether or not the city's officials took appropriate actions to maintain the peace, acts that

seemingly “attempted to gratify . . . embittered passions” did not hold any interest for them.⁷⁰ Thus much of what the committee considered disjointed, sporadic, and irrational in the rioters’ actions was omitted in the official report. Yet evidence of the social, economic, or racial divisions that erupted into violence during the riots may be gleaned from the depositions of the witnesses—many of whom did not overlook the “private” acts that contributed to much of the violence. Testimony concerning these actions reveals more about the reasons for the violence than either the members of the House committee or the mayor were either willing or able to face.

The return of the *Federal Republican* certainly resurrected political agitation within the city, but the reappearance of Hanson’s newspaper was the chief motivation for only some of the people who participated in the subsequent riot on Charles Street. For example, despite the constant use of the word “Tory” as an expletive, there is reason to suspect that the language can be deceiving here and that the word does not reveal a political motivation by the rioters. Samuel Sterrett, a leading Federalist and militia captain, who was politically predisposed to blaming Republicans for the violence, did not feel that the rioters necessarily targeted Federalists. Although rioters often employed the word “Tory” as a precursor to committing violence against either people or property, Sterrett believed the rioters used the word merely as a “cant term . . . which was the signal for insult and violence.” The varied “terror and consternation” that “many respectable persons” faced that night seemed to appear from multiple directions—for Sterrett, the mob was a “many headed monster.”⁷¹ What Sterrett had noticed, and had trouble articulating clearly, was that the mob used the pretense of political action to mask social and economic causes for their violence. The riots on Gay Street in June and Charles Street in July provided the political cover for rioters to act on a multitude of grievances and disaffections stemming in part from politics, though also from ethnic antagonisms and insufficient economic opportunities among other causes. Indeed, frustration over lagging economic opportunities, rather than anti-Federalism alone, helps explain why many rioters abandoned their attacks on supposedly Federalist targets after the Gay Street riot and began assaulting African Americans and their property.

Reasons other than the publication of the *Federal Republican* may have contributed to the mob’s swelling numbers on July 27. Before dusk, William Barney stopped by the home of Thomas Jenkins, which was next door to the Charles Street house that Hanson’s Federalists occupied. Barney spent “a few minutes” conversing with Jenkins when “a negro came out of the Wagner’s house with a pitcher in one hand, and a [sword] cane in the other.” After surveying the assembling mob, the unidentified African American man allegedly said, “there they stand by two’s, and by three’s, but damn them, let them come, we are ready for them.” The statement surprised Barney, who turned to Jenkins and said “do you hear what that damnd negro says?” Barney then left without making any attempt to disperse the growing crowd.⁷²

The exchange between Thomas Jenkins and Major Barney suggests that race

may have been more of a motivation in this riot than observers realized. As was the case in June with the attack against James Briscoe's houses, the threat to the church, and the assaults against several other African Americans, even the rumor of the black man's words in front of the house would have been enough to incite violence. If rumors of the exchange spread many of the city's white, disenfranchised, working poor would have been moved to action—just as the rumors of Briscoe's speech had led to violence against his houses and other African Americans. There is ultimately no way to tell, because the House committee investigating the riots never asked the question. Yet the composition of the mob assembling outside 45 Charles Street lends some weight to the idea.

Early in the evening of July 27, before the verbal exchange on Charles Street, Thomas Wilson, editor of the Republican newspaper *Sun*, stood outside Hanson's house and urged action against the property. Yet the crowd that existed at that point did not recognize Wilson, and there is no evidence that the mob grew thanks to premeditated or orchestrated action by Republicans.⁷³ Meanwhile, John Howard Payne, the twenty-year-old New York actor that Hanson patronized, was riding all over Old Town and Fells Point and discovered that "everything was tranquil." Joel Vickers, who lived on the main street leading from Fells Point into Baltimore Town, "saw no unusual collection of people" moving from the Point towards Town, "and [he] was the whole night at home." Levi Hollingsworth, a Federalist, believed that "the proceedings at Charles-street were, during the night, almost unknown at Fells Point," and other witnesses reported that very few inhabitants from Fells Point were present in the streets.⁷⁴

By midnight on July 27, everything had changed as three to five thousand rioters were in the streets. As the depositions by Payne, Vickers, and Hollingsworth demonstrated, the mob did not come across Jones Falls from Fells Point or Old Town, nor did they come from Baltimore Town. The rioters must have arrived from either the western precincts or Federal Hill, where a large percentage of Baltimore's poor immigrants resided—a possibility that is reinforced by the testimony of witnesses to the riot and the identities of those rioters appearing in the court dockets. Unlike the descriptions of the mob at the Gay Street Riot on June 22, witnesses to the Charles Street Riot testified that the mob consisted primarily of immigrants, especially Germans and what one witness called "low" Irish.⁷⁵ Whether immigrant or American-born, however, a significant percentage of the mob was white, poor, and disenfranchised. Of the twenty-eight rioters listed in the dockets of the Court of Oyer and Terminer for rioting on Charles Street, only six appeared in the militia rolls, none were assessed at more than \$100 in the tax records, and only two had residencies in Baltimore Town. Most of the rioters were tinmen, plasterers, and carters—members of the working class often in direct competition with African Americans for jobs.⁷⁶

The rioters' struggles to fire a cannon on the evening of July 27 further under-

scores the evidence from the tax records, militia rolls, and city directories as to the Charles Street mob's composition. A few rioters led by a carter named Jones had left the scene and returned with a cannon. Nobody in the mob seemed to know how to fire the weapon, nevertheless, John Gill, a tailor, climbed on top of the gun to prevent anyone from trying. Another man named Long put his finger over the touch hole and said "no person should prime it or fire it, unless he was stronger than himself." That none of the rioters knew how to fire the cannon suggests that few members of Baltimore's militia companies were present and reinforces the idea that most of the rioters were poor, disenfranchised wage earners who were not acting within the Anglo-American mob tradition to make a concerted political statement against Hanson and the other Federalists within the house. By contrast, the tailor John Gill fit the profile of the politically motivated rioter in the Anglo-American mob tradition, but in the Charles Street riot Gill joined those who sought to contain or stop the violence.⁷⁷

Although race may have been a motivating factor for some rioters, others appear to have been motivated by a sense of social or economic disaffection. After General Stricker ordered out the militia to contain the violence, he further recommended to Major Barney that the troops remove their regalia. If anti-Federalism or racism alone animated the mob, such a suggestion would never have been made. Barney's troops were entirely white, so there was no fear of a racial reprisal against them. And Barney was a fairly well known Republican running for city office and therefore should not have feared a political backlash from fellow Republicans among the rioters. Stricker's recommendation suggests that the general recognized an economic or social motivation in the Charles Street rioters that made them unpredictable and likely to be unresponsive or even antagonistic to traditional emblems of social order and control. Barney complied, removing his white feather and Society of the Cincinnati emblem, and had his Hussars remove their white feathers too.⁷⁸

The evidence from the House investigation demonstrates the highly conflicted nature of the Baltimore riots and the multiple causes for the rioters' actions. The Baltimore riots clearly did not reveal the more fully developed racial and class divisions that marked the Jacksonian era; unlike rioters in the mid-nineteenth century and later, the Baltimore rioters displayed an extensive range of motivations. Anger at Hanson and his Federalist opposition to the war angered a number of rioters, but racial and ethnic tensions and economic disillusionment provided motivations for other members of the mob. Violence against African Americans occurred, yet none of the mob actions in 1812 could be called a race riot. Although many rioters attacked symbols of wealth and affluence, none of them made specific demands about poor relief, employment, or better wages. Although violence between Irish factions and political opponents occurred, the Baltimore rioters did not exhibit a clearly defined sense of ethnic polarization. Although much of the violence was due to the material condition of the rioters, none of the rioters actually made that explicit connection.

The only consistent trend among the various rioters was a universal lack of respect for the city's officials and their attempts to reestablish order through traditional eighteenth-century methods of crowd control. No matter what their particular grievance, rioters no longer possessed a strong sense of deference for traditional authority. Without this, officials proved nearly powerless to stop the activities of the mob even when the militia was called out. Yet it is precisely the polyvocality of the Baltimore rioters in 1812 which is important—it demonstrates that the seeds of Jacksonian-era conflict were clearly planted in the soil of Jeffersonian America, and those seeds had begun to sprout but had not yet fully germinated by the War of 1812, long before the eclipse of the Jeffersonian party system.

NOTES

1. "Narrative of John Hall," *Maryland Gazette*, September 3, 1812, and "Narrative of John Thompson," *Maryland Gazette*, August 20, 1812.
2. See especially Grace Overmyer, "The Baltimore Mobs and John Howard Payne," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 58 (1963): 54–61 (hereinafter cited *MdHM*); Frank Cassell, "The Great Baltimore Riot of 1812," *MdHM*, 70 (1975): 241–59; Donald Hickey, "The Darker Side of Democracy: The Baltimore Riots of 1812," *Maryland Historian*, 7 (1976): 1–20; Paul Gilje, "The Baltimore Riots of 1812 and the Breakdown of the Anglo-American Mob Tradition," *Journal of Social History*, 13 (1980): 547–64 (hereinafter cited *JSH*); Charles Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore: Workers and Politics in the Age of Revolution, 1763–1812* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 243–50; Paul Gilje, "'Le Menu People' in America: Identifying the Mob in the Baltimore Riots of 1812," *MdHM*, 81 (1986): 50–66; Donald Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 56–71; and Paul Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 60–63. The brutality committed in the 1812 Baltimore riot helped earn Baltimore the moniker of "mob town" during the nineteenth century.
3. Some of the twentieth century's most deadly riots included East St. Louis in 1917 (forty-eight dead), Chicago in 1919 (more than twenty-two dead), Detroit in 1943 (thirty-four dead), the Watts section of Los Angeles in 1965 (thirty-four dead), Newark in 1967 (twenty-six dead), Detroit in 1967 (forty-three dead), and South-Central Los Angeles in 1992 (fifty-three dead). See *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, intro. Tom Wicker (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), 115, 162, 217–19, 224. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the memory of and images from several of these riots remain current in the media. The deaths of fifty-three people in the 1992 Los Angeles riots, particularly those of twenty-two people whose deaths remained open, unsolved homicides, continued as a cause of media interest ten years later. See Jim Crogan, "The L.A. 53," *LA Weekly*, May 2, 2002. The Watts riot of 1965 was featured in NBC's 1999 TV miniseries *The '60s*, and the 1967 Detroit riots were a focus in Jeffrey Eugenides's novel, *Middlesex*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 2003.
4. Paul Gilje has calculated that for the entire period between 1701 and 1765, only nineteen people died in riots throughout America. Gilje's figures exclude the twenty Indians murdered by the Paxton Boys in 1763. See Gilje, *Rioting in America*, 25.
5. In America, examples of the "Anglo-American mob tradition" include the march of Pennsylvania's Paxton Boys in 1764, the destruction of Governor Thomas Hutchinson's

house in Boston in 1765, the Boston Tea Party in 1773, and the burning of the *Peggy Stewart* in Annapolis in 1774. My understanding of the "eighteenth-century Anglo-American mob tradition" is based in part on Max Beloff, *Public Order and Popular Disturbance, 1660-1714* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938); George Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730-1848* (New York: Wiley, 1964); Gordon Wood, "A Note on the Mobs in the American Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 23 (1966): 635-42 (hereinafter cited WMQ); Jesse Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," WMQ, 25 (1968): 371-407; Pauline Maier, "Popular Uprisings and Civil Authority in Eighteenth Century America," WMQ, 27 (1970): 3-35; E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd," *Past and Present*, 51 (1971): 76-136; Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1972), 3-48; E.P. Thompson, "Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture," *JSH*, 7 (1974); Paul Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy: Popular Disorder in New York City, 1763-1834* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 3-95; Thomas Slaughter, "Crowds in Eighteenth-Century America: Reflections and New Directions," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 115 (1991): 3-34; and Gilje, *Rioting in America*, 1-60. The best account of the Paxton Boys may be found in George Franz, *Paxton: A Study of Community Structure and Mobility in the Colonial Pennsylvania Backcountry* (New York: Garland, 1989). The Paxton Boys did murder twenty Conestoga Indians in 1763, but this presaged their march on Philadelphia in 1764. Upon reaching the outskirts of the city, the mob met with Benjamin Franklin, Mayor Thomas Willing, and Attorney General Benjamin Chew and agreed to seek proper legal redress for their grievances. For a discussion of the destruction of Thomas Hutchinson's house, see Benard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 35-38. For the Boston Tea Party, see Alfred Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 42-45. For an account of the burning of the *Peggy Stewart*, see Ronald Hoffman, *A Spirit of Dissension: Economics, Politics, and the Revolution in Maryland* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 133-38.

6. There is a considerable literature on economic change in the early republic, but see especially Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Winifred Rothenberg, *From Market-Places to a Market Economy: The Transformation of Rural Massachusetts, 1750-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Joyce Chaplin, *An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730-1815* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Daniel Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen: Two Centuries of Work in Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1850* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Martin Brueghel, *Farm, Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley, 1780-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); David Meyer, *The Roots of American Industrialization* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Lawrence Peskin, *Manufacturing Revolution: The Intellectual Origins of Early American Industry* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Cathy Matson, ed., *The Economy of Early America: Historical Perspectives and New Directions* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006); and Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

7. Beloff, *Public Order and Popular Disturbances*, 136-37, and Gilje, *Rioting in America*, 20-24.

8. E.P. Thompson, "Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture," 404.

9. Aaron Burr is second only to Benedict Arnold in the rogues' gallery of the founding fa-

thers, but a number of historians have recently sought to rescue the reputation of the third vice president, particularly on the questions of Burr's duel with Hamilton and his alleged treason in 1807. See especially Arnold Rogow, *A Fatal Friendship: Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), and Roger Kennedy, *Burr, Hamilton, and Jefferson: A Study in Character* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

10. *Baltimore American*, November 19, 1807; *Baltimore Whig*, November 3, 1807; and *Baltimore Federal Gazette*, November 4, 1807.
11. Part of the mob actually turned down Charles Street, and, coming to Martin's house, began throwing rocks at it. Biays doubled back, however, and was able to convince the crowd to rejoin the rest of the procession. See Steffen, *The Mechanics of Baltimore*, 232–34.
12. *Baltimore American and Daily Advertiser*, February 2, 1809.
13. Joseph Whitehorne, *The Battle for Baltimore, 1814* (Baltimore: Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1997), 16.
14. *Baltimore Federalist Republican*, June 20, 1812.
15. Deposition of William Gwynn, in *Report of the Committee of Grievances and Courts of Justice of the House of Delegates of Maryland, on the Subject of the Recent Riot in the City of Baltimore* (Annapolis: Jones Green, 1813), 22. Hereafter, citations of depositions from the report of the Committee of Grievances will be abbreviated as RCG and followed by the page number. This citation would appear as "Deposition of William Gwynn, RCG, 22." Also see Deposition of Thomas Kell, RCG, 138; Deposition of Edward Johnson, RCG, 174; and Deposition of John Owen, RCG, 292–96. On the symbolism of the rioters' behavior, see Gilje, "The Baltimore Riots of 1812," 560 n.19.
16. Deposition of James Hutton, RCG, 147; Deposition of Edward Johnson, RCG, 163; Deposition of James Sterrett, RCG, 199; Deposition of John Diffenderfer, RCG, 222; Deposition of William Barney, RCG, 253; and Deposition of Samuel Hollingsworth, RCG, 336.
17. Deposition of Dennis Nowland, RCG, 185; Deposition of James Sterrett, RCG, 199; and Deposition of Samuel Sterrett, RCG, 202.
18. Deposition of William Gwynn, RCG, 21. Although one witness claimed that a thousand spectators were in the streets, Gwynn's estimates represent a consensus in the testimonies provided to the committee, and may be taken as accurate. See Deposition of David Geddes, RCG, 50; Deposition of James Biays Jr., RCG, 144; Deposition of Dennis Nowland, RCG, 185; Deposition of Samuel Sterrett, RCG, 202; Deposition of George Steuart, RCG, 214; Deposition of John Diffenderfer, RCG, 222; Deposition of Andrew Boyd, RCG, 223; Deposition of John Owen, RCG, 292; and Deposition of Samuel Hollingsworth, RCG, 335–36.
19. Deposition of Charles Burrall, RCG, 153. Judge John Scott also made a half-hearted attempt to stop the riot. See Deposition of John Scott, RCG, 119–20.
20. Deposition of John Worthington, RCG, 242. The story is confirmed in Deposition of Edward Johnson, RCG, 160–61; Deposition of James Sterrett, RCG, 199; and Deposition of Samuel Hollingsworth, RCG, 336, 344–45.
21. Deposition of Samuel Sterrett, RCG, 202. For those who did not believe that immigrants represented a majority of the rioters, see Deposition of William Gwynn, RCG, 21; Deposition of Dennis Nowland, RCG, 185; Deposition of Andrew Boyd, RCG, 223; Deposition of William Barney, RCG, 253; Deposition of John Owen, RCG, 292; Deposition of Christopher Raborg, RCG, 322; and Deposition of Samuel Hollingsworth, RCG, 336.
22. Gilje assumed that those identified in the court dockets represented an accurate cross section of the mob. With fifteen of the thirty to fifty rioters appearing in the court records, this is a probably a safe assumption for this particular riot. In the later riots that summer, however, those charged with a crime represent such a small percentage of the rioters involved,

that it is safer to assume that the court dockets represent an accurate cross section of the mob's leadership only. Gilje also assumed that all those charged in the Court of Oyer and Terminer actually participated in the riot whether or not they were eventually convicted of a crime. See Gilje, "Le Menu Peuple," 53, 57, 65 n.39.

23. For the economic changes and urban transformation in Baltimore that followed the Panic of 1797, see Richard Chew, "Certain Victims of an International Contagion: The Panic of 1797 and the Hard Times of the Late 1790s in Baltimore," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 25 (2005): 565–614, and Richard Chew, "The Measure of Independence: From the American Revolution to the Market Revolution in the Mid-Atlantic" (Ph.D., The College of William and Mary, 2002), esp. chpts. 5–9.

24. Deposition of Christopher Raborg, *RCG*, 322–23.

25. Deposition of Charles Burrall, *RCG*, 154.

26. Deposition of James Sterrett, *RCG*, 199. The Baltimore Office of Discount and Deposit was located at the corner of Gay and Second Streets. The only other possibility is the City Bank of Baltimore, which was located on the opposite corner of Gay and Second Streets. The charter for the City Bank was approved after the riot on December 31, 1812, but many banks in the early republic began their operations as unchartered associations prior to being granted a charter. There is no evidence that the City Bank began its corporate life in this way or that it had made any sort of social or economic impact on the city by the summer of 1812 that would have attracted an angry mob—but the possibility remains. The City Bank closed its doors in 1820 through a voluntary liquidation, and the site was adopted no later than 1842 by the Marine Bank of Baltimore (which became the National Marine Bank of Baltimore in 1880). See Stuart and Eleanor Bruchey, *Money & Banking in Maryland* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1996), 153, 224, 284.

27. For the specie-to-paper currency ratios at the BUS and state banks, see Stuart Bruchey, *Enterprise* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 173, and Hugh Rockoff, "Stock of Money and its Components: 1790–1859 [Friedman and Schwartz]" Table Cj7-21 in *Historical Statistics of the United States, Earliest Times to the Present: Millennial Edition*, edited by Susan B. Carter, Scott Sigmund Gartner, Michael R. Haines, Alan L. Olmstead, Richard Sutch, and Gavin Wright (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/ISBN-9780511132971.Cj1-10710.1017/ISBN-9780511132971.Cj1-107>). For the Panic of 1797 in Baltimore, see Chew, "Certain Victims of an International Contagion."

28. Deposition of William Gwynn, *RCG*, 22.

29. Deposition of John Scott, *RCG*, 120.

30. Deposition of James Sterrett, *RCG*, 200.

31. Deposition of Samuel Sterrett, *RCG*, 203. Sterrett did not comment further on the Irish who attacked Alexander Wiley, and without that testimony it is difficult to pinpoint which antagonism among Baltimore's Irish population—because there were several—may have led to the attack. One important division was between the Catholic Irish, most of whom had arrived after the failed Rising of 1798 in Ireland, and the Presbyterian Irish, many of whom adopted millenarian political-theological views in the early nineteenth century. Another important division was between established Irish Americans and the newly arrived United Irishmen. The United Irish were radicals who began arriving as émigrés in the 1790s and "often displayed an intolerant streak, which was directed first against the Federalists and less radical Irish immigrants." This intolerance had been carried over from Ireland, where the United Irish had, through action and word, stirred deep-rooted ethnic antagonisms in their home country. See David Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States: Immigrant Radicals in the Early Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 1–11.

32. For the rumors of rioters attacking individual houses, see Deposition of William Gwynn, RCG, 22–23; Deposition of David Geddes, RCG, 51; Deposition of John Scott, RCG, 120–21; Deposition of Nixon Wilson, RCG, 149; and Deposition of Edward Johnson, RCG, 161–66. Allegedly, Hutchins had offered a toast in which he proclaimed “Damnation to the memory of Washington and all who espouse his cause.” (The quote is from the Deposition of George Steuart, RCG, 215.) The mob supposedly reacted to this toast as a pro-Federalist statement against the declaration of war, but for Baltimore’s Republicans to have jumped to such a conclusion is not credible. Federalists venerated Washington as a symbol of an “Augustan age” lost in the Jeffersonian ascendancy, and Baltimore’s Federalists sponsored overtly partisan celebrations on George Washington’s birthday, rendering any confusion in Baltimore over the political meaning of imagery associated with George Washington rather difficult to believe. On Federalist symbolism, see Linda Kerber, *Federalists in Dissent: Imagery and Ideology in Jeffersonian America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), 4–8, 10.
33. Deposition of Edward Johnson, RCG, 162. Also see Deposition of William Stewart, RCG, 61–62, and Deposition of George Steuart, RCG, 215.
34. Deposition of William Gwynn, RCG, 23.
35. Deposition of John Abel, RCG, 307, and Deposition of Nixon Wilson, RCG, 149. also see Deposition of Edward Johnson, RCG, 160–63.
36. Deposition of John Abel, RCG, 307; Deposition of Nixon Wilson, RCG, 149; and Deposition of John Scott, RCG, 120–21.
37. For the threat to the African American church, see Deposition of John Hargrove, RCG, 179; Deposition of Nixon Wilson, RCG, 149; and Deposition of Dennis Nowland, RCG, 185. For the indictments, see Gilje, “Le Menu Peuple,” 59.
38. Deposition of Edward Johnson, RCG, 162–63.
39. Thomas and Samuel Hollingsworth to Levi Hollingsworth, July 1, 1812, Hollingsworth Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
40. Deposition of Edward Johnson, RCG, 163. Also see Deposition of Samuel Sterrett, RCG, 205.
41. Christopher Phillips, *Freedom’s Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790–1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 103–109; Joseph Garonzik, “The Racial and Ethnic Make-up of Baltimore Neighborhoods, 1850–1870,” *MdHM*, 71 (1976): 392–402; and D. Randall Beirne, “The Impact of Black Labor on European Immigration into Baltimore’s Oldtown, 1790–1910,” *MdHM*, 83 (1988): 331–45. The trend towards residential segregation of free blacks in Baltimore closely parallels trends in Philadelphia and New York City. See Gary Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia’s Black Community, 1720–1840* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 165–68, and Shane White, *Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770–1810* (Athens, Ga.: The University of Georgia Press, 1991), 172–76.
42. In 1812, the average taxable property of residents in Baltimore Town was \$511, in Old Town was \$332, in the western precincts was \$278, in Federal Hill was \$180, and on Fells Point was only \$150. 1812 Baltimore City Directory, and Baltimore Property Tax Records, 1812, RG.4 #1, microfilm reel 83, Baltimore City Archives (hereinafter cited BCA).
43. Gilje, “Le Menu Peuple,” 59, 62–63.
44. Hargrove and Biays are quoted in Deposition of Dennis Nowland, RCG, 187–88; Gilje, “The Baltimore Riots of 1812,” 551.
45. Cassell, “The Great Baltimore Riot of 1812,” 244–46; John Hanson Thomas to Alexander Contee Hanson, July 15, 1812, in *Baltimore American*, August 8, 1812; and John Lynn to John Hanson Thomas, July 15, 1812, in *Baltimore American*, August 8, 1812.
46. *Federal Republican*, July 27, 1812.

47. Cassell, "The Great Baltimore Riot of 1812," 245-46; Overmyer, "The Baltimore Mobs and John Howard Payne," 54-57; and Deposition of John Howard Payne, *RCG*, 14-18.
48. Deposition of Peter White, *RCG*, 69-71; Deposition of Edward Johnson, *RCG*, 164; Deposition of John Hargrove, *RCG*, 179-80; and Deposition of Dennis Nowland, *RCG*, 187-88.
49. Deposition of Dennis Nowland, *RCG*, 188.
50. Narrative of Otho Sprigg, *Maryland Gazette*, August 27, 1812; Deposition of William Gwynn, *RCG*, 26-27; Deposition of William Steuart, *RCG*, 64; and Deposition of Richard Magruder, *RCG*, 75.
51. Deposition of Peter White, *RCG*, 73; Deposition of Richard Magruder, *RCG*, 75-77, 83; Deposition of Dennis Magruder, *RCG*, 117; Deposition of John Scott, *RCG*, 121; and John Stricker Letterbook, MS.789, Maryland Historical Society.
52. John Williams was identified as the slain spectator in the Deposition of William Stewart, *RCG*, 61. Williams's occupation is listed in *Fry's Baltimore Directory for the Year 1812* (Baltimore: B.W. Sower, 1812).
53. John Stone saved Andrew Boyd from being beaten, Thomas Buchanan saved Rufus Bigelow from being beaten, Isaac Caustin saved Samuel Hoffman from being hanged, and James Heath escaped cleanly. See Deposition of Peter White, *RCG*, 72; Deposition of John Stone, *RCG*, 98; Deposition of Thomas Buchanan, *RCG*, 102; Deposition of John Scott, *RCG*, 121; Deposition of Nixon Wilson, *RCG*, 150-51; and Deposition of Isaac Caustin, *RCG*, 317.
54. Deposition of James Hutton, *RCG*, 147; Deposition of William Barney, *RCG*, 266; Deposition of Middleton Magruder, *RCG*, 305; and Deposition of John Abel, *RCG*, 308-10.
55. Deposition of David Geddes, *RCG*, 51; Deposition of William Barney, *RCG*, 260; and Henry Lee, *A Correct Account of the Baltimore Mob* (Winchester, Va.: John Heisel, 1814), 8-12.
56. Deposition of William Gwynn, *RCG*, 27; Deposition of Nixon Wilson, *RCG*, 150-51; Deposition of Henry Gaither, *RCG*, 192-97; Deposition of Andrew Boyd, *RCG*, 235-36; Deposition of William Barney, *RCG*, 260-72; and Deposition of Richard Dorsey, *RCG*, 339-40.
57. Narrative of Otho Sprigg, *Maryland Gazette*, August 27, 1812; Narrative of John Thompson, *Maryland Gazette*, August 20, 1812; Deposition of Joseph Sterrett, *RCG*, 124; and Deposition of Edward Johnson, *RCG*, 168-70.
58. Narrative of Otho Sprigg, *Maryland Gazette*, August 27, 1812. Alexander Contee Hanson reported that Ligan did not die immediately, but succumbed from stabbing wounds several hours later. See Alexander Contee Hanson, "An Exact and Authentic Narrative of the Events Which Took Place in Baltimore on the 27th and 28th of July Last," in *Interesting Papers Illustrative of the Recent Riots in Baltimore* (Baltimore, 1812), 38-39.
59. Deposition of David Geddes in *RCG*, 53.
60. Lee, *A Correct Account of the Baltimore Mob*; "Narrative of John Thompson," *Maryland Gazette*, August 20, 1812; "Narrative of Otho Sprigg," *Maryland Gazette*, August 27, 1812; and "Narrative of John Hall," *Maryland Gazette*, September 3, 1812.
61. Deposition of Edward Johnson, *RCG*, 170.
62. Deposition of Lemuel Taylor, *RCG*, 44-46; Deposition of William Merryman, *RCG*, 112; Deposition of Edward Johnson, *RCG*, 170; and Deposition of Charles Robinson, *RCG*, 190.
63. "Narrative of John Hall," *Maryland Gazette*, September 3, 1812, and "Narrative of John Thompson," *Maryland Gazette*, August 20, 1812.
64. Cassell, "The Great Baltimore Riot," 258.
65. George Washington Parke Custis, "An address occasioned by the death of General Ligan, who was murdered by the mob at Baltimore: Delivered at Georgetown, September 1, 1812,"

(Boston, 1812), and *Interesting Papers Illustrative of the Recent Riots at Baltimore* (Baltimore, 1812), 25.

66. Gilje, *Rioting in America*, 65–68. For the new, more violent form of rioting that replaced the Anglo-American mob tradition, see especially Adrian Cook, *The Armies of the Streets: The New York City Draft Riots of 1863* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974); Michael Feldberg, *The Philadelphia Riots of 1844: A Study in Ethnic Conflict* (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1975); and *The Turbulent Era: Riot and Disorder in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Thomas Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Gilje, *Rioting in America*, 60–116; and David Grimsted, *American Mobbing, 1828–1861: Toward Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

67. Deposition of John Worthington, *RCG*, 47. Worthington's rendition of Stansbury's conduct was supported in large part by Robert Long, Elias Green, John Dougherty, William Smith, and William Merryman. See Deposition of Robert Long, *RCG*, 89; Deposition of Elias Green and John Dougherty, *RCG*, 97; Deposition of William Smith, *RCG*, 100; and Deposition of William Merryman, *RCG*, 109–12. Two other witnesses disagreed with Worthington's testimony. See Deposition of Isaac Dickson, *RCG*, 87, and Deposition of John Schultz, *RCG*, 127–31.

68. Deposition of John Wooden, *RCG*, 142–43, and Deposition of Abraham Hatten, *RCG*, 137.

69. Deposition of Edward Johnson, *RCG*, 177.

70. Introduction, *RCG*, 3.

71. Deposition of Samuel Sterrett, *RCG*, 203.

72. Deposition of Thomas Jenkins, *RCG*, 169.

73. Deposition of Richard Heath, *RCG*, 58; Deposition of Dennis Nowland, *RCG*, 188; and Deposition of John Stone, *RCG*, 98.

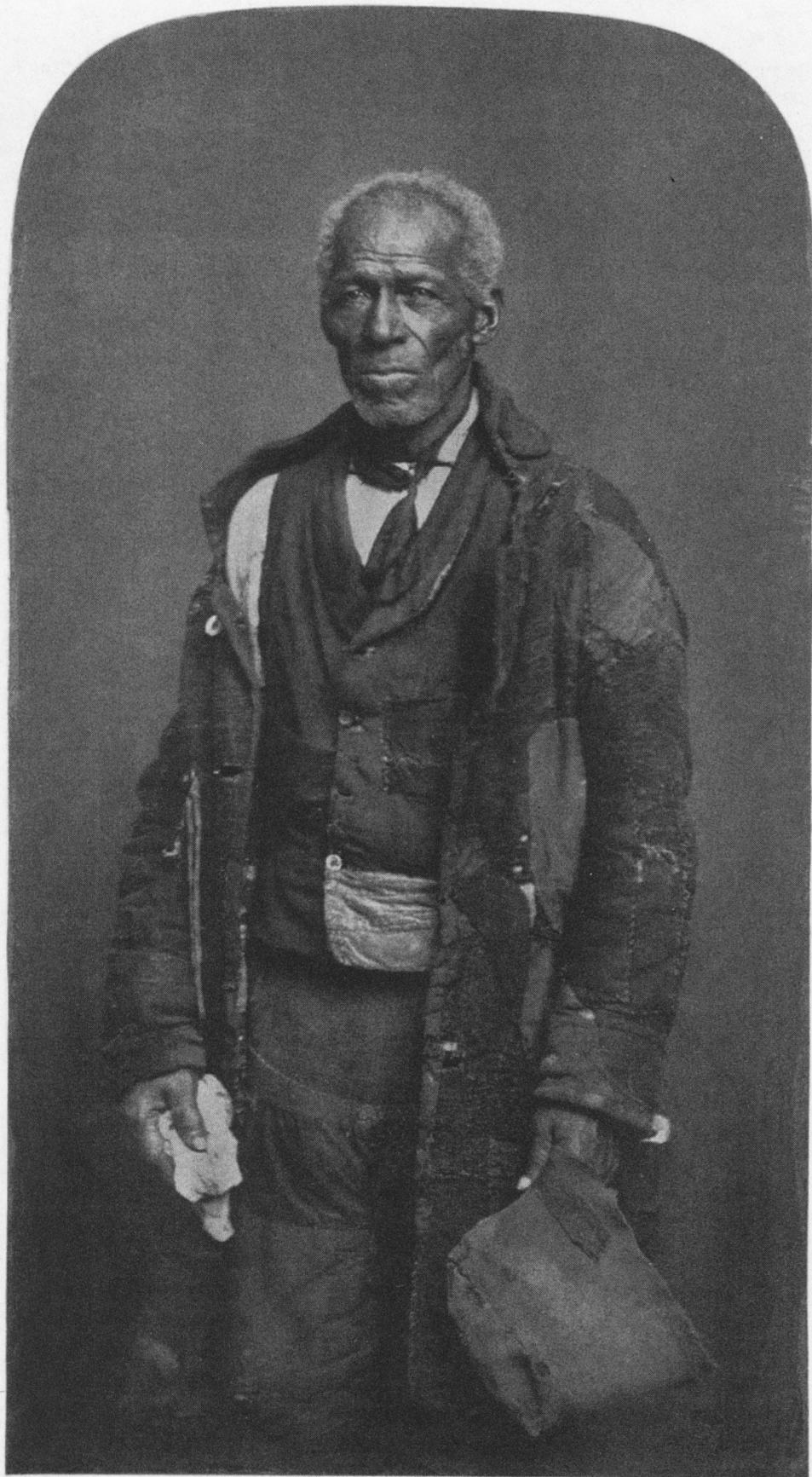
74. Deposition of John Howard Payne, *RCG*, 16; Deposition of Joel Vickers, *RCG*, 41; and Deposition of Levi Hollingsworth, *RCG*, 333. Also see Deposition of Lemuel Taylor, *RCG*, 46.

75. Deposition of Lemeul Taylor, *RCG*, 46; Deposition of Thomas Kell, *RCG*, 138; Deposition of Edward Johnson, *RCG*, 177; and Deposition of William Barney, *RCG*, 264.

76. Gilje, "Le Menu Peuple," 54–56. Gilje identified George Benner as one of the rioters, but Peter White testified that he encountered "a man who is in the employ of George Benner." See Deposition of Peter White, *RCG*, 71. It thus seems unlikely that Benner himself was at the riot.

