

## COPYRIGHT / USAGE

Material on this site may be quoted or reproduced for **personal and educational purposes** without prior permission, provided appropriate credit is given. Any commercial use of this material is prohibited without prior permission from The Special Collections Department - Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore. Commercial requests for use of the transcript or related documentation must be submitted in writing to the address below.

When crediting the use of portions from this site or materials within that are copyrighted by us please use the citation: *Used with permission of the University of Baltimore.*

If you have any requests or questions regarding the use of the transcript or supporting documents, please contact us:

Langsdale Library  
Special Collections Department  
1420 Maryland Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21201-5779  
<http://archives.ubalt.edu>



PUBLISHED MONTHLY FOR THE BALTIMORE STEAM PACKET COMPANY  
ALFRED I. HART, EDITOR AND MANAGER  
1505 MUNSEY BLDG., BALTIMORE, MD.

VOL. V.

MARCH, 1915

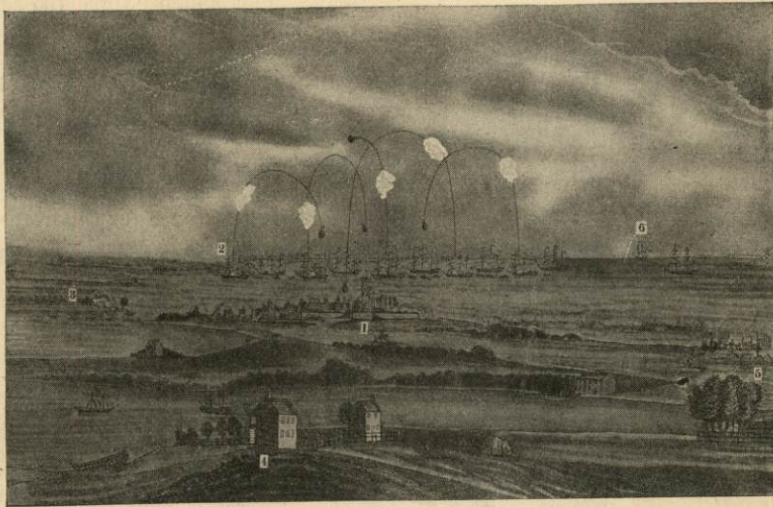
No. 8

## Old Fort McHenry

By A. E. GODWIN

Fort McHenry was conceived immediately prior to the Revolutionary War, and was located on a point of land called Whetstone Point, which commanded the approach to Baltimore by water. At that time and for

No offensive operations were, however, undertaken against the Fort, and it appears to have relapsed into a semi-ruinous condition until the year 1794, when the extraordinary pretensions and naval aggressiveness



THE BOMBARDMENT OF FORT McHENRY

1—FORT McHENRY  
2—NORTH POINT

3—LAZARETTO  
4—SALAUAVE HOUSE

5—FERRY BATTERY  
6—ADMIRAL'S SHIPS

many years afterwards it was known as the Water Battery.

It had its inception in April, 1775, when it was planned by James Alcock, and its erection was begun under the superintendence of three citizens named Griest, Griffith and Loudenslager.

of the British sounded a warning to this country to prepare for any emergency that might arise, as it was thought that a war with England could hardly be avoided.

As the surest means of preserving peace with honor the President made serious preparations for offense and defense. The Fort

was repaired and put in excellent condition by the townspeople, and the Star Fort, of brickwork added. The ground was afterwards ceded to the United States Government and the Fort named Fort McHenry, in honor of James McHenry, a distinguished Marylander, then Secretary of War. On July 24th, 1799, a committee was appointed to raise a public subscription to finish the fortifications, and the work was carried to a successful issue.

When war was eventually declared against England by the United States, preparations were made to provide ample protection for Baltimore against any attack by the British, and the fortifications at Fort McHenry were much strengthened and many additional guns mounted. The following letter indicates the apprehension felt for the safety of Baltimore and the precautions that were taken to guard against an assault by the British Fleet:

Philadelphia, 27th March, 1813.

