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FORT  
McHENRY  
1812-1814

# A Call

to the people of America  
to preserve to posterity  
the birthplace of

The Star Spangled Banner

FORT McHENRY

which in 1814 stood firm  
against the invader and  
delivered the Republic  
from disaster

# The Star-Spangled Banner

O say can you see by the dawn's early light  
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last  
gleaming,  
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the  
perilous fight  
O'er the ramparts we watch'd, were so gallantly  
streaming?  
And the rocket's red glare, the bomb bursting in air,  
Gave proof through the night that our flag was  
still there,  
O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the  
brave?

On the shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep,  
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence  
reposes,  
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,  
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?  
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,  
In full glory reflected now shines in the stream,  
'Tis the star-spangled banner—O long may it wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the  
brave!

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore,  
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion  
A home and a country should leave us no more?  
Their blood has wash'd out their foul footsteps'  
pollution.  
No refuge could save the hireling and slave  
From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave,  
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the  
brave.

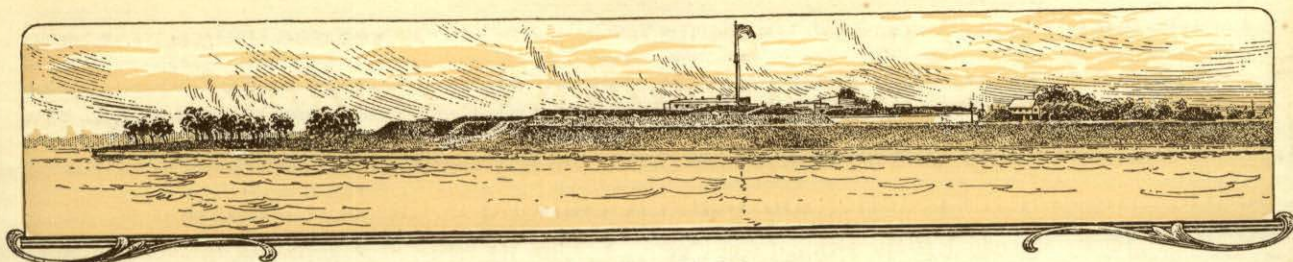
O thus be it ever when freemen shall stand  
Between their lov'd home and the war's deso-  
lation!  
Blest with vict'ry and peace may the heav'n-rescued  
land  
Praise the power that hath made and preserv'd  
us a nation!  
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,  
And this be our motto—"In God is our trust."  
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the  
brave.

—From the original manuscript  
of Francis Scott Key.



*From a London newspaper of June 17th, 1814.*

*It is understood that the grand expedition preparing at Bordeaux for America, under the gallant Lord Hill, is destined for the Chesapeake direct. Our little army in Canada will at the same time be directed to make a movement in the direction of the Susquehanna and both armies will, therefore, in all probability meet at Washington, Philadelphia or Baltimore. The seat of the American Government, but more particularly Baltimore, is to be the main object of attack. In the diplomatic circles it is also rumoured that our naval and military commanders on the American station have no power to conclude any armistice or suspension of arms. They carry with them certain terms, which will be offered to the American Government at the point of the bayonet. The terms are not made public; but there is reason to believe that America will be left in a much worse situation as a naval and commercial power than she was at the commencement of the war.*



## FORT McHENRY



THE first of September, 1814, saw the city of Washington burned, the handful of American warships driven to port by force of superior numbers, the Atlantic coast from Maine to Louisiana open to attack, and the fate of the Union in the balance. It was then that Fort McHenry stood firm against the invader, redeemed our eastern seaboard, and delivered the Federal Government from serious disaster or utter ruin.

Yet, great as were the services which Fort McHenry rendered in that fateful month and year, our once feeble Government, now become the most powerful in the world, has done but little to commemorate the spot which inspired "The Star-Spangled Banner,"—a spot which not only rescued the young Republic in an hour of grave difficulty, but brought the war with Britain to a close and ushered in a century of peace.

Apparently forgotten by the Government are the patriots who proved their claim to liberty by the performance of deeds; neglected are the grounds of Fort McHenry, sacred to the holiest traditions of the American people.