77. Deposition of Nixon Wilson, *RCG*, 150–51.

78. Deposition of John Howard, *RCG*, 233.



Mirage of Freedom: African Americans in the War of 1812

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Frank A. Cassell, writing in 1972, estimated that three to five thousand black slaves from Virginia and Maryland fled to the British in the War of 1812 and were transported to British possessions, notably to Nova Scotia and the West Indies. Some two hundred former slaves in the Chesapeake region even donned the scarlet uniform of "Colonial Marines" to fight for the British against the United States, and a number of blacks helped the enemy by serving as guides. Yet, Cassell says, "even when confronted with overwhelming evidence that substantial numbers of slaves were not only fiercely determined to escape but also willing and able to join a foreign enemy in fighting their former masters, white southerners did not abandon their faith in the institution of slavery or their conceptions about the characters of slaves."¹

Winthrop D. Jordan, in his seminal *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, observes that the overwhelming view of southern whites was that African Americans were inferior human beings, indeed were perhaps less than human, and were contented and genial²—surprising perceptions in the face of slaves fleeing to the British and widespread fear of slave plots and rebellions such as that fomented by Gabriel Prosser in Richmond in 1800.

Cassell states that proslavery southerners chose to ignore the evidence that there were rebellious slaves who "demonstrated their profound alienation from and antagonism towards a country and a society that professed equality for all while tolerating bondage for some." Moreover, because white southerners held to their conception that their slaves were basically loyal and docile, "in their obtuseness lay the seeds of future tragedy."³

Ironically, even whites who worked to better the lot of the Negro thought of the black race not in the context of U.S. society but of sending the African Americans back to Africa or elsewhere, viz., the Colonization Society of Maryland, founded in 1832 to encourage free blacks to return to Africa, which was responsible in large part for the foundation of Liberia.⁴

It is unfortunate that the black man was not more trusted, understood, and welcomed into American society before the Civil War. If African Americans had been

George R. Roberts, shown here many years later, served aboard American privateers throughout the war, including Thomas Boyle's Chasseur.

welcomed as full combatants (as opposed to fatigue men, drummers, trumpeters, or servants) into the state militias if not the U.S. Army in the War of 1812, the United States might not have suffered such reverses as the defeat at Bladensburg, which led to the burning of Washington, D.C., on August 24–25, 1814. The southern Maryland county of Prince George's, which includes Bladensburg, had in the 1810 census a population of just over 20,000, including 6,500 whites, 4,900 free blacks, and 9,200 slaves.⁵ We can surmise, though not entirely realistically, of course, that if a few thousand able-bodied male African Americans had been trained in arms and added to the U.S. regulars and militia of 6,000, the British army, which only numbered about 4,000, might not have routed the Americans nor enjoyed its relatively unimpeded march of fifty miles through the Prince George's County countryside.

The British commander at Bladensburg, Major General Robert Ross, told his wife in a letter of September 1, 1814, that the Americans "feel strongly the Disgrace of having had their Capital taken by a handful of Men and blame very generally a Government which went to War without the Means or the Abilities to carry it on. . . . The Injury sustained by the City of Washington in the Destruction of its public Buildings has been immense and must disgust the Country with a Government that has left the Capital unprotected."⁶

Obviously, the American reverses in the war cannot be blamed on the fact that African Americans were not called on to help defend the country. Lack of preparation for war by the Madison administration, the small size of the U.S. regular army and navy, and overreliance on the volunteer militia all played a part.⁷ It seems nevertheless a supreme irony that although slaves were generally believed to be loyal to their masters, their loyalty to their country was not tested.

This exposes the fallacy of the slave masters' belief in the loyalty of their slaves: deep down, slaveowners knew the slaves could not be trusted to be given arms. Or they clung to their belief in the basic ignorance of the black man. By contrast, partly for their own ends and partly because African Americans of the Chesapeake proved their capabilities fighting in British uniform, leading officers in the British forces frequently noted the intelligence and capabilities of the American blacks they inducted into their ranks.

The questions of slavery and the status of free African Americans in the United States would not be resolved for decades to come, and the situation would not change while the executive and legislative branches of the government were under the influence of southern slaveholding interests. Four of the first five presidents of the United States were southerners as well as slaveowners.

All the same, two of the greatest American successes in the closing months of the War of 1812—the deflection of the British attack on Baltimore on September 12–14, 1814 (during which General Ross was killed) and the British defeat at New Orleans on January 8, 1815 (during which their generals Pakenham, Gibbs, and Keane perished along with two thousand of their men) —were achieved with the help of African

Americans. At Baltimore, under the direction of Major General Samuel Smith, free blacks helped to construct the earthworks that saved the city, and black sailors of the U.S. Navy manned batteries ready to repulse an assault by the enemy.⁸ At New Orleans, where black laborers also helped to throw up defensive works, General Andrew Jackson welcomed black freedmen into his fighting forces, African Americans as well as expatriate Haitians.⁹

Back to the Revolution

The conduct of the British toward the slaves of the Chesapeake in the War of 1812 was really an extension of their conduct years earlier during the American Revolution. Lord Dunmore, last royal governor of Virginia, issued a proclamation on November 7, 1775, that declared all colonists who refused loyalty to the British crown to be traitors and all of their "indentured [sic] Servants, Negroes, or others . . . free that are able and willing to bear Arms."¹⁰ In response to Dunmore's proclamation, a number of slaves fled their masters to join the British, and Dunmore used the able-bodied in an "Ethiopian Regiment" that fought successfully alongside loyal white troops in 1775–1776.¹¹

Historian Benjamin Quarles estimated that not more than eight hundred slaves actually succeeded in reaching Dunmore during that period, with a hundred of those coming over with their Loyalist masters. Still, by the time a defeated Dunmore left the Chesapeake in August 1776, his proclamation had engendered an "expectant attitude" among the slaves of the region, and he had gained the reputation of a "liberator."¹²

Although British activity in the Chesapeake Bay was minimal during the rest of the war, except for the Yorktown campaign of 1781 that marked the final defeat of the British, African Americans still sought to flee to the British side. Area newspapers during the remaining years of the conflict carried a number of runaway slave notices that mention missing blacks who likely had run away to the British. For example, Walter Wyle of Baltimore County ran a notice in July 1779 stating that his runaway slave Tom "will get to the English if he can." The following month, Abraham Risteau thought his Jack "will (as he has before) attempt to get to the British army."¹³

It is probable that the memory of the British as liberators lingered in the slave quarters of the Chesapeake Bay, so that by the time war broke out again between Britain and the United States in 1812, the possibility of freedom was once more dangled before the slaves of the region. Moreover, the specter of freedom may have been heightened by awareness among the same slaves that the slave trade had been abolished throughout the British empire in 1807.

On No Account Give Encouragement

When the British began operations in the Chesapeake in the spring of 1813, a British army under Colonel Sir Sidney Beckwith was sent to the bay in the hopes of diverting American troops from operations on the Canadian border. Lord Bathurst, the Brit-

ish secretary for war and the colonies, sent Colonel Beckwith a letter that included express instructions not to foment a slave uprising:

You will on no account give encouragement to any disposition by the Negroes to rise against their Masters. . . . If any Individual Negroes shall in the course of your operations have given you assistance, which may expose them to the vengeance of their Masters after your retreat, you are at liberty on their earnest express desire to take them away with you. You are authorized to enlist them in any of the Black Corps if they are willing to enlist; but you must distinctly understand that you are in no case to take slaves away as Slaves, but as free persons whom the public become bound to maintain.¹⁴

Despite Bathurst's cautions, as at the time of the Revolution, escaped slaves started to make their way to the British, and British officers found themselves confronted with blacks anxious to leave America. As Cassell notes, "under this pressure, British commanders chose to interpret their orders liberally and to take on board any slave who so requested."¹⁵ In June 1813 the British attacked Norfolk and Hampton in Virginia and in July occupied Point Lookout in southern Maryland. In both Virginia and Maryland, when the British came near, slaves fled in large numbers to their protection.

The escaped slave and freedman Charles Ball, who later served as a cook with Commodore Joshua Barney's Chesapeake Bay flotilla, described the destruction caused by the British raiding parties and the manner in which southern Maryland slaves were taken off:

In the spring of the year 1813, the British fleet came into the bay, and from this time, the origin of the troubles and distresses of the people of the Western Shore, may be dated. I had been employed at a fishery, near the mouth of the Patuxent, from early in March, until the latter part of May, when a British vessel of war came off the mouth of the river, and sent her boats to drive us away from our fishing ground. There was but little property at the fishery that could be destroyed; but the enemy cut the seines to pieces, and burned the sheds belonging to the place. They then marched up two miles into the country, burned the house of a planter, and brought away with them several cattle, that were found in his fields. They also carried off more than twenty slaves, which were never again restored to their owner; although, on the following day, he went on board the ship, with a flag of truce, and offered a large ransom for these slaves.¹⁶

It should be noticed that the carrying off of the slaves was part of the total pattern of destruction and robbery practiced by the British in the region. Ball states almost in one breath that "several cattle" were taken and that "more than twenty slaves"

were carried off. These African Americans were an economic asset to the people of the Chesapeake, just as their cattle and crops were—or indeed the seines and sheds of the fisheries. The intent was to cripple the Americans economically and hinder their ability to carry on the war and, if possible, to use some of the blacks as guides or even as fighters against their old masters.

As early as May 1813 the *National Intelligencer* reported that several Negroes had deserted to the British and “became pilots for them in plundering.” This would be a pattern seen throughout the Chesapeake in the following eighteen months, but the same Washington-based newspaper assured its readers that the slaves were basically patriotic and that they “perform their daily labor not as a task enforced by fear . . . but rather under the influence of an instinct which impels them to the voluntary performance of what they are conscious is their duty.”¹⁷ The white southerner’s belief in the institution of slavery was bolstered by the press even in the face of abundant evidence that slaves fled with ideas of freedom and stalwartly refused attempts to get them to return to bondage.

Ball stated that he was asked to intercede to try to persuade the slaves of a Mrs. Wilson to return. An owner of “more than a hundred slaves,” she lost them all in one night, except, he wrote, for one man who chose not to go because he had “a wife and several children on an adjoining estate” who were kept under rigid guard and so could not flee to the British. The escape was effected after two or three of the black men stole a canoe one night and paddled out to a British ship and informed the officer of the ship that their mistress owned over a hundred slaves. The men were advised to return to the plantation and bring the other slaves to the shore the following night, the officer promising “that he would send a detachment of boats to the shore, to bring them off.” The escape was accomplished around midnight “partly by persuasion, partly by compulsion” by the first of the black fugitives.

Ball characterized this incident as “the greatest disaster that had befallen any individual in our neighbourhood, in the course of the war.” For this reason a deputation of local gentlemen was gathered for the purpose of retrieving the slaves either by ransom or, it was hoped, by persuasion, since their mistress “had never treated them with great severity.” Ball said he was asked to go along to help persuade the “deserters” to return to Mrs. Wilson:

I [went] along with the flag of truce, in the assumed character of the servant of one of the gentlemen who bore it; but in the real character of the advocate of the mistress, for the purpose of inducing her slaves to return to her service. . . . The whole of the runaways were on board this ship, lounging about on the main deck, or leaning against the sides of the ship’s bulwarks. I went amongst them, and talked to them a long time, on the subject of returning home; but found that their heads were full of notions of liberty and happiness in some of the West India islands.

Ball and one gentleman remained on board when the rest of the deputation returned to shore. Ball was instructed to exert himself "to the utmost, to prevail on the runaway slaves to return to their mistress." After lying off Calvert County for two nights, however, the ship sailed for Tangier Island, where "all the black people that were with us" were transferred to a sloop of war.

Ball added that he was asked by the British to go along with the other African Americans (not the only reported instance of attempted coercion on the part of the British):

I was invited, and even urged to go with the others, who, I was told, were bound to the island of Trinidad, in the West Indies, where they were to be free. I returned many thanks for their kind offers; but respectfully declined them; telling those who made them, that I was already a freeman, and though I owned no land myself, yet I could have plenty of land of other people to cultivate. In the evening, the sloop weighed anchor, and stood down the Bay, with more than two hundred and fifty black people on board. . . . What became of the miserable mass of black fugitives, that this vessel took to sea, I never learned.¹⁸

By the end of 1813 blacks were still flocking to the British, as evidenced by the following dispatch from Captain Robert Barrie of HMS *Dragon* to Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren, written from near Lynnhaven on November 14:

The Slaves continue to come off by every opportunity and I have now upwards of 120 men, women and Children on board, I shall send about 50 of them to Bermuda in the Conflict. Among the Slaves are several very intelligent fellows who are willing to act as local guides should their Services be required in that way, and if their assertions be true, there is no doubt but the Blacks of Virginia & Maryland would cheerfully take up Arms & join us against the Americans. Several Flags of Truce have been off to make application for their Slaves . . . but not a single black would return to his former owner.¹⁹

A second British naval captain, writing in more racist terms, described the coming off of the slaves: "Some of their first exclamations were 'me free man, me go cut massa's throat, give me musket,' which many of them did not know how to use. . . . Another favorite expression when we wanted them to work was, 'no, me no work—me free man.' . . . but they considered work and slavery synonymous terms." The officer then turns his bile on the white masters, perhaps with some truth: "Republicans are certainly the most cruel masters. . . . American liberty consists in oppressing the blacks beyond what other nations do, enacting laws to prevent their receiving instruction, and working them worse than a donkey—"But you call this a free country—when I can't shoot my nigger when I like—eh?"²⁰

De facto Becomes de Jure

In the spring of 1814, the aged Admiral Warren was replaced as commander of the British North American station by Vice Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane. The new commander made the encouragement of slaves to flee their masters and the taking away of slaves official British policy. On April 2, Cochrane issued a proclamation in which he declared:

All persons who may be disposed to migrate from the United States, will with their families, be received on board of His Majesty's ships or vessels of War, or at military posts that may be established on or near the coast of the United States, [and] will have their choice of either entering into His Majesty's sea or land forces, or of being sent as free settlers to the British possessions in North America or the West Indies, where they will meet with all due encouragement.²¹

Cochrane's intent was partly to supplement the British forces with able-bodied blacks—a shortage of manpower being one of the problems facing the British. Tangier Island in the southern Chesapeake Bay was fortified as a place to train blacks in arms. The vice admiral relished unrealistic ideas, however, about the prospects for this new fighting force. He wrote to Lord Bathurst on July 14: "The Blacks are all good horsemen. Thousands will join upon their masters' horses, and they will only require to be clothed and accoutered to be as good Cossacks as any in the European army, and I believe more terrific to the Americans than any troops that could be brought forward." To his subordinate Rear Admiral George Cockburn, he intimated that "With them properly armed and backed with 20,000 British troops, Mr. Maddison [*sic*] will be hurled from his throne."²²

Cockburn, who had been operating in the Chesapeake the previous year and possibly had a firmer grasp of the real possibilities of employing the former slaves, urged caution. He told his superior that his "Proclamation should not so distinctly hold out to them the option of being sent as free settlers to British settlements, which they will most certainly all prefer to the danger and fatigue of joining us in arms."²³ Cockburn rightly perceived that the fugitive slaves were basically interested in freedom and would not want to serve (and possibly die) in the ranks of a British regiment if they were offered land instead.

This cautionary note notwithstanding, the rear admiral set about constructing the fort on Tangier Island and recruiting a "Corps of Colonial Marines from the People of Colour who escape to us from the Enemy's shore in this Neighborhood to be formed, drilled, and brought forward for service."²⁴

It seems highly significant that the British chose to call these African Americans "Colonial Marines"—a term which goes to the root of the reasons for the War of 1812. The former colonies that composed the "United States of America" were no longer colonies of Great Britain, and in 1814 had not been so for thirty-one years,

since the Treaty of Paris of 1783 formally recognized the new country as a sovereign nation. Yet, somehow, the British subconsciously had trouble recognizing the new nation; they were more inclined to view their former colonists as ungrateful step-children. The War of 1812 resolved little militarily or even in terms of "Free Trade and Sailor's Rights," the reason for Madison's declaration of war, but it was necessary to establish the national identity of the United States as an entity apart from the mother country.

In terms of the implications of Cochrane's proclamation in tempting African Americans to join the new force, Cockburn's reservations turned out to be well founded: by the end of the Chesapeake campaign in late September 1814, five months after the proclamation, only two hundred former slaves had been recruited.

Cockburn nevertheless put the best face he could on the project of training the slaves in the art of warfare, and it seems that they repaid the trust put in them. The former slaves saw action in all of the major British attacks around the Chesapeake from May to September 1814, and they were praised for "their great spirit and vivacity, and perfect obedience," their "order, forbearance, and regularity," as well as their "extraordinary steadiness and good conduct when in action with the Enemy." Of their presence alongside elite white soldiers of the British light brigade at the Battle of Bladensburg on August 24, three months after the formation of the corps, Cockburn was able to say they "behaved with their accustomed zeal and bravery" while suffering one man killed and three wounded.²⁵

In contrast to documented looting by white British troops at Hampton, Virginia, and Havre de Grace, Maryland, it seems that the former slaves resisted looting the homes they captured and the temptation of seeking revenge on their former masters. And this, it should be borne in mind, when capture by the Americans might have meant swift execution. Certainly, Cochrane never lost faith in the black marines, who he maintained were perfectly suited for campaigning in the hot, humid Chesapeake Bay summer. He was so pleased with their performance that he ordered an additional bounty to be paid to them to remain in the British forces, and the two hundred former slaves were combined with three hundred royal marines in an integrated battalion.²⁶

The exodus of slaves along the coast led the Virginia legislature to increase appropriations to slaveowners whose slaves had been executed or sold out of state for disciplinary reasons. In 1813, slave masters were compensated \$10,000 for slaves that were lost to them in these ways, double the figure for 1812, and in 1814 the total reached \$12,000.²⁷ As Cassell notes, "In these grim figures can be read the personal tragedies suffered by slaves whose bid for freedom failed."²⁸ The Virginia legislature also contemplated abolishing schools for blacks and restricting the movements of slaves outside their masters' plantations as well as those of free black vendors, who were suspected of urging the slaves to escape.²⁹

In Maryland, Governor Levin Winder instructed General Caleb Hawkins of the

militia to "take all proper precautions to prevent an intercourse between the Enemy and the slaves of your counties."³⁰ Due to the long, ragged coastline of the bay, however, "defense" against the flight of slaves was left to small parties of whites who attempted to intercept the fugitives as they left the usually wooded shores to reach the British ships. Newspaper accounts tell of a number of tragic incidents in which runaway slaves were killed or injured by whites.³¹ In April 1813 it was reported that near Hampton, Virginia, some runaway slaves mistakenly rowed out to an American ship thinking it was British and were apprehended after telling the crewmen they wanted arms for a large number of fellow slaves who were planning a general massacre of whites.³² Because the latter report appeared in the fiercely anti-British and pro-slavery *National Intelligencer*, it is possible that the report is an exaggeration if not outright propaganda. Either way, such reports fed rumors of an impending slave insurrection that swept Washington, D.C., in the coming months.

Every Precaution

On July 20, 1813, Margaret Bayard Smith, a prominent Washington socialite, wrote to her sister:

As for our enemy *at home* I have no doubt that they will if possible join the British; here we are, I believe firmly in no danger, as the aim of those in the country would be as quickly as possible to join those in the city and the few scatter'd s-----s about our neighbourhood, could not muster force enough to venture on an attack. We have however counted on the possibility of danger and Mr. S. has procured pistols &c &c sufficient for our defence, and we make use of every precaution which we should use were we certain of what we now only reckon a possibility ... At present all the members and citizens say it is impossible for the enemy to ascend the river, and our home enemy will not assail us, if they do not arrive.³³

Perhaps significantly, given the virulent anti-black paranoia of Smith's letter, it should be noted that the writer's husband, Samuel Harrison Smith, was the founder in 1800 of the *National Intelligencer*, and that her brother-in-law Joseph Gales Jr., was at that time the proprietor and editor. This is not to say, however, that rumors of a coming slave insurrection were not rife in Washington in 1813–1814. Fear of slave rebellions had grown in the southern states since the bloody revolt on the Caribbean island of Santo Domingo (Hispaniola) in the 1790s, which had culminated in the establishment of the black Republic of Haiti in 1804. News reports of the atrocities committed there had alternately fascinated and horrified Americans and had certainly fueled fears that the same bloody events could happen at home.³⁴

Closer to Washington, the memory of Gabriel's Conspiracy in August 1800 in Richmond, Virginia, a mere eighty miles from the national capital, must have been

fresh in the minds of District of Columbia whites. The plot failed when Governor (and future U.S. president) James Monroe called out the militia after two slaves betrayed it. The plan, devised by Gabriel Prosser and Jack Ditcher, rural slaves on plantations to the west of the city, had been to conquer Richmond and to hold Governor Monroe hostage until whites agreed to black freedom.³⁵

James Sidbury, author of the thesis "Gabriel's World: Race Relations in Richmond, Virginia, 1750-1810," which analyzes the background of the planned revolt, points out that "the Haitian Revolution must have encouraged black Virginians to consider seriously the chances for a black revolution." The abortive uprising was the culmination of a number of insurrection scares that had swept Virginia during the 1790s but was put down with relative ease by Monroe after the governor had first suspected that the plot was, like most of the previous scares in the state, "more rumor than reality."³⁶ Gabriel and some thirty-five other conspirators were publicly hanged as an example to other blacks, but Monroe demonstrated his equanimity by allowing co-ringleader Jack Ditcher to be transported out of the United States. Other convicted conspirators were either pardoned or had their sentences commuted to transportation. Sidbury concludes that "ironically one of the biggest insurrection scares in American history helps illustrate the strength and stability of slavery in Virginia."³⁷

Gabriel's Conspiracy led some whites to look for reasons for the plot. One anonymous letter writer dared to conjecture that the cause of the planned revolt was the "existence of slavery in one of the freest republics on earth."³⁸ Jordan notes that the plot also greatly harmed an abolitionist movement that had already grown weak through the 1790s and that hopes for black equality that might have flowed from the American Revolution were instead transformed into a pattern of racial separation.³⁹

In the final event, it was not a slave insurrection that traumatized Washington after the American defeat at Bladensburg but destruction caused by the British, in the burning of its public buildings. African Americans from Washington did not contribute to it, nor did the British urge them to do so. However, the British third brigade, consisting of the 21st Regiment, sailors, and the "Colonial Marines" or former slaves, were the troops that marched into the capital on the night of August 24 and engaged in the incendiarism.

To citizens fleeing from the invaders, every manner of hearsay was evident, including the ever-familiar rumor of an unfolding slave insurrection, this time instigated by the enemy. As with previous alarms of slave revolt, the rumors proved more virulent than the reality, but as Charles J. Ingersoll reported in his 1849 history of the war, this did not stop the stories spreading through the District and plaguing Mrs. Madison and her "caravan of affrighted ladies" in their flight from the capital through the Virginia countryside:

Consternation was at its uttermost; the whole region filled with panic-struck

people, terrified scouts roaming about and spreading alarm that the enemy were coming from Washington and Alexandria, and that there was safety nowhere. Among the terrific rumors, one predominated that Cochrane's proclamation was executed by Cockburn, inducing the slaves to revolt, and that thousands of infuriated negroes, drunk with liquor and mad with emancipation, were committing excesses . . . , subjecting the whole country to their horrid outrages. . . . Gen. Young, commanding a brigade of Virginia militia, . . . says they were delayed on their march to join General Winder [at Montgomery Courthouse], "by an alarm of a domestic nature, which he was so credulous as to believe, from the respectability of the country people, who came to him for protection; he halted his brigade and sent out light troops and one troop of cavalry to ascertain the fact, which finally proved erroneous."⁴⁰

If the citizenry had its fears, the invaders had concerns of their own. On the night of August 25 the British decamped because they feared an American attack. One of the British brigade commanders stated that "we could scarce think the Americans (from their immense population, and a well trained Artillery) would tamely allow a handful of British Soldiers, to advance thro' the heart of their Country, and burn, & destroy, the Capitol [*sic*] of the United States."⁴¹

Fears of black civil unrest resurfaced as soon as the British had evacuated the city. General Tobias Stansbury of the Fifth Maryland Militia reported to Congress on conditions after the British withdrawal:

Reports from Georgetown and the city reached me, that arms of many of the enemy had fallen into the hands of the blacks, and it was apprehended that they would take advantage of the absence of the men to insult the females, and complete the work of destruction commenced by the enemy; and at the earnest solicitation of Brigadier General Smith and Major Peter, who expressed much anxiety respecting their families, and considering it all important to prevent further injury to the city, I ordered the troops of the District of Columbia to move thither for its protection.⁴²

On the march back to their ships, the British were approached by a number of runaway slaves who asked to be taken along. One of the junior officers recalled:

During this day's march [August 26] we were joined by numbers of negro slaves, who implored us to take them along with us, offering to serve either as soldiers or sailors, if we would but give them their liberty; but as General Ross persisted in protecting private property of every description, few of them were fortunate enough to obtain their wishes.⁴³

It is probable that Ross refused to take along most of these slaves because he

knew they would slow up the march, the British being afraid of imminent American attack. As it happened, their fears were groundless: the U.S. forces were dispirited and more disorganized than ever after Bladensburg. Ross's refusal shows, however, how hollow the offer of freedom to slaves was on the part of the British. They were not offering freedom for humanitarian reasons but purely for their own ends, to use the slaves' manpower and local knowledge, as well as to sap the economic strength of the region. When it was not convenient to aid them in their escape, the slaves were turned away.

According to Walter Lord, free blacks joined with whites in digging entrenchments to protect Washington.⁴⁴ Yet, in truth, and again to the shame of Madison's unprepared administration, the entrenchments at Washington were minimal and mainly confined to a small earthwork at Bladensburg, above the Eastern Branch of the Potomac, which the Americans used for a six-gun battery to command the bridge stormed by the British.

Defending Baltimore

The defenses at Baltimore were much more formidable due to the forethought of Major General Samuel Smith, a local merchant and U.S. senator who had much to lose if the British sacked the city. It is significant that, in contrast to General Andrew Jackson at New Orleans, and perhaps not wanting to upset the status quo, Smith did not seek to include free blacks in the militia, though he did welcome their help in constructing the mile-long line of entrenchments that protected the eastern approaches to the city, stretching from Bel Air Road in the north, south to Harris Creek in the harbor.

George Douglass, a local merchant serving as a private in the Baltimore Fencibles, wrote on September 3, 1814, to his friend Henry Wheaton, editor of the *National Advocate* in New York, stating that white and black together were working on the defenses, determined that Baltimore would not suffer the same fate as Washington:

All hearts and hands have cordially united in the common cause. . . . Last Sunday, at least a mile of entrenchments with suitable batteries were raised as if by magic, at which are now working all sorts of people, old and young, white and black, in so much, before Saturday next we expect every vulnerable point will be strongly fortified.⁴⁵

At the time, as shown by the city directory for 1810, Baltimore had a sizable population of free blacks. There also had been an influx of blacks and whites from Santo Domingo after 1793, following the first outbreak of violence there, and the addition of black Santo Domingans to the already large black population helped to magnify racial tensions in the city.⁴⁶

Even though the Maryland legislature had voted in 1781 to allow free blacks to

be recruited to fight in the Revolution, they were now barred from serving with the militia and the army, except in the capacities of servant or musician. They were also, of course, disenfranchised. Quarles stated that by 1800 "Maryland committed itself more explicitly than ever before to slavery and to a subordinate role for the free black." However, blacks faced the future with hope, knowing that not all whites wanted to see blacks downtrodden:

Blacks in Maryland were dismayed at being considered as outsiders, not part of the body politic. But by 1800 they had built up a new determination to press on for what they regarded as their rights. They had faith in the future.... They believed that the egalitarian mood of the Revolutionary War period would never be wholly lost and that America would eventually right itself and do justice to them and to the high principles set forth in the Declaration of Independence and the preamble to the Constitution.⁴⁷

Perhaps because they were aware of the economic opportunities afforded to them in Baltimore, African Americans, both freemen and slaves, worked together to help save the city by helping to build the necessary defenses.

The British landed at North Point, fifteen miles from Baltimore, on the morning of September 12. As General Ross rode toward the city at the head of his troops, he was mortally wounded in a skirmish with Brigadier General John Stricker's advance forces. Colonel Arthur Brooke assumed command and met Stricker's main troops in a battle near Bear Creek. Brooke won the battle— but at a cost. The next morning, September 13, after bivouacking for the night on the battlefield, the British continued their march toward the city. Shortly after dawn, the Royal Navy began to bombard Fort MCHenry at the entrance to Baltimore harbor.

Present among the six hundred regulars deployed in the fort's moat to prevent an attempted landing by Royal Marines was a certain Private William Williams. Williams, whose real name was Frederick or Frederick Hall, was a slave who months earlier had escaped from the Prince George's County tobacco plantation of Benjamin Oden. Instead of seeking the sanctuary of a nonslave state to the north, the fugitive had taken the seemingly astounding step of volunteering as a soldier in the 38th U.S. Infantry. Possibly the runaway, described in a reward notice of May 18 as "a bright mulatto . . . so fair as to show freckles," could pass as a white man. On enlisting in Baltimore on April 14, the twenty-one-year-old young man received an enlistment bounty of fifty dollars and a private's monthly wage of eight dollars.⁴⁸

As the bombardment began, a rocket ship, schooner, and five bomb ships began to hurl cannonballs, 200-pound bombs, and rockets toward the brick and earth fort. An answering fusillade ordered by fort commander Major George Armistead compelled the schooner and rocket ship to retire. However, the bomb ships, after retreating a safe distance, continued the bombardment with but short intermission for twenty-

three hours until after dawn on September 14. Sometime during this terrifying rain of metal, Private William Williams had "his leg blown off by a cannonball." He died some months later at the Baltimore Public Hospital.⁴⁹

During the bombardment, African-American sailors manned batteries that supported Fort McHenry. Unlike the army and militia, there existed no proscription against recruiting African Americans for service in the navy or in Commodore Barney's flotilla. Although Barney himself had been severely wounded at Bladensburg, his flotillamen worked the batteries of Forts Babcock, Covington, and Lazaretto that rendered invaluable assistance to the defenders of Fort McHenry. Other black sailors stood ready to work both shipborne cannons and land batteries for the defense of the city should the Royal Navy force a way past the star fort. Probably 10 to 25 percent of the sailors were African-American.⁵⁰

The defenses of Hampstead Hill (now Patterson Park), manned by around 15,000 militiamen, literally bristled with cannons. In the face of these daunting defenses, Colonel Brooke, on receiving word from Admiral Cochrane that the Royal Navy had failed to "reduce" Fort McHenry, decided to withdraw rather than risk an attack.

During their retreat to the ships, the British not only looted area houses and burned one house but reportedly carried off one free black farmhand who supposedly did not want to go, according to an account that was printed in the *Baltimore Sun* some decades later: "One free colored man, Joe Gale, a carpenter, employed on the farm, boastfully declared he was a free man and no slave, was taken prisoner to Halifax and did not get back until peace was declared."⁵¹ Is it possible that British troops, angry that their commander shied away from sacking Baltimore, made a prisoner of this African American because he refused their offer of "freedom"?

A Life in Canada?

What of the fate of the three to five thousand former slaves—men, women, and children—shipped out of the Chesapeake region by the British? Although a few of them ended up in Bermuda, notably the ex-Colonial Marines who were rewarded with jobs in the Ireland Island British naval base and a number who were sent to the West Indies, it seems the majority were sent to Halifax, Nova Scotia. Cassell relates:

The single largest group of black exiles was deposited in Halifax in the early months of 1815. Over two-thousand former slaves with no resources of any kind were left standing on the docks. Penniless, jobless, many of them sick, the refugees were immediately reduced to seeking public relief. What eventually happened to them is something of a mystery. At least a portion established themselves as farmers or domestics while others may have migrated to the West Indies.⁵²

Researchers in Canada have gone far toward solving the "mystery" that puzzled Cassell, although the fate of the former slaves turns out to be bleaker than the scenario he envisioned. John N. Grant and Robin W. Winks relate that the African Americans who were sent to Nova Scotia as a result of the War of 1812 actually comprised the third wave of black immigrants to land in the Canadian province over a thirty-four-year period. The first blacks were the "black Loyalists" who fled during the American Revolution, notably several thousand former slaves from New York who had fled to the British and were shipped out after the British defeat at Yorktown in 1781. The second wave were Maroons who were exiled from Jamaica in 1796 after waging a war against white settlers there. Although both of these earlier groups suffered from the bureaucratic inefficiencies of the British Colonial Office, they did get the chance to get out of the forbidding climate of Nova Scotia, since projects were instituted to give any who wanted the chance to emigrate to Sierra Leone in Africa in 1792 and 1800.⁵³

The ex-slaves who landed in Halifax during the War of 1812, dubbed in contrast to the other two groups the "Refugee Negroes," mostly missed this chance to resettle in a more conducive climate. Except for a handful who were resettled in Trinidad in 1820, the remainder of the exiles lost the chance to emigrate due to miscommunications with the whites who talked of resettling them. The former Chesapeake slaves also suffered more deprivations and misery than the first two groups, because they were less accustomed to the cold weather than the New York Loyalists and because they lacked the skills of the

Maroons, most having been field hands back in the Chesapeake tidewater. British governmental bungling made their situation even worse. A shipment of three thousand pairs of shoes and other clothing intended to help them through their first winter was misdirected to Bermuda. It took twelve months for the shipment to reach them, leaving the miserable exiles to shiver through their first winter in the bitter Nova Scotia climate without new clothes.⁵⁴

In 1816, when some of the Refugee Negroes were given land by the British government, the land turned out to be worthless and stony, and the blacks did not know how to work it, particularly since it was frozen a large part of the year. The British government had not planned for the long-range support the new settlers would need. When the Earl of Dalhousie took over as governor in October 1816, the refugees were, he said, in "a state of starvation," having been left in a "deplorable condition" during the absence of the previous governor, and he urged that the legislature allow them provisions for at least another year. Dalhousie was hardly sympathetic to the woes of the new colonists. They must, he said, be "supported for many years" by the government, and he added haughtily, "little hope can be entertained of settling these people so as to provide for their families and wants. . . . Slaves by habit 8c education, no longer working under the dread of the lash, their idea of freedom is Idleness and they are altogether incapable of Industry." Dalhousie suggested that they be sent to

Sierra Leone or the West Indies and even went so far as to suggest that one solution would be to restore them to their masters in the United States!⁵⁵

The lot of these African Americans in Nova Scotia would not improve for the next few decades: hundreds died of disease and deprivation. A member of the Refugee Negroes made the following scourging statement: "I have felt my color is my pride and I should have suffered often the pain of being skinned alive could it make me white."⁵⁶ Descendants of the former Chesapeake Bay slaves still live in Nova Scotia.

