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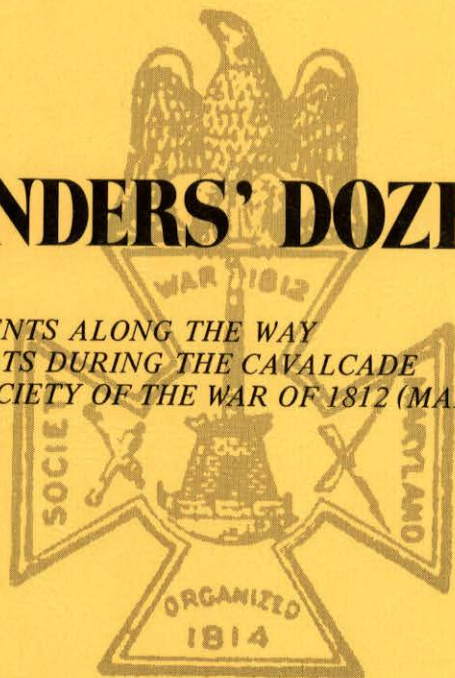
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Battle of Baltimore — 1814

# DEFENDERS' DOZEN

*SOME COMMENTS ALONG THE WAY  
AT THE HALTS DURING THE CAVALCADE  
OF THE SOCIETY OF THE WAR OF 1812 (MARYLAND)*



by

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*Baltimore:*  
*Society of the War of 1812*  
*in the State of Maryland*  
1974

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*First Edition*

## PREFACE

One would think that, of all the major wars the United States has been party to, scarcely any could be more stowed away and forgotten than the War of 1812. It ended inconclusively for both sides; it was massively controversial in America; and the British, who would have liked to ignore it, have ever since been employed in so doing. But this "second war for independence" has not been forgotten by American academe. During the eighteen years the present writer has edited the annual brochure of the Maryland Society, War of 1812, he has witnessed a slowly surging increase of interest in that far-off conflict — in all aspects thereof. This is not the place to delve into the reasons behind such scholarly activity, or even to suggest a reading list. Suffice to note that the ablest book-length overviews of the subject published to date are Reginald Horsman's *The Causes of the War of 1812* (Philadelphia, 1962) and Harry L. Coles' *The War of 1812* (Chicago [1965]). The most comprehensive study of the military phase is John K. Mahon's *The War of 1812* (Gainesville, 1972).

To Marylanders the conflict carries a varied connotation. Though we got a trouncing at Bladensburg, we sent the enemy packing at North Point and on the Patapsco River. Not only did the Free State's share in the campaigns produce the country's National Anthem, it enabled Baltimoreans in particular to perpetuate their claim to be residents of the only, repeat only, American metropolis of ancient founding that has never, repeat never, existed under a foreign flag. And Samuel Smith's latest biographer, Dr. John S. Pancake, has gone so far as to affirm that our beleaguering marked "the only time in the nation's history that an American city has been defended by its citizens."

It is to commemorate certain phases of the Battle of Baltimore that this pamphlet, written and researched in the first half of 1971 and now revised, is offered to any interested eye. Its appearance is owing to the generosity of the Society of the War of 1812 in the State of Maryland, to the officers and membership of which association the writer extends thanks for their confidence and support. It is in effect a tour guide for the Cavalcade staged — in one form or another since the year 1815 — each "Defenders' Day," September 12, through Baltimore and its environs. The author hopes, however, that his booklet will be perused not just by 1812'ers but by any citizen curious about this phase of Maryland's past. It is to such citizens that the present tiny footnote to local history is dedicated.

**Curtis Carroll Davis**

Baltimore, Maryland  
July, 1974

## HALT #1 — TOMB OF MAJOR GENERAL SAMUEL SMITH

*Old Western Burying Ground,  
Fayette at Greene Streets,  
Baltimore*

Chronologically this should be our last halt. The bloodshed and the bullets, the advances and the retreats — all have died away, now, on the winds of the past. We peacefully assemble here to view the resting place of him who directed these activities from the American side of the ramparts.

First, a few words about the locale. Though the Westminster Presbyterian Church was not organized until 1852, the cemetery has been here since 1784. In a common grave under the building lie the remains of over a hundred Revolutionary soldiers. In the burying ground itself repose at least a dozen General officers from that war as well as five Mayors of Baltimore town.

The gates on Greene Street — not those through which you entered from Fayette — are the creation of that erratic French painter, architect, and military engineer, Maximilian Godefroy (1765-*post* 1840). Godefroy, who married a Baltimore girl, assisted in planning some of the outworks at Fort McHenry during the War of 1812 and is the designer of the tomb here of General Smith. He is however, more renowned as the designer of Battle Monument, of the Unitarian Church at Charles and Franklin Streets, and of Saint Mary's Seminary chapel, the first Gothic Revival religious edifice in the United States.

Among the more notable personalities from the War of 1812 who also rest here are:

James McHenry, the nation's first Secretary "at War," for whom our Fort is named

Colonel John S. Skinner, Government agent for prisoner exchange and future agricultural editor, who accompanied Francis Scott Key out to the British fleet anchored in Baltimore harbor in order to negotiate the release of the American hostage, William Beanes, M.D., of Upper Marlborough

David Stodder, prominent tradesman and designer of the frigate *Constellation*

Brigadier General John Stricker, veteran of the Revolution, who commanded the Third (City) Brigade in 1814 and for whom Stricker Street is named

I scarcely need tell you that the tomb you passed on your right, at entrance, shelters by far the most renowned resident of this turf, a gentleman who had but slight acquaintance with matters military. Although the poet was interred here at the time of his death in October, 1849, the monument you passed was not erected until November, 1875. But we are not here to discuss Edgar Allan Poe.

Samuel Smith (1752-1839), born in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, of County Tyrone descent, was a merchant, shipowner, speculator, soldier, and politician. He was very successful at all of these pursuits. For example, he served throughout the Revolutionary War with regular promotions and, at Fort Mifflin — a small outpost on Mud Island in the Delaware River below Philadelphia — with such distinction that both Washington and Lafayette asked him to join their personal staffs.

After the Revolution Smith proceeded to compile — quite aside from his private civilian pursuits — the following public record:

- 1793-1803 United States Congressman (Md.)
- 1803-1815 United States Senator (Md.)
- 1816-1822 United States Congressman (Md.)
- 1822-1833 United States Senator (Md.)
- 1835-1838 Mayor of Baltimore

In 1811, unfortunately, Smith fell out with President Madison, and as the result suffered political ostracism from his own party (the Democratic-Republican). Nevertheless, as his first book-length biographer points out,

The war of 1812 . . . provided the General with an opportunity to repair his political fortunes through his military exploits. At the end of the war he returned to Congress . . . There he found that the old issues that had agitated the country for so long had been replaced by new ones brought about by expansion and industrialization. Until his retirement in 1833 Samuel Smith played an honorable if relatively minor role in Congress. When he died in 1839 at the age of eighty-seven, President Van Buren, the cabinet, and both Houses of Congress travelled to Baltimore for his funeral. It was a fitting tribute to the "Hero of Mud Island," who had served his country long and well (Cassell, p. 221)

And his second biographer reminds us that these last rites were

a tribute to the political achievements of the man who represented his State in the national legislature through the administration of seven presidents. As the procession reached Baltimore Street and turned east along the waterfront, the ships in the Patapsco lowered their colors to half-mast for the merchant whose ships had known the ports of the world from Europe to China. And as the throng of citizens watched the hearse with its military escort ascend Hampstead Hill, the guns of Fort McHenry boomed a final salute (Pancake, pp. 198-99)

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- Frank A. Cassell, *Merchant Congressman in the Young Republic: Samuel Smith of Maryland, 1752-1839* (Madison, Wis., 1971)

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## HALT #2 — FRANCIS SCOTT KEY MONUMENT

*Eutaw Place at Lanvale Street,  
Baltimore*

Unveiled May 15, 1911. The sculptor was Jean Marius Antonin Mercie, of France.