The question for the people of America to answer is: Shall these ramparts go to ruin, shall modern buildings encroach upon the soil of this sacred ground? Surely a patriotic people will not permit these battlements that once repelled a victorious invader to be thus dishonored. Let us restore them as they were, so that coming generations may see them with the eyes of those gallant first defenders, or else let us level them to the earth.

\* \* \* \* \*

IN the two and a half years of war preceding the defense of Fort McHenry, scores of the fastest sailing vessels afloat had set forth from beside its parapets. Eluding the frigates that once impressed American seamen, these light-armed clipper-ships pursued and captured enemy merchantmen by the hundred, prisoners by the thousands, and booty that ran into millions.

To the enemy, the waters of the Chesapeake had now become little better than a "nest for privateers and pirates." It was clear to them that the Chesapeake must be rid of these pests, the Federal capital captured, and Baltimore forced to pay for damage done and be made the point of a wedge to drive the North and South apart. Then Fredericksburg and Richmond could be threatened or captured on the south, Philadelphia and New York on the north.

The British were driving south from Canada and were at Plattsburg. They proposed to sweep down and make a junction with the nine thousand troops quartered on the fleet in the Chesapeake. Then by uniting their forces from Lake Champlain and the Chesapeake and having neutralized New England, they would coerce and subjugate America once again. To quote from an officer with the attacking British fleet:

*"A large proportion of the peninsular army would be transported to the other side of the Atlantic. The war would be carried on with vigor and no terms would be listened to except and as a British general should dictate in the republic senate house."* (G. R. Gleig-Narrative of Campaigns 1812-1821.)

Washington had fallen easily, a body of our regulars and militia had been defeated at Bladensburg, and the Chesapeake coast line was at the mercy of the "red-coats"—all but that section protected by the guns of Fort McHenry and troops gathered in the vicinity. To be pitted against our soldiers were Continental veterans fresh from their victories on the continent of Europe. In the Chesapeake were not only Wellington's Invincibles, but Nelson's marines distinguished at Trafalgar and the Battle of the Nile.

The invading fleet numbered some fifty sail—a large proportion of them clasped as men-of-war and frigates of the line. Against this armada with its troop transports, America could oppose nothing afloat.

The hope of the Middle Atlantic seaboard and perhaps the Union itself lay in the city of Baltimore, and the hope of Baltimore lay in the garrison and guns of Fort McHenry and such untrained troops as could be mustered for other land defenses.

No wonder that General Sir Robert Ross, who commanded the British troops, declared that he would "eat his supper in Baltimore" subsequent to his first day on land. Nothing seemed to him more certain even if, as he said, "it rains militia." Baltimore was picked to be his winter headquarters and a logical base for further operations north, south, or west.

**E**ARLY on Sunday morning, September 11th, the alarm was sounded through the streets of Baltimore. The British fleet had entered the Patapsco River. Three cannon boomed on the court-house plaza, summoning the militia to arms.

The defensive force and equipment of Fort McHenry were supplied largely by the citizens of the beleaguered port. Regardless of a blazing sun, men and women toiled with pick and shovel to throw up breastworks at every approach to the city and its chief reliance, Fort McHenry. Major-General Samuel Smith was in command of the militia and under him was Brigadier-General Stricker. Sailors, lacking ships to go to sea, were converted into land forces under the brilliant Commodore John Rodgers.

Before dawn had streaked the sky on the twelfth of September, the British were astir, and boat after boat carried men and arms to North Point, where now stands Fort Howard. General Ross, who had won his laurels in Holland, Egypt and the Peninsula, took command. At his side was Rear-Admiral Cockburn, who was hated for his plundering of defenceless villages. Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane, successor of Admiral Warren as commander-in-chief of the British forces in America, remained on his flag-ship and in person supervised the plans for the attack by water.

The American commanders sent forward outposts to engage the British, and scarcely were the latter assembled on shore, when General Ross fell. Tradition has it that two youths, perched in a tree, shot him when he passed within range of their rifles. As he was carried to the rear, he demanded that he be covered for fear the knowledge of his fall would reach his men and dismay them. Shortly after giving these directions, he lost consciousness and died in the arms of his aide, Sir Duncan M'Dougall.