"The Pride of Baltimore"

On the evening of April 8, 1815, Captain Thomas Boyle sailed his privateer *Chasseur* past the ramparts of Fort McHenry into Baltimore harbor. Boyle ordered the schooner's cannons to be fired to salute the fort that six months earlier had withstood the might of the Royal Navy. The citizens of the city acclaimed the *Chasseur* the "Pride of Baltimore."⁵⁷

The *Chasseur* must have been a special source of pride to one of Boyle's gunners, the free black man George R. Roberts. The African-American seaman was on board the privateer on August 28, 1814, when Boyle issued his paper blockade of the British Isles, which he requested that the British post at Lloyd's Coffeehouse in London. Boyle's audacious proclamation was a spoof of the blockades of the U.S. coast that had been declared by British admirals Warren and Cochrane in the preceding eighteen months. During the *Chasseur's* capture of the British schooner *St. Lawrence* on February 27, 1815, Roberts is said to have "displayed the most intrepid courage and daring."⁵⁸

At the beginning of the war, Roberts had enlisted on board the Baltimore privateer *Sarah Ann* under the command of Captain Richard Moon. In October 1812 the *Sarah Ann* was captured by the enemy off the Bahamas. Six crewmen, including George Roberts, accused of being British subjects, were put on board ship for Jamaica. In a letter sent to the owners in Charleston, South Carolina, Captain Moon said he feared the men would "be tried for their lives." The privateer skipper rebutted the British charge that the sailors were not Americans. In regard to "George Robert [*sic*], a coloured man and seaman," he stated, "I know him to be native born of the United States. . . . He entered on board the *Sarah Ann* at Baltimore where he is married. . . ." The editor of *Niles' Register* reported that in retaliation for the British action, the Charleston cartel took twelve British prisoners from a prison ship "and put [them] into close confinement, to be detained as hostages."⁵⁹ No doubt this ploy worked. Certainly, the episode counts as one of the "hairbreath escapes" this brave African American experienced, as mentioned in his obituary in the *Baltimore Sun* following his death in January 1861 at his home in Canton at the reported age of ninety-five years.⁶⁰

Indeed, in his waning years, as his nation teetered toward civil war, the newspapermen of Baltimore noted that the aged George Roberts still felt proud to parade with the other "Old Defenders" of Baltimore. For he too had served.

NOTES

1. Frank A. Cassell, "Slaves of the Chesapeake Bay Area and the War of 1812," *Journal of Negro History*, 57 (April 1972): 144-155.
2. Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 482-511.
3. Cassell, "Slaves of the Chesapeake Bay Area," 155.
4. See Penelope Campbell, *Maryland in Africa: The Maryland State Colonization Society, 1831-1857* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971).
5. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of 1810, Prince George's County, Maryland.
6. Robert Ross to Elizabeth Ross, September 1, 1814. Quoted in Christopher T. George, "The Family Papers of Maj. Gen. Robert Ross, the Diary of Col. Arthur Brooke, and the British Attacks on Washington and Baltimore of 1814," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 88 (1993): 300-316. The British sack of the national capital forced Pennsylvania and New York to revise their state militia acts to allow the recruitment of "free men of color" in black combat units. See Gerard T. Altoff, *Amongst My Best Men: African-Americans and the War of 1812* (Put-in-Bay, Ohio: The Perry Group, 1996), 69-72.
7. See J. C. A. Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War: Politics, Diplomacy, and Warfare in the Early American Republic, 1783-1830* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).
8. Scott S. Sheads, *The Rockets' Red Glare: The Maritime Defense of Baltimore in 1814* (Centerville, Md.: Tidewater Publishers, 1986), 60-61.
9. Charles B. Brooks, *The Siege of New Orleans* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1961), 51, 57-58, 87-88. It is curious that both Andrew Jackson and Samuel Smith were controversial figures. They were the type of men who either inspired love or hate. Although Smith never reached the political heights of Jackson, he did aspire to national office, having to settle for serving twenty-three years as a U.S. Senator; he also was elected mayor of Baltimore and served until his death in 1839 at age eighty-seven. Both Jackson and Smith were accused of arrogance and high-handedness. Although these commanders seemingly made careers of creating enemies, as the architects of plans to save American cities from the British, they got the job done.
10. Proclamation of the Earl of Dunmore, November 7, 1775. Broadside, Tracy W. McGregor Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.
11. "Lord Dunmore's Ethiopian Regiment" in Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1973), 19-32.
12. Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, 31-32. Ironically, as governor, Dunmore had withheld his signature from a bill against the slave trade.
13. *Maryland Journal*, July 13 and August 24, 1779. Although the British offer of freedom to Chesapeake Bay slaves was renewed by Benedict Arnold, then a British general, during his 1781 raid through Virginia, there is evidence that his intentions were ambiguous at best. A letter of Arnold's states that he intended to return Negroes to their masters. This letter is discussed in James Sidbury, "Gabriel's World: Race Relations in Richmond, Virginia, 1750-1810" (Ph.D. diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 1991), 6.
14. Lord Bathurst to Colonel Sir Thomas Sidney Beckwith, March 20, 1813. Thomas Brisbane Papers, 1813-1815, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
15. Cassell, "Slaves of the Chesapeake Bay Area," 146.
16. Charles Ball, *Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball, a Black Man* (1837, repr.; New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 469.

17. *National Intelligencer*, April 30 and May 1, 1813.
18. Ball, *Slavery in the United States*, 471–473.
19. Captain John Barrie, R.N., to Admiral Sir John B. Warren, November 14, 1813, Admiralty Archives, Adm. 1/505, 131–133, Public Record Office, London.
20. William Stanhope Lovell, *Personal Narrative of Events from 1799 to 1815* (London, 1879), 152.
21. Cochrane Proclamation, April 2, 1814, Admiralty Archives, Adm. 1/508, 579.
22. Cochrane to Bathurst, July 14, 1814, War Office 1/141, Public Record Office, London; Cochrane to Cockburn, July 1, 1814, Cochrane Papers 2346, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.
23. Cockburn to Cochrane, April 2, 1814, Cochrane Papers 2574.
24. Cockburn to Cochrane, May 19, 1814, Admiralty Archives, Adm. 1/507, 59–60.
25. Captain James Ross to Cockburn, May 29, 1814, Admiralty Archives, Adm. 1/507, 68–70; Captain William Baines to Cockburn, June 19, 1814, *ibid.*, Adm. 1/507, 81–86; Cockburn to Cochrane, June 23, 1814, *ibid.*, Adm. 1/507, 57–58; Cockburn to Cochrane, August 27, 1814, *ibid.*, Adm. 1/506, 609–612. Interestingly, at New Orleans General Andrew Jackson used the same argument as Admiral Cochrane for using African–American troops: the blacks were “inured to the Southern climate and would make excellent soldiers.” Jackson to Louisiana Governor William C. C. Claiborne, September 21, 1814, in John Spencer Bassett, ed. *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, Vol. 2, May 1, 1814–December 31, 1819* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1927), 56.
26. Cochrane to Admiral John Croker, September 28, 1814, Admiralty Archives, Adm. 1/507, 248.
27. Virginia Senate Journal, January 22, 1813, January 24 and 25, 1814, Class A.1a (reel 2), Microfilm Collection of Early State Records, Library of Congress.
28. Cassell, “Slaves of the Chesapeake Bay Area,” 150.
29. Virginia House Journal, January 8, 11, 17, 26, and 27, 1814, Class A.16 (reel 6), Microfilm Collection of Early State Records, Library of Congress..
30. Governor Levin Winder to General Caleb Hawkins, August 27, 1813, Maryland Governor’s Letterbook, Class E.2 (reel 4), Library of Congress.
31. *Richmond Enquirer*, July 30 and October 8, 1813.
32. *National Intelligencer*, April 6, 1813.
33. Margaret Bayard Smith to Mrs. Jane Kirkpatrick, July 20, 1813, in Gaillard Hunt, ed., *The First Forty Years of Washington Society* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1906), 89–91. Around the time of the British invasion, rumors circulated of a slave conspiracy in Frederick, forty miles northwest of Washington, with several leaders already arrested (*New York Evening Post*, August 22 and 24, 1814; *Richmond Enquirer*, August 27, 1814).
34. Jordan, *White Over Black*, 375–402.
35. James Sidbury, “Gabriel’s World,” 180–184.
36. *Ibid.*, 20.
37. *Ibid.*, 5, 185–187.
38. *Virginia Gazette*, December 11, 1800.
39. Jordan, *White Over Black*, 400–426.
40. Charles J. Ingersoll, *Historical Sketch of the Second War between the United States of America, and Great Britain, Vol. 2, Embracing the Events of 1814* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1849), 207–208. Although the rumors proved for the most part to be unfounded, there were certainly blacks and others who took advantage of the chaos in the capital, notably looting by a “rabble” at the president’s mansion after the Madisons fled. A slave, Nace Rhodes, later returned some of the president’s silver urns, trays, and a candelabra, for which he was rewarded five dollars (Nace Rhodes, letter to “dear sir,” April 24, 1815, District Commissioners’ letters received, National Archives).
41. Diary of Colonel Arthur Brooke, quoted in Christopher T. George, “The Family Papers of

- Maj. Gen. Robert Ross, the Diary of Col. Arthur Brooke, and the British Attacks on Washington and Baltimore of 1814," 300–316.
42. Report of General Tobias E. Stansbury, November 15, 1814, American State Papers, Military Affairs, 1:560–562.
43. George R. Gleig, *The Campaigns of the British Army at Washington and New Orleans, 1814–1815* (London: John Murray, 1861), 80.
44. Walter Lord, *The Dawn's Early Light* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), 76–77.
45. George Douglass to Henry Wheaton, September 3, 1814, Vertical File, Fort McHenry Library. Another anonymous observer commented: "White and black are all at work together. You'll see a master and his slave digging side by side. There is no distinction whatsoever." (*New York Evening Post*, September 5, 1814.)
46. William Joseph Fletcher, "The Contribution of the Faculty of Saint Mary's Seminary to the Solution of Baltimore's San Domingan Negro Problems, 1793–1852." M.A. thesis, the Johns Hopkins University, 1951. Also, Walter Charlton Hartridge, "The Refugees from the Island of St. Domingo in Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 38 (1943): 103–122. The 1820 Baltimore city directory lists 220 free blacks. In comparison. New Orleans had around six hundred free blacks, probably more than any other city in the United States. See Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 64. Moreover, many of the New Orleans African Americans were well-to-do Creoles or expatriate Haitians, in comparison to Baltimore's free blacks, who were artisans, laborers, and the like.
47. Benjamin Quarles, "'Freedom Fettered': Blacks in the Constitutional Era in Maryland, 1776–1810—An Introduction," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 84 (Winter 1989): 299–304.
48. Scott S. Sheads, "A Black Soldier Defends Fort McHenry, 1814," *Military Collector & Historian*, 41 (Spring 1989): 20–21. Also see Altoff, *Amongst My Best Men*, 126–127. Slave escape notice, *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser*, May 18, 1814.
49. Sheads, *The Rockets' Red Glare*, 91–102. Altoff, *Amongst My Best Men*, 127.
50. Altoff, *Amongst My Best Men*, 127–128.
51. "Baltimore's Proud Day. The Battle of North Point. A Maryland Lady's Reminiscences," *Baltimore Sun*, September 12, 1888.
52. Cassell, "Slaves of the Chesapeake Bay Area," 153–154. The former Colonial Marines apparently later were given land in Upper Canada and, according to a British report of 1840, they and their descendants were alleged to be "happy and loyal settlers." *United Service Journal*, 4 (May 1840): 27.
53. John N. Grant, "Black Immigrants into Nova Scotia, 1776–1815," *Journal of Negro History*, 48 (July 1973): 253–270; "The Refugee Negroes" in Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 1971), 114–141.
54. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 116 and 124–125.
55. Dalhousie to Bathurst, December 29, 1816. Co217/98, Colonial Office Records, Public Record Office, London.
56. Lenore DeWolf Rathbun, "First Freed Slaves at Five Mile Plains and Vicinity," typescript manuscript in the Public Record Office of Nova Scotia, written in 1950 from interviews with great-grandchildren of African-American settlers and diaries of the author's parents and grandparents, quoted in Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 114.
57. *Niles' Weekly Register*, April 15, 1815.
58. *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser*, January 16, 1861. For more on Boyle and the *Chasseur*, see Fred W. Hopkins, Jr., *Tom Boyle, Master Privateer* (Cambridge, Md.: Tidewater Publishers, 1976).
59. *Niles' Weekly Register*, November 14, 1812.
60. *Baltimore Sun*, January 16, 1861.

Dennis's Advice to Admiral Cockburn

[9 (1914): 70]

Now Cockburn, my dear, will you just lend an ear,
And take the advice of old Dennis M'Clure,
Who long has been viewing the mischief you'r brewing,
In Chesapeake Bay, and this town to be sure.
He thinks, you'r so crazy, and can't well be asy
Since blood, rapes and plunder, have gain'd you renown,
That you cast on our city, your Bull's eyes, so pretty,
Arah! would you be plundering Baltimore Town?

Now, can't you be quiet, why kick up a riot?
Secure your Bull's head by a decent retrate;
Tell Boss a snug story, that his fame and glory
Will be after ending, before it's too late!
Nor think by your thunder, our city to plunder.
For bomb-shells we care not a single half-crown;
Tho' *here you'd take dinner* Nabocklish* you sinner:
You might get your bitters in Baltimore Town.

Oh! yes, my dear honey, you want all our money;
Our banks they are rich, but be asy, my dear:
Our Baltimore lads, by the help of their dads,
Know how to defend them, and that's very clear.
Would you know a plain fact, they'r of *Irish* extract,
Not aisily curb'd by a threat, or a frown;
Tho' with Yankeys and Dutch, they are mix'd pretty much;
Free citizen soldiers of Baltimore Town.

Then we've lads from the sod, who have long felt the rod
Of oppression by England's old crazy old king;
They are now, my dear juel, preparing your gruel,
If you your neat carcass to Baltimore bring,
Tho' late from Killarny, they'll tip you no blarney,
But out of pure love for your king and his crown
They'll salute you jentaly, my darling, so gaily;
Arah come, my dear honey, to Baltimore Town.

I've a tight Yanky wife, that I married for life;
 And an arm full of childer, I've got, to be sure;
 My tight little sons, are preparing their guns
 To fight by the side of their father, M'Clure.
 So now, my dear Cock, you may hang at the rock.
 But the stars of the nation, can never come down,
 So burn away powder, ay! crack away lower:
But don't be after coming to Baltimore Town.

Arah bang away, honey, in troth, it luks funny
 To see such a wasting of powder and ball;
 Then stop when you'r tired; you'll be much admired
 By old crazy George, *poor John pays for all.*
 Your *old trade down the Bay* will afford better pay.
 To hunting up nagars, send out your blood hounds,
 Besides sheep and hogs, for your Johnny Bull dogs,
Who will be after starving e'er they come to Town.

You are such an odd creature, so savage by nature;
 My juel, I can hardly let you alone;
 They tell me you'r cross since your friend, Master Ross,
Has quietly laid himself down like a stone.
 But I think I'll conclude, lest you think me too rude,
 Subscribe myself *Dennis M'Clure, of Tyrone.*
 So good-by, I must go, and see Torpedos blow
You to Balinahah from Baltimore Town.

Now Cockburn is gone I'll an end to my song.
 So fill up a glass, I will end with a toast.
 Success to the boys who, regardless of noise
 When danger's at hand will remain at their post.
 Come, fill up more liquor, success to bold *Stricker,*
 To *Sterett,* to *Fowler, M'Donald* and *Long;*
 To *Armistead* and others, to wives and to mothers,
Likewise to the girls of Baltimore Town.

[This ballad, together with five others, appears in a Chapbook of eight pages, printed in Baltimore in 1823. It was evidently written for and sung in the theatres immediately after the conclusion of the War of 1812. The copy from which this is taken is believed to be unique.]

*Nabocklish: Gaelic, "leave it alone."

The Battle of Bladensburg – Part I

ALBERT KIMBERLEY HADEL

[1 (1906): 155–67]

A review of this most disastrous and discreditable defense of our Capital on August 24th, 1814, on the part of those most responsible for the same will not at this time be influenced by the political conditions existing at that time, which made it very difficult to get reliable testimony which was not biased to some extent. I have undertaken this work of investigation from a sense of duty and justice, and to serve the double purpose of inspiring loyalty in the hearts of true patriots and a respect and honor for the volunteer soldiers of our State who have never yet been found wanting from the remotest colonial period to the present time.

The soldiers of Maryland and of the other States participating in the engagement at Bladensburg have been the subjects of severe criticism, during their lives and now; and it is my ambition to remove the obloquy which has rested upon their good name, that prompts me to lay bare every bit of testimony of any importance bearing upon the case, and if I fail to give a thorough and comprehensive history, it will be for want of space and time, for I have been compelled to eliminate a great deal of testimony.

Of course nothing is more easy than to criticize the order of battle of a defeated army: in fact the defeat itself shows defects; but the blunders of the battle of Bladensburg are so appalling, that it certainly does rob the victors of any credit which might have come to them.

The field over which I have had to wander was very large, covering the months preceding the battle, acts of Congress, of the President and Cabinet, the public and private acts of the citizens of Washington, Georgetown and Alexandria, Va., as well as the expressions of the military men attracted to the Capital by the menacing attitude of the army and navy of the enemy in the Chesapeake.

Much of my testimony has been gathered from letters and reports of those who participated in the defenses of Washington and the battle of Bladensburg, so that if any errors have crept into this paper or any contradictions become apparent, the responsibility will not rest with me, for it is my only desire to give history as I find it, supported by those who were instrumental in its making.

Soon, however, in the day of my labor did I realize that many serious obstacles lay in my path; first for the valueless investigation of Congress shortly after the battle, called forth by the righteous indignation of the people of Alexandria, Va., who had been forced to surrender to Admiral Cockburn upon the most exacting, indeed impossible terms.

The people of Maryland demanded to know why her soldiers had not been allowed to do their whole duty to their country. The people of Washington were also indignant that their own militia, of which they were proud, had been ordered to retreat without an effort to defend their homes, and finally a storm of indignation from every quarter of our country. Every one wanted to know who was responsible for the disasters of the day.

The utter failure of the Congressional Committee to call for certain papers and witnesses, as well as the suppression of some testimony, in order to shield the administration, whom we will show as the most culpable, and finally to throw the blame of the disaster upon the shoulders of General Wm. H. Winder, the commander, a relative of Levin Winder, the Governor of Maryland, who had been selected by the President to command the 10th military district, it is said upon political grounds.

There was no personal objection to the selection of General Winder, although he was entirely unknown to the people of Washington, except his want of military experience; his patriotism and courage were generally acknowledged.

He entered upon his duties under the greatest difficulty. He had no means at his command and no way of creating them; the military district, over which he now presided, had no magazines, provisions or forage, and was without transport tools, without a commissary or quartermaster's department, and himself without a single officer on his staff, and finally without any troops.

The proclamation by the President on July 4th was a mere matter of form and without any effect, for the States had only a small number of troops with poor equipments, as Congress had offered them no encouragement, and now, at the last moment, had none to offer them; and to add to the general alarm, came the daily reports of the depredations of the enemy on the shores of Virginia and Maryland, and yet those in power could not be made to believe that they would extend to the Capital, flattering themselves that what had happened to every other nation in the world could not happen to theirs.

At Washington at this time there was not a single company of regulars, and no effort was made to get them within the threatened area.

General Winder's headquarters was a deserted place, without a secretary, and even the customary guard at his door was absent until the latter part of July. Here sat the commander of the 10th military district, now the most important in the country, powerless to direct or even assist in any movement and absolutely ignored by the President and Cabinet.

It was announced from time to time by the *National Intelligencer*, an administration paper published by a native of London, that the British were committing depredations on the shore of the Chesapeake, and had as many as 5000 men within 50 miles.

For fifteen months before the actual invasion of the capital the enemy had certainly given evidence of their intention to control the commerce of the Chesapeake Bay; Havre de Grace, Frenchtown, Georgetown and Frederickton on the Bay shore,

and Hampton, Va., had been attacked and burned and its citizens carried off into captivity.

On July 15, 1813, General Philip Steuart, a member of Congress from the eastern part of Maryland, a veteran of the Revolution, offered a resolution in Congress, directing the government to arm the citizen soldiers of Maryland and Washington as well as the States calling for arms, that the invaders might be received properly should they attempt to extend their operations to the larger cities; but that body struck out the enacting clause and actually adjourned without taking any steps to defend the city.

In the early part of April, 1814, the attention of the President was called to the defenseless condition of Washington and Alexandria, but no notice was taken of it.

On the 1st of May a delegation of business men of these two cities waited upon the President and pointed out several places around the city which should be immediately fortified, and suggested that the Governors of Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia should be asked to have their troops in readiness to march to the defense of the Capital at the shortest possible notice, as the danger of an invasion was imminent. The President listened attentively and promised to bring the matter to the attention of the Cabinet at their next meeting, which was done the next day. Here it was discussed informally but no action was taken, the President stating that he thought they were over-excited, that in his opinion the enemy had no intention of attacking Washington; but that possibly Baltimore and Philadelphia might be compelled to defend themselves. The matter was then dropped and referred to no more until too late for action.

June came and still that strange and fatal apathy pervaded the official circles of the government, and there seemed no thought of action in this entire military district of which Washington was a part. Only 2,154 effective men of the regular army were in reach,—one-half at New York, one-fourth at Fort McHenry, Baltimore, and the other quarter divided between Annapolis, Fort Washington and St. Mary's, besides a company of marines at Fort Washington on the Potomac; 500 recruits for the army from North Carolina who were in a camp of instruction near Washington. These were actually sent to the northwestern frontier as late as July 25th and at a time when the public mind was filled with alarm because of the frequent reports of depredations committed upon the citizens of the Eastern Shore of Maryland by Sir Peter Parker, and yet the President and Cabinet saw nothing menacing in the attitude of the enemy, and so stated.

On the 6th of June it became known to the authorities in Washington that the Emperor of Russia and the King of Prussia had entered Paris on March 30th with 180,000 men. The President was informed soon after officially by our Minister at Paris that Louis XVIII was now on the throne of France; that Bonaparte was a prisoner, and that peace now reigned in France; that the actual embarkation of the British army had begun, including a number of Wellington's veteran regiments, and that it was no secret that their destination was the Chesapeake Bay.

On July 9th General Winder addressed a communication to the President, detailing certain plans which he thought necessary for the defense of the Capital, and asking that steps be taken at once to carry them out, as the enemy's fleet in the Chesapeake Bay was being greatly reinforced, and closing his letter with these words underscored: "The enemy is now within three hours' march of Baltimore, less than that of Annapolis, one and one-half days of Washington." To this very important letter no answer was returned and the suggestions were not carried out in any detail.

On July 29th the people of Washington rose in their indignation and the militia rebelled against their commander. General Winder openly criticized the President for his criminal inactivity at such a time, when the enemy was almost at their door. The soldiers refused to serve under Winder, believing him the cause of the delay, and finally demanded the resignation of General Armstrong, the Secretary of War, as well as that of General Winder. This was followed, says Armstrong, by the President requesting him to retire from the active duties of the War Department for a time to satisfy the excited public. In reply he told the Executive that he did not see how he could be held responsible for the excited state of affairs, as he had not been consulted at any time, and that, had he been, he would certainly have opposed the appointment of General Winder, who had never had the confidence of the public or soldiers.

General Armstrong's retirement at this time was fortunate for his own reputation, for the defenseless condition of the capital was now acknowledged by all. No one could now be found, even among the personal and political friends of the President, to defend the administration.

This condition of affairs at the seat of government was well known to the enemy, for their officers disguised easily made their way into the city, mingled with the people, frequented the hotels and taverns, and passed in and out of the city at pleasure, being also aided by treacherous Americans in the pay of Admiral Cockburn.

It was decided about the middle of July at a cabinet meeting that the Governors of Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia should be called upon to assemble all their available forces, so that at short notice they could march to the seat of war, and the number was placed at 13,000, quite a formidable number on paper, but of this number only a few hundred could be gotten together. Strange to say, this order was not issued for ten days. The alarming news received on the 19th of August caused the authorities to do more active work, yet only a limited number of men were available, for want of arms.

About this time a messenger reached Washington with the information that a large body of soldiers and a number of warships had arrived to reinforce the British already in the Chesapeake Bay. This left no shadow of doubt in the minds of even the cabinet that an enterprise of great magnitude was intended.

On the morning of August 16th, twenty-two of the enemy's ships reached the Chesapeake Bay and proceeded up to join the force stationed at the mouth of the Patuxent River. The whole body then ascended that river, and on the 19th began land-

ing troops at the ancient village of Benedict, about 40 miles south of Washington. Great consternation followed the receipt of this news at the Capital, and that it was in great danger no one doubted for a moment.

On August 22nd the State troops from "Virginia and Pennsylvania began to arrive. The next day came the Maryland brigade, except the 5th Infantry under Lieut. Col. Joseph Sterett and Pinkney's riflemen, which did not get in until sunset of the 23rd. By noon of the 24th between 6,000 and 7,000 militia, including about 400 regulars, were in and around Bladensburg.

At ten o'clock on the morning of the 24th it was known to General Winder that the enemy was rapidly moving towards Bladensburg, and he proceeded to arrange his troops to meet their advance.

General Tobias E. Stansbury, the commander of the Maryland brigade and a veteran of the Revolution, being called upon, gladly assisted General Winder in placing his troops in position, and this was not an easy undertaking, for there was considerable confusion, many of the companies being of the rawest kind of militia, their officers excited and their men not under perfect control.

The plan of battle decided on was not the work of much time and was far from perfect, but was not without merit. It provided for three lines of defense.

The first line consisted of the Baltimore brigade under General Stansbury. Pinkney's riflemen (150 men), the 5th Maryland Infantry (500 men), which had arrived only a few hours before, had only a short rest, and had been without food for twenty hours; the Maryland Infantry under Col. Ragan (550), the Maryland Infantry under Col. Schutz (800), and last, but not the least, the two Baltimore batteries of Artillery (150), the American under Capt. Robert B. Magruder and the Franklin under Capt. Joseph Myers, in all about 2,200 men. On the Georgetown road [were] a company of Riflemen, one of Infantry, one of Artillery, and one of Cavalry.

The second line of defense consisted of two commands of Washington militia under Colonels Magruder and Wm. Brent, two companies of light artillery composed of the gentlemen of Washington, forming a brigade under General Walter Smith of that city; also two companies of Georgetown troops and a company of volunteers from Alexandria, Va., with Kramer's Infantry and Col. Beall's Infantry from Anne Arundel County.

In the rear of this line was the third line, consisting of the Pennsylvania and Virginia troops, under General Douglass of Virginia, and in front of this line were the works of Barney, who in the closing hours of that memorable day was to cover himself with glory. Stull's Infantry, Waring's Infantry, Scott's U. S. Regulars, Smith's brigade, and Peter's Artillery, formed part of this line.

The plan of battle was arranged by Winder and Stansbury to prevent the enemy from crossing the bridge which led into Bladensburg, which, however, should have been destroyed early in the day. It was left to the Baltimore brigade to check the advance of the enemy, the Baltimore Artillery and Pinkney's Riflemen to hold the

bridge, supported in the rear left by the 5th Md. Infantry, and on the rear right by the infantry under Ragan and Schutz. In the event of the falling back of this line, the second line was to flank the enemy, assisted by the artillery, who were to give them a flank attack, enabling the first to reform and charge the enemy with the bayonet. Assuming that they would not fall back, the third line was to move forward, supporting Barney's batteries and fire canister while they were in range, which would be a signal to the other batteries occupying raised ground to pour their shot into the ranks of the retreating foe, the cavalry to charge should the enemy re-form or be reinforced.

This was the plan of battle, and as we examine it upon the map, it certainly impresses us as being an excellent one, which, if carried out, should have resulted in victory for General Winder; but unfortunately it was not carried out in any detail. Indeed so badly was it interpreted that history records the defeat of about 7,000 Americans by about 1,500 British. Though this is not true, it has been repeated by writers from time to time, and to correct this and to give a fair and truthful account of the battle I have undertaken this history.

Many distinguished historians have fallen into this same error. Even Mr. Roosevelt in his *History of the Navy in the War of 1812* briefly continues this statement, and speaks of the battle of North Point in language incomprehensible to me, for the story told by the participants should confirm or correct these errors.

When all the different commands had been placed in position, it gave to the brigade of Stansbury the post of honor, and placed upon their shoulders a great responsibility; for upon the valor of these troops depended the fate of the day. Unfortunately for all most interested, they were not permitted to show their courage or ability.

When the trumpet announced the near approach of the enemy, the President, James Madison, James Monroe, Secretary of State, Gen. James Armstrong, Secretary of War, and the Attorney-General, accompanied by a number of friends, all on horseback, rode upon the hill overlooking the field, near the Georgetown road. Mr. Monroe rode some distance forward and seemed to examine the positions of the various commands critically, after which, returning to the side of the President, he conversed with him in a low voice and rode rapidly away. A most unfortunate thing this proved to be, for it resulted in the removal of the 5th Md. Infantry as the support of the Baltimore artillery, and the Maryland regiments of Ragan and Schutz from the right as the support of the Pinkney's riflemen and the falling back of the cavalry and artillery on the Georgetown pike, thus leaving the right and left of the firing line entirely exposed, disconcerting the plans of Winder and Stansbury.

This order was given and executed without the knowledge of or consent of these two generals during a conference which took place only a short distance away. This order coming from some one high in authority, General Winder dared not countermand it, as he could have done in time to save or preserve his plan of defense.

General Stansbury was so angry when he saw upon his return to his former posi-

tion what had been done, that he threatened to leave the field, and said in a loud and angry voice, "That the order was an outrage, and could only result in disaster."

We will now detail in a brief way the history of the battle of Bladensburg gathered from the reports of those who participated in the fight, which I believe to be technically correct.

At twelve o'clock the detachment which had been sent forward to locate and annoy the approaching enemy, returned and went to the rear. In a few moments the enemy's advance guard was seen in the road and began firing rockets which reached the unprotected regiments of Sterett, Ragan and Schutz, who were now more than a quarter of a mile in the rear of the riflemen and artillery. The moving of these regiments forced out of position another battalion, disconcerting the whole line of defense and support, in full view of the enemy, in range of their rockets, and without any service to the batteries or themselves.

The enemy seeing the weakness of the firing line and the unprotected position of the riflemen and artillery, sent increased numbers of rockets at the 5th Regiment. The British had now reached the apple orchard and had the protection the 5th Md. Regiment would have had had they been allowed to remain.

By this time the whole plan of battle had been so disarranged that the chance was gone to correct the grave errors which had been committed by someone other than General Winder. The enemy was now seen *en masse* coming down the hill just beyond Bladensburg and rapidly pressing forward to the bridge which they could never have crossed had the original plan of battle been adhered to.

The attacking line of the British was about 1,500 to 2,000 strong with some heavy field pieces, General Robert Ross commanding, with Admiral Cockburn in charge of sailors and marines. The enemy was not long in crossing the bridge, although the first attempt was not successful owing to the splendid service of the two Baltimore batteries and Pinkney's riflemen; but soon this small body, certainly not more than 350 men, was confronted by the whole attacking line composed of veterans of many battles. Yet the enemy were driven back by the raking fire of Pinkney's riflemen and were compelled to take shelter behind an old house which had previously given shelter to a portion of the 5th Regiment and which had been left to the enemy by the removal of the 5th Maryland.

The British advanced again under a heavy fire of the Marylanders so fierce that it swept away whole files of the advancing enemy.*

The enemy was now reinforced and fell heavily upon our artillery and riflemen

* Major Geo. Peter assisted Col. Thornton of the British advance in the hospital after the battle, who was badly wounded and left in Washington in our care, who remarked to Major Peter, "that just before they crossed the bridge the fire of the American artillery was the heaviest he had ever experienced." The National Intelligencer stated in their first issue after the battle, that over two hundred of the enemy's dead were found at this spot and buried by the citizens of Washington.



Maryland troops failed to stop the British at Bladensburg, allowing the invaders to ransack and torch public buildings in Washington, D.C., including the White House. B. H. Latrobe, MdHS.

who alone commanded the pass from the bridge, who finding no support coming to their aid fell back to a position commanding the road. General Stansbury in complimenting these soldiers afterwards said, "You did your work nobly, for you had to contend with the whole British force, and it is astonishing that you were able to maintain your position so long and to be able to withdraw so successfully."

The enemy in formidable numbers now began pressing the second line, when a company of District militia becoming panic stricken, broke and ran, throwing their arms upon the ground. This cowardly behaviour was the beginning of the end of that disastrous day. The whole force of the British was now hurled against the 5th Md. Regiment and the batteries of Magruder and Myers, but the gallant men of these commands not only checked their advance, but the 5th Regiment pressed their lines so strongly at the point of the bayonet that the British were compelled to fall back to the margin of the stream, where they stubbornly maintained their position until again reinforced by a part of the Grenadier or 2nd brigade. Thus strengthened they pressed forward and soon turned the left flank of our army, sending a flight of rockets into Stansbury's brigade, then the regiments of Ragan and Schutz broke and fled in great disorder. Colonels Ragan and Schutz did all they could do to rally their men, and even General Stansbury in a loud voice commanded these colonels to cut down the fugitives. General Winder rode hurriedly in front of them and begged them to halt, but without avail. General Stansbury, although seeing the case hopeless, ordered the 5th Regiment to stand firm, which they did, until both flanks were turned, when

General Winder ordered them to fall back to a slightly elevated position near the Washington road, and dashed away. The whole body of the enemy was now again pushing for the 5th, when an orderly notified Stansbury to hold the enemy in check while he attempted to rally the frightened militia who were retreating towards Washington and Georgetown. Stansbury held a council of his officers and submitted the order to them, and by their unanimous advice began retreating. As his troops filed down the road, he again received orders to make a stand at this place, but refused to obey, saying that nothing but complete annihilation of his command could result from making a stand at this place, as he was outnumbered five to one.

As he was crossing a narrow stream an orderly came to him greatly excited and demanded to know why he disobeyed the commander's order. His reply was, "Tell your commander that I am responsible for the disobedience and will answer for it when required."

General Armstrong some months after the battle said that he did not believe that the order came from General Winder, for no military man would give such an order, or expect Stansbury to hold in check so large a body of men unless he was sure of reinforcements; that the order came from some one higher in authority than Winder, for there was now no line of defenses to be depended on but the seamen and marines under Barney, and they were behind earth-works and could not move.