Dear Sir:

I have written to Mayor Beall to have such work done at Fort McHenry as is necessary to its repair and better state. The Major is also desired to platform the batteries in front of the Fort, and to mount in them not exceeding 30 heavy cannon, attaching the requisite furnaces, for a more extended offense of Baltimore Harbor, including the rear of Fort McHenry, Patapsco River, the Cove, the Point between the Fort and Flagstaff Point, and the point opposite Fort McHenry on the northeast side of the harbor, I have recommended to the Hon. Secretary of War, to have 12 eighteen pound canon mounted on traveling field carriages, completely appurtenanced, attaching to them two furnaces. This train is to be disposed so as to run four of the pieces with a furnace to any position on the Fort McHenry side, and eight of them with furnace to the point opposite Fort McHenry to be used as the position of the enemy may require. Bridges should be constructed over every creek or river in the route from Baltimore to any point of attack, removable at will. The furnaces can be placed in a ravine or behind an embankment to secure from the enemy's shot. The house near Fort McHenry should be removed.

I have the honor to be, dear Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,  
J. G. Swift, Col. Eng.

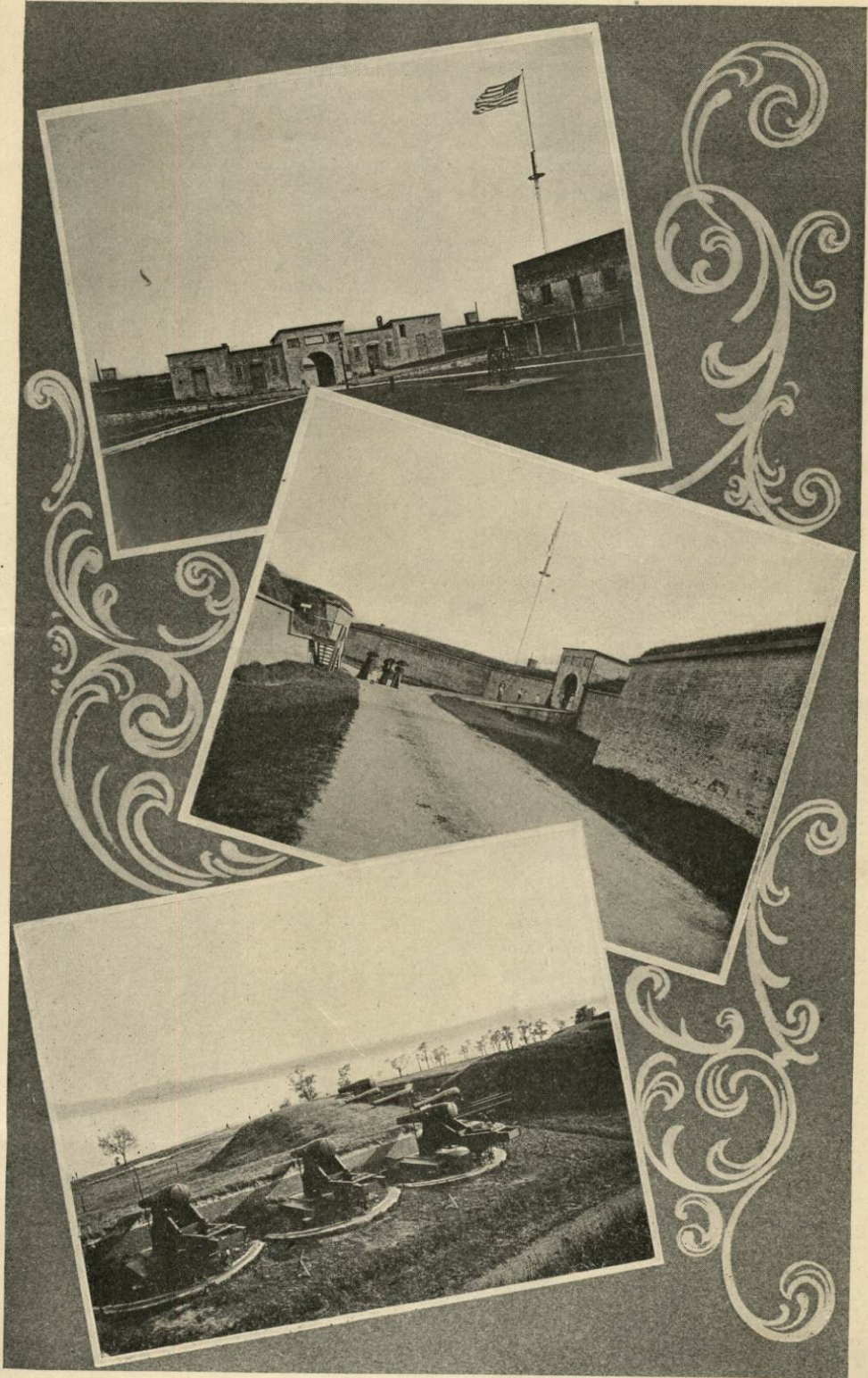
Major-General Samuel Smith,  
Baltimore.