\* \* \* \* \*

**T**HE encounter at North Point was that phase of the engagements which in their entirety might be called The Battle of Baltimore, the attack upon Fort McHenry being the crucial or decisive action. The first encounter, wholly on land, was on the afternoon of the twelfth. The British stormed the American earthworks, but were checked by a fire of shot, slugs, scrap-iron and nails. The lines of both armies swayed back and forth, with victory smiling first one side and then on the other. The British lost six hundred that day, the Americans one hundred and fifty.

At dusk a great storm broke and the fighting halted. At daybreak the rain ceased and the battle began anew, the British commander, Brooke, who had succeeded Ross, ordering his men forward to avenge the setbacks of the day before.

The fleet was all commotion, for an officer from Colonel Brooke's staff had urgently requested Admiral Cochrane to open the bombardment of Fort McHenry, which, if successful, would seal the fate of the city. Soon the ships weighed anchor, and sailing up the Patapsco, got into battle formation two and a half miles off the Fort. The decks were stripped, the bomb and rocket vessels opened their fire and sixteen ships hurled bombs, rockets, and solid shot into the ramparts. The garrison of the Fort—one thousand volunteers and regulars—was under Colonel George Armistead. Armistead unmasked his batteries and directed a brisk fire; but the range of his guns and mortars fell short of the ships. This was disheartening and his anxiety was not lessened when a twenty-four pounder in the southeast bastion was demolished by an exploding bomb, mortally wounding an officer and several of the cannoners.

Observing the confusion in the Fort, Admiral Cochrane signaled three of his bomb-vessels and they moved closer to the ramparts to hasten the victory. Armistead seized his opportunity and ordered a well-directed fire, and his wide-mouthed cannon wrought havoc on the decks of the three, one of them, the *Erebus*, being disabled.

In the shadow of the British fleet that day and night rode the American vessel *Minden*, flying a flag of truce and used by American agents in the exchange of prisoners. While the bombardment raged, none watched with more anxiety than Francis Scott Key. He had gone to the British fleet in the Potomac to seek the release of an old friend, Dr. William Beanes, a physician seized on charges of taking up arms against British stragglers. Key obtained his release, but on the eve of the operations, both were transferred to the *Minden*, which was detained under a guard of marines until the British plans should be carried out.

From the decks of the cartel ship, Key and his companions watched every belch of the cannon. Midnight came and twelve hundred and fifty men, equipped with scaling ladders, dropped from the fleet into barges with the intention of surprising from the rear the defenders of the Fort.

How the hearts of the patriots beat, as, helpless to give the alarm, they saw this strategy under way with every prospect of success! In attempting to effect a landing, however, the expeditionary force struck lights and these lights cost it a possible victory. The defenders promptly set fire to a hay-stack and, as its glow revealed the barges, Fort McHenry and the redoubts shook with the salvos of the guns. The six-gun battery under Sailing-Master Webster, which the British had planned to take by storm, was served that midnight coolly and quickly by a little group of cannoners, whose valor was sustained by the

thought of home and country and to whom Colonel Armistead afterward said he was "persuaded the country was much indebted for the final repulse of the enemy." Many of the landing party were killed and others wounded; two boats were sunk and the survivors made back to the fleet. The defenders lost four killed and twenty-four wounded. The master-stroke had been delivered and had failed; 1800 shells had been thrown into the fortifications, but no white flag flew from the great staff on the ramparts.

\* \* \* \* \*

SUNSET had cast a leaden gloom upon the spirits of the defenders, but dawn found their hopes high and the invader beaten off. That night, with the fate of the city and perhaps the existence of the Union hanging by a thread, Key paced the decks of the *Minden* and each shell that sped screaming from the ships was a stab at his heart, a challenge to all he held dear. When the first blush of morning tinged the sky, Key gazed toward the battlements and with straining eyes beheld the Stars and Stripes, scarred, but still defiantly floating. The cannonading had ceased; the troops, many of them wounded, had been conveyed to the ships and the fleet was setting its sails. The joy of Key was unrestrained, and from his soul there came "The Star-Spangled Banner." He put into words the exaltation which coursed through the veins of every loyal American, as the tidings of the triumph spread. Conceived in the midst of shrieking shell and of bursting bomb, the National Anthem of America was born in victory. The battle had been fought and freemen had dealt a crushing blow to the invader.