It is my opinion that General Winder did give that order, for those above him by this time were near the city of Washington, and the manner of Winder at this time was that of a man who had lost his head. In proof of this I will state that after the retreat of the second line, composed of three companies or battalions, the remaining troops closed up their ranks and prepared to receive the enemy, when General Winder rode up to an officer, who happened to be the Hon. Wm. D. Merrick of Maryland and the adjutant of the command, and in an excited manner ordered them to fall back. Mr. Merrick pointed to Col. Scott, the commander, who was on foot, his horse having been killed only a short time ago. Col. Scott heard the order, and recognizing Gen. Winder, said angrily, "Does Gen. Winder order me to fall back when my men are in good order and anxious to fight?" But fall back they did, and after this he ordered the 5th Md. Regiment to hold the British, a thing utterly impossible at the time, as the full force of the enemy, 4,000 or 5000 men, were now employed and marching upon Barney and the marines.

The American army had early in the day been hopelessly divided, and at the near approach of the attacking party, the President and Cabinet who were still mounted and standing on an eminence about a mile from the most advanced position, became alarmed at the condition of affairs created by Col. Monroe, and perhaps at the suggestion of some one of his party now made an effort to concentrate the forces as had been the plan of Gen. Stansbury from the very first, but it was now too late, for it meant the total destruction of any command to attempt to cross that space now covered by the guns of the enemy on Lowndes' Hill. Remember, that the British had

crossed the bridge and were in possession of a vacant house which had previously sheltered a company of riflemen, and emerging from behind this house they presented an unbroken front. It can be seen that if the Baltimore brigade had not been moved from this position, it being the most defensible Stansbury could have found, as he was protected by an apple orchard and with another brigade near at hand, it would have without doubt altered the fortunes of that day.

At two o'clock nothing stood between the enemy and Washington but the batteries of Barney, and upon that armed position they poured a hail of shot, and concentrating their forces made a vicious attack upon the centre; but like the hero that he was Barney maintained his position for some time. His left was soon carried by the British marines, but the seamen of Barney drove them back, and when they rallied it was seen that they had suffered a severe loss, but the next attack was made by the combined forces and ended the day's battle, for Barney at this moment was severely wounded and fell, and before he could rise, was a prisoner. His life was saved by the timely arrival of a humane officer, for a British bayonet was almost at his throat.

The history of the enemy's work in our defenseless capital is known to every one, the destruction by fire of the public and private property, the destruction of some and the mutilation of other works of art, the hasty retreat of that enemy in a tremendous rain and thunder storm, leaving 300 to 400 unburied where they fell, and their wounded to be cared for by our own surgeons and citizens, the most dangerously wounded being taken into the houses at Bladensburg.

The *National Intelligencer* is authority for the statement that the enemy lost about 500 killed and wounded, and 500 missing, of which number only a few made any effort to rejoin their companions.

The loss of the Americans was 76 killed and wounded and about 3000 missing, who all, it is said, found their way home.

Part II

[1 (1906): 197-210]

THE TESTIMONY WHICH I now submit comes from the men who participated in that unfortunate battle, and most, if not all of them acknowledge that but for the blundering of someone a different result would have been attained.

The first writer to be presented is Col. McLane, an eminent tactician of Revolutionary fame, who said:

At sunrise in the morning of August 23, General Winder and I visited the President and submitted to him a plan of battle, both offensive and defensive, which had the approval of several brigade commanders assembled at or near Bladensburg, that to concentrate our main force at some protected spot which

would enable them to pour a destructive fire into the ranks of the advancing enemy, being kept at bay by the artillery and riflemen, and within easy call the remainder of the army on the Georgetown and Washington roads, thus making it impossible for the enemy to pass a given point even if they succeeded in forcing the first line from their position; then to have at hand the cavalry and light artillery to annoy the rear guard if the enemy retreated. Now in the event that the enemy penetrated these two lines of defenses and drove back the artillery, the infantry and riflemen were to find protected places behind the stone walls and fences and pour a rapid and continuous fire into them, making their progress impossible.

In support of this plan I mentioned the well-known affair at Lexington, Mass., in which 1800 British were almost annihilated by the cross fire of scattered companies protected by fences and bushes, wood-piles, and houses; and concluded by saying, Mr. President, in the success of this against the best plan executed by the enemy, I will pledge my reputation and my life, and I earnestly recommend it to your adoption.

General Armstrong, the Secretary of War, being present, appeared to be pleased and it is supposed discussed the matter with his Excellency after our departure, but we might have saved our breath, for nothing came of it.

Major William Pinkney, speaking of the changes made in the plans at the last moment, said: "The 5th Md. Infantry, much to the chagrin of Col. Sterett and to the great disparagement of my battalion, were made to retire to ground several hundred yards in the rear, but visible to the enemy, where they could display nothing more than gallantry."

General Smith of Washington said that "when the order was given for a general retreat my soldiers and officers evidenced astonishment and indignation that they were to fall back ignominiously before they had had a chance to resist so impudent an enemy."

The testimony of General Tobias E. Stansbury is quite voluminous and I can give only a few facts bearing upon the principal points at issue. According to this soldier:

The 5th Infantry under Col. Joseph Sterett, the best disciplined and equipped regiment in my command, indeed on the field, had been placed in a position slightly in the rear of the Baltimore Artillery and Pinkney's riflemen, while the regiments of Ragan and Shutz, also of Maryland, were placed on the other end not far from the Washington road, with the intention that the infantry were to protect the artillery and riflemen and prevent their being flanked. This position was one of great responsibility and great honor, which they seemed to appreciate for they moved to their positions with alacrity and enthusiasm.

As I rode off a short distance to give some order to the artillery, I was greatly surprised to see the regiments of Ragan and Shutz marching to the rear at the moment when the enemy was seen in the road. I hastened to where General Winder stood on a little elevation and while conversing with him regarding this most unmilitary and incomprehensible movement and turned to point out the mistake of this order, when to my amazement and consternation saw the 5th Regiment also marching away to an exposed position in reach of the enemy's rockets, without cover or opportunity to inflict any damage whatever upon the enemy, thus taking away the support of the artillery and riflemen and leaving them to receive the first shock of the attack. I rode quickly back to General Winder and demanded sharply to know why such an order had been given, although I suspected who had done so, for I saw James Monroe riding with Col. Sterett, and I knew he was interfering with the commander.

To my inquiry, General Winder replied: "I do not know, it was not my order, nor does it meet with my approbation. I suppose my superior officer has ordered it."

(Now General Winder had but one living superior officer and that was the President of the United States.)

General Stansbury continues: "I knew in a moment that this last movement had lost us the battle and before a shot was fired, for it left Pinkney's riflemen and the two Baltimore batteries without support, but the number of dead British soldiers found opposite this command after the battle will prove how well they did their duty, even without support."

I write the reliable testimony of General Stansbury with great pride, and let it here be recorded to the honor of Pinkney and his brave riflemen as well as the Baltimore batteries of Magruder and Myers, that had they been veterans of many campaigns instead of militia, they could not have been more gallant, and Pinkney deserted by all but the artillery, remained in the firing line until overwhelmed by three times their number, and although wounded himself, retired from the field without the loss of a gun.

A most remarkable story now follows and from no other than General William H. Winder, the commander. Said he:

A few moments preceding the battle I rode up to a battery which had been thrown up to command the street entering Bladensburg and found them to be Magruder and Myers' artillery from Baltimore; they were well posted and were supported on the right by a battalion of riflemen and on the left by two regiments of infantry, all of Baltimore. I learned that General Stansbury was on a slight rise of ground near an apple orchard with the 5th Regiment and in a most excellent position. I rode quickly to his side and found him and

Col. Monroe together. Col. Monroe said as he rode away that he had ordered Col. Sterett to post his command in a rear position. I had scarcely time to examine the situation when an orderly rode up rapidly and informed me that a column of the enemy was in sight. The riflemen soon after began to fire and after a few volleys were seen to fall back to the edge of the orchard and soon after to retire to the left of Stansbury's line.

I immediately ordered the 5th Md. Regiment forward to sustain the artillery which were now giving signs of an intention to fall back; they immediately commenced the movement in the face of a shower of rockets, when the two regiments of Regan and Shutz, occupying the center of the line, received a shower of rockets in their ranks which caused them to break ranks and fly. After several fruitless efforts to rally them, I turned to the 5th Regiment, but to my surprise they had also fallen back. Riding to their commander, I then ordered them all to fall back and make another stand near Washington, but at Washington I found no troops. Undoubtedly some very grave errors occurred in the action at Bladensburg, which I would not repeat under the same conditions.

This account from General Winder is by no means satisfactory, or does it agree with other accounts.

General Armstrong, the Secretary of War, said, in conversation a few days after the battle, when most of the people and officials had returned to the Capital:

After I was requested by the President to give up for a time the functions of my office, I was a mere spectator, and as soon as I saw that the infantry had been taken away from the artillery I saw that an invitation was given the enemy to turn our left, and they were not long in accepting it either. The busy and blundering Col. Monroe was responsible for the defeat a short time later. I am in no way responsible for the disgraceful affair.

After the battle no one could be found to accept the responsibility of the fatal blundering, but almost to a man, except General Armstrong, tried to fasten the blame upon General Winder on the ground of inexperience of military affairs; and while it was certain that he was not the man to command on so important an occasion, he cannot be held responsible for the disasters of that day, for while he was nominally the chief in command, the orders which made defeat inevitable emanated from his superior, the President, and this came out in the investigation by Congress, but the results of this were of such a partisan character that none of the military men would abide by it.

General Winder, under severe censure, made no effort to shift the responsibility on any one, which he could easily have done, and had he done so, it might have resulted in preventing the election of James Monroe as the successor of James Madison, but he remained silent and soon severed his connection with the army. He may have

been without that military experience necessary in a commander; but he was never without honor, truthfulness, and patriotism: he was a true Maryland gentleman.

The over-anxiety of the administration to relieve themselves of censure, was evidence of their deserving it. If they had selected a commander-in-chief solely upon the ground of his fitness, and had complied with his reasonable demands as far as laid in their power, there would have been no necessity to exert that powerful political influence which they brought to bear upon Congress later to suppress the testimony which showed that the blame for the blundering of Mr. Monroe by authority of President Madison had made the catastrophe inevitable.

In the proclamation of the President later it was made to convey the impression that the disaster was chargeable to the private soldiers and the subordinate officers, which according to the testimony that I present is absolutely untrue. While nearly all the troops present were raw militia with only a limited acquaintance with the drill master and had never faced an enemy before, they evidenced, with one or two exceptions, a desire to engage in the conflict.

Confidence of troops in their commander is certainly the main element of victory; but how was it possible for General Winder's soldiers, having no personal knowledge of him, to feel a confidence, when at the most critical moment those who knew him best—the President and Cabinet—were unwilling to trust to his capacity and kept him in a state of supervision and doubt all the time, urging him to do this and that, and finally with the enemy almost upon them, posted his troops for him without his knowledge or consent.

The few personal friends of the selected commander admitted that there was nothing in his antecedent career that recommended him to the preference of the President. But we do find great fault with General Winder for accepting so important a command when in the regular army in and near the Capital there were a number of experienced officers of the Revolution.

Winder had just returned from a long captivity in Canada and was not thoroughly conversant with the conditions that prevailed; he was not in a mental or physical state to carry out the details necessary to so important a defense; and before the battle his appointment was spoken of as a great mistake and afterwards as a calamity.

Generals Samuel Smith, John Stricker, Tobias E. Stansbury, and Thomas Foreman, all of Maryland, and of Revolutionary experience, would have been acceptable, and General Moses Porter, the Commandant at Norfolk, a splendid soldier of forty years' experience in military affairs and outranking General Winder and a dozen others, would have inspired the soldiers with confidence when they appeared on the field. But the fact remains that although he did all in his power to rally the men in the last moment, with the hope that a stand could be made at Washington, no soldiers were found, upon his arrival, to do so,—the gate of the nation's Capital stood wide open, the British accepted the invitation, and by acts of barbarity and vandalism steeped their flag in ignominy.

The defenseless condition of the city was well known to Ross and Cockburn, and why they should destroy our Capital was known only to themselves, for certainly there was no military advantage to be gained by the burning of Washington.

The lighted torch in the hands of Lieutenant Parker of the navy, by order of Admiral Cockburn, set fire to our public buildings and all but the Patent Office were destroyed. In the burning of the Library of Congress our government lost many valuable documents and rolls of troops in the Revolution; and but for the providential torrent of rain which burst upon the Capital City about nine o'clock that evening, not a building would have been spared. Our government, stung to the quick by this wanton destruction of public buildings and property, caused Mr. Monroe to write to Admiral Cockburn and General Ross regarding this uncivilized method of warfare. Cockburn's reply was "That he had been instructed by his government to lay waste such towns and districts on the coast that he found assailable, but upon reflection he experienced much regret that it should have been done, and if it were revocable would not be repeated under similar circumstances."

General Ross made no reply, although he received the letter on September 6th. But nothing could have been expected of him, for he had won his spurs in the Spanish wars and acquired his morals and learned his catechism in that atmosphere. If he had been in any way responsible for this outrage he never regretted it, for it is said he boasted of it on his way to his death at North Point.

Civilized warfare has its laws, and international ethics should prevail during the time of war as well as peace; and the greatest achievement of Christian civilization has been to soften the horrors and excesses of war and to condemn savage barbarity.

When the news of the capture of Washington was received in London it caused great rejoicing. The Tower guns were fired three times in honor of the event. But when details of the destruction of public and private property and the plunder of the people was received, it caused great shame.

The *London Spectator* said: "Would that we could throw a veil of oblivion over our transaction at Washington. Even the Cossacks spared Paris, but Englishmen spared not the Capital of America."

The *Liverpool Mercury* said: "If the people of the United States retain any portion of the spirit with which they contended successfully for their independence, the effect of these flames will not soon be extinguished."

The *British Annual* said: "The proceedings of Ross and Cockburn at Washington were a return to the times of barbarism, which would bring a heavy censure upon British character."

Let it be said to the shame of George IV that this warfare, which would have disgraced banditti, not only met with his approval, but Admiral Cockburn upon his return to England was the subject of his favor. The first honor conferred upon him was that of Royal jailer to Bonaparte on his way to St. Helena, and is said he insulted General Bonaparte only three times. The last caused the prisoner to turn his back

on the insulter and walk away, to be reminded by the Admiral that he, Bonaparte, had not read *Chesterfield* carefully. "No," replied Bonaparte, "I have not, but I see you have."

As soon as the order was given for a general retreat at the moment when the 5th Regiment fell back, it was known to Mr. Madison that the army of defense had been totally defeated and dispersed, and that no stand could be made at Washington. He hastened to the White House and found Mrs. Madison and her attendants packing up every article that could be carried away in her carriage, she having been notified of the great disaster only a short time before the arrival of the President.

All was silent except the low voice of Mrs. Madison giving directions; the carriage was before the door; the President was hurriedly gathering up official documents and cramming them into a portfolio. An explosion near by alarmed them and quickly gathering up the things she hastened to the door, giving directions to one of the servants to carry the Stuart portrait of Washington to a friend in Georgetown, and entered her carriage just as the President and friends mounted their horses. Her carriage was about to move off when she remembered not having seen the Declaration, it being overlooked in their haste. Entering the house she soon returned, holding up triumphantly that precious document; entering her carriage she bowed to her husband and drove off. Not a tear was upon her cheek at this sad hour, but on her face was a look of defiance, with a salutation of dignity to all whom she passed. She bade adieu to her home and became a fugitive from her country's capital.

Mr. Madison, in company with some of his cabinet and friends, all on horseback, rode away in another direction, it having been arranged between them that Mrs. Madison was to await him at a certain tavern on the Maryland side.

Mr. Richard Rush, in a letter written some years after the war, referring to the flight of the President, said:

Never can be forgotten by me as I accompanied out of the city on that memorable night of August 24, 1814, President Madison, General Armstrong, Secretary of War, General Mason, Mr. Charles Carroll of Belview, and Mr. Tench Ringgold.

We were all on horseback, as we looked back over our homes on that night and saw that all of the public buildings were on fire, some burning slowly and others with sudden bursts of flames, mounting high up in the horizon, shall I ever forget these moments? At intervals the dismal sight was lost to view as we rode down hill to again see the heavens lighted up as we rode up hill again; on we went, slowly and sadly followed by our servants, and soon reached the Virginia side of the Potomac with the intention of recrossing to the Maryland side at Great Falls, to be near the scene of action and to watch the movements of the enemy.

The following is a most valuable and interesting letter written by Miss Polly Kemp of the Eastern Shore, but a resident of Washington at that time, which throws some light on the state of affairs and certainly clears away many doubts which have existed for eighty-eight years regarding the movements of the President and Mrs. Madison in their flight from Washington. The letter is written to her cousin Alice in Baltimore, is dated on December, 1814, and reads thus:

It was an almost suffocating day in August, the 24th, when the sound of guns reached our ears, we were all tuned up to a high pitch of excitement from early morn until afternoon when our flying soldiers from the battle-field at Bladensburg, told us that our army had been completely routed and that the enemy was marching rapidly on to Washington, Uncle John, who, as you know, was in the city militia, came to us immediately and all was bustle. While the carriage was coming, we got together all of our valuables and soon we were in the midst of a great cavalcade of teams of all descriptions, moving as rapidly as possible into Maryland, and it was near midnight before we reached the tavern. Before that it began to rain in great torrents, the lightning and thunder adding to the terrors of a dark night, our man walked ahead with a lantern, the outhouses and stable were full so that our poor tired rain-beaten horse had to be tied to the trees and remain out in the rain for hours, we were made as comfortable as was possible in our wet garments, and had been seated scarcely an hour when there was a loud rap upon the door and the great rough tavern keeper made it known to us in an angry voice that the intruder was Dolly Madison, as he attempted to push her away from the door. Father indignantly sprang to the door and pushing aside the angry keeper, went out in the rain to find that lady walking away in that terrible rain. Taking her by the arm he led her back into the house. The keeper began denouncing the President as the cause of the war and the destruction of the capital; many of the occupants murmured against admitting her, but father was determined that she should remain and remain she did: we took her under our special protection. We sat silently until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, when a rap came upon the door, one of our party opened the door and who should walk in but President Madison himself and several gentlemen, but the President did not remain long. An hour later a messenger announced to the President that the enemy was coming that way, he quickly drew on his great cloak and kissing his wife went out again into the storm followed by his faithful followers. By daybreak, Mrs. Madison became restless and could not stand the suspense any longer and started out with her coachman to find Mr. Madison. After they had gone some of the people in the tavern who were under the influence of liquor, were very angry with father for admitting them. How very sorry we were for Queen Dolly as she was called sometimes.

During all these indignities she spoke not a word. Towards morning a straggler came in and reported that the enemy had evacuated Washington, and soon the sad cavalcade began their tramp back to the city. It is true we were all indignant at the inactivity of Mr. President and his advisers in their stupid management of affairs. You or I could have done better. But at the sight of lovely Dolly Madison our bitterness relented, and we all tried to heal the wounds received at the hands of their countrymen, but the comedy of errors, as the battle was called, was over but not forgotten, and never will be while the blackened walls remain to remind us of the barbarian's visit and our great loss, and as father says, the blow to our national dignity. How proud you must have been to see your brave Baltimore boys marching home from North Point. I was so proud when I read the account of that glorious battle in the newspapers. I am a native of the Eastern Shore and I glory in it.

You will notice that I have spoken little of the other forces and confined my remarks to Maryland alone, because the others played so little part in the war game, but a large part in the stampede which no human power could arrest.

As the battle progressed, they simply melted away, home, country, honor was lost sight of, personal safety was sought at the sacrifice of everything. Let it be said, however, in extenuation of their conduct, that they were only militia, never having been on the firing line before, and so badly scattered that they lost confidence in themselves, too readily listening to idle rumors that floated over the battle-field, with no knowledge or confidence in their commander, what other result could have been attained?—so that the brunt of the battle fell upon the Baltimore brigade with the exception of several companies which very early sought safety in flight. But old General Stansbury was so sure of his men that he went into battle exultantly; his spirit of daring was so ardent that it was a source of real inspiration to his men, and so crestfallen was he when he saw that a bungling hand had robbed his brigade of a great victory that he used language stronger than elegant.

The statement was made by Admiral Cockburn, that the American army of 8,000 men had been dislodged by about 1,500 men as soon as reached. If this statement was accepted, how can one reconcile the fact that they were two hours in making their way through militia regiments; but there is no truth in it. The actual number of men in conflict at one time on the American side was about 2,100, while that of the enemy was 2,000 to 3,000, because the original attacking party of the enemy was 1,500, but it must be remembered that they were reinforced several times, and it is well to remember also that the artillery of Magruder and Myers and Pinkney's riflemen, not over 300 men, held the 1,500 men of the enemy in check for over an hour without any support at all. Had the 5th and the two other Maryland regiments remained as their support, the British could never have crossed the bridge.

As to the amount of fighting done by Pinkney and the artillery in that short

time, nearly 200 dead bodies of the enemy were found after the battle in front of this command.

Niles' Register places the number of the enemy at 5,100; Gleg, the English historian, says it was 4,500; the *Subaltern*, 4,000; the exact number we shall never know for none of these writers have been guided by truth.

Another English historian, Allison, is more untruthful than all others and that in the face of official reports of those in command. Honorable warfare makes the victorious proud but generous, proud of their prowess and this oftentimes removes the sting of defeat from the brave vanquished; but in the breasts of the American soldiers as they retreated from Bladensburg, as they looked back at the mailed hand of the barbarian, deep hatred for their foes filled their breasts and thirst for revenge filled their hearts.

On the morning of September 14, 1814, when it became known that General Ross had been killed and his army under Col. Brooke retreated before the brigade of Stansbury at Loudenslager's Hill, the shame which they had felt at Bladensburg for their heartless enemy was changed to contempt for the commander who feared to meet again the militia of Maryland.

It is deeply regretted by every true lover of our country, that the splendid services rendered the nation by James Madison, for he was justly called the father of the Constitution, should have been dimmed by the closing years of his administration; for while he was a true patriot and a wise statesman, he knew nothing of the science of war and, unfortunately, his advisers knew little more.

ADDENDA.

FROM AN OLD NEWSPAPER, PUBLISHED IN 1848, ENTITLED
"AN HISTORICAL ERROR CORRECTED."

"It has always been universally believed for the last thirty years and more that the full length portrait of General Washington, which adorned one of the rooms in the State House at Washington, was saved from the conflagration caused by the British in 1814, by General Mason. We know that General Jackson was so strongly impressed by that belief as to express some anger when the merit of the rescue was ascribed to another. Mr. Jacob Barker, now of New Orleans, who was one of the real saviors on that occasion, has been induced recently to write out his recollections on the subject for the *N. Y. Express*, in the form of a letter to the gentleman, Robt. G. L. De Peyster, who assisted him in saving the picture. It contains many interesting references in localities in the neighborhood of Georgetown, D. C., relating that it was at the instance of Mrs. Dolly Madison, who in that hour of danger evinced the most admirable presence of mind, that they took measures to receive the picture, procuring a cart and taking it through Georgetown, thence on the road to the Montgomery County Court House, where after concealing themselves in the woods for some time to rest, they deposited it with a widow lady at a country house, some distance from the road. Six weeks later, Mr. Barker called, in company with Miss Dashiell and took the picture away to Washington and delivered it to Mr. Monroe, the Secretary of State and War, who promised to have it varnished and placed in a new frame and reinstated in the President's home where it still remains. What agency General Mason may have had in restoring it to its present place, Mr. Barker does not know. Mr. Barker accounts for General Jackson's error by supposing that General Mason might possibly have been of a party who came in with the President from the battlefield (Bladensburg), whilst they were engaged in securing the picture, several persons he says assisted in taking it down and General Mason might have been one of them, but the most active was the venerable Mr. Carroll. He says of the party, Mr. Carroll left with the President and the others all left before the retreating army reached the city, excepting you, myself and servant."

NOTE.—General Mason was with President Madison on the battlefield of Bladensburg and rode with him to the White House and may have assisted in taking down the picture, but General Mason and Mr. Carroll rode away with President Madison into Virginia, and Mr. Barker and others, with the painting in their possession, rode towards Georgetown.

The Use of Rockets by the British in the War of 1812

RALPH ROBINSON

[40 (1945): 1-6]

It is well known that rockets employing the jet system of propulsion were used as weapons of offense by the British in the War of 1812, and it has been suggested that some account of their construction and the uses to which they were put may prove of interest at this time when the re-introduction into warfare by the Germans of similar weapons has made news.

The missiles used in the War of 1812 were designed by Sir William Congreve (1772-1828), a Major General of the British Army and were known as "Congreve Rockets." In appearance they were not unlike those used in a 4th of July display of fireworks and were adapted for operation both on land and on vessels. There were two types, the case-shot rocket employed as a substitute for artillery or auxiliary thereto, and the rocket loaded with inflammable material designed to start conflagrations.

The case-shot rocket contained carbine balls, the bursting powder being in a cylindrical chamber in the rear of the charge of balls, the explosion of which was regulated by a fuse. Those used with infantry weighed from three to twelve pounds and were fired from a position prone upon the ground and also from a stand fashioned like a tripod upon which they could be adjusted at any pitch. From vessels they could be fired from the deck, from the rigging and from openings in the gunwales or hulls made especially for their use. Because of the absence of recoil, they were adapted to use on very light vessels and even by boats under oars.

Case-rockets exploded like shrapnel and their effective range was put at 3,000 yards which exceeded that of field artillery using solid shot and canister. Their penetration in a solid bank of earth is given as about 20 feet.¹

The first experience of our armed forces with Congreve rockets was in the Chesapeake Bay area, where they were used by Rear Admiral Cockburn in his marauding

1. The information here furnished as to Congreve Rockets is taken from a work with illustrations by Sir William Congreve entitled *Treatise on the Congreve Rocket System* (London, 1827), to be seen in the Library of the War College, Washington, D.C. Here also will be found MS notes by Lieutenant Miner Knowlton, one time instructor of artillery at West Point, furnishing, such information about rockets as then understood and also a work by J. Scoffern, *Projectile Weapons of War* (London, 1856). *Niles' Weekly Register* claims rockets did not originate with Sir William Congreve, that they "were used in India before his great-grandfather" (X, 212).

expeditions, of which there are several recorded instances. On his staff a young officer was serving in the rank of lieutenant, who later in life as Sir James Scott wrote the following account of an attack on a shore battery by boats under oars.

The slide, on which they [the rockets] were laid, contained two of these destructive missiles carrying special shells, instead of combustible material. By good luck (for they are an uncertain weapon) in the first flight I let off, one of them fell directly into the block-house and the other alighted in one of the batteries under it. Waving to the remainder of the boats, our gallant leader [Cockburn] headed the attack and got possession of the batteries before the enemy could recover from the panic occasioned by the rockets.²

The redoubtable Commodore Joshua Barney also records their use against his fleet of barges which later were ingloriously destroyed to prevent capture by the British. In an encounter with some of the enemy's vessels near the mouth of the Patuxent he wrote:

During the firing the enemy advanced a barge which threw rockets but as they cannot be directed with any certainty, they did no execution. But I find they can be thrown further than we can our shot and conclude from this essay, this will be their mode of warfare against the [our] flotilla.³

Shortly after this when Barney had taken refuge in St. Leonard's Creek which makes in from the eastern shore of the Patuxent River in Calvert County, he was repeatedly attacked by the British who had two frigates moored at its mouth.

One of the enemy's rockets, [he says] fell on board of one of our barges and after passing through one of the men, set the barge on fire and a barrel of gun-powder, and another of musket cartridges caught fire and exploded by which several of the men were blown into the water and one man very severely burned—his face, hands and every uncovered part of his body being perfectly crisped.⁴

Abandoned by her crew and with the magazines on fire the barge was gallantly boarded by the Commodore's son, Major William B. Barney, and saved from destruction.

2. Sir James Scott, *Recollections of a Naval Life* (London, 1834), III, 262.

3. Barney to Secretary of the Navy, June 3, 1814. T. H. Palmer, ed. *Historical Register*, IV, Part II, 118.

4. Mary Barney, *Biographical Memoir of the Late Commodore Barney* (Boston, 1832), 239; See also Hulbert Footner, *Sailor of Fortune* (N.Y., 1940), 271-72.

From Colonel Deceius Wadsworth who had been sent from Washington with a battery of artillery to relieve Barney we learn that "one of the enemy's rockets passed through an ammunition box which had been injudiciously placed and exploded, which did some damage. An ammunition cart near it was covered with fire but fortunately did not explode."⁵

The employment of rockets in the War of 1812 most familiar to Americans, was by the British infantry in the battle of Bladensburg, fought on the 24th day of August, in which they were substituted for artillery. Of the latter arm the British had but one six-pounder and two three-pounders (dragged by sailors), which apparently never got into action.⁶

The centre of the first line of the American Army facing the British as they rushed across the Bladensburg Bridge, was occupied by General Stansbury's Baltimore Militia wholly without combat experience. "The rockets," we are told "which had for the first three or four passed very high above the heads of the line, now received a more horizontal direction and passed very close to the heads of Schulz's and Regan's Regiments . . . a universal flight of these two regiments was the consequence."⁷

Brave and strenuous efforts were made by these officers to reform their men and, although a few responded, the majority continued in flight. Shortly after this the 5th Baltimore Regiment became confused, when ordered to change its position on the left flank of Stansbury's troops, and broke and fled, followed by the remaining troops that had faced the enemy as the first line of defense.⁸

While it is true that the American troops were under musketry fire from the beginning of the action, the initial break was the work of the rockets and there appears to be no reason to doubt that it undermined their steadiness.⁹

Nor is the fact that these raw troops were stampeded by the rockets as discreditable as it has been generally considered, for it is reported that in the battle of Leipzig Napoleon's troops were assailed with Congreve rockets and that "their noise and bright glare" had great effect in frightening them and throwing them into confusion, and in the Peninsular War their use by the British caused "terror by their novelty."¹⁰

5. Report to Secretary of War, June 26th, Palmer, *Historical Register*, *loc. cit.*, 122.

6. So Cockburn reported. Palmer, *loc. cit.*, 144.

7. General William H. Winder, "Statement to Congressional Committee," *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, I, 558.

8. *Ibid.*

9. The effectiveness of the rockets at Bladensburg is attested by Rear Admiral Cockburn and also by Gleig. Cockburn in his report to Admiral Cochrane says "I remarked with much pleasure the precision with which the rockets were thrown," Palmer, *loc. cit.*, 144; "A corps of rockets proved of striking utility," G. R. Gleig, *Narrative of the Campaigns of the British Army at Washington and New Orleans*. (London, 1826), 126. A misleading misconception of the rockets used at Bladensburg appeared in the *Baltimore Evening Sun* on January 9, 1939. It was supplied, together with a cartoon, by John Hix, at that time running a daily "Believe It or Not" feature. Hix claimed that the American troops fled in wild disorder when "sky-rockets" were fired at them which "They believed to be some devilish new instrument of War."

The use of rockets in the War of 1812 also has been made familiar by the line in our National Anthem, "And the rocket's red glare, the bomb bursting in air."

The rockets Francis Scott Key saw were fired from the *Erebus*, a ship especially fitted for such use, and one of the squadron engaged in bombarding Fort McHenry. Whether these rockets were case-shot or incendiary does not appear and it is doubtful if the *Erebus* was close enough to the fort for them to be effective. No mention of their reaching it was made by Major Armistead in his report, whereas he did mention the bombs, of which some 400 fell "within the works" from the five "bomb-ketches," as the vessels from which they were fired, were called.¹¹

Rockets were also used by the British in the battle of North Point but as they were well supplied in that engagement with artillery, some of which is said to have used shrapnel,¹² rockets appear to have played a minor role. General Stricker speaks of their use against his left flank, but on this occasion the militia, which included troops that had fought at Bladensburg were not stampeded by them, although it was the left flank that proved unsteady and gave way.¹³

The weakness of Congreve rockets was their inaccuracy. This inherent fault, together with the improvement in artillery, led to their disuse.

The propriety of using rockets in warfare was questioned and found expression in the following paragraph which appeared in *Niles' Weekly Register* in August, 1814:

CONGREVE ROCKETS—The property and composition of these instruments is ascertained. If required, we also can have them made. But— would it not be *cruel* to use them? If the torpedo, in the water, was an "unfair" weapon, are not rockets in the air improper to be used by a "moral and religious people?"¹⁴

In Boston a proposal for use of the new arm appeared in print but no action appears to have been taken:

ROCKET BATTERY—*From the Boston Gazette*—A correspondent would beg leave to suggest to the committee of defense the utility of erecting a *rocket battery* on either forts Warren or Independence.—By means of a recent invention, rockets from one to thirty-two pounds, or larger if necessary, may be fired with as much accuracy as ordnance; and possessing a quality equally destructive as shells, they may be made a powerful weapon of annoyance to

10. *Dictionary of National Biography*, IV, 934.

11. Armistead's Report to Secretary of the Navy. Palmer, *loc. cit.*, 199.

12. Gleig, *op. cit.*, 181. The shrapnel shell was a recent invention of Major General Henry Shrapnel (1761–1842) a British officer. It was quite as new to the American troops as rockets and far more deadly. *Dictionary of National Biography*, XVIII, 163.

13. Stricker's report to Major General Samuel Smith. Palmer, *loc. cit.*, p. 191.

14. Vol. VI: 425 (August 20, 1814).

the enemy's vessels, should they attempt to come within their reach—and it is said they can be thrown two miles and upwards. We understand Mr. Beath has expressed a willingness, not only to superintend the making of these rockets, of which it is believed he has a perfect knowledge, but also to be stationed at the battery, in case of attack.¹⁵

A similar objection to the use of the torpedo as a weapon of offense has doubtless been forgotten by many who today are habituated to its unrestricted use, both under water and in the air.

A submarine torpedo was designed and patented by Robert Fulton of steamboat fame in the first decade of the nineteenth century. His efforts to get, first, the British Admiralty and, later, our government to use them were unsuccessful. The objection chiefly urged was that as an instrument of warfare they were inhuman.¹⁶

This attitude was attested when a sub-marine device for destroying ships in the Potomac River was submitted *anonymously* to General William H. Winder in command of the defenses of Washington.¹⁷

The failure to make use of torpedoes by the Madison Administration in the War of 1812 was ascribed to the activities of the so called "Peace Party" by *The Aurora*, a strong administration paper published in Philadelphia which compared their use with that of rockets in this paragraph:

We would respectfully solicit the *pious men* to explain the difference between waging war with submarine machines and with *aerial* destructive weapons—fighting under water or fighting in the air? The British too cowardly to meet us on shore (except when they are certain of finding little or no opposition) like men and soldiers send us *Congreve rockets* to burn out towns and habitations. We in turn dispatch some of our torpedoes to rub the copper off the bottom of their ships.¹⁸

Banning the use of rockets as "unfair" and the use of torpedoes as "inhuman" appears today not only essentially unrealistic but a bit whimsical. It stems of course from a conception of war as one of the major sports—a conception which modern weapons of offense and defense has rudely shattered.

