

Baltimore County Landmarks Preservation Commission

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Battle Acre

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

South side of Old North Point Road, opposite terminus of Kinberly Road.

CITY, TOWN

Dundalk

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF 7th Councilmatic District/2nd Congr. Dist.

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Baltimore County

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME State of Maryland, Military Department

Telephone #: 728-3388

STREET & NUMBER

Fifth Regiment Armory

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

VICINITY OF

Maryland

STATE, zip code

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Baltimore City Courthouse

Liber #: TK 292

Folio #: 246

STREET & NUMBER

111 North Calvert Street

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

Maryland

STATE

21202

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE none

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT

GOOD

FAIR

DETERIORATED

RUINS

UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED

ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE

MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Battle Acre is as its name implies, an acre of land, enclosed by iron fencing and entered via concrete gateposts topped with cannon balls. The ground is mostly in grass, and very level. In the center of the compound is a large flagstone terrace which supports an enormous surticated stone block bearing memorial tablets and a small cannon. There is also a flagpole, too small for an acre park, and also bent from its vertical alignment. The fence was second-hand when installed in 1914 and had served the Blind Asylum on North Avenue.

In July, 1977, the grass was cut, and the litter situation was mostly under control.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES Dedicated 1839, fenced 1914 BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Battle Acre is a small part of the field where Baltimore's "citizen Soldiers" --the term was used at the time--stood their ground before the advancing British army. All the rest of the battlefield has been overrun by row houses and suburban sprawl in the last few decades. The part of the field that survives was directly in front of the position held by the Fifth Regiment of Maryland Militia during the afternoon of September 12, 1814. The Fifth held, but it must be admitted that the Fifty-first fled.

The battle area was not forgotten by the original combatants, as witnessed by the erection of the Aquilla Randall Monument farther down North Point Road in 1817. Numerous engravings and lithographs celebrated the Old Defenders, and the Battleground Hotel (distinct from the Monument House) helped mark the spot. Back in the city itself, the Battle Monument in Calvert Street north of Fayette was put up in 1815 and made Baltimore the "Monumental City."

President John Quincy Adams visited the scene on October 16, 1827, and recorded it in his diary. The next day's paper reported the event.

The President left the City Hotel yesterday morning, about eight o'clock, accompanied by a number of citizens, on a visit to the Battle ground at North Point; and after an examination of the various points of this interesting spot, rendered additionally so by the explanations of those who had a personal share in the dangers of the day, -- returned to the city at one. (1)

Baltimore made a great event of the 25th anniversary of the battle in 1839, and the newspapers for the 12th of September listed the order of march downtown to the Bond Street wharf for a steamboat excursion to Bear Creek; room had been reserved for both the President and Vice President of the United States. (2)

As reported later, the city had to do without the two top officers, but the flotilla of seven steamboats carried two cabinet officers and two justices of the Supreme Court, the governor, and at least three generals. Their destination was Battle Acre and their mission the laying of a cornerstone. The Fort McHenry flag from 1814 was displayed on the rostrum.

The day before, the one-acre site had been deeded to the State of Maryland by Dr. Jacob Houck, owner of the surrounding farm. For one dollar, Dr. Houck conveyed to the State part of the tract called Swan Harbor, "constituting a part of the North Point Battle Ground for the purpose of erecting a Monument thereon."

As the daily paper reported:

The procession having formed around the foundation of the Monument, the venerable Major General McDonald, aided by a soldier of the Revolution, General T.E. Starsbury, Governor Grason, General Forman, and others proceeded to the cornerstone, in doing which General McDonald delivered a brief and pertinent address. He then deposited in its cavity an official list of all the officers and privates who were in the Battle of North Point and Fort McHenry, lists of the present members of the military corps of the city, the newspaper of the day, coins &c. The ceremony concluded, a national salute was fired by the artillery and a feu de joie by the whole line of infantry . . . .

General B.C. Howard, the Orator of the Day, addressed the assembled multitude for about an hour and a half. (4)

But nothing happened at Battle Acre to justify the excursion, the bands, the speeches, and the drowning of one steamboat passenger. No funds were appropriated by the General Assembly for the monument. On his tour of November, 1860, Benson J. Lossing mentioned the hostelry, the Battle Ground House, and added

In a field adjoining it we saw a rough-hewn block of granite, with a square hollow in it, which was pointed out as the cornerstone of a monument which it is proposed to erect on the field of strife. This was on the right of Long Log Lane going out . . . (5)

Years later, it was recalled that Miss Long, keeper of "a tavern" kept the grounds clean for a period of time. Eventually the cornerstone and its contents vanished. Local people laid out their vegetable gardens on the acre. (6)

Dr. Houck, who had donated the land, was recalled as never practicing his profession but as manufacturing a patent remedy called a "panacea." Each year he entertained the Old Defenders at his farm on Swann's Creek, "Houck's Pavillion."

Scharf in 1881 stated:

The monument has never been erected, but there is a plain slab of stone marking the spot. Around the stone are the remains of the old intrenchments, and nearby is an old log hut bearing the marks of cannon and musket-balls. (7)

A Sunday feature article of 1907 described the spot near the former "Houck's Pavillion."