Earthworks were thrown up and a fort erected at what is now Riverside Park, and was named Fort Covington. It was protected by a fine park of artillery containing from 35 to 40 pieces—18s, 12s, 6s and 4s—all on flying or field carriages, and in

charge of Lieutenant Newcomb, of the Navy. In addition, earthworks were thrown up and guns mounted in what is now Patterson Park, and both sides of the river were defended by troops of horse and companies of artillery, infantry and riflemen. The feeling of enthusiasm and patriotism displayed by the people was intense, and day and night the preparations for repelling the enemy went on without abatement. Daily drills of the troops were held in Fort McHenry, and the city had all the appearance of an armed camp. In an address to the troops, Major-General Samuel Smith, in command of the forces, who had served in the Continental Army, said: "The Executive of Maryland has done his duty; he has adopted every means in his power for the defense of this important port; it remains for us to do ours."

In the meantime General Ross, in command of the British forces, and who had successfully despoiled and burned the National Capital, had decided upon making his winter quarters in Baltimore, and had boastingly remarked that with the forces at his command he could go wherever he pleased through Maryland. He also remarked that it would only take a couple of hours to reduce the Fort, and that when that was accomplished and the shipping destroyed, "He would then think about terms for the city." There can be no doubt that General Ross was sincere in his intentions, for he had with him some of the troops that had distinguished themselves on the field in the Peninsula Wars under the Duke of Wellington, and he assuredly contemplated but small resistance for this force from the Citizen Soldiers of Maryland. Besides the force at his command was a large one, it being estimated that in the attack on Baltimore he landed 9,000 men, consisting of 5,000 soldiers, 2,000 marines and 2,000 sailors, the military being under the command of General Ross, while the naval contingent was commanded by the redoubtable Admiral Sir George Cockburn.

The animus of the British appears to have been more particularly directed against Baltimore, which was alluded to in the British House of Commons as that "Nest of privateers," and Vice-Admiral Warren, in a speech declared "Baltimore is a doomed town." The British press was unanimously hostile to Baltimore, and the leading London newspaper said editorially: "The American navy must be annihilated; his arsenals and



1—INSIDE FORT McHENRY

2—THE OLD SALLY PORT

3—THE BATTERY

dockyards must be consumed, and the truculent inhabitants of Baltimore must be tamed with the weapons which shook the wooden turrets of Copenhagen." Another newspaper, under date of June 17th, 1814, said: "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 instant 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 immediate object of attack. In diplomatic circles it is also rumored 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, of course, 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." Baltimore was also alluded to by an eminent British statesman as "The great depository of the hostile spirit of the United States against England." From these utterances it may be inferred that Baltimore could not expect much clemency should she fall into the hands of the invaders.