15. *Niles' Weekly Register*, VII, 55 (Oct. 6, 1814).

16. Those interested in Fulton's efforts to get his torpedo adopted in the United States may consult his *Torpedo and Submarine Explosion* (N.Y., 1810; Reprint by William Abbatt, 1914), Enoch Pratt Library. See also B. J. Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812* (N. Y., 1868), 238–40, for an account of Fulton's efforts to get his torpedoes used by the British Admiralty.

17. Lossing, *op. cit.*, p. 939–40, where an illustration of the submarine device will be found taken from the original drawing in the Winder MSS.

18. *Ibid.*, 693, note 2, where also will be found an account of the attempt to destroy *The Plantagenet*, a ship of the British Navy by a submarine device.

Response to Crisis: Baltimore in 1814

FRANK A. CASSELL

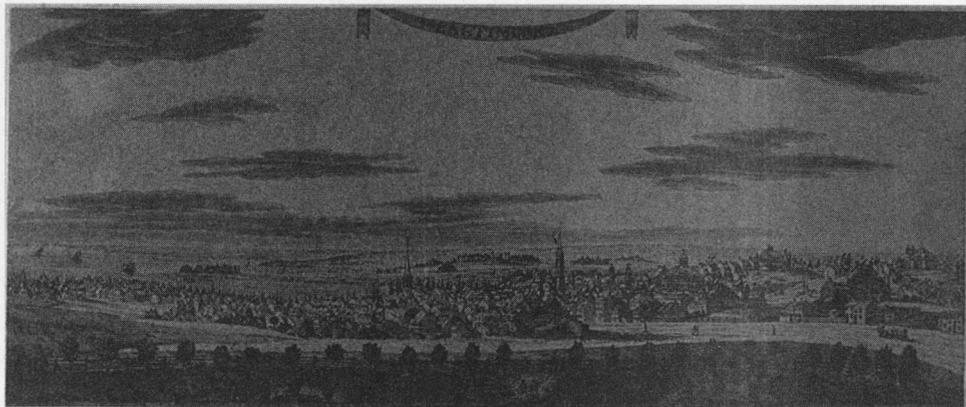
[66 (1971): 261-87]

The Battle of Baltimore in September 1814, has been retold so often that one might question the necessity and value of returning to such a familiar episode. Yet the historical literature on this event appears to be curiously incomplete. While scholars have dwelt upon the military aspects of the battle and carefully noted that the national anthem was written during the shelling of Fort McHenry, they have not addressed themselves to the question of why and how Baltimore was able successfully to resist the combined land-sea onslaught.¹ To say that Baltimore was saved because the British fleet could not break through the harbor defenses and the British army declined to attack the fortified American line on Hampstead Hill does not really answer the question. What is important is to determine why Baltimore was so well prepared. To solve this problem requires an understanding of the resources and leadership of Baltimore itself, for to a startling extent the defense of the city was exclusively in the hands of its inhabitants rather than those of the state or federal government. Of the three major cities attacked by the British in the War of 1812, New Orleans, Washington, and Baltimore, only the last did not rely heavily on non-citizens for protection. The factors responsible for the victory, therefore, are to be found in the context of the city. They may be defined generally as the great wealth acquired through trade, the strength and flexibility of local political institutions, and superb leadership exercised by an intelligent and aggressive business elite.

Located on the Patapsco River only a few miles from Chesapeake Bay, Baltimore would indeed have been a rich prize for the British. In 1814 the city had a population of around fifty thousand and ranked third in size behind Philadelphia and New York. Because it was situated farther to the west than its northern rivals, Baltimore had become the principle market for the wheat-growing regions of western Pennsylvania and Maryland. Baltimore's merchants grew rich by exporting wheat and flour to the West Indies and the Mediterranean and importing manufactured items for sale to eager American farmers.² The prosperity generated by foreign commerce had encouraged the growth of subsidiary industries such as flour-milling, iron-making,

1. See for example Charles G. Muller, *The Darkest Day: 1814* (Philadelphia, 1963), pp. 173-205; Neil H. Wanson, *The Perilous Fight* (New York, 1945); Reginald Horsman, *The War of 1812* (New York, 1969), pp. 204-208.

2. For a description of Baltimore's economic growth in these years see James Weston Livingood, *The Philadelphia-Baltimore Trade Rivalry, 1780-1860* (Harrisburg, 1947).



Baltimore, c.1811. Baltimore facing south. Note Fort McHenry on Whetstone Point in the center distance. J. L. Boqueta de Woiseri. (MarylandHistorical Society.)

and ship-building. Economic institutions kept pace with the city's development. Banks, insurance companies, commercial exchanges, as well as retail stores and hotels appeared in great numbers after 1790. Physically, Baltimore reflected its thriving economy. Visitors uniformly praised the handsome red-brick homes that lined broad paved avenues. They also noted the imposing public buildings such as the Exchange and Court House. Few, however, made mention of the shacks and tenements that housed Baltimore's less affluent citizens.

As in all American cities political power was held by the merchants and the wealthy lawyers and manufacturers who were their allies. Although property qualifications for the vote were loosely enforced, office-holding remained the prerogative of the rich who had the leisure time as well as the money to afford public service. This is not to say, however, that the common citizens were of no political importance. On the contrary, the need for popular support to win elections forced candidates to adapt their appeals to popular sentiment. Those who ruled in Baltimore did so at the sufferance of the numerous artisans, small businessmen, and lesser professional men who made up the electorate. From the late 1790s Baltimore's voters had been overwhelmingly Republican in their sympathies and had consistently supported those candidates who espoused Jeffersonian principles.³ Political unity was a necessary condition to the successful defense of Baltimore, and it was the Republican party organization which helped to provide that unity.

When the war with Britain began, the citizens of Baltimore fully expected that their city would be attacked. In part this conviction derived from Revolutionary War experiences when British cruisers had continually harassed shipping even in the Patapsco River and on at least one occasion had threatened to assault the city.

3. William Bruce Wheeler, "Urban Politics in Nature's Republic: The Development of Political Parties in the Seaport Cities in the Federalist Era" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1967), pp. 147-151.

But more than this Baltimoreans could not believe that the enemy would not make some effort to destroy the government stores and naval vessels in the city. The many commercial ships anchored in the harbor and the numerous warehouses crammed with goods also appeared to offer a tempting prize. Additionally, the port of Baltimore was a center of privateering activity. It was only reasonable to assume that the British would strike at the base of these troublesome raiders.⁴

Baltimore was not an easy city to defend. The Patapsco was deep enough to allow all but the biggest warships to sail within cannon-range of the city's center. Attack might also come by land. The extensive and entirely unfortified shores of Chesapeake Bay contained numerous places at which an army might debark and march against the city from virtually any direction. But geography was only one of the problems faced by those responsible for protecting Baltimore. Another, more serious difficulty was the total absence of any preparations for defense. In 1812 Fort McHenry, the main bastion guarding the water approaches to Baltimore, was a decaying wreck. Without sufficient cannon, its earthworks worn away by wind and water, and manned by an insignificant garrison, the fort was in no condition to withstand an assault. No other fortifications existed in the harbor area nor, for that matter, anywhere else around Baltimore.⁵

Baltimore's leaders soon discovered that they could expect little help in making their city ready for war. The federal government had few resources to spare for the defense of the Chesapeake. Almost every soldier and gun it could obtain was forwarded to the northern frontier where the major campaigns of the war were being waged. The state government of Maryland was also reluctant to provide large quantities of military supplies to the state's chief city. Besides Baltimore there were dozens of settlements located on Chesapeake Bay or along the shores of adjacent rivers and streams that lay within reach of enemy raiding parties. Understandably, public officials in Annapolis felt some responsibility towards those citizens and found it difficult to deny them a portion of the meager stocks of guns, uniforms, tents, and powder located in state arsenals.⁶ Thus, for all practical purposes, Baltimore was isolated from the rest of the United States. Its survival was almost entirely dependent on the decisions, the actions, and the discipline of its citizens.

From the moment war was declared Baltimore's fate was placed in the hands of Samuel Smith, major general of Maryland's Third Militia Division. The choice

4. Horsman, *War of 1812*, p. 204; Francis F. Berne, *The War of 1812* (New York, 1949), p. 309; A. T. Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812* (2 vols.: New York, 1903), I, pp. 395-398, II, pp. 226-240; Glenn Tucker, *Poltroons and Patriots* (2 vols.: New York, 1954), II, p. 515.

5. General Samuel Smith to Governor Robert Bowie, Sept. 23, 1812, Smith papers. Library of Congress.

6. Frank A. Cassell, "Baltimore in 1813: a Study of Urban Defense in the War of 1812," *Military Affairs*, XXXIII (Dec, 1969), p. 349.

was a fortunate one, for General Smith was a most remarkable man. Born in 1752 in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Smith had arrived in Baltimore as a youth. Following in his father's footsteps, he had become a merchant. His firm, S. Smith & Buchanan, was among the largest in the city and had produced for him an immense personal fortune. Related by blood or marriage to many other important citizens of Baltimore, a director or stockholder in several local banks, Smith was counted among the foremost leaders of the city. At the age of forty he had commenced a career in national politics, serving as congressman from Baltimore in the years 1793 to 1803 and then moving to the Senate of which he was still a member at the time of the British attack in 1814. A Republican, General Smith had been a friend and advisor to Thomas Jefferson. The Virginian had once offered Smith a position in his Cabinet as secretary of the navy, but the General had preferred to keep his seat in Congress. In both the House and Senate the Marylander had exercised considerable influence. Because he was an expert on matters relating to commerce, banking, and the military, he was frequently called upon to draft legislation or to chair committees concerned with these matters. In 1812 the general's power in Congress was declining largely because of a long series of disagreements that he had with President Madison over foreign and domestic policies. Nevertheless, he was still a United States senator, a member of several committees dealing with military appropriations, and a personal friend of many officials within the administration. The Marylander's position and contacts proved of value in his efforts to build up Baltimore's defenses.⁷

That Samuel Smith was also the principle military official in Maryland was no accident. His acquaintance with the military began during the Revolution when he had fought in most of the major battles of 1776 and 1777. As a young lieutenant colonel Smith had won national recognition and a congressional decoration for his tenacious defense of Fort Mifflin, a post located on Mud Island in the Delaware River below Philadelphia. Upon his retirement from the Continental Army in 1779, he was named a colonel in the Maryland militia and from that time had continuously been in charge of Baltimore's security. In 1794 he was promoted to major general and given command of the militia forces located in the Western Shore counties. Over the years Smith had proved to be a popular commander. The common militia soldiers respected his leadership while the officers, whom he had nominated to their positions, were often business associates or political allies. Indeed, the militia generally had been among Smith's most loyal supporters in his political campaigns.⁸

At the beginning of the War of 1812, Smith could claim only limited experience as a wartime commander. He had never led large bodies of troops in battle and his only acquaintance with fortifications had been at Fort Mifflin. His troops could claim

7. For details of Smith's career see John Silas Pancake, "The General From Baltimore: A Biography of Samuel Smith," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. University of Virginia, 1947) ; Frank A. Cassell, "Samuel Smith: Merchant Politician, 1792-1812," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. Northwestern University, 1968).

8. Cassell, "Samuel Smith," pp. 15-16.

even less familiarity with war. Not for two decades had the Maryland militia been called upon for any military service. In 1794 Smith and the Baltimore militia had marched against the Whiskey Rebels but never fired a shot in battle. An amateur general at the head of amateur troops was all that stood between the British and Baltimore in 1814.⁹

Much of the hard work that made the victory of 1814 possible was completed in the summer of 1813. With a British fleet operating in the Chesapeake the citizens of Baltimore were inspired to put their city in the highest possible state of readiness. In April and again in August 1813, the Patapsco was blockaded, and the very real threat of invasion existed.¹⁰ While General Smith did take some precautions against a land attack via Patapsco Neck, his attention was primarily focused on the harbor. Within a few months Smith had done much to rebuild Fort McHenry; fortifications were repaired, over sixty large cannon mounted, and several hundred militia were trained in the use of the big guns. Booms were erected around the fort to prevent assaults by small boats, and by the end of the summer several small batteries were constructed behind the fort to guard against attack from the rear. Batteries were also located on the Lazaretto across the ship-channel from Fort McHenry, and, as further insurance that the British would not reach the inner harbor, a line of hulks was made ready for sinking. In order to have the greatest amount of warning of approaching danger, Smith set up a complicated intelligence system. Lookouts were posted near the tip of North Point and a string of guard boats stationed at intervals between North Point and the city. When British ships were spotted, the word was relayed from boat to boat by flag signals. The mechanism worked well in 1813 and was again employed a year later. Smith did one other thing of note: he used his influence in Washington to have the uncooperative Major Lloyd Beall replaced as commander of Fort McHenry by Major George Armistead.¹¹

While work proceeded in the harbor, Smith was also busy training the troops under his command. The third division consisted of four brigades of which two, the second and ninth, were drawn from inland counties and of limited military value. The eleventh brigade, its ranks filled by militia from Baltimore County, was more promising, but in 1813 it lacked weapons and training. The finest military unit in Maryland was the third or City Brigade. Well drilled by Smith for many years, the 4,500 men of the third constituted the city's most reliable defense force. Yet fully one-third of the brigade attended musters without weapons. Throughout the sum-

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6; C. I. Bushnell, ed., *Memoirs of Samuel Smith, a Soldier of the Revolution, 1776-1786* (Baltimore, 1860).

10. Walter Dorsey to S. Smith, April 13, 1813, Smith Orderbook Papers, Library of Congress; *Niles Register*, April 24, 1813; *Baltimore American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, April 17, 1813; S. Smith to John Armstrong, July 7, 1813, War Department, Secretary of War, Letters Received, Registered Series, National Archives, Washington, D. C. (Hereafter cited as WD, LR, Registered Series).

11. Cassell, "Baltimore in 1813," pp. 351-353.

mer of 1813 Smith worked feverishly to improve the fitness of his troops. Begging, threatening, cajoling officials in Annapolis and Washington, he managed to secure enough arms to equip most of his militia. Training exercises sharpened the discipline of the troops. Smith gave particular attention to the eleventh brigade in issuing strict instructions to its commander, General Tobias Stansbury, to build up the morale and efficiency of his unit. By September Smith's energetic direction had successfully transformed the citizen soldiers of Baltimore into a force capable of meeting regulars on the field of battle.¹²

General Smith's accomplishments in 1813 were only possible because of the united support of Baltimore's most influential citizens. The emergency conditions prevailing during the summer persuaded the city's leaders that the present structure of Baltimore's government was inadequate to meet the situation. Accordingly, on April 13, a new city agency named the Committee of Public Supply was created by the mayor and city council. Charged with the responsibility of providing for the city's defense, the Committee of Public Supply was in effect a wartime government. Its members, who were appointed rather than elected, were entirely drawn from the business community and included General Smith's partner, James A. Buchanan, William Patterson, and Samuel Sterett, who were related to the general by marriage, and Mayor Edward Johnson, a longtime political supporter of Smith's. Given these interrelationships, it was not surprising that the committee and the commanding general enjoyed complete harmony in their dealings with each other. To carry on its work the city government granted the Committee of Public Supply an appropriation of \$20,000 and gave it permission to seek loans within the city. In practice the committee acted as General Smith's purchasing agent. Both the state and federal governments promised supplies for the city but frequently failed to provide funds. The Committee of Public Supply remedied this deficiency by buying arms and other military necessities in the expectation that the money would later be repaid. Without this financial support Smith would not have been able to carry out his ambitious program of defensive preparations.¹³

In the fall of 1813 the British fleet left the Chesapeake to spend the winter in the West Indies. The citizens of Baltimore were relieved but convinced that their ordeal had not yet ended. There was every expectation that the spring would bring a renewal of British naval operations in the great bay. In the months since the first alarms had been sounded the city had moved with dramatic speed to erect its defenses. Confident that the harbor fortifications could withstand any attack and reassured by the presence of the well-armed, well-disciplined militia troops of the third brigade, Baltimoreans could afford to be more hopeful about their future.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 357-359.

13. J. T. Scharf, *History of Maryland* (3 vols: Hatboro, Penn., 1967), III, p. 39; S. Smith to John Armstrong, April 15, 1813, WD, LR, Registered Series; S. Smith to Committee of Public Supply, April 13, April 15, April 18, April 19, and May 18, 1813; Cassell, "Baltimore in 1813," pp. 354-355.

The ships and men that would eventually attack Baltimore began to gather in Bermuda as early as January 1814. In April command of British military operations on the Atlantic coast was transferred to Vice Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane, who received orders to employ his forces in attacking coastal American settlements and destroying American naval power.¹⁴ Before Cochrane could act, however, events in Europe drastically altered the situation. France and Napoleon had finally been defeated, thus freeing thousands of British troops and large numbers of ships to descend on the United States. Plans were immediately laid in London to increase the tempo of the war in America by tightening the naval blockade and mounting a massive three-pronged attack along the northern frontier. Cochrane's command was substantially enlarged, and he was now told to attack targets of opportunity. He was to create a diversion that hopefully would draw American troops away from the Canadian border. To accomplish this mission Cochrane was given great latitude for action. His orders made mention of Washington and Baltimore as possible objectives, but he was to use his own judgment in determining whether those cities could be attacked "without too much risk."¹⁵

By August 12 Cochrane's armada had reached the Chesapeake. Pursuant to orders the fleet moved first against American naval forces in the area, which meant Commodore Joshua Barney's flotilla of gunboats. On August 19 the British had trapped Barney in the upper reaches of the Patuxent River. Troops were debarked to attack the shallow-draft gunboats and Barney was forced to destroy his vessels to avoid capture. The absence of strong American resistance convinced the British commanders that a thrust at nearby Washington was militarily feasible, and 4,200 troops under Major General Robert Ross and Rear Admiral Sir George Cockburn were accordingly assigned the mission. On August 24 Ross's troops, many of them veterans of the European war, easily smashed a larger American force composed almost entirely of militia at the misnamed Battle of Bladensburg. While the terrified militiamen scattered over the countryside, the British entered Washington and leisurely burned most of the public buildings and the naval yard. From a distance President Madison and his advisors observed the nation's capital go up in smoke. Following the destruction of the city, Ross retreated to his ships where the troops rested and the chief officers conferred about their next move.¹⁶

News of the American defeat at Bladensburg and its aftermath shocked but did

14. Admiralty Archives, Adm. 2/123, pp. 91-39, and Adm. 1/505, p. 434, and Secretary of the Admiralty John Croker to Admiral Cochrane, April 4, 1814, Ad. 2/1380, pp. 10-12, Public Record Office, London.

15. Secretary Croker to Vice-Admiral Sir Edward Pillow, April 15, 1814, Adm. 2/1380, pp. 25-27, 75, 123; Croker to Cochrane, May 19, 1814, Adm. 2/1380, pp. 142-146, *ibid.*; Earl of Liverpool to the Duke of Wellington, Sept. 27, 1814, printed in the *Md. Hist. Mag.*, II (1909), p. 112.

16. Admiral Cockburn to Admiral Cochrane, Aug. 13, 1814, Adm. 1/507, pp. 119-120, Public Record Office, London; Horsman, *War of 1812*, pp. 194-204.

not panic Baltimore. There was pride that the 2,500 men of the third division who had fought at Bladensburg under General Stansbury's command had acquitted themselves well. There was also concern that the survivors would find their way back to the city in time to meet the British assault everyone expected. In the months before Bladensburg General Smith had certainly not relaxed his efforts to improve Baltimore's security. During April he had made efforts to rehabilitate the second and ninth brigades with indifferent success. On June 20 he had taken steps to put the harbor fortifications in a state of alert by recommending that Major Armistead place booms across the entrance to the harbor at night to avoid the possibility of a sneak attack. Smith also urged Armistead to make use of the city-owned barges. These vessels, built by order of the Committee of Public Supply at Smith's request in 1813, were designed to patrol the Patapsco River and challenge smaller British vessels. Manned by the marine fencibles, sailors in the pay of the city, the barges would prove useful in September.¹⁷ In July Smith was able to persuade the federal government to repair some of the booms anchored in front of Fort McHenry that had been damaged during the winter. After official word arrived that war had ended in Europe, Smith redoubled his exertions, putting men to work making 320,000 cartridges for the 5,000 men he estimated that it would take to defend Baltimore.¹⁸

From long experience Smith had known what to do when, on August 18, he received messages telling of a large British fleet ascending the bay towards Washington, Annapolis, and Baltimore. Not knowing that the British were actually in pursuit of Barney's flotilla, the General assumed that Baltimore was possibly the destination of the enemy fleet. Using the emergency powers vested in him as commanding general of the third division, Smith called out the city brigade and ordered it to appear fully equipped on the parade ground the next day. Even as the citizen-soldiers moved to their posts, the General was dispatching orders to the 1,500 men of the eleventh brigade not at Bladensburg with Stansbury. They were instructed to "march without delay by companies and Half companies" to Baltimore and rendezvous on Hampstead Hill. Smith also ordered General Thomas Forman, commander of the ninth brigade, to provide 500 men for the gathering army at Baltimore.¹⁹

On August 23, the day before the Bladensburg fiasco, the Committee of Vigilance and Safety commenced operations. The successor to the Committee of Public Supply, this new organization was even stronger and more efficient than its predecessor. Its records reveal that it had total responsibility not only for defending the city but

17. Samuel Smith, Orders to the Third Division, April 14, 1814; Smith to Major Armistead, June 20, 1814, Smith Orderbook Papers.

18. John Armstrong to S. Smith, July 8, 1814, Secretary of War, Letters Sent, Military Affairs, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (Hereafter cited as SW, LS, MA) ; S. Smith to Major Armistead, July 11, 1814, Smith Orderbook Papers.

19. Gov. Levin Winder to S. Smith, August 18, 1814; Gen. William Winder to S. Smith, Aug. 18, 1814, Smith papers; S. Smith, Orders to the Third Division, Aug. 19, Aug. 20, and Aug. 23, 1814, Smith Orderbook Papers.

also for administering it during the crisis. Among other duties the committee raised money, built barracks, arrested suspected spies, purchased supplies of all sorts, and made provision for the city's sick and poor. It also undertook to represent Baltimore's interests before the state and federal governments. Like the Committee of Public Supply, the Committee of Vigilance and Safety was the indispensable mechanism necessary to free the city's resources and effectively utilize them. It differed, however, in that the committee members were elected by the citizens of Baltimore by wards rather than appointed by the mayor, as had been the case in 1813. It thus had a broad popular constituency that insured its decisions would be respected. Although elected, the committee members were still drawn from the merchant-business classes and consequently had access to those groups in Baltimore controlling the wealth. Experience would show that the Committee of Vigilance and Safety was as loyal an ally to General Smith as the Committee of Public Supply had been.²⁰

Following the "Bladensburg Races," as one wit described the American rout on August 24, and just as Baltimore appeared in the greatest danger, Samuel Smith's right to command was contested, and for a few anxious days at the end of August it seemed possible he would be relegated to a secondary status. Smith's challenger was Brigadier General William H. Winder, nephew to the governor of Maryland, friend of Secretary of State James Monroe, and the unfortunate commander of the American forces at Bladensburg. A native of Baltimore, Winder began his military career as a captain in Samuel Smith's third division. Enlisting in the regular army at the beginning of the war, he had risen rapidly through the ranks. In July 1814, after having been captured and then paroled, Winder was named commander of the newly created tenth military district that included Maryland, the District of Columbia, and northern Virginia. It was in that capacity that he found himself at the head of a ragged, frightened mob of militia at Bladensburg.²¹

General Smith had sensed immediately that Winder's appointment might conflict with his own. On July 20 he had written Secretary of War John Armstrong asking that the federal government grant him the same broad powers he had been given the previous year to call all the militia troops into federal service that he deemed necessary. Armstrong did not bother to reply. A week before the British troops landed in the Patuxent, General Winder had made inquiries as to whether he could on his own authority call out the Baltimore militia. Smith firmly answered that under the laws of Maryland only he could do that.²² The question of command became even more acute after enemy troops had landed. In the same letter in which he informed the governor of Maryland that he had mobilized the city brigade, Smith asked for

20. Minutes of the Committee of Vigilance and Safety, Aug. 25, 1814, William D. Hoyt, Jr., ed., "Civilian Defense in Baltimore, 1914-1815," *Md. Hist. Mag.*, XXXIX (Sept., 1944), p. 204.

21. John Armstrong to Gen. William Winder, July 2, 1814, SW, LS, MA.

22. S. Smith to John Armstrong, July 20, 1814; same to Gen. William Winder, Aug. 14, 1814, Smith Orderbook Papers; Gen. Winder to S. Smith, Aug. 12, 1814, Smith Papers.

orders "to govern my authority in the event of an invasion of my Military District." Governor Levin Winder responded that he had long been concerned with the possibility of conflicting commands but felt only the federal government could make a final determination. He reminded Smith that in the past Secretary Armstrong had ruled that a regular army officer was superior to all ranks of militia officers unless such officers had been called into the actual service of the United States. By that interpretation William Winder was clearly the legitimate commander of Baltimore and its defenses.²³

For a few days the momentous events at Bladensburg and Washington pushed the quarrel between Smith and Winder into the background. Winder's defeat and the British threats against Baltimore again made the argument one of primary importance. Unless one man or the other achieved undisputed control, the defense of Baltimore would be made infinitely more difficult. At this critical moment the Committee of Vigilance and Safety gave Smith some much needed support. On August 25, the second full day of its existence, the committee publicly endorsed Smith. That an *ad hoc* committee should presume to advise the state and federal governments on such a matter is no more amazing than the events that preceded the endorsement. Early on the morning of August 25 the committee received a personally delivered petition from Brigadier General John Stricker of the City Brigade, Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, the hero of Lake Erie who was in Baltimore to take command of a new ship, Major George Armistead, the regular army officer in charge of Fort McHenry, and Master-Commandant Robert T. Spence of the United States Navy. As the top military officers in the city, these men took the highly unusual step of telling the city government that it was their "wish" that Smith command all forces stationed at Baltimore. The only explanation for such a procedure is that in the unusual circumstances that prevailed, with national authority temporarily neutralized, these officers felt that they must take some initiative to avoid serving under the incompetent Winder. It was also a tribute to Smith that their confidence in him was such that they would risk future official reprisals in order to keep him in command. There is no evidence Smith himself instigated the officer's petition, but there does appear to have been some collusion between the authors and the committee of Vigilance and Safety. Only some previous understanding could explain why they made their plea to a quasi-legal governmental body in Baltimore rather than to the governor of Maryland or even the Secretary of War.²⁴

Upon hearing the officers, the Committee of Vigilance and Safety voted to send a three-man delegation headed by Colonel John Eager Howard to Smith's headquarters. Howard was to convey the committee's request that the general "take upon himself the command of the Forces that may be called out for the defense of our city." A short

23. S. Smith to Gov. Levin Winder, Aug. 19, 1814, Smith Orderbook Papers; Gov. Winder to S. Smith, Aug. 19, 1814, Smith Papers.

24. Declaration of the Committee of Vigilance and Safety, Aug. 25, 1814, Smith Papers.

time later Howard reported to the committee that Smith was "willing and would" accept the command if Governor Winder "sanctioned" it. Thereupon the committee drafted a letter to the governor asking him to "invest Maj. Genl. Smith with powers in every respect commensurate to the present exigency."²⁵ While all that occurred might have been honest and above board, the episode, when viewed in the context of the prolonged contest between Smith and Winder, appears contrived. It had been made to appear, rightly or wrongly, that the people of Baltimore and the chief military officers on duty at that place were unanimous in their feelings that General Smith rather than General Winder was the man they trusted to defend the city regardless of military etiquette. It would have been very difficult for state or federal authorities to disregard the opinions of Baltimore on this matter. To force General Winder on an unwilling city might have meant catastrophe in the event of an attack.

In response to the communication of the Committee of Vigilance and Safety, Governor Winder awarded Smith the position of major general of the Maryland troops called into actual service by the federal government. To his angry nephew the Governor protested that this appointment did not make Smith overall commander at Baltimore. Winder still maintained that only the national government could make that decision. Technically the governor was probably correct; the federal government could still name General Winder to the post. But it was hardly likely that a fugitive administration not yet returned to a burned capital city would place a lesser-ranking officer who had just lost a major battle over a man who was now on the federal payroll and who seemingly was the most popular soldier in Baltimore. Smith wasted little time in exploiting his commission from the governor. To General Winder, who was marching towards Baltimore with the remains of his army, Smith sent a copy of the governor's letter and informed him that he had "in consequence assumed the command agreeably to my rank." Winder was ordered to report on the number of troops he had and to send ahead tents and other camp equipment belonging to Stansbury's brigade.²⁶ A day later Smith informed Secretary of War Armstrong that he was now in control at Baltimore. General Winder had finally reached Baltimore, Smith casually remarked to Armstrong, but "I have not yet seen him." Suddenly without troops or power William Winder was a pathetic figure. An appeal to his friend James Monroe, who had replaced Armstrong in the War Department while continuing as secretary of state, brought no satisfaction. The national government was hardly more than a group of refugees and in no mood to play politics when the enemy was still in the vicinity. Winder was politely advised to obey Smith's orders.²⁷

Having survived this ordeal, Smith focused his full attention on the military situ-

25. Minutes of the Committee of Vigilance and Safety, Aug. 25 and Aug. 26, 1814, Hoyt, "Civilian Defense," pp. 204-206.

26. Gov. Levin Winder to S. Smith, Aug. 26 and Aug. 27, 1814, Smith Papers; S. Smith to General William Winder, Aug. 26, 1814, Smith Orderbook Papers.

27. James Monroe to S. Smith, Sept. 11, 1814 and S. Smith to John Armstrong, Aug. 27, 1814, Smith Papers; James Monroe to S. Smith, Sept. 2, 1814, Smith Orderbook Papers.

ation. Fortunately, from his point of view, the enemy was giving him time to perfect his plans. For reasons unknown to the Americans, Ross, Cochrane, and Cockburn kept the fleet in the Patuxent. Smith used this time well. The harbor fortifications required little attention since the labors of 1813 had put them in good order. The only major decision left was when to sink the hulks to block the ship channel. For advice on this and many other matters the general relied on Captain John Rodgers of the United States Navy, a tough veteran who knew how to handle men and cannons. With the harbor secure Smith concentrated his energies on preparing for a land attack against the city.

In 1813 a few earthworks had been thrown up on Hampstead Hill, and General Stansbury's brigade along with some artillery had been stationed both on the hill and along Patapsco Neck. Such precautions were obviously inadequate to ward off an attack by the sizable land force at the disposal of General Ross. As a first step Smith requested the Committee of Vigilance and Safety to mobilize Baltimore's citizens into work brigades to be used in a massive program of fortification building. On August 27 the committee responded with a sweeping directive. Free Negroes and whites exempt from militia service were ordered to report the next morning at Hampstead Hill for assignment to labor details. Slave owners were asked to send their slaves for the same purpose. The entire city was divided into four sections. Each section was to provide labor crews one day out of four.²⁸ To help finance the construction as well as to purchase arms and food for the militia troops arriving in Baltimore, Smith asked the Committee of Vigilance and Safety to seek a \$100,000 loan from the city's banks. Within forty-eight hours the money was made available. Contemporary news accounts show that the committee obtained funds in other ways. Many individual citizens, local organizations, and even militia companies contributed money for the Committee's activities.²⁹

Baltimore was a city-in-arms, straining every fiber in a gigantic effort to preserve its safety. Day after day witnessed purposeful confusion as the city's streets teemed with soldiers, sailors, workmen, artillery trains, wagons full of equipment, and galloping troops of cavalry. Everywhere there was evidence that the defense of Baltimore was a communal enterprise: women making bandages, old men manufacturing cartridges, gangs of men and boys who struggled to build crude shed-like barracks for the troops, and thousands of militiamen who endlessly drilled had committed themselves entirely to a higher purpose. Hardly a person was not enlisted somehow

28. S. Smith, Orders to the Third Division, Aug. 27, Aug. 29, and Aug. 30, 1814; S. Smith to Committee of Vigilance and Safety, Aug. 28, Aug. 30, and Aug. 31, 1814; same to Thomas C. Worthington, Aug. 29, 1814, Smith Orderbook Papers; Minutes of Committee of Vigilance and Safety, Aug. 29, Aug. 31, Sept. 1, and Sept. 3, 1814, Hoyt, "Civilian Defense," pp. 209, 211, 212-213, 215-216.

29. S. Smith to Committee of Vigilance and Safety, Aug. 31, 1814, Smith Orderbook Papers; Minutes of Committee of Vigilance and Safety, Aug. 31 and Sept. 1, 1814; Hoyt, "Civilian Defense," pp. 211-213; *Baltimore Patriot and Evening Advertiser*, Sept. 1, 1814.

in the defense effort: housewives cooked provisions, doctors flocked to makeshift hospitals behind Hampstead Hill, and all citizens were warned by the public prints to report anyone whose actions were suspicious. The civilian and military leaders of the city continued to work in perfect harmony. General Smith met daily with the Committee of Vigilance and Safety to work out plans that were immediately implemented. Yet, in the final analysis, the authorities would have been helpless had it not been for the spirit of voluntarism and citizen participation that characterized Baltimore in these critical days.³⁰

During the first week in September work progressed rapidly, although there were signs that despite the general cooperation of the citizens the Committee of Vigilance and Safety was having trouble supplying enough laborers. In an effort to overcome this problem, the committee authorized the payment of one dollar per day for unskilled workers and slightly more for carpenters. On September 7, however, the committee had to abandon these wage guidelines and begin hiring workmen on the best terms that could be obtained. Even with these difficulties the committee was able to honor General Smith's requests that a bridge of scows be built in the area of Fell's Point and that some fortifications be erected on North Point road about half way along Patapsco Neck.³¹ The Hampstead Hill defenses were well advanced by September 10. Beginning at Fell's Point near the harbor, the line of earthworks, ditches, and redoubts stretched northward to where the hills ended and the land flattened out.³²

The troops to fill these extensive fortifications poured into Baltimore throughout early September. Besides the third division, militia troops from Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Delaware were available to defend the city as well as a small number of regular army troops and the invaluable handful of United States Navy gunners. Altogether 15,000 troops stood ready to face the British should they attack. Of this number, however, relatively few possessed the weapons and training needed to fight effectively. Prudently, Smith ordered most of the militia to be stationed on Hampstead Hill in the hopes that they would fight better from a protected position. Only the crack third brigade was kept in the city ready to move against the enemy when they should land.³³

30. S. Smith, Orders to the Third Division, Aug. 27, Aug. 29, Aug. 31, Sept. 1, and Sept. 2, 1814; S. Smith to Committee of Vigilance and Safety, Aug. 28, Aug. 31, and Sept. 3, 1814, Smith Orderbook Papers; Minutes of the Committee of Vigilance and Safety, Aug. 29, Aug. 31, Sept. 1, Sept. 3, Sept. 5, Sept. 11, and Sept. 13, 1814, Hoyt, "Civilian Defense," pp. 209-221; *Baltimore Patriot and Evening Advertiser*, Sept. 1, 1814.