How brief, though momentous, the message which went by courier to Washington from General Smith:

*H'quarters, Hampstead Hill, Balto.  
Sept. 14, 1814—10 A. M.*

*Sir:*

*I have the honor of informing you that the enemy, after an unsuccessful attempt, both by land and water on this place, appear to be retiring.*

*We have a force hanging on their rear.*

*I have the honor to be,*

*Your obedient servant,*

*(Signed) S. SMITH, Major-General Commanding.*

*P. S.—The enemy's vessels in the Patapsco are all under way going down the river. I have good reason to believe that General Ross is mortally wounded.*

*Hon. JAMES MONROE,  
Acting Secretary of War.*

**T**HE attack on Fort McHenry in September, 1814, marked the last major engagement of the war prior to the signing of the treaty of peace at Ghent. For some weeks commissioners from the United States and Great Britain had been discussing terms of peace at Ghent, but the Americans would not accede to the British demands and agreement seemed impossible. When, however, the news of British defeats at Plattsburg and at Baltimore reached London, the British ministry quickly yielded the points most objectionable to the Americans and the treaty was signed.

\* \* \* \* \*

To the citizen who came to wander through the redoubts in the days that followed, how wonderfully complete seemed this impregnable fortress! How impassible appeared the moat of murky waters between the outer ramparts and the star fort walls; how massive the masonry; how impressive the thick wooden doors with their studded surface; how doughty the cast-iron cannon in grim silhouette against the sky! The Fort conceived in fear and born in hope now lived a life of love—a love that had its greatest expression in the World War, when cannon mounts, feeble with age, stood watch over the wounded brought from the battle fields of Europe. Today, more than one hundred years after the supreme effort of 1814, though apparently neglected by the Government it saved, the old Fort smiles to the sky, serenely awaiting the final day of decay, unhonored but not unsung.

\* \* \* \* \*

**T**HE time has come for our great Federal Government to show an active interest in the fact that Fort McHenry marks the spot where a decisive blow in the War of 1812 was struck; where Francis Scott Key was inspired by the valor of its defenders to write America's national anthem—"The Star-Spangled Banner." In a word, Fort McHenry, standing as a silent sentinel for a century at the approaches to Baltimore, a uniquely historic point on the Atlantic Coast and most celebrated in the songs of the Nation, should be recognized by the Government it saved.

What finer tribute could we pay those immortals, whose blood was spilled at the altar of liberty in 1776, in 1812, and in 1918, than by restoring Fort McHenry to its condition in those early days of the Republic, with the ancient cannon once more set up, by removing unsightly buildings from its grounds, and by dedicating it as a National Park to the carrying out of the ideals of Americanization? We have done this at Yorktown, for example; why not at

Fort McHenry? On the grounds of Fort McHenry is the immigration station of the Government, which will receive new citizens who enter America through the port of Baltimore. What more living lesson in Democracy could these be given than to be welcomed on ground once trodden by patriots and sacred to the traditions of liberty achieved through the shedding of blood?

It is to such an ideal that this booklet is dedicated: that Fort McHenry through its restoration may be honored by the Government which it saved in 1814, thus furnishing a splendid inspiration of patriotism for our children and our children's children. It has been prepared, further, with the thought foremost in the minds of the undersigned citizens of the United States that Fort McHenry ever may serve as a beacon light of our liberty, that loyalty may be intensified at a time when loyalty is a vital need, and love of country may be enshrined in the heart of every native-born and adopted son and daughter of the United States of America. In doing this, we shall have carried out the prayer of the author of our National Anthem:

*O! thus be it ever when freemen shall stand  
Between their lov'd home and the war's desolation!  
Blest with vict'ry and peace may the heav'n-rescued land  
Praise the power that hath made and preserv'd us a nation!*

KEY COMPTON  
JOHN R. BLAND  
HENRY WALTERS  
VAN LEAR BLACK  
EUGENE LEVERING  
DANIEL WILLARD  
FRANK A. FURST  
JOSEPH I. FRANCE  
R. HOWARD BLAND  
CLINTON L. RIGGS  
WILLIAM H. WELCH  
R. BRENT KEYSER  
BLANCHARD RANDALL  
B. HOWELL GRISWOLD, JR.  
ROBERT GARRETT