Don't necessarily believe what you see either in print or on the face of a monument — in this instance the south face. Mr. Key first saw the light of day in the year 1779, not 1780.

The sculptor's concept places the thirty-five year old lawyer (1779-1843) at a sea wall, addressing the symbolic figure of Columbia, who holds aloft the gilded National Banner. Key's right hand originally grasped a torch to illuminate the Flag, but the torch has vanished. For some years until 1973 the sailor's right oar was another casualty, but has now been restored. The suppliant's left hand grasps a manuscript, presumably that of his poem, which by Act of Congress was proclaimed the National Anthem a mere 117 years later (March 3, 1931)!

The City of Baltimore owes this imposing structure to the beneficence of one man, tobacco importer Charles L. Marburg, who had long been an admirer of the Maryland poet. In his will Marburg stipulated the then princely sum of twenty-five thousand dollars for the erection of the monument, but died shortly before it was completed. He had, however, named his brother, the diplomat Dr. Theodore Marburg, as trustee for completion of the project; and this was done.

At the ceremonies an American Flag was unveiled from the figure of Key by his granddaughter, Mrs. William Gilmor, assisted upon the platform by little Charles L. Marburg (of today's "Torch Hill," near Lutherville, and son of the diplomat), whose most vivid memory of the episode is that his new pair of white shoes pinched his toes unmercifully. The principal address was delivered by the Hon. W. Stuart Symington, Jr., a judge on the Supreme Bench of Maryland. Among the dignitaries present was James, Cardinal Gibbons.

It must be conceded that our monument is a relative latecomer to statuary honoring Francis Scott Key. Here are a few others that claim one's attention:

- 1887 Golden Gate State Park, San Francisco
- 1898 Mount Olivet Cemetery, Frederick, Maryland, where Key lies buried, with President William McKinley orator of the occasion
- 1915 Estate of "Terra Rubra" ("Red Land"), near Keyville, Carroll County, where Key was born
- 1922 Monumental figure of Orpheus strumming his lyre, at Fort McHenry, by Charles H. Niehaus, dedicated on Flag Day (June 14) that year, with President Warren G. Harding orator of the occasion

As a boy I used to derive much satisfaction from scrambling all over this lofty pile whilst my father was attending his patients at the Baltimore Eye, Ear, and Throat Hospital, which used to occupy the building on the southwest corner opposite. I can, accordingly, say amen to all but the opening clause of the observation that follows from Francis F. Beirne's *The Amiable Baltimoreans* (New York, 1951), p. 102:

Although it may not rate high as a work of art, it is an unending delight to little boys, who keep an eye out for the cops while they join Key and the sailor in the boat.

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### HALT #3 — AQUILA RANDALL OBELISK

*Old North Point Road at 4000 Battle Grove Road*  
(S.E. of the Methodist Episcopal church and of Battle Acre)

Erected July, 1817. Sponsors were the deceased's superiors of three years earlier, Maj. Richard K. Heath, commanding the 5th Infantry Regiment, Maryland Militia, and Capt. Benjamin C. Howard (son of the Revolutionary veteran), commanding Pvt. Randall's own 1st Mechanical Volunteers Company, plus numerous enlisted veterans. (Baltimore, Md., *Niles' Weekly Register*, XII [Aug. 2, 1817], 367.)

I have always admired what struck me as an Augustan ring to that quotation carved on the highway side of the obelisk:

How beautiful is *Death*.  
when earned by *Virtue*

I wondered who, in that assemblage of citizen soldiers, had had the taste to select those verses, but mostly I wondered where they came from? Only last spring, in riffling through some research notes on an entirely different subject, did I abruptly find the lines staring up at me. They are from Joseph Addison's *Cato: A Tragedy* (1713), a drama popular among the literati during the Colonial period. We now see that this popularity extended much further, and I can also assure you there is good reason to believe that Capt. Nathan Hale had the same verses in mind when he made his ringing pronouncement from the gallows at the British artillery park on Manhattan Island in 1776.

Aquila Randall's given name is from the Latin and means "eagle." The only other historic American figure I know of to bear it was the Philadelphia typographer Aquila Rose (c. 1695-1723), whose manuscript poetry was collected and published by Benjamin Franklin. *Our* Aquila, only twenty-four years old at the time of his death, would be totally unknown to history were it not for this simple shaft. He was just a Private. Twenty-one other Privates fell dead at North Point. Hence there must have been something special about him. I have often conjectured what it was?

The military background to this tiny episode goes as follows . . . .

About 3 A.M., September 12 (Monday), 1814, the British ships in the Patapsco River effected a landing to the south of us at an inlet on the northwest side of the Point called Old Road Bay. (See James E. Hancock, *Eve. Sun.*, January 5, 1929, he now entering upon his first and lengthy tenure as president of the 1812 Society.) The landings were completed about 6 A.M. In all, some four thousand seven hundred invaders clumped ashore. Of this total about fifteen hundred were sailors and marines under command of Rear Admr. Sir George Cockburn. About three thousand were soldiers, many of them in units recently released from European duty against Napoleon I and calling themselves the Duke of "Wellington's Invincibles." These ground forces were commanded by Maj. Gen. Robert Ross, a professional soldier of Irish birth and a bemedalled veteran of the Napoleonic wars across half of Europe. (London, *Dictionary of National Biography*, XVII, 274-77.)

The opposing Maryland troops — augmented by units from Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Virginia — were the Third Militia Division, under Maj. Gen. Samuel Smith. This Division was comprised of four brigades:

- Second; Ninth from rural counties inland and virtually worthless, since they lacked weapons, training, and leadership
- Eleventh from Baltimore County, under Brig. Gen. Tobias Stansbury — better, but far from combat ready
- Third Baltimore City's own, the State's ablest militiamen, commanded by Brig. Gen. John Stricker

It was elements of General Stricker's troops that were ordered forward to reconnoitre the British, specifically, men of the 5th Regiment under Major Heath, including Captain Howard's company of Mechanical Volunteers. Here, about seven miles from the landing area and some seven and a half miles from Baltimore, third largest city in the land, this young "eagle" was among the first to fall.

Over the decades this locally hallowed spot has had its share of visitors. One who tarried in the spring of 1833 was a Lieutenant Coke, on leave from the 45th Regiment, British Army. Coke perused that Addisonian quotation with a cold eye. He assumed that it was indubitably Private Randall who had done in General Ross at or near this place. He took it for granted that the youth was firing from cover and that the British commander was in the open. What the Private accomplished, therefore, was not only no feat deserving a monument but "a deed which was but a shade better than cold-blooded assassination." In the Lieutenant's opinion that entire second verse from *Cato* ought to have been deleted!

The reason our visiting Englishman made the assumption he did may have stemmed from his reading an account of the episode in the *History of the Late War* . . . (1816), by the Pittsburgh-born Maryland lawyer and legislator Henry M. Brackenridge. If so, then Lieutenant Coke pole-vaulted to conclusions. True, the American historian had written that General Ross' demise was attributed to "one of the company of Captain Howard, \* \* \* an apprentice boy armed with a rifle, and who fired from behind a tuft of bushes, and forfeited his life for his temerity." But the historian was careful to add: "This matter is still somewhat in doubt, and has given rise to some dispute." The dispute was still fresh as of an 1833 issue of *Niles' Register*, reporting on Coke's visit to Baltimore.

Many years later a visitor of quite a different temperament, from a land much farther away, and speaking the King's English with a broken accent, also gazed at Aquila Randall's obelisk. His name was Eli Buniavas (1895-1962), and he had emigrated to America from Yugoslavia at the age of fourteen "because of democracy." He became a coal miner in West Virginia, but eventually settled at Baltimore, where in 1944 he purchased the tavern property rising behind me.

