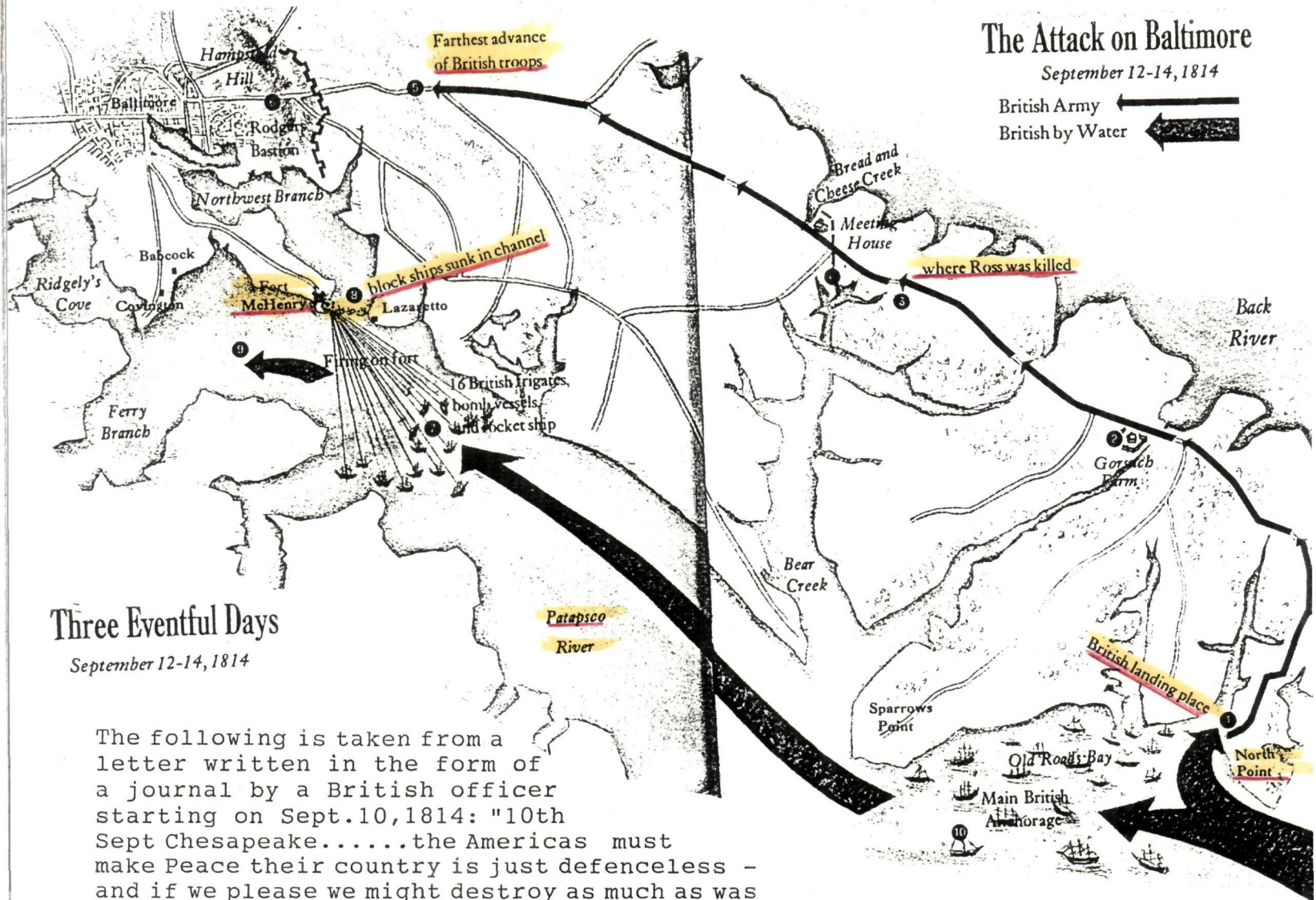


THE WESTERN MAILS

The Attack on Baltimore

September 12-14, 1814

British Army ←
British by Water ←



Three Eventful Days

September 12-14, 1814

The following is taken from a letter written in the form of a journal by a British officer starting on Sept. 10, 1814: "10th Sept Chesapeake.....the Americas must make Peace their country is just defenceless - and if we please we might destroy as much as was conceived necessary if the war continues, we must levy contributions for the expence of it on the counties that are exposed - we are now going to Baltimore - my principal objection is the sickly season, and its being short for a Coup de Main - I wish that we had gone to the North for two months and then returned. The Americans in general are very averse to the war - they have nothing to animate them, and their only pleasure is railing at each other, which they do to perfection - the wind is fair and I shall be at the mouth of the Patapsco [river] tonight [SEE MAP] - I trust we shall succeed, but I fear our information is not sufficiently correct - the Admiral [Sir Alexander Cochrane, in command of the British fleet on the North American Station] has been over persuaded to change his plan.....And I think so has the General [Ross] by Cockburn [Rear Admiral, George] and the Quarter Master general. both dashing sanguine men, full of Zeal and enterprise but sail rather fast. 16th Sept -We landed on the 12th fourteen miles from Baltimore at North point [SEE MAP]. I took leave of the General [Ross] about six miles on the road, at two o'clock - at three the enemy were discovered and just as our Troops were formed an unfortunate Ball struck my esteemed and gallant friend [Ross] - the only words he spoke were "take me to the Royal Oak and if I die request the Admiral to write my wife", I sincerely lament him - I had formed a strong friendship for him and it was reciprocal - he was not only a brave, but he was a good man - he was always in the front, at Washington he escaped by a miracle, he had two horses shot under him. I have written Mrs, Ross - she is at Bristol with his Brother. He died on his way to the beach in the arms of a Lieut of the Royal Oak who had always accompanied him. [Lieut Haymes aide to Ross] I have had his body preserved

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and we propose burying him at Hallifax [Nova Scotia] and erecting a monument. Our Army defeated the Americans but on their approach to Baltimore they found it defended by a strong intrenched camp with double their numbers to defend it - We had got within shot of the Batteries - but they had sunk ships to prevent our approach - our bombs could only throw shells into the Forts - they could not reach the Town. Sir A. Cochrane [Admiral] was in the SURPRISE and your friend in the SEA HORSE with Gordon [Capt. James A.] as fine a fellow as ever, It became a question wither the Camp should be stormed - it was considered that we might force the works, but that