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BALTIMORE AND ITS DEFENSES, PAST AND PRESENT.

March
1776

By Gen. W. P. Craighill.

From the Maryland Historical Magazine,

Page 28- 29. Vol. 1.

The next recorded step in the growth of the defences of Baltimore was twenty years later, in March, 1776, when much alarm was caused by the appearance of the British ship Otter. It became necessary then to prepare for a defence on the water-side, as the enemy was expected from that direction; whereas none such was needed against the Indians. A ship, called the Defence, which was nearly completed in the harbor at that time, was hastily prepared for service. While the Otter did not tarry long, the scare hastened the construction of certain defences which had been ordered by the Provincial authorities. A boom was put in position between the Lazaretto and Whetstone Point or Neck, the latter being the present site of Fort McHenry. Earthen batteries were built and guns mounted at those points. A chain was also stretched across the mouth of the harbor supported by twenty-one small sunken vessels. This last obstruction was soon removed as it impeded navigation too much. Beacon stations were also prepared on the shores of the river and Bay, to assist by lights at night and other signals by day in giving timely notice of the approach of an enemy.

BALTIMORE AND ITS DEFENCES, PAST AND PRESENT.

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Page 29. Vol. 1.

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In 1794 the battery on Whetstone Point was repaired and the present enclosed bastion fort was built. The whole property was ceded to the United States and received its present name after James McHenry, who had been Secretary to Genl. Washington during the war of the Revolution and became Secretary of War in 1798.

BALTIMORE AND ITS DEFENCES, PAST AND PRESENT. Sept 12
1814?

By Gen. W. P. Craighill.

From the Maryland Historical Magazine,

Page 31. Vol. 1.

It is interesting here to recall the fact that the inspiration of the "Star Spangled Banner" came to Key at a point about midway between Fort McHenry and the site of Fort Carroll, when he was for a short time detained by the British Admiral one of his ships during the attack on Fort McHenry.

In September, 1814, the crisis came. Work on the defences had been conducted with skill and vigor, and good progress had been made. Besides Fort McHenry and its water battery on Whetstone Point, there were Fort Covington and the City (or Babcock) battery on the Patapsco side. Also at the end of Light street near the present Fort Avenue there was an unfinished redoubt for seven guns. There was also a battery of four guns at Lazaretto Point, opposite Fort McHenry. Vessels were sunk between these two points and also in the river towards the Anne Arundel shore. Lines of entrenchments were also constructed on Loudenslager's Hill in and near what is now known as Patterson Park. The batteries and lines are all shown on the map made by Col. Kearney of the United States Engineers.

To the details of the engagement called the Battle of North Point and the attack on Fort McHenry, I shall return later, when commenting on some of the features of a proper defence of any locality with special application to Baltimore and its environs.

BALTIMORE AND ITS DEFENCES, PAST AND PRESENT,

[31. Oct
1873]

By Gen. W. P. Craighill.

From the Maryland Historical Magazine,

Pages 35, 36, 37. Vol. 1.

At the time of the trouble over the *Virginus* in Cuban waters, when war with Spain seemed inevitable, and we had no navy worth speaking of, and our coast was almost defenceless, all that could be done in the harbor of Baltimore, as money for the purpose was very scarce, was to mount on fifteen-inch smooth-bore gun at Fort Carroll and to renovate the old water battery at McHenry. Arrangements were made to sink hulks, &c., in the channel, to prevent the ingress of Spanish ships, a very sure way also to stop commerce in ships of heavy draught. A little later the new earthen battery along the sea wall at Fort McHenry was built under my direction. It is still in good condition but no guns have yet been mounted in it.

Sch 2, 1814

BALTIMORE AND ITS DEFENCES, PAST AND PRESENT,

By Gen. W. P. Craighill.

From the Maryland Historical Magazine,

Pages 36--37. Vol. 1.

I return now for a few moments to the attack on Baltimore in 1814, to draw special attention to a matter which is deemed important enough to be thus noticed. The engagement near North Point, between the British and American forces, took place September 12th 1814, a day which should be forever memorable, but I will not here allude to its details. On the morning of the next day (the 13th), the British opened fire on Fort McHenry about sunrise from a distance of about two miles. The bombardment was kept up but with no great effect. About midnight it was found that a fleet of small boats had slipped past Fort McHenry in the darkness and that a force of about twelve hundred men, provided with scaling ladders and other appliances, was about to disembark, with the expectation of taking Fort McHenry in the rear. This attempt was brought to naught by the fire of the guns in Fort Covington and the batteries near it.

While the bombardment at Fort McHenry was in progress the American forces withdrew from their first position and took up another at and near Loudenslager's Hill. The British followed. The boat attack, which was about midnight of the 13th, had failed. The British forces on the North Point side withdrew about two or three hours later, but the bombardment of Fort McHenry continued some time longer in order to cover the retreat of the boat party and to draw attention from the retrograde movement of the forces on the other side.

The point to which I/^{wish}now call special attention is the importance of not omitting, in the plans for the defence of any important position, to prepare and maintain an interior line to play just such a part as was taken by Fort Covington and the adjacent batteries in the attack

on Baltimore in 1814. At that time Fort McHenry and Lazaretto Point formed the outer line of defence against the Naval attack, the inner being at Fort Covington and the adjacent batteries. At this day the existing water battery at Fort McHenry should be maintained in the best condition, armed with rapid fire and rifled guns, as an inner line, to repel small vessels which might in the night or in the smoke of battle pass the outer lines of North Point and Carroll.