When I say that he, too, gazed at Randall's monument, I mean that he gazed down, not up; for he found it shattered and lying in fragments on the earth. At once Buniavas set to work on a labor of love. On October 14, 1945 — one hundred and thirty-one years after the battle of North Point — he completed the monument's entire reconstruction, at his own expense, to the tune of seven thousand dollars. Yet such is the casual puissance of "ingratitude, the proverbial sin of republics" (Josiah Quincy, *History of Harvard University* [1840], I, 5-6) that Eli Buniavas' own small plaque has itself had to be restored.

Even more recently, not long after our 1973 Halt here, vandals toppled the shaft and badly damaged it. At once a reward of three hundred dollars on the culprits was posted by the Dundalk-Patapsco Neck Historical Society — with our own Society donating a third of that amount — but the criminals have yet to be apprehended. In any event, Aquila's obelisk was speedily repaired, and the local Boy Scout troop has undertaken its care. Long may their vigilance endure!

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N[athaniel] Hickman, ed., *The Citizen Soldiers at North Point and Fort McHenry, September 12 & 13, 1814* . . . (Baltimore [1858]). 1st Edit., 1822. Reprinted 1889, with typed index thereto in Maryland Room, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore

Harold A. Williams, "Baltimore's War," *Sunday Sun*, Sept. 8, 1946. Map, illus.; account of Buniavas

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Frank A. Cassell, "Response to Crisis: Baltimore in 1814," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, LXVI (Fall, 1971), 261-87

"*The Neck*": 1672-1973 (Dundalk-Patapsco Neck Historical Society, 1973). 2nd Edit. Booklet, maps, illus.

#### HALT #4 — BATTLE ACRE

3100 block Old North Point Road, east of  
Trappe Road (N. W. of the Randall obelisk  
and S.E. of the Methodist Episcopal church)

Ladies and gentlemen, make no mistake about it: for years after 1814 it was not the bombardment of Fort McHenry that Marylanders thought of when they referred to the "Battle of Baltimore" — it was the fighting at North Point. Their outlook arose probably from two facts: the momentousness of the unexpected loss of the enemy commander; the realization that if the British forces had swept on to capture Baltimore, Fort McHenry and its garrison would have become only an incidental strong-point that could have been casually starved into submission.

Cornerstone laid September 12, 1839 (twenty-fifth anniversary). Proceedings featured an oration by one of the veterans, Benjamin C. Howard, now a Brigadier General in the Maryland Militia and U.S. Congressman from Maryland. Erection of the monument lagged until 1914, when the Star-Spangled Banner Centennial Association finally brought the project to completion. Historical marker put up by the State Roads Commission, following research by the Maryland Historical Society, not until 1964.

The chief action at North Point swirled bloodily around this acreage where the monument stands. We are just east of Bread and Cheese Creek — a reassuring appellation which stands on the earliest maps of the area and has nothing to do with the enemy soldiers' rations — an inlet of the Back River. The date was Monday, September 12 (1814).

The defenders were elements of the Third Brigade, Maryland Militia, including the Fifth and other regiments, under command of Brig. Gen. John Stricker. They totalled about 3,200 men. The enemy totalled about 4,700 men, most of them better trained and equipped. When the tide of conflict ebbed, and the screams and cannon bursts had begun to die upon the wind, the following (approximate) casualty figures took shape:

	<b>Killed</b>	<b>Wounded</b>	<b>POW</b>	<b>Total</b>
American	24	139	50	213
British	46	295	?	341

One of the enemy officers participating, Lt. George R. Gleig, attributed the relatively high percentage of British wounded to the defenders' use of buckshot and their advantage of cover in the heavily wooded terrain.

Looking at these statistics, a Marylander of today's world would have to concede that here certainly was no crushing victory. In point of fact, all that the defenders had hoped to accomplish was to execute a holding action. They achieved their purpose, and Marylanders have a right to be proud thereof. That this proud memory lingers is evidenced by the fact that, quite recently in the Baltimore area, there expired a gentleman whose family had seen fit to grace him at birth with the given names of North Point (*Sun*, June 23, 1973 [A-15]).

At the time Maryland private enterprise lost little opportunity in attempting to reap a legitimate profit from the event. As promptly as September 28 there went on sale in the Old Town neighborhood of the metropolis an engraving entitled, "First View of the Battle of Patapsco Neck," by 1st Corp. Andrew Duluc, a member of the Baltimore Yeagers under Capt. Philip B. Sadtler. Two originals of this quaint, rare copperplate repose today in the Peale Museum, where hand-colored reproductions are available for purchase. Scrutiny of the "First View" will suggest to connoisseurs that Corporal Duluc, combat witness though he was, posed no significant artistic threat to the reputation of any of the Peales.

On September 11, 1839, this acreage was presented to the State as a gift by Jacob Houck, M.D., Health Commissioner of Baltimore County, who owned property in the area and who had made it a custom each September 12 to invite any North Point veteran to dine at his summer home here overlooking Swann's Creek. Dr. Houck, incidentally, was the grandfather of the late Mrs. William F. Pentz (a family connexion of one of your Society's past presidents, John A. Pentz) and of the late Mrs. Reuben Ross Holloway, a redoubtable preservationist in her own right and a *grande dame* renowned almost equally for her personal battles with politicians and the High Gothic splendor of her headgear.

The enclosing iron fence was rescued from the grounds of the Asylum for the Blind on east North Avenue, Baltimore, when that property was condemned by the City for the erection of the Polytechnic Institute. The emplacement of the fence, as well as the inscriptions on the monument, are one of the many accomplishments of the National Star-Spangled Banner Association, which was formed at Baltimore in 1914 under the first presidency of Mayor James H. Preston. It sponsored the Star-Spangled Banner Centennial, which did much to foster country-wide recognition of Francis Scott Key's poem as the appropriate and only National Anthem.

In 1960 one of our Society's three Honorary as well as Life members — the others are the Baltimore Harbormaster, Jean Hofmeister, and the late General of the Army Douglas MacArthur — Neil H. Swanson, in his column in the *News-Post* for August 11 saw fit to caption that column, "Battle Acre, a Disgrace." Any of you who, until recent times, chanced to visit North Point sites on a non-Cavalcade occasion will understand why he did so.

In March, 1962, the State Board of Public Works tacitly endorsed journalist Swanson's point of view when it restored this area, then ordered the State Roads Commission to maintain it properly henceforth. The Commission complied, but pointed out that, at the moment, a twenty-foot section of the fence was totally missing and that its responsibilities surely did not include going to look for it?

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1918), pp. 92-93, 155-65
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- "Old North Point Battle Monuments Are Weed-Covered and Neglected,"  
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52-53. Booklet, illus.
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**HALT #5 — "BATTLE GROUND"  
METHODIST-EPISCOPAL CHURCH SITE**

2400 block Old North Point Road  
at German Hill Road (some 500 yards  
N. W. of Battle Acre)

At 8 P.M. the night before the North Point engagement, *i.e.*, on Sunday evening, September 11 (1814), General Stricker arrived here with the bulk of his troops and encamped for the night. Probably he established his headquarters within the chapel. During and after next day's battle the Meeting House was utilized as a field hospital for the wounded of both sides.

The site is close to the head of Bread and Cheese Creek, and slightly northwest of the head of Bear Creek, the City proper lying about seven miles to the west. On this peninsula stood what was originally referred to by its Methodist congregation as the Patapsco Neck church (or chapel) and, after the War of 1812, as the "Battle Ground" church. Records of the Baltimore Circuit indicate that a chapel stood here at least as early as 1795, one of the pioneering Methodist chapels in Baltimore County. The structure had double doors with large, straight iron hinges, and was painted red.

Monument erected in 1914 by the Patriotic Order, Sons of America, as part of the Centennial observations. Title to the site was conveyed to the State of Maryland through the efforts of one of your Society's past presidents, William Henry Pitcher.

