

B4-451

FORT CARROLL - 1848 - Harbor defense fort of 3.4 acres, built on driven wooden pilings, poured concrete, and granite footings at Sollers Flats. Construction was supervised by Robert E. Lee, brevet colonel of Engineers, from 1848-52. Fort was never completed beyond the first tier of three tiers that had been planned. Sold by U. S. Government in 1958 to Benjamin N. Eisenberg, who had hoped to open a restaurant. Mr. Eisenberg had 80 or more dummy cannon cast in concrete as decorations for a dining plate that was never opened.

Fort Carroll

Fort Carroll is a man-made, unfinished, six-sided island fortress in the middle of the lower Patapsco River at the edge of Baltimore Harbor. Preparations for its construction were begun in 1847. The following year Robert E. Lee, who had distinguished himself during the Mexican War but was still only a brevet-colonel in the Army Engineers, was chosen to supervise the building of a bastion to help defend Baltimore in future wars. He began his assignment on November 15, 1848. For the next three years he commuted from the fort to his town house in Baltimore.

Progress was slow. The design called for a four-story, 40-foot-high fort of tiered galleries that would be able to hold 350 cannon. The island was to cover four acres, and each of its six sides was to be 246 feet long. By 1851, more than \$1 million had been spent, and only the foundation and the first story were completed. Congress began having second thoughts as to whether the fort should not be located near the Virginia Capes, where it could protect more than one port against foreign navies. However, unable to decide anything, Congress did nothing. Lee was appointed to the superintendency of West Point, and construction was halted.

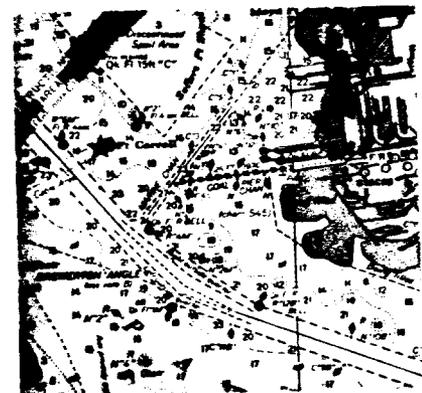
The lighthouse was built on the fort's unfinished parapet in 1854, and the keeper was its only permanent resident. In 1898 the Army Engineers made some minor improvements. The Spanish-American War was in progress, and the lighthouse and fog bell tower were torn down on October 17, 1898, to make way for two batteries, which were constructed and manned. A temporary lantern was installed and used until, in December, the lighthouse was rebuilt. It was a wooden tower erected about 100 feet north of the site of the old structure. The fog bell, which had been rung by hand, was also placed on the tower and operated by machinery. A fifth-order Fresnel lens was installed 45 feet above the water. During World War I the gun batteries were reactivated and used for firing practice. In World War II the Coast Guard used the fort as a pistol range and as temporary housing for seamen whose ships had to be fumigated. After the war the lighthouse was discontinued.