As one goes down the North Point Road, he will notice on the right hand margin immediately after passing Mr. Lang's house, two small granite markers, a dozen rods apart. These with two other in the field mark the acre invested by Mr. Houck, and in the center of the space thus enclosed will discover, if he searches carefully, a tiny mound only a few inches higher than the adjacent soil and almost hidden by vegetation.

This is the foundation of the proposed monument, shadowed by peach trees and surrounded by standing corn. (8)

It was not until the 75th anniversary of his donation and the 100th anniversary of the battle that anything was done about the park. Dr. Houck's granddaughter had turned out to be an active patriot--perhaps the most visible ever--Mrs. Reuben Ross Holloway. In 1914, Mrs. Holloway reminded the State that it owned the ground and prevailed on the Star Spangled Banner Commission to make the wasteland into a park.

The Commission, founded to organize the celebration of the Centennial of the anthem,

put up a fence around the acre and erected a large memorial stone--apparently a stone distinct from that of 1839. Admittedly, the fence was previously owned, having been removed from the Blind Asylum on North Avenue which was then being replaced by the new buildings of Polytechnic Institute. Lombardy and other shrubs were planted around the fence.

In the week-long festivities, Sunday, September 13 at 11:30 a.m. was marked on the official programs with the entry

North Point Battlefield

Dedication of "Dr. Houck's Acre" in commemoration of the last important engagement before Peace was declared. Unveiling of tablets. (9)

By 1939, many of the trees and plantings had died but "the spot presents sufficient dignity and distinction to induce an occasional traveler along to the North Point Road to stop, enter the inclosure and read the inscriptions . . ." (10)

Keeping the plot up always seemed a good thing to avoid and periodically an outraged citizen would sound off against the disgrace of it all.

In 1947, fourth and fifth graders from East Baltimore went on a history field trip to Battle Acre and could barely find the cannon for the weeds. They wrote a letter to local papers and the notoriety resulted in a general clean up. (11)

The Enoch Pratt Library's vertical file on "War of 1812" contains numerous newspaper clippings about the acre, many of them letters protesting weeds and litter, and lack of gratitude to the fallen. In 1962, the State Board of Public Works restored the Battle Acre and instructed the State Roads Commission to maintain it. The roads agency cleaned it up at least annually over the next seven years, as reported by their public relations director, George A. Elliott, 3d. (12)

About 1971, Ben R. Womer, president of the Dundalk-Patapsco Neck Historical Society went through a lengthy correspondence with various arms of the State, and eventually discovered that the Military Department was responsible for maintaining the park, and another clean-up was effected by the citizen soldiers of the present.

Two years later, when Mr. Womer brought out his society's book The Neck, he was interviewed by Isaac Rehert of the Sun:

Battle Acres monument. "I got proof that monument belongs to the State. But we've had a helluva time getting them to clean it up."

In July, 1977, various citizens of the eastern county interested in preservation and history proposed that the county acquire title to the park and place its maintenance under the Department of Recreation and Parks.

## NOTES:

1. Baltimore American, October 17, 1827, p. 2, col. 1. Also, JQA's diary, 7:336.
2. "Twelfth of September," American, September 12, 1839, p. 2, col.5.
3. Baltimore City Deeds, TK 292:246.
4. "The Twelfth of September," American, September 14, 1839, p. 2.
5. Benson J. Lossing, Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812 (New York, 1868)
6. "Centennial of 'Battle Acre,'" Sun, August 20, 1939.
7. T.J. Scharf, History of Baltimore City and County (Philadelphia, 1881), p. 933.
8. Lewis Beeman Borwne, Rev., "Battle of North Point in Legend and Tradition," Sun, September 8, 1907, p. 13.
9. Frank A. O'Connell, National Star-Spangled Banner Centennial (Baltimore, 1914), p. 113.
10. "Centennial of 'Battle Acre,'" Sun, August 20, 1939.
11. Wayne Hardin, "Ghost Soldiers of 1814 Wouldn't Recognize Site," Evening Sun, April 4, 1972, p. C1.
12. "How It Turned Out," Evening Sun, April 2, 1969.
13. Isaac Rehert, "Patapsco Neck History Buffs Put Out Book on Their Area." Sun, July 17, 1973, p. B-1

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- "Centennial of 'Battle Acre,'" Sun, August 20, 1939.  
"The Twelfth of September," Baltimore American, September 14, 1839, p. 2.  
Dundalk-Patapsco Neck Historical Society, The Neck 1672-1973 (Dundalk, 1973), p. 21.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.0

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Bg on SW side of road ... to North Point ...  
S66 $\frac{1}{2}$ E 12.7 perches  
S23 $\frac{1}{2}$ W 12.7 Perches  
N66 $\frac{1}{2}$ W 12.7 perches  
thence by straight line ... to begining

### LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE none COUNTY none

STATE COUNTY

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE John McGrain

ORGANIZATION Office of Planning and Zoning

DATE July 1977

STREET & NUMBER 401 Bosley Avenue

TELEPHONE 494-3495

CITY OR TOWN Towson

STATE Maryland 21204

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 267-1438