On the 10th of September, 1814, information was received that the enemy was ascending the Bay, and 40 or 50 of his ships were seen off the mouth of the Patapsco River. Some of these vessels entered the river, while others proceeded to North Point, at the mouth of the Patapsco, distant 12 miles from the city, and commenced the debarkation of their troops in the night, all being landed by the next morning. In the meantime the frigates, bomb-ketches and small vessels approached and ranged themselves in a formidable line to command the Fort and town.

The attack on the Fort was an appallingly grand spectacle. The enemy's vessels formed a great half-circle in front of the works on the 12th, but out of reach of the guns, and also those of the battery of the Lazaretto, on the opposite side of the great cove or basin, around the head of which the City of Baltimore was then built. At 6 o'clock on Tuesday morning six bombs and

some rocket vessels commenced the attack, keeping such a respectful distance, however, as to make the Fort rather a target than an opponent, though Major Armistead, the gallant commander and his brave garrison fired occasionally to let the enemy know that the Fort was not given up. Four or five bombs were frequently in the air at a time, and, making a double explosion, created a ghastly noise. Some of these bombs were subsequently found intact and weighed 210 to 220 pounds. By 3 o'clock in the afternoon the enemy had become more daring and dropped near to the Fort, opening a heavy fire. This was returned with such interest that the British slipped their cables and got out of range of our 42-pounder guns, but continued to throw bombs into the Fort. At 1 o'clock A. M. the next morning, aided by the darkness of the night and screened by a flame they had kindled, one or two rocket or bomb vessels and many barges manned with 1,200 chosen men, passed Fort McHenry and proceeded up the Patapsco to assail the town and fort in the rear. But our troops were alert, and this maneuver was observed, with the immediate result that Forts McHenry and Covington, with the City battery and the Lazaretto and barges, vomited an inferno of red-hot shot that speedily convinced the invaders that in retreat their only safety lay.

During the bombardment the houses in the city were shaken to their foundations by the concussion of the gun and mortar fire, and the heavens were lighted with the flames of bursting bombs and rockets. It is estimated that from 1,500 to 1,800 of these great bombs were projected at the Fort, besides rockets and a perfect hail of round shot. Despite this rain of shot and shell, only four of the garrison were killed and about twenty wounded, while the damage to the Fort was not more than a couple of hundred dollars. The enemy's loss amounted to between 600 and 700 men, and two barges sunk with all hands. General Ross, the British commander, also lost his life at the Battle of North Point.

Upon the cessation of hostilities the gallant Commodore Rodgers, U. S. N., who was chief in command of the Naval forces supporting Fort McHenry in its rear, wrote Major Armistead as follows:

Armistead, my dear fellow:—

I congratulate you and a country that owes you much. The enemy is off and the

Devil go with him. General Ross is said to be mortally wounded.

Yours truly,  
John Rodgers.

Tuesday morning  
Major Armistead,  
Fort McHenry.

On September 15th official acknowledgment of the gallant defense of the Fort was made by the military authorities by means of the following orders :

for his able, vigilant and exact arrangements before and during this period of arduous duty, as well as for the uniform zeal, vigor and ability he has discovered in all his preparations for the defense of the post immediately committed to his charge, as for the prompt and efficacious manner in which he has complied under great and perplexing difficulties with demands from all quarters for ammunition.

Robert G. Hite,  
Assistant Adjutant-General.



SOME OF THE GUNS USED TO REPEL THE BRITISH ATTACK ON BALTIMORE  
GUNS IN RIVERSIDE PARK, THE SITE OF FORT COVINGTON      GUNS AT PATTERSON PARK

Division Orders.

Division Headquarters, New-Church Street,  
September 15th, 1814.

Brigadier-General Winder congratulates the troops of his command upon the suspension of the severe duties to which they have been exposed for the last four days.