In 1837 the chapel was remodelled, and again in 1858. When this was done, hundreds of lead bullets were found embedded in its framework. Presumably it is the earlier of the remodelled edifices which is seen on the scroll affixed to the front of the monument. This visualization closely resembles the earliest depiction of the Meeting House that I have uncovered. This is a clearly printed but dwarfishly reproduced engraving in *Harper's Magazine* for March, 1864 (XXVIII, 443), in a series of articles on the war by the New York historian Benson John Lossing. The engraving shows a rectangular building with three windows on its right side, two high front openings, and chimney on the right rear of the roof. Probably the visualization on the scroll derives from Lossing and, if so, in all likelihood from the book edition of his articles, the monumental *Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812* . . . (New York, 1868), p. 950.

Three later identical views of the Meeting House — in 1907, 1919, and 1934 — reveal a sloping addition on the chapel's left side. In 1887 the congregation removed to a new house of worship, and the older building was demolished about 1921. Two different photographs showing its "last stand" may be found in the two concluding sources below.

## SOURCES

Anon., "Historic Sketch of Patapsco Neck Methodist Episcopal Church," typescript, 3 pp. (n.p., n.d.), in Lovely Lane Museum, Baltimore

Metho, "The Embattled Meeting House," typescript, 3½ pp. (n.p., n.d.), in possession of Ben R. Womer for the Dundalk Historical Society

"Patapsco Neck Church," Baltimore *American*, Aug. 30, 1897. Illus. (like Lossing). Includes anecdote by the Widow Langford, at whose home Gen. Ross allegedly paused for a drink of milk before the battle.

*Sunday Sun*, Sept. 8, 1907 (p. 13). Illus.

*Sunday Sun*, Sept. 7, 1919 (Feature Sect., p. 2). Illus.

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## Halt #6 — RODGERS BASTION

*Hampstead Hill*  
(Patterson Park),  
Baltimore

Bastion: “. . . work projecting outward from the main enclosure of a fortification, consisting of two *faces* meeting in a *salient* angle, usually *acute*, commanding the foreground and outworks, and two *flanks*, each able to defend by a flanking fire the face of the adjacent bastion and the adjacent curtain, or wall which joins the flank of one *bastion* with the adjacent flank of another.”

*Webster's New Internat. Dict.*  
. . . *Unabridged*, 2nd Edit. (1944)

Merchant William Patterson, one of the wealthiest Marylanders of his day, donated the land for this area to the City in 1827. He is better known for having, less willingly, donated his daughter Betsy to Prince Jerome Bonaparte, younger brother of the Emperor, Napoleon I.

The bastion is named for Commodore John Rodgers, U.S.N. (1773-1838), of the Havre de Grace family, the ranking American naval officer in active service at this period. Currently commanding the Delaware Flotilla, this steadily successful seaman had relished harassing the British fleet as it withdrew down the Potomac following the sack of Washington City.

Fully a year earlier Maj. Gen. Samuel Smith had begun to fortify this natural strong point in the land defenses of Baltimore, a city of some forty-five thousand inhabitants. On his orders a line of breastworks had been thrown up and an artillery park established boasting some sixty cannon. As his biographer Dr. Cassell maintains, “In both 1813 and 1814 General Smith stood at the center of events. He was the integrating force that meshed Baltimore's will to survive with the practical necessity of obtaining trained men, arms, and fortifications. The battle of Baltimore was won as much in 1813 as in 1814, and from first to last it was singularly Smith's victory.”

The General had now placed Rodgers in command of the cannoneers and the Hampstead Hill defenses (also called Loudenslager's Hill). One may guess at what passed through the Commodore's mind as he gazed down that long slope at the invaders, some of whom, just this past May 3, had burned and plundered his home town.

After executing their delaying action at North Point, General Stricker's troops had gradually withdrawn to this prepared position. As they went, they felled trees, to hinder the enemy soldiers. Ascending the hill, the City Brigade settled down to hold it along with their fellow defenders already massed there.

To protect the City at all points General Smith had a total of some 16,300 troops of varying categories and stages of readiness. At this area, which was designated the Eastern Defense Line, he had probably some ten to eleven thousand effectives. Around midnight, Monday-Tuesday, September 12-13 (1814), there came an unprescribed assist in protecting the City: heavy rains.

In the early afternoon of Tuesday, September 13, the British forces — totalling about 4,500 men now under command of Ross' successor, Col. Arthur Brooke, another veteran of the Napoleonic wars — began to accumulate on the open plain at the foot of Hampstead Hill. Instead of an assault Brooke elected to encamp. His reasons for doing so are spelled out by one of his subalterns:

Upon a ridge of hills, which concealed the town itself from observation, stood the grand army, consisting of twenty thousand men [*sic*]. Not trusting to his superiority in numbers, their general had there entrenched them in the most formidable manner, having covered the whole face of the heights with breast-works, thrown back his left, so as to rest it upon a strong fort, erected for the protection of the river, and constructed a chain of field redoubts, which covered his right, and commanded the entire ascent. Along the side of the hill were likewise *fleches* and other projecting works, from which a cross fire might be kept up; and there were mounted throughout this commanding position no less than one hundred [*sic*] pieces of cannon (Gleig, p. 187)

Quite aside from the disparity as to the number of American troops and cannon actually on site, the invaders stood naked in cleared grassland or corn fields, with no cover available against weaponry, either head-on from Hampstead Hill or by cross-fire upon their right flank (from newly positioned elements of Stricker's and Winder's commands). That night the rain fell in torrents.

To make matters even more untenable, Colonel Brooke presently learned that his naval support in the Patapsco could afford him no real relief, since it was kept downstream by the hulks the defenders had sunk between Whetstone Point and Lazaretto Point on the east bank of the river's Northwest Branch. The British commander decided to withdraw.

About 3 A.M., Wednesday, September 14 (1814), the enemy troops somberly commenced their retreat back down toward North Point. There had been no contest. There *had* been a confrontation: the Americans had not merely stared down on them; they had stared them down. The Battle of Baltimore was over.

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The monument which you see before you, forward of the Pagoda, was erected in honor of the writing of "The Star-Spangled Banner" by the pupils of the public schools of Baltimore as part of the Centennial celebrations in 1914. It was designed by J[oseph] Maxwell Miller (1877-1933), a nationally known sculptor of Baltimore birth.

## HALT #7 — WELLS and McCOMAS OBELISK

*Gay at Aisquith Streets,  
Baltimore*

The ten-foot base was laid in 1871, the twenty-one foot marble obelisk raised in 1873.

The bodies of the two young men had been removed from their vault in Greenmount Cemetery and reinterred here on Ashland Square (as the area was then called) on September 13, 1858, with full military honors, a parade, and speakers. Though subscriptions were at once begun for a monument, it ultimately necessitated some assistance from the City before the project was completed. (*Eve. Sun*, Sept. 8, 1960.)

On the occasion of the youths' interment here a local poetaster who described himself merely as "one who was a little boy at the time of the Battle of Baltimore" composed a

Wells and McComas Funeral and Monument Song  
Baltimore, September 13, 1858  
To the Memory of the Brave  
WELLS and McCOMAS  
Who Shot General Ross

Published by Weishampel's Bookstore and Circulating Library at 484 West Baltimore Street, the dirge was to be sung to the tune of the "Star-Spangled Banner." (Broadside, Maryland Room, Enoch Pratt Free Library.)

Precisely one year later, on September 12, 1860, the local journalist and actor Clifton W. Tayleur saw production at the Holliday Street Theatre of his three-act drama, *The Boy Martyrs of Sept. 12, 1814*. A copy of this rare play is in the Maryland Historical Society library.