31. Minutes of Committee of Vigilance and Safety, Sept. 5 and Sept. 7, 1814, Hoyt, "Civilian Defense," p. 217; S. Smith to Committee of Vigilance and Safety, Sept. 3, 1814, Smith Orderbook Papers.

32. William M. Marine, *The British Invasion of Maryland, 1812-1815* (Baltimore, 1913), p. 132.

33. S. Smith to James Monroe, Sept. 3, Sept. 4, Sept. 7, and Sept. 9, 1814, Smith Orderbook Papers.

General Smith's most pressing problem was to obtain accurate information on the movements of the British. The lookout post at North Point was manned, but the general was determined to have the earliest possible warning of an attack. It was vital to know, for example, whether the British intended to march overland from Upper Marlborough to Baltimore. All of Smith's preparations had been based on the assumption that any enemy attack would involve landings at North Point where the water was deep enough to allow troop transports to maneuver close into shore. If General Ross decided to lead his forces cross country, then Smith would need time to redeploy his troops. As his chief intelligence officer, Smith chose Major William Barney, a trusted personal aide. On August 27 Barney was ordered to shadow the enemy fleet which had remained idle in the Patuxent. He was told to set up horse relays at ten-mile intervals to speed his information back to Baltimore. Barney performed his task efficiently. By watching the fleet and interviewing British deserters and released American prisoners, he was able to give Smith a reasonably complete picture of the enemy's strength and plans.³⁴

On Saturday, September 10, Barney reported that the British fleet was on the move and heading towards Baltimore, but contradictory reports from other sources caused General Smith to delay taking action. The next morning, however, a messenger arrived from an observation post that Smith had established at Herring Bay far to the south of Annapolis and Baltimore. The report confirmed Barney's observation that at least thirty ships were sailing rapidly northward. Smith had hardly finished reading this information when other riders brought news that the fleet was in view of the North Point observation station. The rapidity of the British advance obviously surprised the general, and he was forced to fire alarm guns in order to assemble the third brigade. Sometime during the afternoon General Stricker and 3,200 soldiers marched from Baltimore to the western end of Patapsco Neck where, with the exception of several hundred skirmishers who were sent ahead, they bivouacked for the night.³⁵

That the British were coming to Baltimore at all was largely due to Admiral Cockburn. Ruthless and belligerent, Cockburn had earned the hatred of all Marylanders by his devastating raids around the Chesapeake in 1813. Always anxious for combat, Cockburn had persisted until he overcame the reluctance of Cochrane and Ross to risk an attack on Baltimore. Indeed, until shortly before the fleet moved against Baltimore, Cochrane was telling his superiors in London that his plans did not include operations against the city. It is likely that Ross, at least, did not believe that he had sufficient troops for such an attack. Although the expedition began with over 7,000

34. S. Smith to Major William Barney, Aug. 27 and Sept. 1, 1814; Barney to Smith, Aug. 30 and Sept. 1, 1814, Smith Papers.

35. S. Smith to James Monroe, Sept. 23, 1814; William Barney to S. Smith, Sept. 10, 1814; James Monroe to S. Smith, Sept. 11, 1814, Smith Papers; S. Smith to James Monroe, Sept. 19, 1814, printed in the *Baltimore Patriot and Evening Advertiser*, Sept. 23, 1814.

soldiers, sickness and desertion had reduced that figure by nearly half. Nevertheless, he finally agreed with Cockburn that the defenses of Baltimore should be tested. If they proved weak enough, then a full scale assault might be mounted.³⁶

At 7 A.M. on Monday, September 12, Stricker learned that British troops were landing at North Point. Acting on Smith's orders and in accordance with a strategy that may have been decided on as much as a year earlier, he marched the City Brigade forward to the narrowest part of Patapsco Neck. Stricker was well acquainted with this terrain. In 1813 he along with Major Barney had been detailed by General Smith to take a survey of the peninsula. In that survey Barney had noted that the most defensible position was the strip of land between Back River on the north and Bear Creek on the south. It was at this point that Stricker now arranged the six regiments under his command, again taking the precaution of sending squads of riflemen ahead to harass the British. For the next few hours the clerks, carpenters, apprentices, blacksmiths, sailmakers, laborers, and businessmen who made up the third brigade leaned on their weapons and waited nervously for their first taste of combat.³⁷

Meanwhile, General Ross, after stopping for breakfast at a farmhouse at North Point, led his 3,500 troops towards Baltimore at a leisurely pace. Without warning the British General and his aide suddenly confronted a few of Stricker's skirmishers who opened fire. Ross was killed instantly, a circumstance that seems to have severely depressed the rest of the army. The two young militiamen who allegedly shot Ross, Daniel Wells and Henry McComus, were shot down shortly after Ross's death. Colonel Arthur Brooke now assumed command and continued the march.³⁸ Between 2 P.M. and 3 P.M. the two armies came into view of each other and an artillery duel ensued. The spectacular but quite ineffective Congreve rockets that had frightened the American militia at Bladensburg failed to panic the disciplined Baltimore soldiers. For nearly one and a half hours Stricker's men behaved like regulars, matching the British veterans volley for volley. Stricker was finally forced to order a retreat when large numbers of British troops threatened to turn his left flank by wading through a marsh. In attempting to counter this move, the American general had ordered one regiment to execute a maneuver that proved too difficult under fire. Confusion swept its ranks and the men finally broke and ran. Of more importance, the other regiments, leaving the field in good order and reforming around a prepared position, maintained their composure. Stricker had performed his assigned mission better than anyone had a right to expect. He had not been ordered to hold his position at

36. *Baltimore Patriot and Evening Advertiser*, Sept. 1, 1814; Admiral Cochrane to Earl Bathurst, Aug. 28, 1814, War Office 1/141, pp. 27-30, Public Record Office, London; Report of a British officer on the Battle of Baltimore, Sept. 28, 1814, printed in the *Baltimore Patriot and Evening Advertiser*, Oct. 25, 1814.

37. General Stricker to S. Smith, Sept. 15, 1814, printed in the *Baltimore Patriot and Evening Advertiser*, Sept. 23, 1814.

38. Muller, *The Darkest Day*, pp. 187-188.

all costs but merely to delay the enemy's advance as long as it was feasible to do so. His men had never been in battle before, and yet they had withstood with honor an attack by professional troops fresh from the battlefields of Europe.³⁹

By the evening of September 12 Stricker had led the City Brigade back to Hampstead Hill where General Smith ordered them posted to the left and a half mile in front of the main fortifications. His intention appears to have been to keep his best troops mobile in order to prevent the British from flanking the American lines. Stricker was soon joined by General Winder and a force of Virginia militia. The British chose not to follow up their initial advantage. Disheartened by Ross's death and unused to physical exertion after long days in the cramped holds of the transports, the troops made camp near the site of the battle. British and American troops alike were thoroughly drenched by a heavy rain during the night from which they had no protection.⁴⁰

At 10 A.M. on Tuesday, September 13, the British began their major movement against Baltimore. In the Patapsco, naval vessels moved to within two miles of Fort McHenry and began a twenty-five hour bombardment. At the same time Colonel Brooke marched his troops out of the Patapsco Neck woods and into full view of the American position on Hampstead Hill. From his command post General Smith could see a breathtaking panorama. To his right and left concealed behind the hastily built earthworks studded with over one hundred cannon crouched 11,000 men. To the north and east he could see the massed ranks of Stricker's and Winder's commands. In the distance, some two miles away, he could make out the red uniforms of the enemy. Later he would learn that one of the British regiments was made up of escaped American slaves. As the Americans waited, Colonel Brooke and Admiral Cockburn, who once again preferred to be with the army rather than the fleet, argued over strategy. Cockburn urged that the army be immediately launched against the American positions. Brooke maintained that a frontal assault would likely fail because, he believed, at least 20,000 men had to be manning the extensive works he observed. Furthermore, the ground was wet from the recent rain and the footing on the side of the ridge would be treacherous. Although neither Brooke nor any other British officer verbalized it, there must have been some feeling that if the troops before them fought like Stricker's men had yesterday, there was little likelihood a victory could be won. In the end Brooke rejected Cockburn's advice and decided to try a less risky plan.⁴¹

39. British and American reports of this battle widely differ. The evidence seems to show, however, that the British exaggerated when they spoke of an American rout. See General Stricker to S. Smith, Sept. 15, 1814, printed in the *Baltimore Patriot and Evening Advertiser*, Sept. 23, 1814, and Admiral Cockburn to Admiral Cochrane, Sept. 15, 1814, Adm. 1/507, pp. 95-100, Public Record Office, London.

40. S. Smith to James Monroe, Sept. 19, 1814; General Stricker to S. Smith, Sept. 15, 1814, printed in the *Baltimore Patriot and Evening Advertiser*, Sept. 23, 1814.

41. *Ibid.*; Admiral Cockburn to Admiral Cochrane, Sept. 15, 1814, Adm. 1/507, pp.

Shortly before noon Brooke moved his army towards his right in an obvious effort to slip around the American left flank. The most critical moment in the defense of Baltimore had arrived. Should the American units under Winder and Stricker fail to block this movement the battle would be lost; the fortifications would be useless, the American army defeated, and Baltimore defenseless. But Winder and Stricker did not fail. On orders from Smith the two generals adapted "their movements to those of the enemy." Instead of a clear road into Baltimore, Brook faced two brigades and a third in reserve. Worse yet, the British army now ran the risk of having its line of retreat cut should the Americans sally forth from their fortifications. Wisely Brooke marched his troops back to their original position but now at a distance of only one mile from Hampstead Hill. Having tried his way and having not succeeded, Brooke was apparently about to yield to Cockburn's scheme of storming the American lines.

For a man who had no experience in directing large bodies of troops in battle before, Smith was displaying unusual ability. Not waiting for the British to strike, the General ordered Stricker and Winder to arrange their men in a line at right angles to the left end of the American entrenchments. Now if Brooke attacked, his troops would be exposed to fire not only from Hampstead Hill, but also from their right flank. In that deadly crossfire the attackers would surely be cut to pieces and Brooke knew it. With orders that told him not to risk attacks that might be costly, heading an army less than a third as big as his adversary's and being confronted by an unknown but clever American general, Brooke could only retreat. His decision, reinforced by direct orders from Cochrane whose sea attack had miscarried, came none too soon as Smith already was contemplating an attack of his own the next morning. At 1:30 A.M. on September 14 the British army slipped quietly away under cover of a rainstorm. Discovery of the British maneuver came too late to permit any serious harassment, and the British were undisturbed as they boarded the transports at North Point.⁴²

While the British army was being frustrated, the navy was having its own troubles. Admiral Cochrane had hoped to smash through the river defenses into the inner harbor from where the city could easily be shelled. Should this not be possible he at least intended to get near enough to the scene of the land operations to support Brooke's army with his big naval guns. If the cannon at Fort McHenry and on the Lazaretto could be silenced, it would be an easy matter to wipe out the whole right

95-100, Public Record Office, London; Dr. James McCulloch to S. Smith, Aug. 25, 1814, Smith Papers.

42. S. Smith to James Monroe, Sept. 19, 1814, printed in the *Baltimore Patriot and Evening Advertiser*, Sept. 23, 1814; Admiral Cockburn to Admiral Cochrane, Sept. 15, 1814, Adm. 1/507, pp. 95-100, Public Record Office, London. S. Smith to Gen. Cadwallader, Sept. 17, 1814; Smith to Gov. Winder, Sept. 15, 1814, Smith Orderbook Papers; Marine, *Invasion of Maryland*, pp. 130-170; J. W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army* (13 vols.: London, 1899-1930), X, pp. 146-149.

flank of the Hampstead Hill line anchored at Fell's Point. But none of this could take place until the star-shaped bastion at the tip of Whetstone Point was destroyed. Cochrane's task was complicated by the fact that his largest vessels, the gigantic seventy-four gunships-of-the-line were too big to enter the Patapsco. The British admiral thus had to rely on his frigates and bomb vessels. The latter carried two guns, each capable of firing a missile thirteen inches in diameter and weighing two hundred pounds. Cochrane could see that a mad rush past the fort was not practical because of the booms and sunken hulks clogging the ship channel. The only course open to the British fleet was to stand at a distance just beyond the range of Major Armistead's cannon and bombard the fortifications in the hopes of neutralizing them.

Cochrane opened his attack at the same time Brooke began his maneuvers in front of Hampstead Hill. From couriers who dashed between Fort McHenry and his command post Smith learned that hundreds of bombs and rockets had hit the fort and that Armistead and his thousand-man garrison could do nothing but huddle in their shelters. Around two in the afternoon Cochrane sent his frigates in towards the fort to test its condition. Armistead's gunners quickly manned their 42-pounders and the ships veered away. The most serious threat to McHenry came that night even as Brooke's troops were preparing to retreat. Using darkness and rain as cover, several smaller British vessels and barges slipped into the Ferry Branch just south of the fort. Cochrane was planning to land troops behind McHenry and capture it, but Smith's arrangements made in 1813 stymied the British. Two batteries, Forts Covington and Babcock, had been constructed along the Ferry Branch to thwart such a plan. Manned by experienced gunners of the United States Navy, these batteries along with those guns that could be brought into play from Fort McHenry and the Lazaretto blasted the British flotilla. In a battle lasting nearly two hours one of the barges was sunk with the loss of all hands. The surviving vessels fled back down the river to the main fleet.⁴³

Both on land and water the British had been repulsed. On September 14 the fleet lifted its siege of Fort McHenry and drifted down the Patapsco to North Point where they rejoined the troop transports. Before leaving the area Cochrane released several American civilians, including Francis Scott Key, who carried with him a few precious scribbled lines of poetry. News of the victory at Baltimore lifted the spirits of any Americans still shocked by the burning of Washington. More substantively, the Battle of Baltimore when coupled with the simultaneous victory at Plattsburg on the northern frontier improved the bargaining position of the American negotiators at the peace talks in Ghent. No longer could the British seriously demand

43. S. Smith to James Monroe, Sept. 19, 1814, printed in the *Baltimore Patriot and Evening Advertiser*, Sept. 23, 1814; William Winder to S. Smith, Sept. 14, 1814, Smith Papers; S. Smith to —, Sept. 14, 1814, Smith Orderbook Papers; Report of a British Officer on the Battle of Baltimore, Sept. 28, 1814, printed in the *Baltimore Patriot and Evening Advertiser*, Oct. 25, 1814.

that the United States accept a loss of territory as the price of ending hostilities. The citizens of Baltimore could take justifiable pride in their accomplishments. Almost alone and unaided they had turned back a large, experienced, and well-equipped enemy force. They had succeeded because they had shown an ability to organize their resources of men and money. They also had been willing to experiment with new forms of political organization to meet the emergency situation. Above all they had selected competent civil and military leaders to whom they were willing to give their complete support. The victory of 1814, therefore, can be attributed to the spirit, the determination, and the resourcefulness of Baltimore's inhabitants. But in a larger sense the manner in which Baltimoreans went about organizing themselves was the product of two centuries of growing experience with local government in America. Only a people schooled in self-rule could have improvised so well.

Defense of Baltimore, 1814

CAPTAIN JAMES PIPER
(from the Society's Collections.)

[7 (1912): 375-84]

Grovemont, April 20, 1854

To
Brantz Mayer, Esqr.
Dr. Sir

Herewith you will receive my communication on the subject of your circular which I received a few days ago. I regret that it is not what I could have desired it to be and that I have been obliged from the alterations made, to patch it up so as to endeavor to make it legible to you, but this seemed unavoidable and I trust with you excusable in some degree and that you will pardon my repugnance to copying a long article of my own, when I plead how fatiguing it must be to the age of 71— which is my case. I should like to have a copy of the article, if it is practicable to gratify me as I have endeavored generally to preserve my writings of public interest or concern.

I am Dear Sir with great respect,
Your obedient servant,
Jas. Piper.

Grovemont near Ilchester,
Howard County, April 17, 1854

To
Brantz Mayer Esq.
Dear Sir,

I had the honor to receive your circular on the 15th inst. soliciting from the survivors of that memorable period the Battles of North Point, Fort McHenry and the attack upon our city any information with regard to the events that occurred in our neighborhood, or for any contributions, either of original papers or of personal recollections and anecdotes, which you were anxious to obtain "from the lips and pens of those who are still spared from the decreasing roll," as you had undertaken at the instance of the Maryland Historical Society to write and publish a memoir of those events and that no effort should be spared to gather the authentic materials for its history. This decreasing roll, Sir, which you have referred to, to hasten your work must necessarily in a very few years, number in its lists, the now surviving actors in those stirring scenes and therefore whatever we may have to

communicate the sands in our glasses warn and admonish us still more emphatically to do it at once. Therefore my dear Sir, allow me to say to you before I enter on this subject that I not only respond to your wishes with the greatest pleasure but that I feel particularly gratified at the excellent judgment of the society in placing this subject in such able and patriotic hands—and I could most fervently wish that I could promise you, that my contribution might even to a limited degree aid and assist you in making your memoir entirely acceptable to that enlightened society, and to the public, for whose benefit originates this patriotic design—if I should be so fortunate as to add something unthought of by others, which may lead to the investigation and development of new sources of interest I shall be highly gratified. I therefore cannot promise you that my contribution to the general stock of information which I hope will be liberally imparted to you at home and abroad, will prove of any great interest, as I have only to rely upon reminiscences of near forty years back and draw them forth from a memory not improved by age with the somewhat like difficulty we call up spirits from the vasty deep*—but such as will answer to my call I cheerfully present them to you. Our citizens, whatever differences of opinions had existed previous to the war as to its necessity or policy at that particular juncture, unprepared as the country seemed to be, never for a moment doubted that years of injustice from England to our country, had long before given us numerous just causes of war. Therefore as soon as our country settled the question of war, by a public declaration, England became our open enemy, and as we knew her feeling towards our country, and her power to make us feel it, and that Baltimore might be made a prominent object of vengeance, for the injuries we should inflict on British commerce, our citizens at once saw the necessity of uniting hand and heart, in preparing for such an event commissions were sought for the militia enrolled—the various volunteer companies augmented. Constant drills of officers and men were going on day and night and nothing was heard of or talked of which did not sound of war. Our city became a camp, and our citizens, soldiers. Fort McHenry demanded our attention and the most urgent solicitations were made to the government to put this great arm of defense in order by our Committee of Safety, Colonel Armistead, our members of Congress and by our leading influential citizens. The result was unsatisfactory. The invading army of the north seemed almost exclusively to engage the attention of government and to absorb its funds—which left but little to be expended on home defenses—and doubtless the pervading sentiment of fancy politicians of the time exerted a commanding influence, that republican governments cannot prepare for war before war is commenced and by the same parity of reason the necessity to strengthen our fort could not exist and ought not to be made, as it might prove a useless expenditure until the enemy should clearly indicate his intention by some overt act or by some public declaration or unequivocal manifestation.

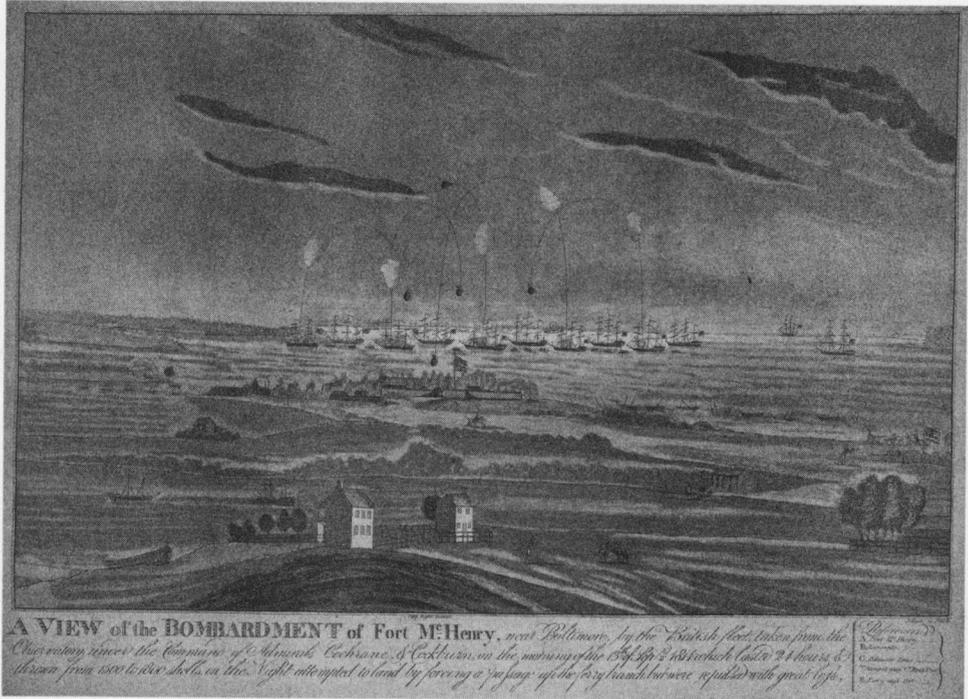
* Editor's note 2012: "I can call spirits from the vasty deep," William Shakespeare, *Henry IV*, Part 1, Act 3.

But the first war blast which boomed over the ocean after the downfall of Napoleon, which left British army and navy free to give their individual attention to our country scattered to the winds, these political mists, which had hoodwinked too many as it did the kindred hallucinations of an earlier day. Embargoes, non-intercourses and proclamations never again to insult the practical good sense of the nation. A tour of duty of some weeks with my company then in the 6th Regiment of Infantry under command of Col. McDonald (afterwards General McDonald) at Fort McHenry gave me some knowledge of its state and condition and of the earnest efforts of Col. Armistead to have it put in a proper state of defense. The indefatigable exertions of Col. Armistead conjoined with the citizens of Baltimore and inadequate aid from the government made it what it was in 1814. It never could be rendered a safe and reliable place of defense without being made bomb proof and in justice to the important city of Baltimore, it ought to have been done promptly as well as to the brave men who might be called to its defense. I cannot in chronological order, follow out when and what time other means of defense were raised but I can say, what was undertaken by our citizens, was cheerfully and heartily done by all classes, as committee men, soldiers, and non-combatants. The gun, the spade, and the pick were all put in requisition, and in due time strong batteries with their heavy guns in great number, stood with gaping mouths, watching for our enemy on our eastern heights and by order of General Samuel Smith of Revolutionary experience and fame who was indefatigable in his exertions to extend and strengthen our defenses. A connecting line of defenses extending somewhat beyond Harford Avenue was projected by his order under the superintendence of a well-known worthy and estimable French citizen and engineer, Mr. Godfroe, and I received orders from the general to accompany him in this duty.¹ These defenses hastily thrown up for the protection of the infantry were intended to anticipate any British movement to avoid the effects of our heavy batteries in their attack upon our city on this quarter. They were plainly visible for many years after the war. The enemy far or near, we neither relaxed our exertions nor our ardor. Martial law was proclaimed, we were mustered into the service of the U.S. Our soldiers duties became familiar to us. Our martial spirit was kept up to the highest point and when the enemy came within our waters, and not knowing where or what point he would attack. Our troops were occasionally by false alarms called to arms from the cannon's mouth. Thus were we gradually prepared for the enemy by a growing confidence in ourselves, our discipline, and our defenses up to the time of the disastrous news of the Battle of Bladensburg and the capture and burning of the capitol at Washington. This came upon us like an avalanche causing the spirits of many to sink within them and to others to give vent to the most indignant feelings against the nation's arraigned authors of our calamity and disgrace and the supposed badly arranged defenses of Washington by the half

1. Maximilian Godefroy, architect of the Battle Monument, First Unitarian Church, etc.

dozen commanders, who gave contradictory orders. I well remember this period of gloom, the enemies presence at our very doors never occasioned so depressing an influence, and with reason too—as some of our best troops, from the city and regiments from the adjacent counties, our natural protectors and defenders—were engaged in the late battles measurably scattered and a powerful conquering enemy, flushed with success commanded by a bold and daring general within a few hours march of our city—were matters truly painful to be obliged to think of. Many desponding countenances were visible. The passing events in their bearing and consequences upon us were too vivid and appalling—too near home not to make even stout hearts quail at the bare possibilities of the British general following his advantages with his characteristic boldness. Day after day passed over us of the deepest anxiety not knowing when the gloom might burst upon us, but each day measurably lessened the apprehension of an attack upon our weakest and most vulnerable point. Fight we were bound to do, and determined to do—but it would have been under the most disadvantageous circumstances compared with our defenses chosen by ourselves and chosen because they were the very strongest possible points. The British general was sufficiently elated to rest awhile upon his Bladensburg and Washington laurels declaring before he took leave of our waters, “he would take Baltimore if it rained militia men.” The British general’s presumptuous confidence in his own strength and our weakness saved us from a desperate battle and lost to him the most favorable time to have attacked our city and which led to consequences of the most disastrous to himself and to his family. The British general’s time to execute his threat at last arrived and all sails of the fleet were unfurled to the winds to speed his way up the bay to our doomed city as he fancied. At this time the enemy had such undisputed possession of our bay and tributary rivers, that it became hazardous for our bay boats to pass up and down the bay, and this ready and hitherto certainty of learning the movements of the British fleet was thus cut off, and our land communication could not be relied on, particularly if the British fleet should be favored with a strong fair wind so that our first knowledge of the British fleet at North Point was announced on Sunday morning the 11th of September. I do not recollect that our citizens had any previous knowledge of their approaching our city. But they did not come before we were well and fully prepared for them. Our soldiers were soon at their posts and our gallant old general with his numerous staff were immediately actively engaged in arranging the troops, and planning the order of Battle. Our troops for some time had been [coming] from various Counties of our State and from the neighboring States of Pennsylvania, Delaware and Virginia well officered—of good material and well equipped were quartered in tents, rope walks and along the eastern hills stretching to Harford avenue. So that we were so well supplied with men that if necessity existed we might have defended with a moderate share of firmness and bravery every accessible point, with an almost certainty of success. Our numbers, our strong and well manned batteries occupying the very best possible positions—

inspired us with confidence that we would prove more than a match for the British veterans which could be brought into action under these disadvantageous circumstances. Our general had these troops stationed at various connecting points and the dragoons scouring the country to the east and north east of our batteries, with an ample number of videtts (mounted sentinels), extended far on the road to North Point. A large detachment under Brigadier Gen. John Stricker, an officer of experience, judgment, coolness, and bravery, were ordered to march to North Point consisting of several regiments of Infantry the 6th, the 27th, and the 51st under Cols. Long, McDonald, and Amey—and of one artillery company under Capt. Montgomery and a detachment under Lt. Stiles assisted by Major Barney and a company of sharp shooters riflemen. I have no recollection of any other companies. Gen. Robert Goodloe Harper a distinguished civilian of our city, fond of military life offered his services to the general as volunteer aid which was accepted—and rendered valuable services. James H. McCullough the collector of the port and a non combatant—took his station in the ranks with gun in hand. There may have been other volunteers, but I have now no recollection of them. The day was intensely hot, and our troops suffered greatly from the heat and dust, and many sank under their fatiguing march. The general made choice of the best position to receive the enemy on his upward march to Baltimore, which he was forced to pass, determining to dispute every inch of ground, and gave minute direction to the officers of their respective positions, when the enemy should approach and then ordered Lt. Stiles and Major Barney with a detachment of artillery and the company of sharp shooters to advance and reconnoiter the enemy, and to fall back as the enemy should advance, until they reached the main body. This fortunate, judicious, and good generalship, as it afterwards proved, was of infinite consequence in determining the subsequent movements of the British Army. General Ross with his extreme contempt for militia men, and with his characteristic bravery exposed his person unnecessarily at the head of his men, and fire from one or more of the sharp shooters sure marksmen, brought the general down from his horse as it afterwards proved, mortally wounded, although unknown to his army at the time—who dashed on with rapidity, until their flankers came into contact with the main body, under Gen. Stricker and then the battle began in earnest. The American troops stood firmly to their posts, pouring into them as they came up a most destructive fire, which continued until a gap in the line was opened by the 51st Reg. whose colonel misapprehended the general's order, which when the British observed, to rid themselves of the galling fire, which was thinning their ranks, accelerated their movements and pushed forward their flankers to intercept the falling back of the American troops which this untoward occurrence had compelled Gen. Stricker to order, as it could not be rectified in the face of their veteran enemies in time, to save his command from being cut off. In the mean time, the great object of the expedition had been accomplished—by giving the enemy a specimen of Baltimore bravery and sharp shooting, an earnest ___ what he might



A View of the Bombardment of Fort McHenry, near Baltimore, by the British fleet, taken from the Observatory, under the command of Admirals Cochrane & Cockburn on the morning of the 13th of September 1814 which lasted twenty-four hours & threw from 1,500 to 1,800 shells in the Night attempted to land by forcing a passage up the ferry branch but were repelled with great loss. J. Bower, Philadelphia, 1814.

expect, when he came to the great encounter where our force and strength would as far exceed his—as his did that of Gen. Stricker's. The general retired in good order ready to afford his troops another opportunity of gaining fresh laurels in the expected coming conflict before our city. The general expressed his high approbation of their gallantry and their fellow citizens and countrymen their deepest sympathy for the brave fallen, and heart felt gratitude to the gallant survivors, for their severe check to the enemy which produced such important results to our city. Every preparation was now made for battle, expecting the enemy to follow up his success, and our videtts coming in to announce their approach. Our guns were charged, our ammunition boxes replenished and our matches lighted and our eyes anxiously directed to the eastern hills and the main road leading from North Point, for hours expecting to see the enemy in full force to commence the onslaught. During this time numerous non-combatants too patriotic to remain spectators, volunteered their services, one in particular I remember Mr. De Loughery an officer of our customs, an aged and worthy citizen, who came to fight by his son's side a sergeant in my company worthy too, of such a father. Although we continued to remain undisturbed the bomb ships continued a tremendous fire upon Fort McHenry and kept it up

almost unceasingly upon its brave and unprotected defenders, who were liable to be blown up every moment by the bomb shells and rockets all around and about them, without the power of returning the fire, as their ships kept out of the reach of the fort guns, although of large caliber. Sometimes they would venture nearer, but our well directed and well sighted guns, soon compelled them to loose their moorings and retreat to a safe distance. From our elevated position, we could see every bomb and rocket fall, and happily they generally fell short or went beyond the fort. If the firing had not have been all on one side, and the insecurity of the fort so great from its want of bomb protection, we might have witnessed this sight with less anxious feelings of, as we feared no other casualty but the one, and that one did not know what moment it might take place and our sympathies for the brave men, numbering many of our most valued citizens, within its walls, kept us in a constant state of intense excitement. The fort was a target for the enemy from the beginning to the end of the long and terrible bombardment, and surely if ever men's courage and firmness were tried theirs were more than seven times tried by the very red hot shot of the British fiery furnaces, and their exploding bombs and rockets falling like hail. Under the cover around and about them of a dark night a detachment of boats number unknown but must have been considerable as they certain had some great object in view connected with a general attack by land and water, with muffled oars to steal by Fort McHenry and had actually succeeded in it and to convey this important information to the British fleet, supposing themselves out of all danger; threw up a blue light rocket. In a moment an unknown, unobserved, and unobtrusive little battery of six guns Fort Covington under its brave but modest commander Captain Webster of the Revenue Service opened upon these boats such a torrent of well directed balls, that neither boats, men or blue lights were ever afterwards heard of.² No doubt the failure of this bold and daring enterprise contributed to some extent to put an end to all their hopes of possessing Baltimore. During the heaviest of this bombardment it became necessary occasionally for Gen. Smith to communicate with Col. Armistead the commander of the Fort, and generally when it is not done by the general's aids whether on these occasions by command, or as a volunteer service I know not, but the duty was perilous in the highest degree amidst a shower of bombs and rockets. These messengers I saw dashing in full speed to and fro, from the fort and I regret, that I am not able to do justice to but one of them, and I do this with the highest pleasure as the due of a brave and patriotic citizen, the late Captain Henry Thompson acknowledged to be one among the best of cavalry officers. In my narration I have not stopped to pay a just tribute to the many brave men, who died on the field of battle or to the many others who signalized themselves—that you will no doubt receive from some of their brave companions more capable of doing justice to them. None are more ready to do homage to their patriotism and virtues than

2. Capt. John A. Webster was in command of "Babcock" or the six gun battery, located about a quarter of a mile east of Fort Covington.

myself and hold them up as bright examples of patriotism and valor for future generations of our countrymen. I have already, gone far beyond in this relation than I designed when I began it and I fear Sir, that I have given you occasion to wish that my memory which I complained of, had been less tenacious then it has proved to receive.

With my most cordial wishes for the success of your memoir, I beg you to accept the sincere regard [of Dear Sir]

Your Obedient Servant,
James Piper

General John Stricker

JOHN STRICKER JR.¹

[9 (1914): 209-18]

General John Stricker, descended from Swiss ancestors, was the son of Colonel George Stricker of the Revolutionary Army, and was born at Frederick Town in the state of Maryland, on the 15th day of February, 1759.

At the commencement, or perhaps in anticipation, of the war of independence, his father, earnest in the cause of the country, raised a company comprising many of the . . . youth of his neighborhood which went soon into active service. From an orderly book now in the possession of one of his descendants, he appears to have commanded under Smallwood, and to have been for some time stationed at Annapolis in 1776.² The fate of his company was disastrous. At the battle of Long Island so great was the havoc in its ranks, in the conflict and during the retreat, that scarcely one of its members escaped death or a wound. Meanwhile the captain had been promoted to the Lieut. Colonelcy of the German battalion and continued in that corps until the death of the Colonel;³ when, conceiving himself injured by the appointment of a German (Baron Arendt) it is believed he left the army.⁴

His son, the subject of this notice, had been for some time with him, and served as a cadet until commissioned as an officer of Proctor's Artillery—seventeen years of age; in which service, before the termination of the war, he rose to the rank of captain.⁵ Portions of his regiment were frequently detached to the armies in differ-

1. Written by John Stricker, Jr. (son of Genl. Stricker), Nov. 23d, 1837; the manuscript in possession of General Stricker's great-granddaughter, Mrs. Robert P. Brent.

2. Endorsed "Orderly Book of Smallwood's Regiment in 1776; found among the papers of Col. George Stricker, Captain in that Corps" (Smallwood's Battalion).

3. Weltner.

4. The writer of this sketch distinctly remembers to have heard from Col. Bentalou, a friend of his father, and a distinguished officer of Pulaski's Legion, that the denial of the command to Col. Stricker was by many deemed unjust as well as irregular; but that the influence of Washington's name was such as to stifle all complaint. Before joining the horse Col. Bentalou served as Lieutenant in the German Battalion. The Colonel further said that the foreign commander was not long in shewing himself unworthy of the trust to which he had been raised as stated. The Congress, about this time, had clothed the commander-in-chief with a power at pleasure to displace or appoint officers below the rank of brigadier -----see Jour'l 1776.