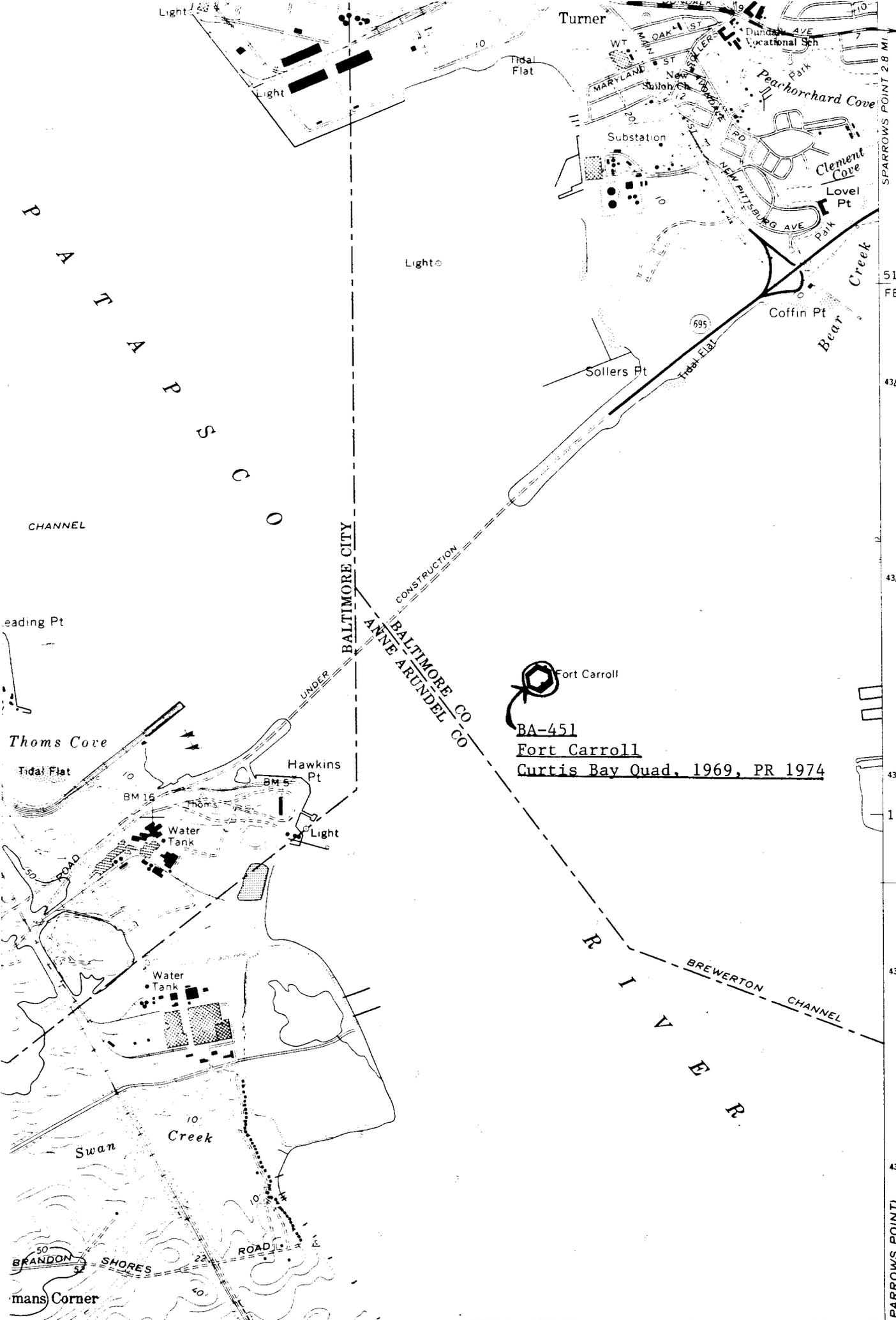
In 1958 the government sold the entire fort and the lighthouse to a Baltimore attorney for \$10,000. Some needed repairs were made, and the fort was opened to visitors, who were transported there via hydrofoil. The venture lost money, and the tours were halted. Many uses have since been suggested for the fort, ranging from a marina, penitentiary, or summer theater to a museum. The fort and the square wooden lighthouse are still abandoned, vandalized monuments to bad planning and worse luck.

de Gast, Robert

1973 Lighthouses of the Chesapeake.

Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.





Fort Carroll
BA-451
Fort Carroll
Curtis Bay Quad, 1969, PR 1974

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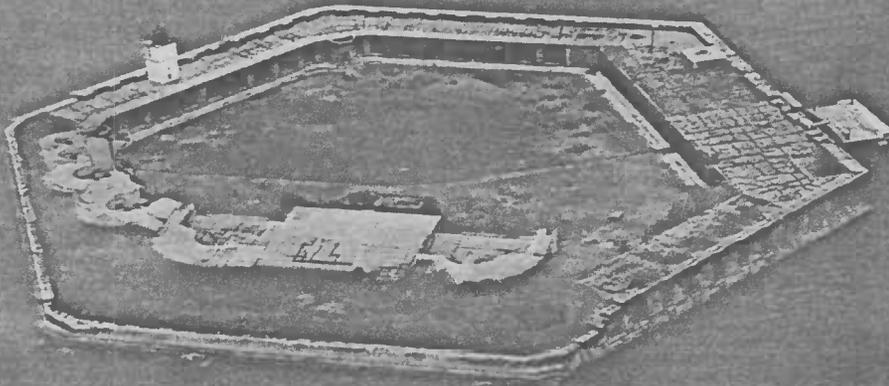
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12'30"