Almost needless to say, Baltimore boasts a Wells Street and likewise a McComas Street. Both are situated in that area so garlanded with Old Defender street names, Locust Point, just west of Fort McHenry. There is also a Wells and McComas Post, Veterans of Foreign Wars. As the inscriptions on the obelisk spell out in loving detail, the slain pair were Henry G[ough] McComas (Sept 20, 1795 - Sept. 12, 1814) and Daniel Wells (Dec. 30, 1794 - Sept. 12, 1814). Observe the tender dating of their ages at death, down to the very day.

Before taking up arms the young men are said to have been apprentices in a saddle factory (*Eve. Sun*, Sept. 12, 1961). Certain it is that both were Privates in the Sharpshooters Company of Capt. Edward Aisquith in the 1st Rifle Battalion, Maryland Militia. On the day of the engagement the Company had been among those detachments that had volunteered to go forward beyond even the American advance elements in order to reconnoitre the enemy, concentrated in the vicinity of Gorsuch's farm. A rumor had passed down the line, "Remember, boys, General Ross rides a white horse today!" (In fact, Walter Lord tells us, it was a black horse.)

Tradition has it that the British commander had taken over the Shaw family home, not far from the debarkation area, and there spent the night of September 11. Tradition further has it that the next morning during his troops' advance the General tarried for refreshment at the farm of Robert Gorsuch, a sea captain. When he was asked submissively if he would also require supper to be prepared that evening, he snapped out, "No! I shall sup in Baltimore tonight or in hell!" (*Balto. American*, Aug. 30, 1897.)

Now, Captain Aisquith's Company had seen service at the battle of Bladensburg. There young McComas had had a plume shot out of his hat. He had also caught a glimpse of Maj. Gen. Robert Ross; and when he returned home to Baltimore after the fray, he assured his family that if ever he were to spot the General again, he would know him. When the Company was later ordered to duty as part of the City Brigade, the lad announced breezily to his family, "Here goes for a golden epaulette or a wooden leg!"

Both Wells and McComas had asserted that, if need really be, they would sell their lives dearly. When the order eventually came for Aisquith's Company to fall back on the American lines, both boys refused to do so. Wells family tradition declares that the youths had concealed themselves in a clump of bushes near a spring and that the British officer had made an easy target when he chanced to approach the same spring for a drink. The tradition of both families also declares that each rifleman took shelter behind separate trees and that each fired almost simultaneously.

British accounts state that General Ross, somewhat to the rear of his advance elements, having heard unexpectedly heavy fire from that quarter, rode forward to see what was occurring. Soon he and his entourage spotted three [*sic*] American soldiers at not a great distance. One was in a tree, picking pears. One was sporting a high hat of the type worn by civilians. When the Americans detected the invaders, all three riflemen fired together. The General was hit by both buckshot and ball cartridges, and died within a few minutes. A Colonel McNamara by his side had three holes in his coat. \* One of their horses took no less than five buckshot in its chest. Promptly the British skirmish line loosed several volleys and killed all three Americans around the tree where they had first been encountered.

Daniel Wells was slain by a shot in the back of the head. Harry McComas had apparently been trying to reload his weapon: when his body was found, the ramrod was about half-way down the barrel. One of our Society's past presidents, William Henry Pitcher, a collateral descendant of McComas, recalls his father telling him that a kinsman of theirs happened to be present when the corpse of one of the boys was returned to his residence. The youth was tall, and the wagon not a deep one. As it moved slowly through the streets, the boy's legs dangled over the end as though he were himself still walking back home.

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\*Walter Lord says (p. 262) the General "was riding all alone . . . ."

## SOURCES

"Clifton W. Tayleur," *Sun*, May 2, 1891, Supplement (p. 2)

Mrs. Mary Dutton, recollections, *Sun*, Sept. 12, 1895. Nine years old at the time of North Point, she recalls it was widely assumed that Wells and McComas had slain General Ross

William M. Marine, *The British Invasion of Maryland, 1812-1815*, ed. Louis H. Dielman (Baltimore, 1913), pp. 190-93

Frederic Arnold Kummer, "Young Glory," *Sun*, Sept. 8, 1935. Fiction

Irene White, "The Shaw House," typescript, 3 pp. (n.p., n.d.), in possession of Ben R. Womer for the Dundalk-Patapsco Neck Historical Society

Walter Lord, *The Dawn's Early Light* (New York [1972])

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### WHO KILLED ROBERT ROSS? OR WELLS AND McCOMAS: PRO AND CON

CON: Baltimore *American*, Sept. 12, 1901 (p. 13)

An interview with Henry A. Wilson of "Oakenshaw," Merryman's Avenue. In August, 1846, while touring in Ireland near the Giant's Causeway he chanced to encounter a former ADC (unnamed) to General Ross who assured him that the General had been felled by one musket ball and three buckshot. The corpse did not exhibit the regularly shaped wound that would have been inflicted by a rifle (which the American sharpshooters employed). Wilson, moreover, has heard from his uncles, Thomas and William Wilson, who had served at North Point in Capt. A[aron]R. Levering's "Independent Blues," that the Captain had ordered his men to drop three buckshot down their barrels over the musket ball. Wilson feels that General Ross was assuredly killed by regular platoon fire.

CON: Baltimore *Sun*, March 11, 1902 (p. 6)

A summary of Dr. Albert K. Hadel's speech of the night before at the Maryland Historical Society on the topic, "Who Killed General Ross?" The physician is currently Registrar of the 1812 Society (Md.) and its future president.

It was not the sharpshooters who nailed Ross but unknown members of Captain Howard's company, the "Mechanical Volunteers." Major Heath had ordered both Captains Howard and Levering to have their companies deliver a volley, and Howard's men got theirs off first by a few seconds. It was this volley that hit Ross and some of the British officers in his company. Placed on a commandeered cart, he was carried away from the exposed area, but died about fifteen minutes later while lying sheltered under a tree, still some six miles distant from the gunboats at the debarkation point..

**CON:** Unidentified news clipping, Baltimore, *post* March 11, 1902. In Albert K. Hadel's 1812 Society scrap-book, MS #762, Maryland Historical Society.

An interview with William M. Marine, Historian of the 1812 Society (Md.). He agrees with the conclusions of Dr. Hadel, but adds in a testy tone that he has already said so, considerably in advance of that physician's pronouncement, in the manuscript of his book *The British Invasion of Maryland* . . . (Baltimore, 1913; preface dated 1899). He has been researching this work for more than a decade, and now at the conclusion of his labors is having trouble getting it published!

One of Ross' aides, Colonel Taylor, has remarked in England in later years<sup>1</sup> that Ross was killed by a musket volley. Taylor was a lieutenant at the time. Marine has presented the *pros* and *cons* in his MS, and left the decision up to the reader. He is persuaded that it was a musket volley by unidentified soldiers that killed the General — definitely not Wells and McComas.

**PRO:** Letter to the editor, *Sun*, March 13, 1902 (p. 5)

George A. Wolf of Baltimore states that some years ago the Baptists were having a national convention here, the president whereof was Dr. Spencer Cone, the prominent preacher. Cone on this occasion stated that Wells and McComas were members of his own Company, the "Invincible Rifles" [no such unit listed in Nathaniel Hickman's *Citizen Soldiers* . . .], and that they asked his permission to attempt to hit Ross, who was visible not far off on a knoll with several other men. Cone gave permission. The boys advanced and stationed themselves behind a tree, from which vantage they shot the General.

**CON:** *Sun*, March 15, 1902 (p. 10)

Rebuttal of Cone, by Dr. Hadel. Cone was not the Captain of the company but its 3rd Lieutenant<sup>2</sup>, whose position would normally be at the rear of the troops and not forward. Judge Legrande, orator on the occasion of the cornerstone laying of the Wells & McComas obelisk in 1858, made no claim that they had killed Ross, stating that the evidence was too conflicting.<sup>3</sup> Nor does the inscription on the obelisk so state.

Incidentally, Ross' demise was not even known to the Americans until the morning of September 14, when the information was acquired from newly captured prisoners.