The Garrison of Fort McHenry, under the command of Major Armistead, are entitled to, and receive, the warmest acknowledgments and praise from the Brigadier-General for their steady, firm and intrepid deportment during an almost incessant bombardment for twenty-four hours, during which time they were exposed to an incessant shower of shells.

The Militia Artillery of the 3rd Brigade under Captains Nicholson and Berry, and Lieut. Pennington vied with the regulars in a firmness and composure which would have honored veterans, and prove that they were worthy to co-operate with the regular Artillery, Infantry and Sea Fencibles in defence of that important post. Major Armistead receives also the warmest acknowledgments of the Brigadier-General commanding,

The following is the official report of the attack on Fort McHenry, submitted to the Secretary of War by Major-General Samuel Smith, commanding the forces at Baltimore :

Headquarters, Baltimore,  
September 19, 1814.

Sir :

I have now the pleasure of calling your attention to the brave commander of Fort McHenry, Major Armistead, and to the operations confided to that quarter. The enemy made his approach by water at the same time that his army was advancing on the land, and commenced a discharge of bombs and rockets at the Fort as soon as he got within range of it. The situation was particularly trying. The enemy having taken his position at such a distance as to render offensive operations on the part of the Fort entirely fruitless, whilst their bombs and rockets were every moment falling in and about it—the officers and the men being at the same time entirely exposed. The vessels, however, had the temerity to approach

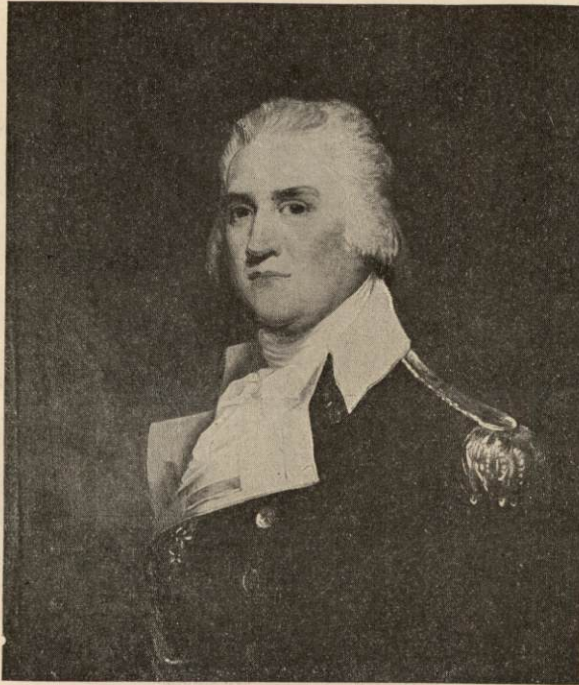
somewhat nearer—they were as soon compelled to withdraw. During the night, whilst the enemy on land was retreating, and whilst the bombardment was most severe, two or three rocket vessels and barges succeeded in getting up the Ferry Branch; but they were soon compelled to retire, by the Forts in that quarter, commanded by Lieutenant Newcomb of the Navy, and Lieutenant Webster of the Flotilla. These Forts also destroyed one of the barges, with all on board. The barges and Battery at this Lazaretto, under the command of Lieutenant Rutter of the Flotilla, kept up a brisk, and, it is believed, a successful fire

who were both estimable citizens and useful officers.

The enemy's loss in his attempt on Baltimore, as near as we can ascertain it, is between six and seven hundred killed, wounded and missing. General Ross was certainly killed.

I have the honor to be, with  
great respect, Sir, your  
obedient servant,  
S. Smith, Major-General Com'g.