JOHN WALTER SMITH  
WALTER B. BROOKS  
O. E. WELLER  
RT. REV. JOHN GARDNER MURRAY  
W. S. THAYER  
WALDO NEWCOMER  
WILLIAM L. MARBURY  
GEORGE WEEMS WILLIAMS  
W. HALL HARRIS  
NORMAN JAMES  
JACOB EPSTEIN  
J. M. T. FINNEY  
FRANK J. GOODNOW  
W. W. SYMINGTON  
ARTHUR B. BIBBINS

# Estimated Cost of Restoration of Fort McHenry

Reference Map: "General Hospital No. 2, Fort McHenry."

## PLAN

The estimate is based upon the cost of restoring Fort McHenry to the condition it was in at the time of its bombardment by the British, as shown by plans on file in the District Engineer Office, Customhouse, Baltimore, Md. Certain buildings which were not in existence in 1814 would be left standing and used in connection with the maintenance of the reservation as a park.

The following structures would remain in place:

Buildings of immigration station,		Buildings Nos. 51	} To be used as quarters for superintendent and laborers.
Star Fort with buildings therein,		60	
Upper Water Battery,		61	
Lower Water Battery,		62	
Building No. 22 } To be remodeled.		Building No. 75	} Old magazine
		" " 77	} Chapel
		Buildings Nos. 94	} For storehouse and garage.
		95	

These structures are outlined on the appended map. All other buildings within the present limits of the reservation would be removed.

It is proposed to use the following portions of the existing road system:

- (a) All concrete roads.
- (b) Main macadam road through center of grounds (Fort Avenue, extended) with both branches leading from junction northeast of Star Fort to the seawall.
- (c) The macadam road leading from the axial road toward the wharf.
- (d) The macadamized portion of the road leading southwest from the entrance and along the seawall.

The present cinder road around the seawall would be replaced by macadam, 14 feet wide. Portions of macadam and cinder roads not utilized under the scheme of restoration would be removed and the existing roads straightened in places.

The present wooden building at the entrance to the Fort would be removed and replaced by ornamental iron gates.

## COST

It is estimated that the buildings can be removed and the pillars and foundations taken out of the ground for the value of the salvaged materials therein. The seawall is in good condition and requires few repairs.

### *Star Fort:*

Painting, new roofs, and miscellaneous repairs to six buildings at \$700. each. . . . .	\$ 4,200.00
Sodding, stone coping, roads and walks . . . . .	2,000.00
Repairs to outside brick wall. . . . .	1,000.00
	\$7,200.00

### *Detached emplacement opposite sally port*

Pointing up brickwork, sodding, steps, etc. . . . .	\$ 600.00
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### *Upper water battery*

Sodding, grading, repairing walls and magazine doors. . . . .	3,000.00
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### *Roads*

New Macadam $\frac{3380 \times 14}{9}$ =	
5256 sq. yds. at \$3. . . . .	15,768.00
Removing 3600 yds. of cinder road at 40c. . . . .	1,440.00
Straightening roads and removing portions not used. . . . .	1,792.00
	\$19,000.00

### *Entrance*

New approach and iron gates . . . . .	1,800.00
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### *Grading*

Regrading and landscape gardening, 36 acres at \$400 per acre . . . . .	14,400.00
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### *Miscellaneous*

Procuring and setting up old guns, placing tablets, etc. . . . .	4,000.00
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## *SUMMARY*

Star Fort. . . . .	7,200.00
Detached emplacement. . . . .	600.00
Upper water battery. . . . .	3,000.00
Roads . . . . .	19,000.00
Entrance . . . . .	1,800.00
Grading . . . . .	14,400.00
Miscellaneous . . . . .	4,000.00
	\$50,000.00