Wolf's statement appears to be news to Dr. Hadel, but he nevertheless affirms that it is incorrect.

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor is not mentioned in Marine's published book, tho' he may be the unnamed aide of Ross encountered by Henry A. Wilson (see above). Wilson's anecdote is cited in Marine's book but is placed in England (Marine, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-93).

**CON:** Frederick M. Colston, "The Battle of North Point," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, II (1907), 114-15

Supports Henry A. Wilson's statement, in first **Con** above, that Ross was slain by a skirmish-line discharge and not by sharpshooters. Upon examination of the bodies of the three American soldiers, it was found that their weapons were loaded with both buckshot and ball.

**PRO:** Walter Lord, *The Dawn's Early Light* (1972), p. 363

"... most British sources — including [Admiral] Cochrane's letter of 9/17 to [Viscount] Melville — say that the General was indeed killed by a rifle."

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<sup>2</sup>Correct, according to the listing in Nathaniel Hickman, *op. cit.*, who carries him as Spencer A. Cone, 3rd Lt., Aisquith's "Sharp Shooters."

<sup>3</sup>Correct. Judge John Carroll LeGrand [*sic*], stating that he himself was not even born at the time of the battle and hence is no expert, cites General Howard's speech of 1839 at the cornerstone laying at North Point to the effect that Ross was at least slain honorably and not from an unassailable vantage point. (*Sun*, Sept. 14, 1858, p. 1, giving a lengthy account of the well-attended proceedings and printing the Judge's remarks in full.)

General Howard's own speech in 1839 at North Point names no names, but states that the ridiculous story of one of the marksmen being up a tree is absurd. He specifies only that Maj. Richard K. Heath had been ordered forward with a detachment, in order to reconnoitre.

## HALT #8 — THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER FLAG HOUSE

*Pratt at Albemarle Streets,  
Baltimore*

In late June, 1813, the commander of the troops garrisoning Fort McHenry, Maj. George Armistead, reported to his superior, Maj. Gen. Smith, in part as follows:

We, Sir, are ready at Fort McHenry to defend Baltimore against invading by the enemy. That is to say, we are ready except that we have no suitable ensign to display over the Star Fort, and it is my desire to have a flag so large that the British will have no difficulty in seeing it from a distance.

Shortly thereafter Commodore Barney and Brig. Gen. Stricker paid a visit to the owner of the little dwelling beside which we now stand. They had decided upon her, her daughter recalled, "to make this star-spangled banner, being an exceedingly patriotic woman."

The dwelling was built about 1793. From 1807 until her death it was the home of Mrs. Mary Young Pickersgill (1776-1857), the widow of John Pickersgill, a onetime British claims agent in London. His widow was already a pioneer in charitable work for the indigent: her *other* monument is the Aged Woman's and Aged Men's Home, a foundation organized in 1802 and today situate at its quarters of "Pickersgill" on Chestnut Avenue, Towson.

Mary's mother, Mrs. Rebecca Young, also widowed, lived with her here. As far back as the year of Mary's birth — and how patriotic a birth year, that! — Mrs. Young had had experience as a flag maker. She it was who was requested by General Washington to manufacture the ensign subsequently known as the "Grand Union" and first flown at Cambridge, Massachusetts, in January, 1776. So our Baltimore seamstress had learned her trade under the venerable apprentice system.

For some six weeks Mrs. Pickersgill, daughter Caroline, and niece Eliza Young toiled over the job. Most of it, presumably, was accomplished in the second-floor front room, where the light was best. But part of it was performed on the floor of the malt house in Brown's Brewery nearby, for the flag was stretched there. Caroline Pickersgill recalls that "my mother worked many nights until twelve o'clock to complete it in a given time."

The result was an item thirty feet hoist (height) by forty-two feet fly (breadth) "of first quality Bunting," as is stipulated in Mary's receipt, which is still in existence. The creation was then, and remains today, the largest American garrison flag ever flown. For her labor Mrs. Pickersgill charged the not inconsiderable sum of \$405.90. It was delivered to Fort McHenry in the latter part of August, 1813, as a routine business transaction — thirteen months in advance of immortality.

Since 1907 this unique example of Americana has been in possession of the Federal Government's Smithsonian Institution over at Washington. Since 1964 it has rippled in air-caressed majesty as a principal exhibit in the Smithsonian's new Museum of History and Technology.

In 1953 the Flag House inaugurated its own museum of the War of 1812 period, which welcomes the contribution of authentic relics dating from the 1790-1820 era.

On Flag Day, 1956, a ten-stanza poem, "The Ballad of the Widow's Flag (1814)," by Mrs. Juliet B. Ballard of Virginia Beach, Virginia, was chosen as the "house poem" of the Flag House. No comparisons at all are called for between this entirely competent effusion and the famous lyrics which, just thirteen months after its fabrication, were inspired by Mary Pickersgill's handiwork.

#### **SOURCE**

Mary-Paulding Martin, *The Flag House Story* (Baltimore [1971]). Pamphlet, illus.

## HALT #9 — U.S. FRIGATE *CONSTELLATION*

*'Constellation' Dock,  
Inner Harbor, Baltimore*

Not nearly enough Marylanders understand that they own one of the most historic sailing ships in the world, certainly the most legend-laden vessel of the American Navy. Since 1955 she has been the property of the Flag House Association, Inc., and the struggle to acquire her is a saga in itself (which I will not go into at this point).

Her construction was authorized in 1794 by President Washington, along with five other ships including *Constitution* ("Old Ironsides," of which about 5% of the original materials remains). Washington dubbed this Baltimorean *Constellation* in honor of the fifteen stars in the new flag. Designed and built by David Stodder for thirty-eight guns, she was built in his shipyard on the west bank of Harris Creek, somewhat south of the present Patterson Park, in the vicinity of what is now the foot of Boston Street and Kenwood Avenue. A vestige of Harris Creek lingers today as the boat lake at Patterson Park. The vessel slid down the ways in September, 1797, to the lonely sound of a muffled drum.

*Constellation* lost very little time in acquiring renown. You may consult the details of her record in the unusually informative leaflet (1967) available aboard her, and you may dial her direct at her own 'phone number 539-1797. To whet your appetite, here are just a few of those details:

During 1798-1800 the United States Navy *Regulations* were composed aboard her by her skipper, Captain Thomas Truxtun.

In February, 1799, she defeated the French frigate *L'Insurgente* in the Caribbean, to achieve America's first important victory over an enemy man-o'-war on the high seas.

At the outbreak of the War of 1812 *Constellation* was dispatched to the Hampton Roads and moored at Gosport, the Navy Yard opposite Norfolk town. There a considerable British fleet contrived to keep her bottled up throughout the conflict. But the fact of her presence, aside from pinning down enemy vessels, protected the harbor of Norfolk and the American fortification on Craney Island. Her armed boats twice detected and repulsed British fleet forays. On a third occasion her guns helped sink three British fleet boats assisting a 700-man invasion force, of which ninety became casualties and forty-three prisoners of war.

In 1840 this "Yankee race horse," as she was labelled because of her speed, because the first American man-o'-war to penetrate the inland waters of Imperial China.

She is the only major American warship still in existence which saw action during the Civil War — and she saw plenty.

For the period 1893-1939 she was the flagship of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet, the only sailing vessel in our history to serve as such and the only ship in any category to serve as such that long.

In 1914 she came down from her berth at Newport, Rhode Island, to grace the Star-Spangled Banner Centennial celebrations here.

She has the longest record of total service of any American ship of war.

And, ladies and gentlemen, in glaring contrast to the *Constitution*, thirty-three and one-third percent of her is *still here!*

Long may she ride the waves!