Extract from General Orders issued by  
Major-General Samuel Smith:



MAJOR-GENERAL SAMUEL SMITH

during the hottest period of the bombardment. Major Armistead, being seriously ill in consequence of his continued exposure to the weather, has rendered it impossible for him to send in his report. It is not, therefore, in my power to do justice to those gallant individuals who partook with him the danger of the tremendous bombardment, without the ability of retorting, and\* without that security, which in more regular fortifications is provided for such occasions: The only loss sustained in the Fort is, I understand, about 27 killed and wounded. Amongst the former I have to lament the fall of Lieutenants Claggett and Clemm,

Colonel James Munroe,  
Acting Secretary of War,  
General Orders.

Headquarters, Baltimore,  
September 19, 1814.

The successful defense of Fort McHenry by Major Armistead of the United States Army, having under his command (besides his own corps) three companies of Col. Harris's Regiment of Artillery, commanded by Captains Berry and Nicholson and Lieutenant Pennington, and a part of the 36th and 38th Regiments of United States Infantry, commanded by Lieut. Col. Steuart, is beyond all praise. Their gallantry and intrepidity enabled them to defend the Fort against every effort of the enemy, and there is no doubt that this intrepid officer will be rewarded by the Government. The voluntary services of Major Lane of the 14th Regiment of the United States Infantry were highly useful and duly appreciated by

\*The defense of Fort McHenry was even more gallant than appears from the fact that the magazine was not bomb-proof—a fact known only to Major Armistead, and which is referred to by Major-General Smith in the above report when he says: "The Fort was without the security which in more regular fortifications is provided for such occasions."

Major Armistead. Lieutenant Newcomb of the Navy, who commanded Fort Covington, and Lieutenant Webster of the Flotilla, the City Battery, performed their duties to the entire satisfaction of the Commanding General.

By order of Major-General S. Smith,  
Wm. Bates, Asst. Adj. Gen., D. M. M.

In the face of a pronounced defeat, the following announcement was made by the British:

Appleton, of New York, who placed it in the National Museum. It was 40 feet long by 30 feet wide, bearing 15 broad red and white stripes and 15 white stars upon its blue field, but, through use and mutilation, it now measures 32 feet 10 inches by 27 feet 6 inches and one star is missing. There are several rents and tears in it, which were made by the British shot. The house where the flag was made is still standing—at the



LIEUT.-COL. GEORGE ARMISTEAD

His Majesty's Printing Office,  
Bermuda, September 23rd.

"It appears from report, that after destroying Washington, and taking possession of Alexandria, the small body of brave men under General Ross made an attack on Baltimore; the enemy had sunk vessels and but two or three small craft with bombs could approach; they succeeded, however, in driving the Americans from the Fort; having to contend with a superior force, they eventually retired, as the occupation of the town, which might have been gained, would be a poor compensation for the sacrifice of many valuable lives."

After the bombardment of Fort McHenry the Government presented the flag he had so nobly defended to Colonel Armistead. It was left at death to his daughter, and she in turn bequeathed it to her son, Mr. Eben

northwest corner of Albemarle and Pratt streets.

To fittingly commemorate the repulse of the British and to perpetuate the memory of those noble Citizen Soldiers who yielded up their lives in the Battle of North Point and the attack on Fort McHenry, the citizens of Baltimore decided to erect a suitable monument. A site was chosen at the corner of Calvert and Fayette streets, then called Washington Square, and on the first anniversary of the Battle of North Point—September 12th, 1814—the corner-stone was laid by the architect and his assistants, under the direction of General Smith, General Stricker, Colonel Armistead and the Mayor, prayers being offered up by the Right Reverend Bishop Kemp. The monument was

designed by Maximilian Godefroy, and executed by John Finley, assisted by Rembrandt Peale. The inscription on it reads as follows:

Battle of North Point  
12th of September, A. D., 1814, and of  
the Independence of the United States  
the Thirty-ninth.

Bombardment of Fort McHenry  
September 13, A. D., 1814.

John Lowry Donaldson, Adjutant, 27th  
Regiment.

Gregorius Andre, Lieutenant, 1st Rifle  
Battalion.