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PARROWS POINT
5762 III NW

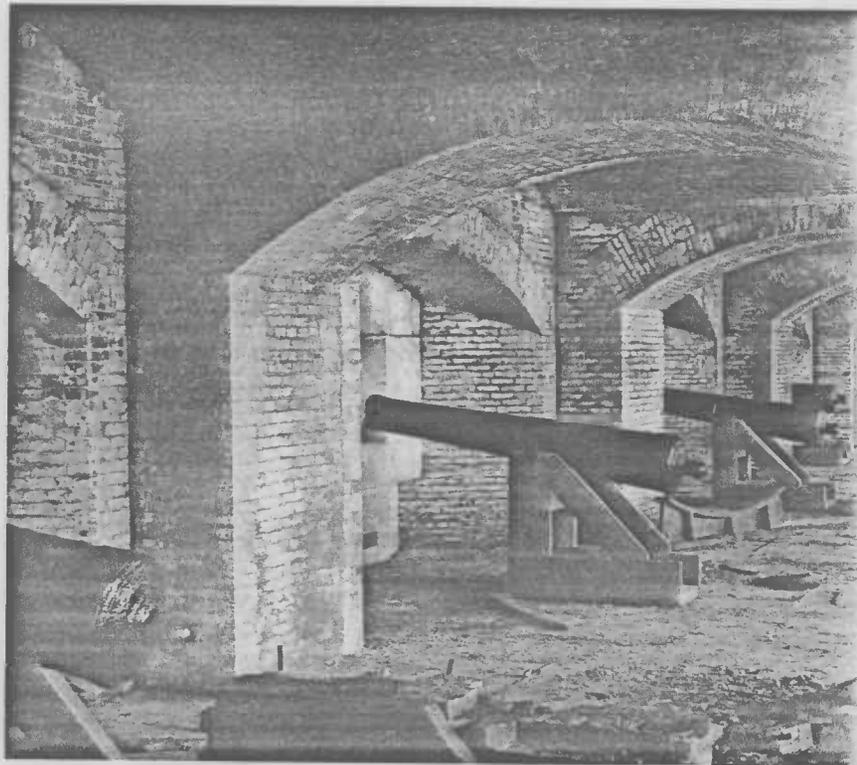


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FORT CARROLL . . . Robert E. Lee as a brevet colonel of engineers directed the building of this harbor defense. The work occupied four years, 1848-1852, and by the time it was done the fort was obsolete. Nonetheless, it was manned for almost 50 years.

NEVER A SHOT . . . Was fired in anger by Carroll's guns. The fort was finally transferred to the State. During World War II a Coast Guard pistol range was set up in it. A developer bought it for \$10,000 when it was sold at public auction in 1958.

*A. AUBREY BODINE, THE FACE OF MARYLAND.
Baltimore, MD; Bodine & Associates, Inc., 1961*



BA-45A

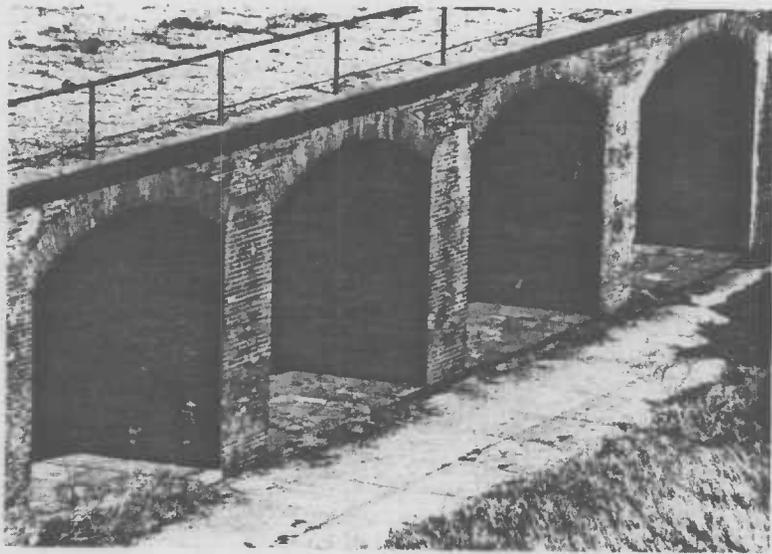
**Fort
Carroll**



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Segmental brick arches of the fort's only completed tier.

The dilapidated entrance to the tower.



The dilapidated
entrance to the tower.

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