5. He was a cadet I think in Capt. Keepert's Comp'y in the German Battalion of which his father, Col. Geo. Stricker was Lieutenant-Colonel. Genl. John Stricker served during *the whole* Revolutionary War.

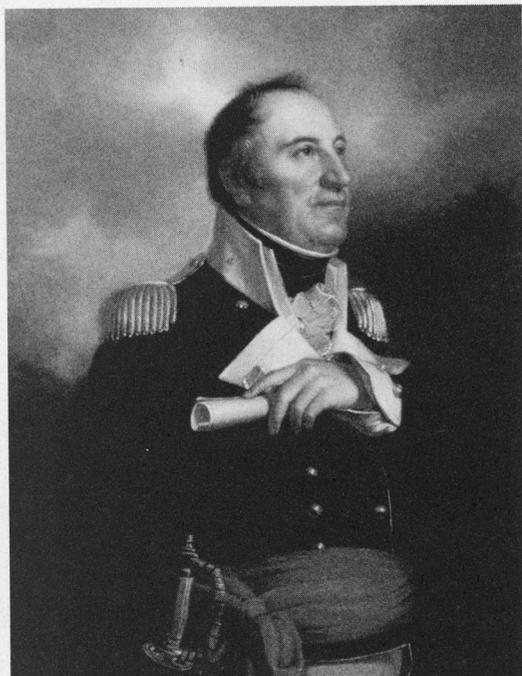
ent quarters, and partook largely of the dangers of the Revolution. In the important battles of Trenton, Princeton, Brandywine, German Town, Monmouth, Springfield, and others not now recollected, he was personally engaged and also accompanied General Sullivan on the expedition against [the Iroquois] Indians. Reluctant at all times to speak of himself, nothing more than is here stated, is known of his services, during the trying contest which led to his country's emancipation, and which, beneficently affecting the destinies of millions, as well in the old as in the new world, should ensure to the humblest individual sharing its perils, not merely the lasting gratitude of his countrymen but the homage of the patriot everywhere.⁶

At the close of the war Capt. Stricker remained some months in Philadelphia, and there married a daughter of Gunning Bedford, Esquire;⁷ with whose family the late gallant Commodore Joshua Barney had about the same time in a like manner connected himself. Proceeding to Baltimore soon after their marriage the two officers were associated in commerce. This town, though even then in a flourishing state, had as yet given no promise of the splendid fortunes which have since awaited it. The captain was however pleased with his reception and prospects and determined to make it the place of his permanent abode. In a long commercial career, not without painful vicissitudes, he was ultimately successful, and realized a competent if not affluent estate.

The military spirit of Baltimore, whose infant patriotism in the Revolution was worthy of all praise, had not subsided with the war. Townsmen organized companies of volunteer militia, and availing themselves of the skill and experience of such native and other officers as had served in the regular army and were then living among them, the citizen forces were soon brought to a state of subordination and discipline, which attracted general admiration, and which afterwards made their daring courage effectual when resisting for more than an hour in an open field the choicest veterans of Wellington. Soon after his arrival in Baltimore Captain Stricker formed and disciplined one of the earliest corps and advanced in due course of promotion to the command of a brigade. It is certain that, with others, he was greatly instrumental in bringing the militia to the efficient condition which distinguished it. Accustomed

6. He was sent from the Jerseys, with the Hessians taken prisoners at Trenton, under his care and charge to Fredericktown, Md. He was present, within a few paces of the spot at the execution of Major Andre.

7. The father of the gentleman of the same name, who signed the Constitution of the United States, as one of the representatives in the Convention from Delaware, and who afterwards shone as a lawyer, and sat with credit as a Federal Judge. Another of this name and family appears, from the journals of Congress 1776, to have been Muster Master General of the forces, and was since Governor of Delaware. Jos. Bedford accompanied his brother in law Barney in the gallant exploit, the capture of the General Monk, was like the rest brave and useful, and is said to have been something of a wit, dying (as the bulk of that tribe) with little or no property. The family was originally from England, where Barney found his wife's relations high in rank and of large fortune.



General John Stricker (1758–1825).
(Maryland Historical Society.)

to the life of a soldier he may be supposed to have gone into this service with zeal and pleasure, and could certainly have desired no richer reward for his devotion to it, than that which he derived from the determined conduct of the troops generally when at a subsequent period it was his good fortunes to claim and secure for them the honor of being first in danger.⁸

The opposition to internal taxes having led in 1794 to acts of violence in the neighborhood of Pittsburg, President Washington issued a proclamation calling large portions of the militia to arms. A considerable force was draughted from Baltimore, and Col. Stricker, then at the head of the 5th Regt. accompanied Genl. Samuel Smith as second in command. Their march, however, was soon arrested by intelligence that the insurgents had submitted.

In 1801, Col. Stricker received an appointment to the Naval Agency for the Port of Baltimore, and continued in that office nearly ten years, fulfilling its duties to the entire satisfaction of the government, and securing the lasting esteem and friendship of many of the commanders.

In the political divisions of the country, he had generally thought with the Democratic Party; and in 1812, when partisanship was at its height and Baltimore was the scene of disgraceful violence he became, from the course he pursued as commander

8. See the Genl. order of Genl. S. Smith, and his letter to the Secretary of War in Sept. 1814. Published in newspapers of the day, and in *Niles' Register*.

of the militia, an object of particular resentment and embittered censure, from many of those whose principles in politics were opposed to his own. An inquiry into the justice of this reproach would demand more space than we can spare, and indeed it is probable that now, when the party passions of the period, have in great measure yielded to time and reason, vindication is unnecessary.

The British army having in August 1814 successfully attacked Washington, and destroyed the national buildings and other property re-embarked on board the fleet in Patuxent, and Admiral Cochrane, passing up the Chesapeake, appeared at the mouth of Patapsco. Anticipating a debarkation of troops at North Point, General Smith commanding at Baltimore, detached General Stricker, with the greater part of his brigade to meet and check them.⁹

The loss of the American army at North Point was in killed, wounded and prisoners 212.¹⁰ That of the enemy as acknowledged was much greater.¹¹

In the dispatch of the commanding general to the War Department the conduct of Genl. Stricker is most cordially, and in terms of high praise approved. He is there said to have gallantly maintained his ground against a greater superiority of numbers, during the space of an hour and twenty minutes, and to have entirely confirmed the confidence which had been reposed in him as a brave and skillful leader. In the language of Division orders, "every praise was due to him; the city being threatened, it became the duty of the citizens to be foremost in its defense. He claimed the honor, and the brave officers and men under his command hailed with delight the opportunity of meeting the enemy's attack," etc., etc.

The grand depository of the hostile spirit of the United States against England, a title with which her enemy had honored her, Baltimore, had she fallen, would in all likelihood have been terribly punished. Besides, in the ruffian destruction of the capitol she might well see a presage of the calamities which awaited her should the foe succeed. Preparing herself accordingly, the English demonstration, as it was called was completely baffled and the gloom of the American people, at a most ill-omened crisis, dispelled. In this latter view the repulse from Baltimore was of transcendent value, and gave to her brave defenders peculiar and unquestionable claims to the nation's gratitude.

Soon after the withdrawal of the British forces, General _____ of the regular army

9. The writer has understood that many, particularly of the 5th were offended at the high praise bestowed in this dispatch upon the 27th Regiment. That corps, however is only spoken of as unsurpassed, not as pre-eminent. Perhaps the offence may have been induced by the Division order of the Commander in Chief, where, in reference to Genl. Stricker's report, the 27th is erroneously said to have been in a particular manner distinguished; and whence it may be inferred that that corps surpassed the rest.

10. Killed 24, wounded 130, prisoners 49: 212.

11. The admitted loss was 345; but there is little doubt that the admission might have been considerably extended. The entire British loss, in the attack on Balto., is stated in *Niles' Register* to have been 500, as nearly correct.

was directed to take the command of the district of which Baltimore forms a part and General Smith resigned. To the vacant Major Generalship, General Stricker to say nothing of revolutionary and recent services, was by seniority entitled. The party opposed to him, however, then controlling the state appointments, his claims were disregarded, and the commission given to a gentleman distinguished it is true and whose conduct during the invasion deserved and met with applause, but who held at the time no post in the military, and who had never attained a higher grade than that of Captain.¹² Adopting the course, which as we have seen was on a like occasion taken by his father Genl. Stricker, addressed the Executive the following letter resigning his command:

To his Exc'y, Levin Winder, Annap.

Your Excellency & the Council having withheld from me that commission¹³ to which by rank and seniority I am entitled, I owe it to myself to retire from Militia service, and though this course is at the present crisis adopted with great reluctance, it is imposed upon me by a sense of duty, and under a full conviction, that it will receive the approbation as well of the brave men I have so long had the honor to command, as of those of my fellow citizens whose esteem ought to be valued by a Military character; you will accordingly consider this letter as the resignation of my commission as Brigadier General of the 3rd Brigade, Md. Militia.

Your Obedt. Servant
John Stricker¹⁴
Baltimore, November 10, 1814.

In the following order, valuable from its source, and justly prized by the general, his resignation was elegantly and with evident feeling announced to the division:¹⁵

Adjt. Genls. Office Headquarters,
Baltimore, Nov. 11, 1814.

It is with much regret that Major Genl. Scott has to announce to the troops under his command the resignation of Brig. General John Stricker late commander of the 3rd Maryland Brigade now in the service of the United States. This regret is unfeignedly expressed, from the high sense . . . of the Military

12. Mr. Robt. Goodloe Harper.

13. Should be "Promotion."

14. Many, even of the Federal Party, I am advised, disapproved the appointment of General Harper to the prejudice of General Stricker.

15. More properly the whole Military Dist.

and meritorious services rendered by the late Brigadier, as well during our Revolutionary struggle, as on a late important and trying occasion, when at the head, of his gallant and disciplined Brigade he met the enemy in the neighborhood of this City. Baltimore will long recollect what is due to her gallant defender, and in him the Nation will recognize a public Benefactor.

Brigadier Genl. Stricker will please accept the thanks of the commanding general for his strict observance of General Orders, and for the unwearied attention to duty and discipline which has so highly characterized the brigadier and the brigade since they came under the orders of the Major General Commanding.

By order Maj. Genl. Scott,
R. G. Hite,
Asst. Adj. Genl.

The high sense entertained of the general's services by the corporate authorities of Baltimore, is shown in the subjoined correspondence. Accompanying the mayor's letter was a resolution of the councils, expressive of thanks, and requesting the general to sit for his portrait to be placed in the Chamber of the First Branch:

Dr. Sr. I have the honor to transmit to you a resolve of the City Council, passed at their late session, in testimony of the high respect in which they hold the . . . services rendered by you to our City in the hour of her distress and trouble and hope you will afford me an early opportunity of carrying the same fully into effect. I have the honor, &c.

Edward Johnson.

Genl. Stricker.¹⁶
Baltimore, April 18, 1816

Sir

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of yesterday, covering a resolve of the City Council, approbatory of my services, and those of the officers, non-commissioned officers and privates of the 3rd Brigade M. M. during the campaign of 1814. I feel with great sensibility this very distinguished and flattering testimony of approbation from the City of Baltimore, and I receive it with additional satisfaction, as the resolve embraces a very just tribute of praise to the brave officers and soldiers of the Brigade

16. A similar letter was directed to General Smith, and to Col. Armistead, Defender of the Fort McHenry. The Council had before authorized the Mayor to employ skilful artists upon two superb paintings of the Battle of North Point, and Bombardment of the Fort. This resolve was not executed; for what reason I know not.

whom I have had the honor to command during that trying period, and whose patriotism and zeal cannot fail to afford a laudable example should our City ever again be placed in a similar situation. Your request to afford you an early opportunity of carrying the resolve of the Council into effect is duly appreciated and I hold myself prepared to give my personal attendance whenever I shall be requested.

With sentiments, etc. etc.,
Edwd. Johnson Esq.,
Mayor of Baltimore.

In 1820 General Stricker was chosen by the Electoral College to a seat in the senate of Maryland; but distrusting his capacity for usefulness in a situation new to him, he withstood the persuasions of his friends, and declined. To a similar feeling may be ascribed his reluctance to accept the mayoralty and other offices to which in all probability he might without opposition have been chosen.

In 1824, on the approach of La Fayette, the general though greatly enfeebled by disease, was among the foremost in welcoming the friend and guest of the Republic. Entertaining his brethren of the Cincinnati at breakfast in the morning of the October 7, he accompanied them to Fort McHenry, and there made part of one of the most imposing scenes this country has witnessed; sharing in the tears of grief, gratitude, and joy shed in the tent of Washington.¹⁷

On the death of General Harper in 1825, the Major Generalship was immediately tendered to him, but was in consequence of ill health declined. On this occasion the citizen soldiers were sincerely anxious that he should resume the command, and so decided was the sense of the injustice of the treatment he had met from the Executive in 1814, that the officers most nearly affected by his restoration to the command, would doubtless have been among the sincerest in welcoming his return.

He had during the four or five last years of his life suffered greatly from a dropsical affection of the breast. In the summer preceding his death the Bedford Spring greatly relieved him and in 1825, he was about to revisit it, when he was most suddenly summoned from this world. Returning from the bank (23rd June) of which he was president, where he had been all the morning engaged, and perhaps in anticipation of his absence, fatigued himself, he desired one of his daughters to hasten dinner. She left the room for that purpose and though absent but a few moments, was shocked

17. As a member of the Cincinnati, I witnessed this scene, and can imagine nothing of that nature more affecting. It was altogether a scene for the mighty genius of a Tacitus or Scott. The remaining officers of the Revolution were collected from all parts of the State and among them Col. Bruce of a most advanced age and great infirmities. This officer was enlisted by Col. George Stricker, was afterwards promoted, and was known in the army as "Ugly Jack Bruce," a title to which he seemed to have had a very honest claim.

at her return to find that he had fallen, and was as she too truly imagined, dead. His death it is probable was instantaneous.

He was interred with civic and military honors.¹⁸ In person he was singularly handsome and commanding; with a strong practical understanding, he joined the greatest suavity of disposition and manners. Of inflexible integrity, and active industry, as a merchant he was honored and useful. Faithful as their defender, and conspicuous for many of the social virtues, he enjoyed in an eminent degree the respect and love of his fellow-citizens of Baltimore, and it may with truth be said of him that he has left his name strongly written in their history.

18. His remains have since been removed to the family vault recently built in the ground of the First Presbyterian Church, Green Street and West Fayette Street.

Charles Carroll of Carrollton's Letter Describing the Battle of Baltimore

W. STULL HOLT, ED.

[34 (1939): 244-45]

Among the papers of the late John T. Scharf in the Johns Hopkins University library Dr. W. Stull Holt recently found the following letter of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, evidently written to Levin Winder, then governor of Maryland. This fortunately helps to fill the gap in Carroll's correspondence from August to the end of October 1814 as noted in Miss Rowland's biography of the Signer. Carroll's references to his daughter, Mrs. Harper, wife of General Robert Goodloe Harper, suggest that she was with him in the country, doubtless at Doughoregan Manor.

Wednesday morning 14th Sept 1814

Dear Sir,

I rec'd yesterday evening about 8 o'clock the enclosed letter. I had broken open the seal hastily thinking it was addressed to me, when Mrs. Harper told me it was for you. I know not a word of its contents. I also got a letter from Mr. Harper dated 5 o'clock yesterday evening from which I give you some extracts:

"Stricker's brigade was posted down in the neck to oppose the approach of the enemy; soon after my arrival a strong party was detached in front under Major Heath to reconnoiter I went with them & acted as adjutant; we soon met the advance of the enemy & had a very smart skirmish in which I was much exposed but not touched; we returned after some loss & regained our main body which was very well posted; the main body of the enemy soon appeared in front & after maneuvering for nearly 3 hours in our front to gain a position attacked us in line. Part of our troops stood very well and gave them a heavy and well directed fire, but one regiment composed of the precincts men broke before they could give or receive a fire and fled in confusion the rout soon became general; our loss in killed is stated to be about 30, and upwards of 100 wounded; some part rallied and retreated to camp in good order and many straggled into town. I was in the whole of the fire which was brisk and hot, but received not a touch & when I retired I brought off a wounded man behind

*Editor's Note, 2012: telegraph: An apparatus for transmitting messages to a distance, usually by signs of some kind. The name was first applied to that invented by Chappe in France in 1792, consisting of an upright post with movable arms, the signals being made by various positions of the arms according to a prearranged code, *Oxford English Dictionary*.

me; the enemy did not pursue far but advanced after the action to within five miles of the town where they encamped for the night."

Mr. Harper writes that it was expected that the enemy would have attacked them early (yesterday morning) but had not taken place at the date of his letter; he thinks General Ross suffered considerably on the 12th and seems now to be very cautious.

Yesterday morning early they began to bombard the Fort; many shells were thrown into the works, but as yet (date of Harper's letter) none killed, but several were wounded. Armistead has now put his men under cover; no impression has been made on the fort.

"General Ross either intends to wait the effect of the attack on the fort, or to get as near to us as he can this afternoon (13th) and make a night attack; if neither of these be his plan, we shall have him upon us this afternoon, and in that case, as he must take us in front and be exposed to our batteries I think we have a good chance to beat him; if he risks a night attack he will succeed because we can derive no aid from our artillery."

Major Heath had two horses shot under him and a ball through his hat. Js H. M'Culloch the collector had his thigh broken; Lowry Donaldson the lawyer & Findley the chair maker is killed.

"Thus we stand now with force enough to destroy General Ross, if it could be relied on, but there lies the difficulty.

"General Ross has not yet (5 o'clock P. M.) advanced beyond his position of the forenoon which is at Herring Run on the Pha road about 4 miles from Baltimore; the bombardment of the fort is going on briskly."

I have th[?]reing extracted the material parts of Mr. Harper's letter thinking they may give you some particulars you may not have learned from other sources. On the back of yr letter in pencil letters by M' Caton it seems 68 vessels passed Annapolis yesterday morning bound up the Bay—probably these vessels bring reinforcements & provisions. If a large body of militia could be thrown in the rear of Gen. Ross to interrupt his communication with the fleet, I think he would be compelled to abandon his attack on Baltimore.

I enclose the telegraph* of the 11th containing Admiral Cochrane's letter to Monroe & Monroe's answer which perhaps you have not seen.

I remain with sentiments of great respect & sincere regard

Dear Sir

Yr most hum Servt

Ch. Carroll of Carrollton

Be pleased to present my respects to the gentlemen of yr council. Much heavy firing of heavy canon was heard here last night till 11 o'clock probably against the fort. I have not heard of any attack being made last night by the enemy on our lines.

C. C. of C.

Contemporary Report of the Battle of Baltimore

ROBERT HENRY GOLDSBOROUGH

[40 (1945): 230–32]

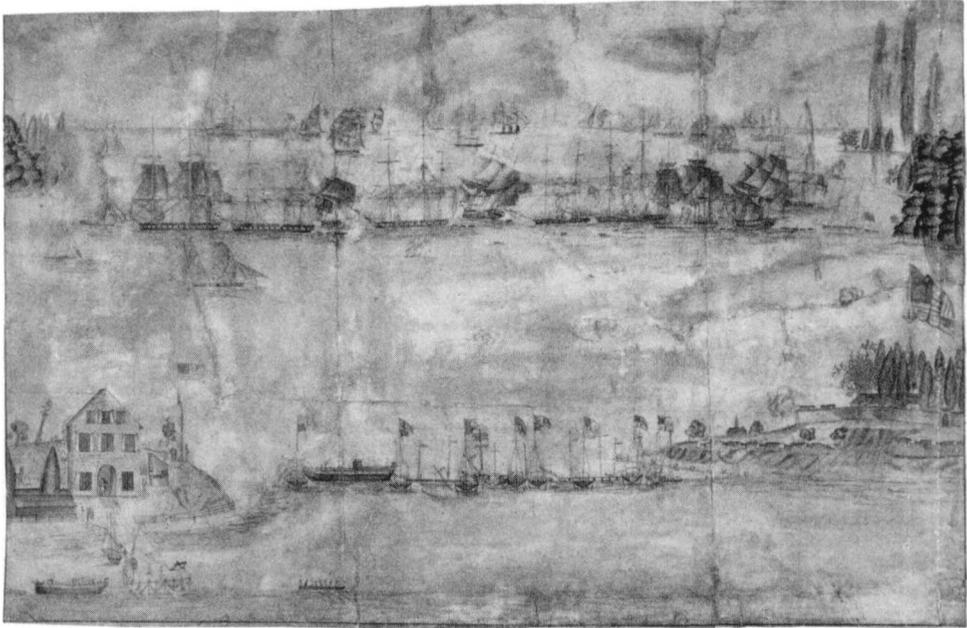
A frank account of the engagement at North Point in September 1814, and blunt expressions regarding Madison's administration are contained in a confidential letter from United States Senator Robert Henry Goldsborough (1779–1836) to a member of his family, presumably to his wife. While the Senator's views are colored by his intense Federalist bias, he supplies a glimpse of what were the probable opinions of a considerable group of citizens.

Senator Henry was born at Myrtle Grove, Talbot County, the son of Robert and Mary Trippe Goldsborough. He was a graduate of St. John's College, member of the Maryland House of Delegates, major of Maryland militia, U.S. Senator 1813–1819 and again 1835 till his death, and filled various other offices. He was known as the "Chesterfield of the Senate."* His wife was Henrietta Maria Nicols. With his father, mother, and sister he appears in the family group portrait by Charles Willson Peale now at Myrtle Grove. The letter is owned by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Goldsborough Henry of Myrtle Grove.

Senate Chamber, Wednesday 21 Sept 1814

We arrived late last evening with tired horses and tired ourselves, after passing through Baltimore and all the battle grounds, encampments, and positions both of the enemy and our own people. The affair at Baltimore was more fortunate but as little glorious to our arms as that at Bladensburg. Our militia were completely defeated and routed. The British lost most men because we fired most and they depended upon the bayonet. Our loss at Baltimore was 192 killed, wounded and captured—the British loss was between two and three hundred killed and wounded, and captured, but few of the latter. General Ross was certainly killed and the existence of Baltimore as certainly depended upon that shot. Admiral Cockrane ordered his sailors and marines (under command of Admiral Cockburn) on board upon the fall of Ross, of course General Brooke, the next in command to Ross was not able with the residue of the forces to prosecute the assault on the town or the storming the American Lines—and was obliged to go on board also. The order for retreat almost occasioned

*Editor's Note, 2012: "Chesterfield of the Senate," reference to Philip Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield, renowned for his courtly manners and legendary oratory skills.



Contemporary sketch of the attack on Fort McHenry, September 13, 1814. (Maryland Historical Society.)

a mutiny among the Baltimore troops and they had to pacify them by making up some stories. Cockburn and Brooke were both anxious to proceed to Baltimore but Admiral Cockrane upon the death of Ross would not permit it and withdrew that part of the forces he controlled. The 5th Regiment and the 27th Regiment behaved well. The 51st commanded by Colonel Amy¹ fired into one of our own troops of horse and killed and wounded 8 or 10 of them—they then took to their heels and ran off. Ben Howard² commanded one of the most exposed companies in battle and was as brave as his father at the Cowpens. Harper³ has immortalized himself by his coolness, his bravery and his able advice in posting our lines. He is eulogized and admired by all parties in Baltimore and was as cool in the midst of the action as in a private parlour. Major Richard Heath⁴ was brave as usual and always exposed, two horses were shot under him and he received a ball in his head which only stunned him for a moment. A good deal of bickering I find exists between the Winder and the Smith parties.⁵ Many blame Smith as Commander in Chief for not giving them battle with all his force and

1. Lieut. Col. Henry Amey.

2. Captain Benjamin Chew Howard, son of Colonel John Eager Howard; later brigadier general of militia, member of Congress and reporter of the United States Supreme Court.

3. Major General Robert Goodloe Harper, United States Senator 1815–1816, son-in-law of Charles Carroll of Carrollton and a leading Federalist of Maryland.

4. Later Lieut. Col. Richard Key Heath of the Fifth Regiment, Maryland Militia.

5. See "Controversy over the Command at Baltimore in the War of 1812," by Ralph Robinson, *Maryland Historical Magazine*, XXXIX, 177–198 (Sept., 1944).

also for permitting the British to retire without molestation. They went off at night, leaving their fires burning [...] some cartridges, powder, slaughtered cattle and swords there are considered marks of hurry, but the Generals don't think so, they suppose that on so dark a night an order given to retreat could not be obeyed with less marks of hurry. It is universally believed that an attempt to have entered Baltimore would inevitably have succeeded and I rejoice sincerely it was not made.

When I got to Bladensburg I there met with a gentle[man] who rode over the battle ground with me and showed me all the positions of the different forces. I saw the graves of the victims and my nose was offended by the inattention which was paid to them. The hogs root them up, and the waters wash them up, they are covering them up daily again. I cannot relate all the circumstances for believe me there is no circumstance I take pleasure in mentioning in all the affairs, but the lucky fall of General Ross, the going off of the fleet and the gallant dispositions of a few persons—all besides is somber and unpleasant. The city of Washington once very beautiful to my eye is now an odious miserable object—it is the dreadful Monument of an unfortunate and illy timed war, and the unerring evidence of a weak, incompetent, and disgraced administration. The message [of the President] skips over our misfortunes and dwells upon our little victories. It calls for more and more money and certainly shows to the world that the affair of impressment so much relied on and so perseveringly reiterated as the cause of war, is to be hushed up and winked over. Thus all our sufferings both national and individual have been occasioned for causes that will never be taken into consideration in the treaty of peace.

As far as I can collect the sentiments of the people of all parts and parties in the United States, there appears but one opinion of the president and the administration and that is that they are totally incompetent to manage the affairs of the nation and that under them we cannot hope for better things. This is a prevailing sentiment among the Democrats. Much is said of removing the seat of government and I should not be surprised if it goes (temporarily) to Baltimore or to Philadelphia. We are all up heads this morning about a report of the fleet appearing again in the Patuxent. I know not if it is true, but we are all very inquisitive about it.

Great expectations are made that Mr. Herbert⁶ will succeed to Congress against Doctor Kent⁷ in Prince George's and Anne Arundel. If the good people will do their duty I believe but few of Mr. Madison's friends will be called to act for them.

Send this letter to Dr. Dawson for the information of my select friends. I have not time to write more now. Tell them not to publish this or any of my letters without my consent. My Love to all.

Yours most affectionately, R. H. Goldsborough

6. John Carlyle Herbert (1775–1846) native of Alexandria, Va., captain of Bladensburg troops in the War of 1812, member of Congress 1815 to 1819.

7. Dr. Joseph Kent (1779–1837) native of Calvert County, Md., physician who settled near Bladensburg, member of Congress 1811–1815 and 1819–1826, Governor of Maryland 1826–1829.

The Last Old Defenders of 1814

SCOTT S. SHEADS

*May your lives be spared, that you should see yourselves, with your own eyes,
the name of your noble association shining under the broad wings of our white
crested eagle, scaling again the lofty mountains of liberty.¹*

On September 15, 1814, in the aftermath of the Battle for Baltimore it was time to bury the dead, care for the wounded, and ease the suffering of those who had borne the conflict. The surviving defenders returned to their lives and raised their families, yet from the first anniversary of their remarkable victory over the British they gathered yearly. As the nineteenth century marched on, and their numbers fell, these stoop-shouldered and silver-haired warriors had become, like their revolutionary fathers before them, iconic patriots. Over time the men of Fort McHenry and North Point gained stature as the Old Defenders of 1814.

On September 12, 1815, citizens and veterans participated in dedicating the cornerstone of the Battle Monument to honor those who had fallen at North Point and Fort McHenry. It would be the first of many occasions when the defenders gathered in celebratory remembrance. One observer wrote that the defenders had “united as a body, let us entertain a well-founded hope that it will be the forerunner of a succession of reunions.” In the years that followed, various rural natural settings and the battlefield itself became popular and familiar sites for the Old Defenders to hold their annual reunions.²

The origin of the Old Defenders Association and its descendant, the Society of the War of 1812 in Maryland, survives in an address that registrar Dr. Albert K. Hadel delivered on September 25, 1895:

[The defenders] were so elated over their victory that, after burying the dead soldiers of England, they paraded near their guns and then there resolved that they would never disband, but come yearly to this spot and celebrate the event. Their joy at their deliverance soon became contagious, and all the soldiers who were at North Point, after parading through the streets of Baltimore on September 15, 1814, and receiving the ovations of the assembled thousands, determined that they would never give up the organization while enough

Scott S. Sheads, a U.S. Park Ranger at Fort McHenry in Baltimore, is co-author with Ralph Eshelman and Donald R. Hickey of The War of 1812 in the Chesapeake: A Reference Guide to Historic Sites in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

of them lived to hold a meeting. . . . I hope that [in] a hundred years more Maryland will still have its Society of the War of 1812, healthy and vigorous doing their duty to perpetuate the memory of the gallant men.³

Hadel probably overstated Baltimore's reaction to the British withdrawal on September 14, 1812, for by no means had the threat to Baltimore ended. The British fleet remained in the bay until late October, and the city prepared for a second assault that never came. Moreover, nine years later, in September 1823, Lt. Upton S. Heath of the Maryland militia was concerned about the lack of remembrance of those heroic days and of those who had fallen.

I am surprised to find the officers (in whom is vested the power of postponing parades, by a law of their state) have come to the resolution of deferring that of the 12th of September, thereby laying the precedent of not celebrating that day. It is hoped, however, that the citizens generally, will on that day dispense with all business, and consecrate to the names of the departed fellow citizens who fell at North Point, a day which gave a military character to Baltimore, and shed upon its patriotic inhabitants immediate renown. It rests with a small portion of the citizens of Baltimore, to declare whether the 12th of September shall be duly respected."⁴

Finally, in September 1836, an invitation to the militia who had fought at Fort McHenry appeared in the local papers:

September 12th, 1814. DEFENDERS OF FORT McHENRY – ATTENTION!
A meeting is requested at the Military Hall, in Gay-street, on SATURDAY EVENING NEXT, at half past seven o'clock, of all Volunteers who defended Fort McHenry during the Bombardment, in order to celebrate the proud day by a Procession to the Fort, and face the old Star Spangled Banner, which "In triumph shall wave, O'er the land of the free, And the home of the brave."⁵

Colonel William Steuart, 38th U.S. Infantry presided over the meeting as, with resolutions and patriotic toasts, the group resolved "that the members present form themselves into a corps to celebrate the battle of Fort McHenry, 13th Sept. 1814 in each and every succeeding year."⁶

On September 14, the *Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser* published the following:

A large number of the survivors of the "Bombardment of Fort McHenry," proceeded to that fortress yesterday on board the steam-boat *Canton*, for the purpose of doing honor to the day. After having assembled, they ad-

opted several resolutions, among which was determining that they celebrate hereafter the anniversary of the defense of Fort McHenry on the 13th of September. Captain [Henry A.] Thompson, Commander of Fort McHenry, was detained in town on business till a late hour in the evening, but had every arrangement made in the garrison for the entertainment of the visitors. After the resolutions had been passed, the company drank a number of patriotic toasts commemorating of the day, each sentiment being accompanied by an appropriate tune from the band. At half past six o'clock the company left the fort, when a salute was fired by the garrison.⁷

The defenders met at Maria Schwartzauer's tavern near Fort McHenry. Earlier the U.S. Army had purchased the tavern, outbuildings, and land outside the gates, thus enlarging the government land to its present-day boundaries. Schwartzauer's business operated under U.S. military authority.⁸

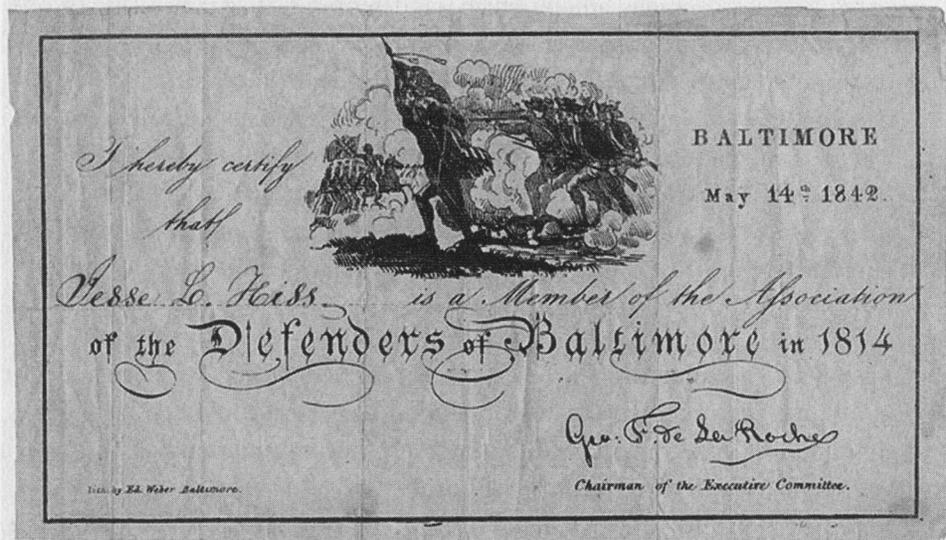
On September 12, 1839, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Battle of North Point, the veterans commemorated the occasion. Louisa Armistead, widow of Lt. Col. George Armistead, lent the original Star-Spangled Banner to be displayed before ten thousand veterans and citizens gathered at the North Point battlefield.⁹ It was on this occasion that Dr. John Houck, health commissioner of Baltimore County, conveyed the deed for the one-acre site, known today as Battle Acre, to the State of Maryland for the sum of one dollar. The Old Defenders' annual appearance there became a celebrated occasion that included the custom of attending church on the Sunday preceding each September 12. According to the *Sun*:

People generally were in a sort of holiday motion. Ladies were out in numbers; children were dressed in the holiday clothes, some of the boys being furnished with miniature guns . . . while the national flag floated free from the tops of all the public buildings . . . tents in town; and even ice cream and lemonade could not cool the patriotic ardor of their occupants, who hoisted diminutive flags on their [tent] ridge-poles.¹⁰

On April 1, 1842, at the Baltimore City Hall (subsequently the Peale Museum) the surviving 1,007 registered veterans formally organized the Association of Old Defenders of Baltimore in 1814, to perpetuate the memory of those who had fought. They would gather annually until such time as fewer than five members were able to attend.¹¹

On September 12, 1845, the Defenders met at City Hall, where Miss Marcella Jennings and Miss Eva Rodgers presented them with two banners. Washington's *Daily National Intelligencer* described the banner:

The front . . . represents on either side a soldier, one a citizen, the other a volunteer, the latter of whom is seen in the act of lifting up the national flag,



Membership Certificate, Association of the Defenders of Baltimore in 1814, to Jesse L. Hiss, May 14, 1842. (Maryland Historical Society.)

which discerns two circular mirrors, in which are reflected a view of the two most prominent scenes in the defense of the city—the bombardment of Fort McHenry, and the Battle of North Point—both of which are surrounded by an American Eagle bearing in its beak, a scarf, on which is inscribed the motto of *Nostrum decus in pace, et tutamen in bello* – “Our glory in peace, our safeguard in war.” The reverse is of beautiful blue silk, and contains simply the words in rich gold letters: “A tribute of respect to the Defenders of Baltimore in 1814, by the Ladies, September 12, 1845.” The trimming by Mr. [Charles] Sisco.¹²

A second banner, a U.S. flag, bearing the motto, “Surviving Defenders of Baltimore during the Late War,” was presented just prior to the veterans’ departure for Washington. In the capital, together with the Associated Survivors of the War of 1812, District of Columbia, they visited the White House and then went to Dolly Madison’s residence, where the former first lady greeted those who had served in the war during her husband’s presidency.¹³

On September 14, 1857, the sons of the Old Defenders formed themselves into a society—the Association of the Sons of the Defenders of Baltimore in 1814. The *Sun* reported: “It imposes upon the elders the duty and obligation of affording to the young examples of courage, patriotism and integrity . . . that our memories will [not] fall into forgetfulness . . . and our graves be honored.” Later the veterans boarded several steamboats for an excursion to the battlegrounds, arriving via Bear Creek at Brown’s (formerly Houck’s Pavalion). As Fort McHenry’s garrison band played “The

Star-Spangled Banner,” the original old tattered flag that inspired the song flew for the last time over Fort McHenry. At the landing site, beneath colorful signal flags and the U.S. flag, the Old Defenders and their sons held their first reunion. Their annual gatherings continued through the Civil War, and the postwar years brought a resurgence of patriotism as the national press noted with interest the passing of each veteran.¹⁴

The Last Photograph

In September 1880, Baltimore celebrated the city’s sesquicentennial, and among the highlights was the display of the original star-spangled banner. Mr. Eben Appleton of New York, grandson of George Armistead, lent the Fort McHenry flag, now a national treasure, for its last appearance in Baltimore. During the parade, William W. Carter, secretary of the Baltimore Office of Park Commissioners, rode in a carriage with the flag displayed on his lap. In 1912, Appleton presented it as a gift to the Smithsonian with the agreement the flag would not leave that institution’s stewardship.¹⁵

On August 23, 1880, at the present-day City Hall, the surviving members of the Old Defenders’ Association had considered admitting their sons and grandsons to continue the tradition. Nine years later, on May 10, 1889, a resolution was approved by which descendants of the veterans would perpetuate the association until such a time as fewer than five of the original members were able to attend.¹⁶

In October of that same year, Mrs. Virginia M. Carter presented the national flag of the Old Defenders’ Association, silk with gilt fringe, plus three red, white, and blue pieces of the original star-spangled banner, to the Maryland Historical Society. The same year, a reprint of Nathaniel Hickman’s 1828 edition of *The Citizen Soldiers at North Point and Fort McHenry, September 13 & 14, 1814* helped stir the patriotic emotions and reprise stories of the Defenders and the events of September 1814. And on September 12, 1892, at the former home of Charles Carroll of Carrollton in Baltimore, the “Association of Descendants of the Defenders of Baltimore of the War 1812–1814” organized and voted to change their name to the “Society of the War of 1812 in Maryland of Baltimore City” beginning in 1893.¹⁷

On September 12, 1880, those Old Defenders well enough to attend, fell in, and, with the association’s flag flying, fifes and drum playing, and the assistance of Civil War veterans, led a large crowd as they marched to the Mansion House at the Druid Hill Park pavilion. As in previous years the veteran drummer boy of Fort McHenry, Henry Lightner, played “The Girl I Left Behind Me.”