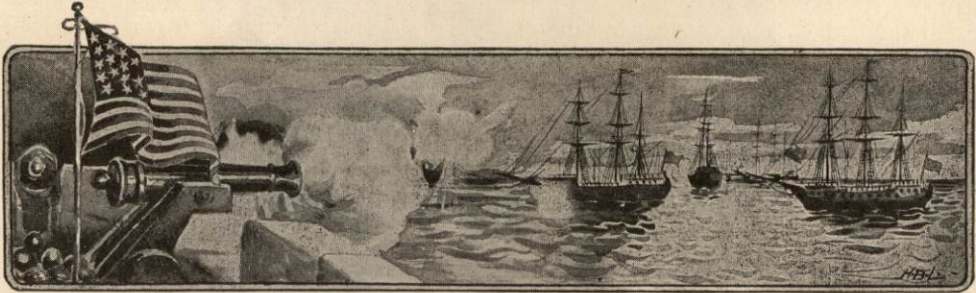
Levi Clagett, 3rd Lieutenant in Nichol-  
son's Artillerists.

G. Jenkins, W. Alexander, T. Richardson,  
T. V. Beeston, D. Howard, J. Dunn, J. H.  
Marriott of John P. Byard, J. Armstrong,  
B. Reynolds, M. Desk, J. Gregg, J. Craig, A.  
Randall, R. Neale, J. H. Cox, J. Evans, J.

cers and soldiers with whom it was my good fortune to be associated on the important occasion you have sought to commemorate."

The same committee presented an elegant sword to Lieutenant Webster, famous for the services he rendered at the "Six-Gun Battery," and afterwards one to Lieutenant Newcomb, of Fort Covington. The Mayor and City Council also resolved to employ on behalf of the City of Baltimore an artist to execute paintings of the Battle of North Point and the bombardment of Fort McHenry, and also portraits of Major-General Samuel Smith, Brigadier-General Stricker and Colonel Armistead.

Lieutenant-Colonel Armistead died Saturday, January 25th, 1818, aged 39 years, and was consigned to the tomb on Sunday, with every respect that a grateful people could bestow. During the solemnities of the



"OUR FLAG WAS STILL THERE"

Wolfe, J. Haubert, D. Wells, D. Davis, R. J. Cooksey, H. G. McComas, J. Wallack, J. Burneston, J. C. Byrd, G. Fallier, W. Ways, J. Jephson, C. Bell, E. Marriott, J. Clemm, T. Garrett, C. Cox, J. Merriken, U. Prosser, B. Bond.

On the 11th of May, 1816, a committee appointed by the citizens proceeded to Fort McHenry and presented to Lieutenant-Colonel Armistead a superb silver punch-bowl, representing one of the largest bombshells thrown into the Fort by the British. The bowl was accompanied by silver cups and a ladle, the latter in the form of a shrapnel-shell, and the whole placed on a large silver tray. An address was also read, which said in part: "We feel great pleasure in reflecting that the gallant defense of Fort McHenry by you and your brave garrison will long be remembered and will hereafter have a happy influence in exciting others to imitate their example." To which Lieutenant-Colonel Armistead replied: "I do not claim to myself an exclusive right to this rich reward. Great merit is due to the offi-

occasion a detachment of the First Regiment of Artillerists of the Third Brigade fired minute guns from Federal Hill. The procession was the largest ever witnessed in the city. A monument to his memory was erected by the city at the City Springs, bearing the inscription:

Bombardment of Fort McHenry  
13th September, A. D., 1814, and  
Independence of the United States,  
the Thirty-ninth.

Colonel George Armistead, in honor of whom this monument is erected, was the gallant defender of Fort McHenry during the bombardment by the British Fleet, 13th September, 1814. He died, universally esteemed, on the 25th April, 1818, aged 39 years.

This monument was allowed to fall into disrepair, and when Calvert street was opened through the City Springs it was demolished and completely lost sight of. In 1881 the city authorized the erection of another monument, which now stands on Federal Hill.