our loss would be more than our little army could stand - it was therefore resolved to retreat which they did and embarked without molestation. If the General had lived he would have retreated, and there is only this to be said that on approaching Baltimore it was found to strong and we gave up the enterprise having beat a superior force on the road - My own opinion is that if it had been attacked by the Bayonet in the night it should have succeeded but it was a greater risk than Col. [A.] Brooke [who took over command on the death of Ross] was authorised to run - he is a very good officer, we have not lost many men - they all did their duty famously - the Seamen were particularly steady - six hundred of them were on shore. James as usual got credit - he knows his business but his Brigadier is a great fool - Col. Paterson of the 21st - it is distressing to see so fine a Regiment in the back ground from the heads wanting that necessary article. I am just returned to my ship [Royal Oak] we all find occupation and our ships are generally aground every day - I told you in my last that Capt. Dix was appointed to the MENELAUS [38 gun frigate - to replace Capt. Sir Peter Parker who had been killed] - Capt. Crofton who takes charge of this, was my Captain for a few days he appears a gentleman like man he was only acting - there is an old friend of mine on this station that I hope to get hold of, Capt. Pearce, I have now got my lower deck guns, so that I begin to hold up my head, but this war must not continue -

We should make peace as soon as possible.

..... James Pasley commanded the Seamen that were landed from the ROYAL OAK - he is a spirited fellow [and probably the James refered to above]. You will see Capt. Capt. Carlton - he was in the Action with James when you have heard his story write Jane.

Pult. Malcolm"

"O SAY! CAN YOU SEE BY THE DAWN'S EARLY LIGHT"

This letter was written onboard the HMS ROYAL OAK, 74 gun Frigate, by Rear Admiral Poultney Malcolm, Commander of the troop convoy. SEE MAP for the positions of the troop ships off North Point and the war ships firing on Fort McHenry. Rear Admiral George Cockburn was in charge of the fleet of war ships, Malcolm was in charge of the troop convoy, Major General Robert Ross in charge of the army troops and Vice Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane was in overall command of the expedition as well as the North American Station. During the burning of Washington the British had taken Dr. Wm. Beans captive. Francis Scott Key had been taken onboard Cochrane's flagship, SURPRISE, to negotiate Beans successful release. Before they could leave the night bombardment of Fort McHenry had began and the action that followed forever immortalized our National Anthem, The Star-Spangled Banner. When Key saw the American flag still waving over the fort in the early hours of dawn, he wrote down his notes for the song. The following is in reference to names above: Col. Arthur Brooke, Capt. Edward Dix and Capt. Edward Crofton.