#### SOURCES

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Edward K. Eckert, "William Jones: Mr. Madison's Secretary of the Navy," *Penna. Mag. of Hist. & Biog.*, XCVI (April 1972), 167-82

Earl Arnett, "Constellation Proudly Displays New Rigging in Baltimore Harbor," *Sun*, Aug. 30, 1972 (B-1)

Isaac Rehert, "First Skipper of Constellation, Capt. Truxtun, a Stormy Figure," *Sun*, Aug. 1, 1974 (B-1). Illus., Stanislav Rembski portrait of Truxtun

## HALT #10 — GEORGE ARMISTEAD MONUMENT

## HALT #11 — SAMUEL SMITH MONUMENT

*Federal Hill, Baltimore*

To take the lower-ranking of these Old Defenders first, let us consider Maj. George Armistead (1780-1818), a career soldier from New Market, Virginia, married to a Baltimore girl, Louisa Hughes, and buried in Old Saint Paul's cemetery.

There are two streets, two monuments, and a housing project commemorating the Major because of his redoubtable conduct as commander of the motley, thousand-man garrison of Fort McHenry during the naval bombardment of Tuesday-Wednesday, September 13-14 (1814). At the time, he was promptly brevetted Lieutenant Colonel; and Baltimoreans lost little occasion in honoring him with a salver, goblets, and a silver bowl in the shape of a bomb. His death shortly after his thirty-eighth birthday occasioned one of the most elaborate funeral ceremonies the City had witnessed. There was even an artillery detachment firing Minute guns from this hill.

The white-marble monument you are now looking at, rising to a height of fourteen feet, had a predecessor "which" — as the inscription on the rear face informs us — "stood in the Calvert Street Spring grounds, until it became defaced and destroyed by time during a period of thirty-five years." The Mayor and City Council had erected that monument in 1827-1828 at a site now occupied by Mercy Hospital, and the final disintegration occurred in the midst of the Civil War in 1863. Its successor was likewise erected by the City, September 12, 1882, but this time installed on Eutaw Place. There was an oration, several dozen dignitaries, a two-hundred man chorus, and two thousand five hundred other people. Residents of the area, however, soon complained that the shaft was disproportionately low in comparison with their roof tops; so it was transferred here the same year. On the front base is the name of the sculptor, G. Metzger. He was present at the Eutaw Place unveiling, but I have been unable to learn anything else about him.

Here the memorial has stood with relative immunity until about 1966. At that time horrid little boys wrought what the British fleet had failed to do: lay low Maj. Armistead. (But not his effigy; that monument stands at Fort McHenry.) Four successive newspaper photographs of this sculpture — the most striking by the late A. Aubrey Bodine in 1953 — reveal that the crown of the monument originally represented a flaming shell. The decorations vandalized from each corner were cannon barrels pointing heavenward.

Obtaining copies of these photos, your speaker strode forward in agitation and supplication to the chief of the city's Department of Recreation and Parks, Douglas Tawney, and handed them to him. In due course Mr. Tawney wheedled from the Board of Estimates and City Council (with the firm support of Mayor William D. Schaefer, a War of 1812 buff) the sizable sum — some nine thousand dollars — necessary to effect restoration. The third week in February, 1974, almost eight years after the vandalism, Maj. Armistead's memorial rose again in unblemished dignity. It was officially welcomed — on a sopping, windy first day of spring (March 21)—by a group consisting of Mayor Schaefer and Parks Chief Tawney for the City and, for your Society, President-General Gordon M. F. Stick, Maryland Society President Wilson K. Barnes, Vice-President Walter Herman, and humble servant and his helpmeet.

Long may it resist any future assaults!

We turn now to one of the Monumental City's best-known monuments, that of Maj. Armistead's commanding officer, Maj. Gen. Samuel Smith. This bronze creation was paid for out of surplus funds remaining to the Star-Spangled Banner Centennial Commission; and the unveiling took place on Independence Day, 1918. The site was the southern extremity of Wyman Park overlooking North Charles Street at Twenty-Ninth. The architect was W. Gordon Brecher and the sculptor that prominent Baltimorean Hans Schuler.

Why such an uptown site was chosen is a mystery to me. In any event in 1953 wiser heads prevailed, and the General was removed to a far more appropriate location down at the Inner Harbor — whence he could glare out balefully at the sterns of the retreating British fleet — and Samuel Smith Park came into being. In 1971 its eponym was temporarily removed here to Federal Hill, but will be returned to the park location when the Inner Harbor urban-renewal project is completed.

This soldier has been painted as well as sculpted. There are portraits of him by Rembrandt Peale at the Peale Museum, here, and by Gilbert Stuart at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington.

Toward the close of his last term as Mayor of Baltimore — perhaps during the Cavalcade of 1967 — I stood next to Theodore R. McKeldin as he sonorously ticked off the accomplishments at the national level of General Smith. "And then," His Honor wound up in ringing peroration, barely concealing a grin, "he *climaxed* his career by becoming *Mayor of Baltimore!*" Everybody tittered. Well, one of the subject's earnest biographers, a young Midwestern historian who knew nothing of this episode, was reaching the same conclusion at the same time. F. A. Cassell writes:

Baltimore was the center of Samuel Smith's life. Aside from his trip to Europe [1772-1774] as a young man, he never traveled farther from the city than to Philadelphia or Washington. Near the end of his life, after his career in national office, he was elected mayor of Baltimore. In a sense, this step might appear strange, an anti-climax; in fact, becoming mayor was the capstone of a public and private career intimately interdependent with Baltimore.

## SOURCES

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*Eve. Sun*, July 21, 1960. Illus.

*Eve. Sun*, Mar. 23, 1974 (p. 10). Illus.

### SMITH

Cassell, *Merchant Congressman in the Young Republic . . .*, *op. cit.*, p. 7

## HALT #12 — BATTLE MONUMENT

### *Calvert at Fayette Streets, Baltimore*

This, our last Halt on the Cavalcade, is the first to touch directly on the Society of the War of 1812 in the State of Maryland. Some time during the forenoon of Wednesday, September 14 (1814) — as the British vessels dwindled on the horizon of the Bay — men from the Fort McHenry garrison and the gunners from Covington's and Webster's (or Six-Gun) batteries behind the fort founded an association to memorialize their share in the defense of Baltimore. This rendezvous marked the spontaneous and informal origin of our Society. In due course these and veterans from the other defense points ringing the City contributed money to buy the land on which Battle Monument stands, helped raise more money to pay for its construction, and saw to it that the shaft carried the names of certain of the more noteworthy officers and men who had perished during what novelist Neil Swanson has labelled that "perilous fight." (Over the years, not surprisingly, local newspapers would print occasional letters to the Editor expostulating that such-and-such a name had been callously ignored.)

Cornerstone laid September 12, 1815; surmounting figure emplaced September 12, 1822; project completed 1825. Fifty-two feet high, of finest Carrara marble shipped direct to Baltimore from Livorno (Leghorn). The fasces constituting the shaft are thirty-nine feet high, to commemorate the inauguration of the project in the thirty-ninth year of American independence.

Battle Monument is the joint creation of the Parisian emigre Maximilian Godefroy, who submitted no less than three designs without charge, and the Florentine sculptor Antonio Capellano, who, before arriving in America in search of commissions, had been household sculptor for Prince Joseph Bonaparte and later chief sculptor to the court of Spain. His marble bust of George Washington stands in the Peale Museum.

The symbolic figure of Lady Baltimore atop the shaft rests her left hand on a ship's rudder, the sign of navigation, and raises a laurel wreath of victory aloft in her right. At her feet repose the National Eagle and a bomb, symbolizing the attack on Fort McHenry. The figure, the eagles, and the relief decoration were all executed by Capellano, who resided in Baltimore some six years before returning home to Italy. That this uniquely regional American structure should be the product of a Frenchman and an Italian is only another example of the workings of the so-called "melting pot."

