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Sept 13, 1814

From Andrews' Tercentenary History of Maryland,

Vol. 1. Pages 728- 730.

While the transports of the British fleet were at anchor off North Point, debarking the troops for the land attack on Baltimore, several frigates, with ^{the} bomb-vessels Meteor, Aetna, Terror, Volcano and Devastation, and the rocket-ship Erebus, proceeded up the Patapsco and came to anchor off Fort McHenry. On Tuesday morning, the 13th of September, at daylight, the bombardment commenced upon and was returned by Fort McHenry and the water batteries on both sides of the entrance. As the vessels of the enemy proved to be out of range of the guns of the fort, their fire was discontinued until 3 P. M., when four of the bombvessels and the rocket ship stood in much nearer the fort. A brisk fire was poured on the attacking vessels, though no serious damage was done them, but boats were sent to tow the Erebus out of range.

In the middle of the night of the 13th, a division of twenty boats was detached up the Ferry Branch. Rain fell in torrents and the night was extremely dark, so that eleven of the boats pulled by mistake directly for the harbor, but the lights of the city made the enemy aware of his mistake and enabled him to return in safety to the ships. The remaining nine boats, under the command of Captain Charles Napier, passed up the Ferry Branch to a considerable distance above Fort McHenry and opened a heavy fire of rockets and shot upon the shore; but accomplished nothing further than to draw some troops down to the beach. While returning to the ships a rocket was fired from the boats, which had the effect of drawing on them a shower of round shot, grape and cannister from the fort and water batteries below. According to the British historian, James, "One of the boats was slightly struck and one man mortally wounded."

Finding that the entrance to the harbor was closed by a line of boats sunk in the channel, and by a heavy iron chain stretched from the

Lazaretto to the fort, and that the bombardment of the fort was ineffectual, the British squadron dropped down towards North Point to rejoin the other vessels.

In order to understand the scope of the preparations which had been made for the defense of Baltimore, in addition to the entrenchments and other works heretofore mentioned, it should be remarked that a series of batteries had been placed at various points of vantage, under the general command of Commodore Rogers, whose official report follows:--

In the general distribution of the forces employed in the defense of Baltimore, with the concurrence of the commanding general, I stationed Lieutenant Gamble, first of the Guerriere, with about one hundred seamen, in command of a seven-gun battery, on the line between the roads leading from Philadelphia and Sparrows Point.

Sailing Master De la Roche, of the Erie, and Midshipman Field, of the Guerriere, with twenty seamen, in command of a two-gun battery, fronting the road leading from Sparrows Point.

Sailing Master Ramage, of the Guerriere, with twenty seamen in command of a five-gun battery, to the right of the Sparrows Point road.

And Midshipman Salter, with twelve seamen, in command of a one-gun battery, a little to the right of Mr. Ramage.

Lieutenant Kuhn, with the detachment of marines belonging to the Guerriere, was posted in the entrenchment between the batteries occupied by Lieutenant Gamble and Sailing Master Ramage.

Lieutenant Newcomb, third of the Guerriere, with eighty seamen occupied Fort Covington, on the Ferry Branch, a little below Spring Gardens.

Sailing Master Webster, of the flotilla, with fifty seamen of the corps, occupied a six-gun battery on the Ferry Branch, known by the name of Babcock.

Lieutenant Frazier, of the flotilla, with forty-five seamen, occupied a three-gun battery near the Lazaretto.

And Lieutenant Rutter, the senior officer of the flotilla, in command of all the barges, which were moored at the entrance of the passage between the Lazaretto and Fort McHenry, in the left wing of the water battery, at which was stationed Sailing Master Rodman and fifty-four seamen of the flotilla. (End report)

Fort McHenry was under the immediate command of Lieutenant Colonel George Armistead, of the United State Artillery. His force consisted of one company of United States artillery, Captain Frederick Evans, and two company of sea fencibles under Captains N. S. Bunsbury and Wm. H. Addison. Of these three companies, thirty-five men were on the sick list and unfit for duty. General Smith also furnished him with Captain Joseph H. Nicholson's volunteer artillery company of "Baltimore Fencibles," and the "Washington Artillery" under Captain John Berry, and the "Baltimore Independent Artillerists," Captain Charles Pennington, all of Colonel David Harris' regiment of the Baltimore Artillery. A detachment of Commodore Barney's flotilla, under Lieutenant Redman, also volunteered their services. In addition, General Winder furnished Colonel Armistead with about six hundred infantry under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Steuart and Major Lane, consisting of detachments from the 12th, 14th, 36th and 38 Regiments of the United States Infantry---the total force in the fort amounting to about one thousand effective men.