The historic photograph taken that day shows the veterans sitting in front of the mansion steps with silvered heads uncovered. Each defender wore a black broadcloth coat, a top hat with a black cockade and rosette on the left side, a black [mourning] crepe on the right arm in memory of deceased comrades, and a badge bearing the words “Defenders of 1814.” Five wore sashes from the right shoulder to the left waist,

a symbol of their status within the organization. The chief marshal and his assistant wore scarlet sashes, the others wore buff. The bass drum of the Old Defenders' Association, and a snare drum carried at Fort McHenry by Henry Lightner, a member of Capt. John Berry's company, the Washington Artillerists, are clearly visible.¹⁸ Perhaps someone recalled what a correspondent for the *Baltimore American* had written on August 17, 1814, a month before the British appeared:

Who that has ever heard the reveille played at Fort McHenry by the skillful performance of that garrison's, "ear-piercing fife and spirit stirring drum," when touched by the hand of a master? . . . Of National Airs, we have as yet few; but we have two that are sufficient for our purpose – *Yankee Doodle* and *Hail Columbia* – are as soul-aspiring as ever were suitable to our present situation.¹⁹

Brief biographies of the twelve members who had their last group portrait taken that day at Druid Hill Mansion are given below, presented as they were seated, from left to right, in the photograph.²⁰

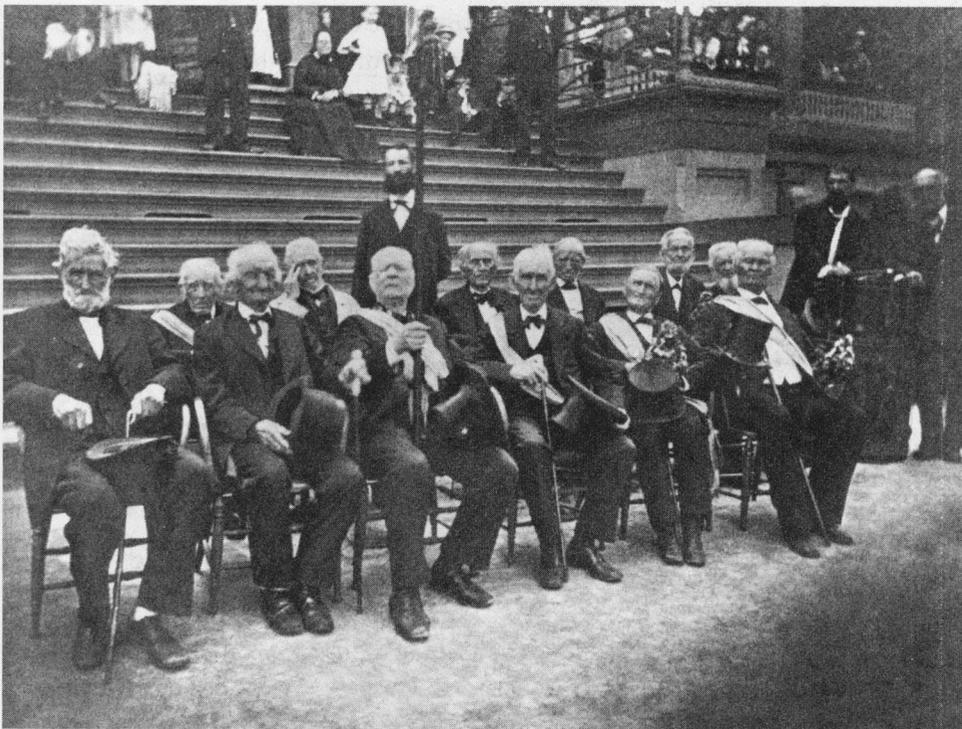
Samuel Jennings (1797–1885) served in Captain James McConkey's 1st Company, 27th Maryland Regiment at the Battle of North Point. A printer by trade he died on November 22, 1885, at the age of eighty-eight and is buried at Old St. Paul's Cemetery in Baltimore.²¹

Asbury Jarrett (1791–1884) served in Captain Josiah Jenkins' Harford County Troop of Horse 7th Cavalry District at Hampstead Hill in September 1814. In private life he was a successful tailor. Jarrett died on November 10, 1884, at the age of ninety-three and is buried in Green Mount Cemetery.²²

George Boss (1793–1886) served as a fifer in Captain Samuel Moale's Columbian Artillery Company, 1st Regiment of Artillery, upon Hampstead Hill, September 1814. He was in the seafaring trade for thirty years and died on December 4, 1886, at the age of ninety-three. His final resting place is unknown.²³

James Christopher Morford (1795–1888). On December 18, 1888, the *Sun* reported: "The Last 'Old Defender' Dead. — Mr. Morford's death marks the extinction of the famous Old Defenders' Association." He was born on September 10, 1795, in Baltimore County's Long Green Valley. A carriage-smith by profession, he enlisted at the age of nineteen years and served in Captain Henry Fowler's rifle company at Bladensburg, Maryland, and later at the Battle of North Point. He died at the age of ninety-three years and was buried in Green Mount Cemetery.²⁴

William B. Batchelor (1786–1885) served as a color bearer in Captain Ezekiel Chambers's Company, 51st Maryland Regiment at North Point, and was one of the most conspicuous members of the Old Defenders. In the photograph he holds the ensign staff bearing the association's national flag with the inscription "The Surviving Defenders of Baltimore." During his life he was a watchman at the state penitentiary



The Old Defenders at Druid Hill Park Mansion, September 1880. (Maryland Historical Society.)

and the Fells Point Bank on Broadway. He attended his last reunion in 1883 and died in March 1885 at the age of ninety-nine years. He is buried in Mount Carmel Cemetery, Baltimore.²⁵

James McCoy (1793–c.1880) served in Captain Benjamin Edes' Company, 27th Maryland Regiment at the Battle of North Point. In 1880 he was eighty-seven years old and lived in Port Deposit, Maryland. His grave site remains unknown.²⁶

William Stiles (1785–1882) a carpenter by trade, served in Captain Robert Conway's Company, 27th Maryland Regiment at the Battle of North Point. He died on December 29, 1882, at the age of ninety-seven with no record of his grave site.²⁷

Henry Lightner (1798–1883) known as "the drummer boy of Fort McHenry," at the age of fifteen served as musician in Captain John Berry's Washington Artillerists, 1st Regiment of Maryland Artillery, stationed at Fort McHenry. His father, John Michael Lightner (1759–1826), had served as a drum major in the Lancaster, Pennsylvania, militia during the Revolutionary War. His son likely used the same drum. A tinsmith by trade, Henry lived on Hillen Street in Old Town, Baltimore. He died on January 24, 1883, having contracted a cold while attending the funeral of another old Defender. He lies buried in an unmarked grave in Baltimore Cemetery.²⁸

Darius Wheeler (1799–1884) served in Captain Michael Peters' Company, 51st Maryland Regiment at the Battle of North Point. A bricklayer and builder by trade,

he died January 21, 1884, at the age of eighty-five years at Hanover Junction, Pennsylvania, and was buried in Green Mount Cemetery.²⁹

Elijah Stansbury (1791–1883) was one of the many members of Maryland's earliest founding families who served as a private in Captain John Montgomery's Baltimore Union Artillery at the Battle of North Point. His father, Brigadier General Tobias E. Stansbury, told his friends that, "I had seven sons under arms the day the battle of North Point was fought, and I would rather see all of them weltering in their blood than to hear that even one of them had shown the white feather." Elijah later rose to the rank of colonel of the 27th Maryland Regiment and was elected to the Maryland legislature in 1843–1845 and as mayor of Baltimore in 1848. A member of the Masons, he died on December 19, 1883, at the age of ninety-two years and is buried in Baltimore's Western Cemetery.³⁰

Nathaniel Watts (1793–1888) served in Captain Adam Showers' Company, 15th Maryland Regiment from Baltimore County at the Battle of Bladensburg and later upon Hampstead Hill at Baltimore. He was born on his family farm of Barnes Grove on Patapsco Neck near the Old Methodist Meeting House where he taught Sunday school. He died of pneumonia at the age of ninety-five on October 29, 1888, burial site unknown.³¹

John J. Daneker (1799–1882) served in Captain Daniel Schwartzaur's Company, 27th Maryland Regiment, at the Battle of North Point and served as president of the Old Defenders' Association and the Baltimore City Council. He died on August 9, 1882, at the age of eighty-three and is buried in Loudon Park Cemetery.³²

The following Old Defenders who were not present at the 1880 reunion, are of interest for their longevity. Among the defenders was Samuel Pastorias of Captain John Stewart's Company, 51st Maryland Regiment, wounded during the Battle of North Point. He died on September 12, 1880, during the celebration.³³

John Petticord (1796–1887) served in Captain George Steever's Company, 27th Maryland Regiment at the Battle of North Point. A hat merchant, he died on October 11, 1887, at the age of ninety-one years at the Aged Men's Home of the Baltimore Humane Impartial Society. He is buried in Loudon Park Cemetery.³⁴

Jacob Wann (1789–1887) served in Captain John B. Bayless's Company and also in Captain Nathaniel W. S. Hays's Company of Harford County's 42nd Regiment and was under arms during the Battle of North Point in 1814. A chair maker by trade, he was born on December 21, 1789, and died on June 15, 1887, in his ninety-eighth year, at Hickory, Maryland. He is buried in Mt. Tabor Church Cemetery.³⁵

John Jennings (1893–1888) served in Captain George Steever's Company, 27th Maryland Regiment, at the Battle of North Point. He died near Black Horse, Harford County, on March 22, 1888, at the age of ninety-five years.³⁶

Robert Ramsey (1795–1888) served in Captain Frederick T. Amoss's Company of Harford County Infantry, 42nd Regiment, and took part in the defense of Baltimore. He was born on October 25, 1795, and died on November 25, 1888, aged ninety-three,

at his home in Delta, Pennsylvania. He is buried in Slateville Cemetery at Peach Bottom, York County, Pennsylvania.³⁷

George William Kincade (1781–1888) served in Captain John Sample's Company, 49th Maryland Regiment, in Cecil County, Maryland, Brigadier General Thomas Forman's 2nd Brigade from Cecil County, and was stationed on Hampstead Hill. After the war he moved west to Richland County, Ohio, where he died on the morning of March 25, 1888, at the age of ninety-seven years.³⁸

Michael Christopher (1801–1889) served as a drummer in Captain Joshua Taylor's Company, 7th Maryland Regiment (Baltimore County). A blacksmith by trade, he died on May 30, 1889, at the age of eighty-eight.³⁹

William Welsh (1800–1894) served in Captain Aaron Levering's Company, Independent Blues, 5th Maryland Regiment, at the Battle of North Point. Born in Baltimore on January 23, 1800, he was engaged in the tobacco trade as an inspector (1860–1867), then served as a trustee for the Bayview Almshouse (1868–1873) and during the Civil War was a member of the Union Relief Committee.⁴⁰

James Hooper (1804–1898) at nine years of age served as a powder boy on Captain Thomas Boyle's privateer *Comet* in 1813 with his father, an officer onboard. When he died on March 16, 1898, his remains were taken to St. Vincent's Church for his funeral and then to Green Mount Cemetery.⁴¹

On September 6, 1884, the *Sun* reported "The Old Defenders Gone, No More Annual Reunions. The Famous Association Disbanded . . . Survivors too Few and Infirm to Keep Up the Organization." The burden of years had taken its toll as the nineteenth century drew to a close.

African American Defenders

In September 1858, upon the forty-fourth anniversary, the *Sun* reported that "two colored defenders were again conspicuous and wore the badge and insignia of the association in company with their white compatriots." One of the two undoubtedly was George Roberts, described as a colored man who was "allowed to parade with the military of the city on all occasions of importance . . . [and] was one of his highest aspirations to be still considered one of the defenders." He served during the war aboard two Baltimore privateers, the *Sarah Ann*, Captain Richard Moon, and more notably the private armed vessel *Chasseur* when in 1814 Captain Thomas Boyle proclaimed the British Isles under naval blockade. In 1859 the *Sun* reported: "Conspicuous among all, however, was George Roberts, the only surviving colored defender. He engaged in the privateer service during the war, but was taken, and at the close of the war released. His stories and anecdotes of the naval officers were full of information and amusement, and in many instances they were historically correct."⁴²

The other was Gabriel Cromwell, described as "quite a feature in the proceedings."⁴³ On September 12, 1853, during the thirty-ninth anniversary of Defenders' Day, a *Sun* correspondent wrote:

We noticed following the [Old Defenders'] "Association," and who accompanies it throughout, a venerable colored man, with the "cockade" in his hat" . . . his name Gabriel Cromwell, who at the Battle of North Point, acted in the capacity of servant to Major Joseph Robinson of the second battalion of the 27th [Maryland] regiment. Gabriel was a free man at the time. . . . When [orders] for "all hands" to turn out for the defense of the city, he shut up [his barber] shop, and started giving whatever service he might be able [to give] . . . He heard in the hottest of the battle Colonel [John] Kennedy Long of the 27th [Regiment] say to his men "don't lose a cartridge."⁴⁴

On July 4, 1881, Gabriel served on the building committee for the laying of the cornerstone during the impressive ceremonies of the United Sons of Towsontown, Lodge No. 1773. He spent his last years in Towson in a frame dwelling in the rear of Ady's Hotel.⁴⁵

In the aftermath of the Battle of North Point on September 12, 1814, Elizabeth (Warner) Sands attended to the wounded, among whom was her brother, Captain Andrew E. Warner, who commanded a company in the 39th Maryland Regiment. The veterans did not forget her presence on the field. In her later years, prior to the Old Defenders of 1814 Association's last meeting in 1889, the group granted her honorary membership. Sands is the only woman known to have had the honor and proudly wore the association's blue and gold ribbon badge.⁴⁶

Elizabeth Sands was born on March 7, 1789, in Darlington, Harford County, the daughter of Cuthbert Warner, a Pennsylvania Quaker who became one of Maryland's clockmakers and silversmiths. Her father moved to Harford County from Bucks County, Pennsylvania, then to Baltimore. He married Rachel Hill (1792-1838) on November 18, 1773, at Deer Creek, Harford County. Elizabeth's brothers, Andrew E. Warner, Thomas H. Warner, and John S. Warner, all master silversmiths, fought at the Battle of North Point.⁴⁷

On December 26, 1805, at the age of sixteen, Elizabeth married jeweler Peter W. Smick (1790-1813). In October 1812, while serving with the militia at Fort Severn in Annapolis, Smick contracted a fever. Elizabeth took their four children to Annapolis and nursed him until he died, then remained to care for others so afflicted.⁴⁸

In July 1824, Elizabeth married engraver John Sands of Ulverston, Lancaster, England, who was producing engraved miniature likenesses of General Marquis de Lafayette to be worn as badges upon the French officer's visit to Baltimore. John Sands had served in Captain John H. Rogers' Company, 51st Maryland Regiment at North Point.⁴⁹

When Sands died five years later Elizabeth turned to making rag carpets to support her family. In September 1887, three years after the last official Old Defenders' reunion (with fewer than five attending), Mrs. Sands, ninety-nine years old, attended a reunion at Baltimore's Rennert's Hotel along with James C. Morford, John Petticord,

and Nathaniel Watts. On August 3, 1890, Elizabeth, at the age of one hundred and one years old, died of cholera. Her final resting place remains unknown. National newspapers chronicled the life story of this celebrated Baltimore citizen.⁵⁰

Who was the last Old Defender from Maryland?

The last known Maryland defender may have been Elijah Bouldin Glenn, a private in Captain Peter Pinney's company, 27th Maryland Regiment who fought at the Battle of North Point. He was born on August 1, 1796, at Carpenter's Point in Cecil County. After the war he lived in Newark, New Jersey, where he died on July 5, 1898, of heat prostration at the age of one hundred and two.⁵¹

That gallant and historic gray-haired coterie, the Defenders of Baltimore, is growing smaller year by year. . . . There are but three surviving "Defenders," all old men staggering on the threshold of the tomb. The long survival of these men is very remarkable. If the same longevity prevails there will be living survivors of the massacre of Baltimore, May [sic] 1861, in 1935. No other group of veterans in American history received such continuous honors and ovations from their fellow-townsmen as has this famous company of the "Old Defenders." All honor to the last of the line.⁵²

The truth may never be known. In 1842 the Old Defenders' Association formally organized with 460 members and grew to 1,259 of the estimated 10,000 Marylanders who had defended the city in 1814. Many who did not belong to the association subsequently moved to other regions of the country or simply had not joined. Nevertheless, as the years went by, and as each of the defenders died, newspapers across the country reported their passing.⁵³

NOTES

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1. A toast at a meeting of the 1843 Old Defenders' Association. *Baltimore Sun* (hereinafter the *Sun*), February 27, 1843.

2. "Old Defenders' Day," *Sun*, September 24, 1841; "City Council," *Baltimore Gazette*, February 10, 1827. French émigré architect Maximilian M. Godefroy designed the monument, completed in 1825. In 1827 it became the official symbol of Baltimore City.

3. Dr. Albert K. Hadel (1830-1905), "The Maryland Society of the War of 1812," *Baltimore American*, September 25, 1895. Dr. Hadel served as the society's registrar from 1892 to 1901. During his funeral the original battle flags carried at the Battle of North Point and those of the Old Defenders' Association draped his coffin. *Sun*, April 4, 1905.

4. Upton S. Heath (1785–1852), “To the editor of the *Baltimore Patriot*, September 6, 1823. The power of postponing parades to which Heath referred was a supplement to an act for the better regulation of the Militia of the City of Baltimore, passed, December session 1821, that parades as established “may be postponed by the commanding officers of Brigades, Regiment, or extra battalions . . . whenever in his opinion a sufficient cause may exist.” *Baltimore Patriot*, September 30, 1822.

5. Joseph H. Nicholson (1770–1817); *Baltimore Gazette*, September 10, 1836.

6. Sheppard Church Leakin (1790–1867), Sheet of “Minutes of 1st meeting of Association of Defenders of Ft. McHenry,” (in the handwriting of Captain S. C. Leakin), Leakin Family Papers, MS 2993 (1790–1922), Maryland Historical Society. The members were: William Steuart (1781–1839), Lieutenant Colonel, 38th U.S. Infantry presiding; Joseph Branson (1791–1873) Private, Capt. Charles Pennington’s Co., Baltimore Artillerists; John Berry (1791–1856), Captain, Washington Artillery, 1st Regt. Md. Artillery; James W. Collins (1765–1841), Private, Capt. Joseph H. Nicholson’s Co., Baltimore Fencibles; Thomas Sangston (?), Captain, 12th U.S. Infantry; and Sheppard C. Leakin (1790–1867), Captain, 38th U.S. Infantry. The association would be similar to the Society of the Cincinnati, admitting the sons and grandsons as members.

7. *Baltimore Gazette*, September 14, 1836; “A Great Convenience,” *ibid.*, May 25, 1837; “The Steam-boat Canton,” *ibid.*, June 12, 1837; *ibid.*, September 14, 1836.

8. The tavern and a boarding house remained private property until January 1836 when the federal government purchased the property. In December 1837 the buildings were removed and the 1794 boundary extended to its present location. Maria’s son was Captain Daniel Schwartzauer of the 27th Maryland Regiment who fought at North Point. “Inventory of the Goods and Chattels of Philip Schwartzauer late of Baltimore County deceased appraised by the Subscribers being First lawfully Authorized and Sworn this ninth Day of December Eighteen Hundred and Eleven.” Philip Schwartzauer completed his last will and testament on November 21, 1811. Four subscribers signed the document, one of whom was Lt. Col. George Armistead of Fort McHenry.

9. Louisa Armistead (1789–1861). Despite the appearance of a delegation of federal and state government officials, including the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, seventy-five years passed before the Society of the War of 1812 installed a monument at the North Point battlegrounds.

10. “The Last Old Defender Dead,” *St. Louis Republic*, December 12, 1888; “The Surviving Defenders of Baltimore,” *Sun*, September 14, 1841.

11. “Old Fort McHenry,” *Sun*, September 13, 1894. In December 1885 the Maryland Historical Society received as a gift the 1842 Baltimore Defenders’ Association Record Book listing four hundred sixty names of the Old Defenders. MS.762, Maryland Historical Society.

12. *Washington Daily National Intelligencer*, September 13, 1845; “The Twelfth of September,” *Baltimore American*, September 13, 1845. Charles Sisco was a maker of sashes and cockades of different colors, ladies finery, and other ornamental clothing. “Battle of North Point,” *Sun*, September 12, 1839; Sidnor S. Donaldson advertised “Ornamental and Fancy Painting,” *Sun*, June 26, 1846.

13. “Celebration of the Twelve of September,” *Sun*, September 13, 1854. Both James and Dolley Madison are buried at Montpelier, Virginia. After the death of her husband in 1837 at their Virginia estate, Dolley removed to Washington where she was a favored guest at society events until her death in 1849.

14. *Sun*, September 14, 25, 1857; “The Battle of North Point,” *Sun*, September 13, 1872. An ironic affair was the federal arrest of several prominent young men, among whom was

George Armistead Appleton, the grandson of Lt. Col. Armistead, who was arrested by Union soldiers for carrying a southern flag in his carpet bag and imprisoned at Fort McHenry. Scott S. Sheads and Daniel C. Toomey, *Baltimore During the Civil War* (Toomey Press, 1997), 45.

15. William W. Carter (1812–1883), “Key Flag in Washington,” *Sun*, July 10, 1907; Lonny Taylor, *The Star-Spangled Banner: The Flag that Inspired the National Anthem* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2000).

16. “Old Defenders’ of Baltimore,” *Sun*, August 24, 1880.

17. “Gifts to the Maryland Historical Society,” *Sun*, October 15, 1889; “Charter, Society of the War of 1812 in Maryland of Baltimore city,” Superior Court of Baltimore City, Liber JB, No. 31, Fol. 288 & C; Society of the War of 1812 Papers, Langsdale Library University of Baltimore; “Old Fort McHenry,” *Sun*, September 13, 1894. On January 8, 1892, a similar patriotic organization, the National Society United States Daughters of 1812, was established on the anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans. Today three Maryland chapters carry on the traditions: the Mary Young Pickersgill Chapter (org. February 16, 1978), the Kitty Knight Chapter (org. 1984) and the William Smallwood Chapter (org. 1907).

18. “Defenders’ Day in Baltimore,” *Sun*, September 14, 1880; “The Old Defenders’ Celebration,” *ibid.*, September 14, 1858; “Route Changed,” *ibid.*, September 13, 1841; “The Defenders of Baltimore,” *ibid.*, September 12, 1881.

19. *Baltimore American*, August 17, 1814.

20. “Defenders’ Day in Baltimore,” *Sun*, September 14, 1880; “A Note on the Old Defenders,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 92 (1997): 520.

21. “Death of an Old Defender,” *Sun*, November 23, 25, 1885.

22. *Sun*, November 11, 1884.

23. “Died” [George Boss], *Sun*, December 6, 1886; “The Municipal Holiday,” *Sun*, September 13, 1883; born on August 5, 1793.

24. “The Last Old Defender Dead”; “Buried With Honors,” *Sun*, December 18, 1888.

25. “Local Matters,” *Sun*, March 26, 1885; “The Municipal Holiday,” *ibid.*, September 13, 1883.

26. *Harper’s Weekly*, September 25, 1880; “Old Defenders of Baltimore,” *Sun*, September 13, 1880.

27. Mary Stiles, Paul Guild, Henry Stiles, *The Stiles Family of America* (Albany N.Y.: Joel Munsell’s Sons, Publishers, 1892): 634.

28. Henry Lightner was Heinrich Leitner in his native Germany. “Death of the Drummer Boy of 1812,” *Sun.*, January 25, 1883; “The Drummer-Boy’s Funeral,” *ibid.*, January 27, 1883.

29. “The Funeral of an Old Defender,” *Sun*, January 22, 1884; “Another Old Defender Gone,” *ibid.*, January 22, 1884.

30. “Col. Stansbury Dead,” *Sun*, December 20, 1883.

31. “Nathaniel Watts Dead,” *Sun*, October 29, 1888.

32. *Sun*, August 10, 12, 1882.

33. “Local Matters,” *Sun*, September 13, 1880.

34. “An Old Defender’s Funeral,” *Sun*, October 14, 1887.

35. *Aegis and Intelligencer*, June 17, 1887.

36. “Death of an Old Defender in Harford,” *Sun*, March 23, 1888.

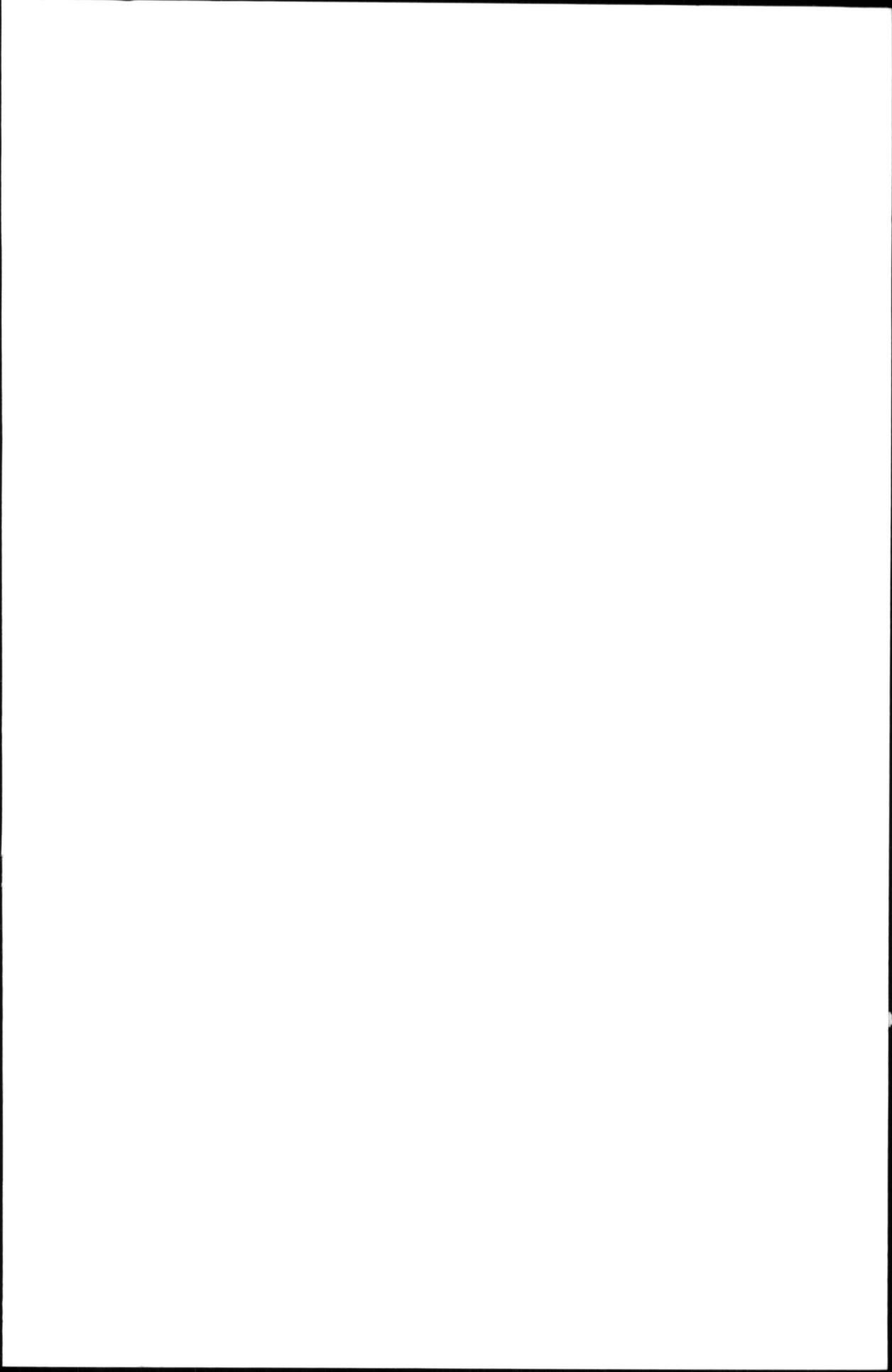
37. *Aegis and Intelligencer*, November 30, 1888.

38. “William Kincade, the Oldest Resident of Richland, County, Dead,” *Cleveland Plain-Dealer*, March 25, 1888.

39. “Michael Christopher, An Old Defender,” *Sun*, June 1, 1889.

40. “Wm. Welsh, Aged 94 Years,” *Sun*, June 2, 1894.

41. *Sun*, September 15, 1895; "The Late Captain Hooper," *ibid.*, March 17, 1898.
42. "The Old Defenders' Celebration," *Sun*, September 14, 1858. Roberts and Cromwell attended the 1857 anniversary, see "The Twelve of September," *ibid.*, September 14, 1857; *ibid.*, January 16, 1861; "Another Old Defender Gone," *ibid.*, January 16, 1861; "Anniversary of the Battle of North Point," *ibid.*, September 13, 1859.
43. "Celebration of the Glorious Twelve of September," *Sun*, September 13, 1853.
44. Gabriel Cromwell (1800–c.1888). "Celebration of the Glorious Twelve of September," *Sun*, September 13, 1853.
45. "Colored Odd Fellows' New Building," *Sun*, July 5, 1881; "Court Cases and Miscellaneous Items," *ibid.*, March 26, 1888. The date of Cromwell's death and his place of burial is unknown.
46. Captain Andrew E. Warner (1786–1870); "Illness of Mrs. Sands," *Sun*, July 26, 1890.
47. Cuthbert Warner (1753–1838); Andrew Ellicott Warner (1786–1870), Captain, 39th Maryland Regt.; Thomas Hayhurst Warner (1780–1828), Captain, 39th Maryland Regt.; and John S. Warner (1797–1868), private in Capt. William Chalmer's 51st Maryland Regt.
48. Rev. Lewis Richards Register (1784–1864), First Baptist Church, Baltimore, MS 690, Maryland Historical Society; "Illness of Mrs. Sands," *Sun*, July 26, 1890. Smick's militia company is unidentified to date.
49. John Sands (1798–1829), "La Fayette Badges," *Baltimore Patriot*, August 19, 1824.
50. "John Sands," *Baltimore Gazette*, February 20, 1829; *Charlotte News* (N.C.), August 5, 1890; "Tribute to Surviving Old Defenders," *Sun*, September 13, 1887; *New York Times*, August 4, 1890; "Illness of Mrs. Sands," *Sun*, July 26, 1890; "Two Centenarians," *Sun*, August 4, 1890, September 13, 1888.
51. Elijah Bouldin Glenn (1796–1898), "A Hundred Years Old," *Sun*, August 8, 1896; "Centenarian Glenn Dead," *Sun*, July 26, 1896; "A Centenarian Dead," *Trenton State Gazette* (N.J.), July 26, 1898.
52. *The Weekly Detroit Free Press*, December 18, 1886.
53. "The Last of the Old Defenders," *Sun*, September 9, 1906.



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