This massive creation, together with Robert Mill's column to the Father of His Country on Mount Vernon Place — begun the same year but not completed till 1828 — are the chief reasons our Maryland metropolis was presently to be dubbed "The Monumental City." Of all the statuary in this metropolis Battle Monument is the most distinctive. Since 1827 it has served as the municipal seal.

The cornerstone was laid jointly by Mayor Edward Johnson (who had held that post throughout the war), Generals Smith and Stricker, and Lt. Col. George Armistead on the first anniversary of the North Point phase of the Battle of Baltimore. With General Smith as marshal of the proceedings, there was a grand parade and celebration and an oration by James Kemp, Episcopal Bishop of Maryland.

Subscriptions for the project had at first been restricted to five dollars apiece, in order to stimulate area-wide giving. When the returns proved insufficient, the limitation was removed. Donations arrived from Virginia and Pennsylvania as well as Maryland, but not a penny of municipal funds was used; here, truly, was a community endeavor. The subscription book listing all the donors' names was placed within the cornerstone and a duplicate deposited in the City Library at City Hall (since dissolved). The four doors are false, but are intended to suggest that the named slain are interred within.

Ever since that long-ago time — think of it! *every year* — your Society has memorialized what came to be known as Defenders' Day by a procession either beginning or concluding at Battle Monument. In 1915 the centenary of the cornerstone laying was commemorated by the emplacement of the handsome bronze tablet on the south base, providing some of the history of this landmark.

At least by the early Nineteen Twenties the personal battle of Battle Monument began against the internal-combustion engine. In 1923 came the initial proposal to move it elsewhere in the City so that the gasoline buggy might enjoy untrammelled passage. Later arose the suggestion that the whole pile really ought to be hefted over to the west corner to get it out of the way of traffic. Fortunately none of these notions prevailed. It was not long, however, before the area immediately around the monument began to be nibbled at by City officials' cars as a reserved-space parking lot.

In 1938 a great windstorm blew off Lady Baltimore's upraised arm, together with the laurel wreath.

In 1960 the Mayor's Downtown Landscaping Commission abolished the unsightly car-park area and in due course produced the handsome terrace we now see. (*Eve. Sun*, Sept. 6, 1960.) At the same time, nevertheless, the Administration crumbled before political pressure and installed a newspaper kiosk on the south abutment. Under President Robert E. Michel your Society fought doggedly against this depredation, but to no avail. On April 19, 1960, the *Sun* printed a letter to the Editor from the present speaker icily protesting the presence of "this excruciating eyesore, this obnoxious excrescence, this self-evident abomination." On December 10, 1970, the same paper printed a second letter from the same source rejoicing in the kiosk's removal.

## SOURCES

- Albert K. Hadel, M.D., in *Baltimore American*, July 25, 1895  
"Capellano's Baltimore," *American*, Sept. 12, 1898 (p. 6), with extensive  
extracts from the paper's issues of 1822  
*American*, Sept. 7, 1902 (p. 24), with list of contents of cornerstone. Illus.  
*Baltimore Municipal Journal*, Aug. 11, 1922. Illus.  
*Sunday American*, Sept. 10, 1925; extensive, including data on Capellano  
*Sun*, Oct. 17, 1954, with sequential photographs and engravings  
Wilbur H. Hunter, Jr., in *Women's Civic League News* (Flower Mart, 1964).  
Illus.  
John Dorsey in *Sun*, July 19, 1964. Color illus.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES:  
MARYLAND'S "DEFENDERS' DAY"

- 1814 Forenoon, this Wednesday, the garrison of Fort McHenry and the  
Sept. 14 artillerists of Covington's and Webster's (or Six-Gun) batteries be-  
hind the Fort assemble to rejoice over their repulse of the British  
landing party at the cove the night before . . . .  
Origin of the future Society of the War of 1812 in the State of  
Maryland. Newspaper notices of Veteran assemblies yearly from  
1815 to 1840, inclusive, are quoted.  
Albert K. Hadel, M.D., Registrar, Md.  
Society, in Baltimore *American*, July 25, 1895
- 1842 Founding of the "Association of the Defenders of Baltimore in  
May 1814." Dr. Hadel has continuous records of the 1812 Society (Md.)  
14 under its various titles, from 1841 to 1895, inclusive.  
*Ibid.* Cf. also the A. K. Hadel "Scrap  
Book," 1891-1901, MS #762 in Maryland Historical Society
- 1843 The Association adopts a constitution.
- 1870 Group photograph, this year, of twelve unnamed Defenders in Balti-  
more *Sun*, Sept. 12, 1938.
- 1870 Group photographs, these years, by Bachrach Brothers, of thirty and  
1878 thirteen unnamed Defenders, respectively, appear in Photogravure  
Sect., *Sunday Sun*, Apr. 4, 1920.
- 1880 *Harper's Weekly*, New York City, this date carries clear, individual  
Sept. 25 engravings of seven named Defenders. (James C. Morford, see  
below, not included.)
- 1881 Bachrach photograph, this date, of twelve Defenders at Druid Hill  
Sept. 12 Park, Baltimore. They are named, including J. C. Morford, in the  
photo as reproduced in the *Eve. Sun*, Sept. 11, 1936. Same photo  
much better reproduced in Harry L. McCulloh's article, "I Re-  
member . . . The Last of the Old Defenders," *Sunday Sun*, Sept. 6,  
1959.
- 1887 Baltimore hotelier Robert Rennert stages his last banquet for the Old  
Sept. 12 Defenders. (Next year only two would remain, both too enfeebled to  
attend such a function.)
- 1888 By necessity, descendants assume reins of the Veteran organization,  
now styled "Association of the Descendants of the Defenders of  
Baltimore in the War of 1812."

- Dec. 17 Death of the last Old Defender, and the last Veteran president of the 1812 Society (Md.), James Chamberlain Morford.  
 Born at Long Green, Baltimore County; interred in family burying ground there. At age 19 he had served at North Point as quartermaster in the Company of his kinsman, Capt. Harry Fowler [46th Regt.].  
 For many years Mr. and Mrs. Morford were members of the High Street Baptist Church, Baltimore. Their pastor, Rev. O. F. Gregory, recalls: "He was the sole survivor at the last dinner given to the Old Defenders, and after retiring from the dinner took the street cars by himself and went to Patterson Park, where a celebration was in progress, was introduced to the audience and made a few remarks."  
 O. F. Gregory, letter to the Editor, *Sun*, Sept. 12, 1913 (p. 6)
- 1893 Oct. 25 "Association of the Descendants . . ." incorporated under title, Society of the War of 1812 in the State of Maryland.
- 1894 April 12 At Philadelphia the Pennsylvania, Maryland, and recently formed associations in Connecticut and Massachusetts organize the General Society of the War of 1812.
- 1895 July 23 Sept. 4 Nov. 17 Appleton Morgan, a vice-president of the Pennsylvania Society, contributes lengthy letters to the Baltimore *American*, these dates, demolishing Pennsylvania's and New York's claims to chronological precedence over the Maryland Society.
- 1908 Heretofore a municipal holiday, Defenders' Day is proclaimed a State-wide commemoration by the General Assembly. (Chap. 181, Public General Laws of Maryland, 1908.)
- 1939 Aug. 7 President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs bill providing for national participation in Defenders' Day. Bill introduced into the Senate of U.S. by George L. Radcliffe (Dem., Md.) and into the House by Lansdale G. Sasser (Dem., Md.).
- 1952 Sept. 12 A clear route-map of the Cavalcade, with photographs of six of the Halts, appears this date in the *Eve. Sun*.
- 1960 Sept. 14 Post Office Department first-day issue at Baltimore of the Francis Scott Key postage stamp (4 cents), in "American Credo" series.
- 1969 Sept. 7 Special Defenders' Day issue appears in "Maryland Living," magazine section of the Baltimore *News-American*, with photographs of Key's manuscript and of the first sheet music, plus feature articles by two of the editors (and Md. Society members), Neil H. Swanson and Walter F. Herman.