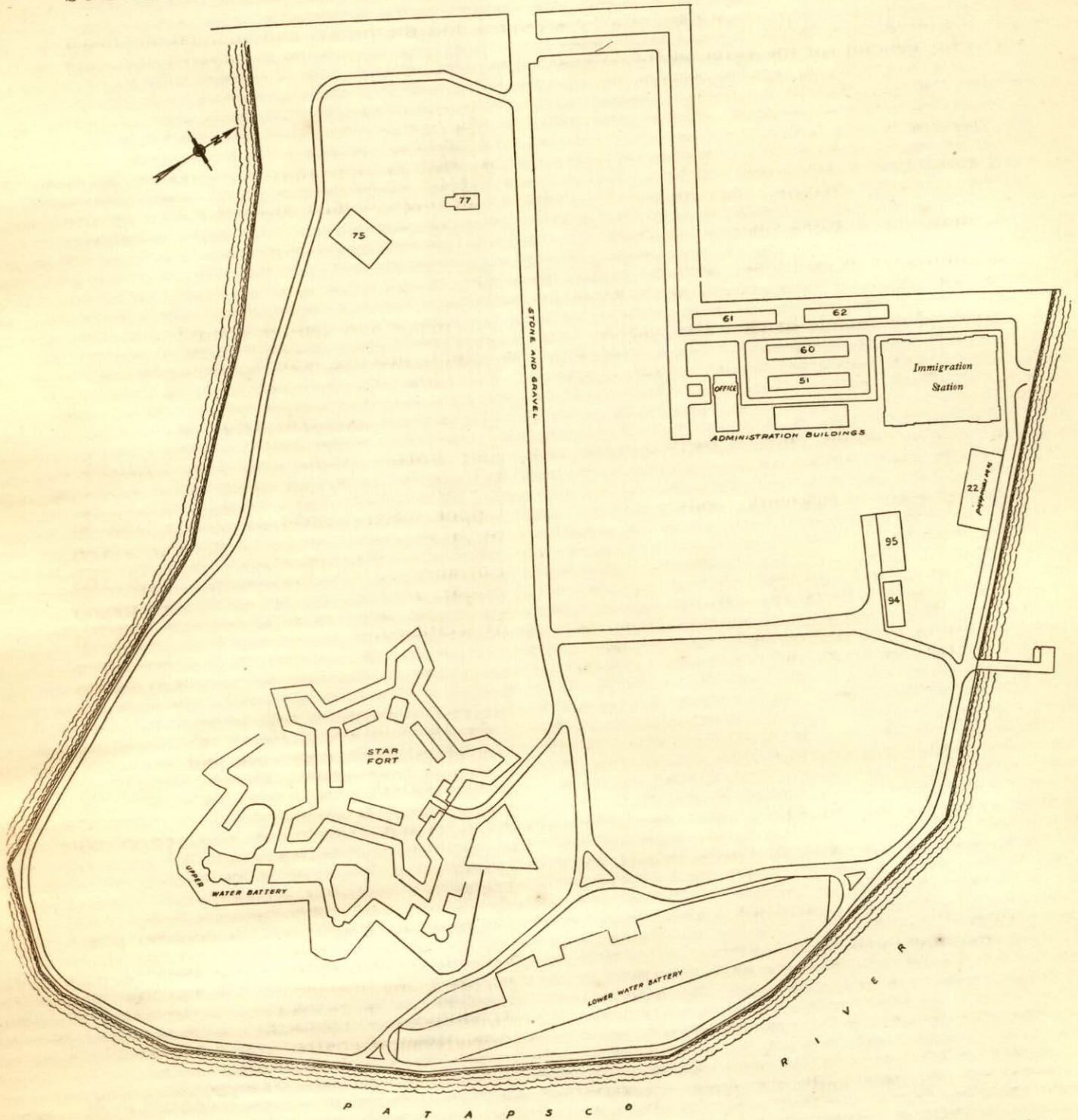
10% for consulting landscape architect, plans, surveys, and incidentals . . . . .	5,000.00
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Total. . . . .	\$55,000.00
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### *Estimated yearly maintenance:*

1 Superintendent . . . . .	2,000.00	p. a.
2 Laborers at \$1,200. . . . .	2,400.00	"
1 Horse, maintenance . . . . .	350.00	"
Machinery, Tools, Materials and Repairs. . . . .	2,250.00	"
	\$7,000.00	p. a.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF FORT McHENRY AS A NATIONAL PARK.



Only those buildings would be left in the Reservation which are marked on the map above. The Francis Scott Key Monument, for which the Government appropriated \$75,000.00, will stand in the Main Road north of the Star Fort.