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The harbor of Baltimore is defended by two fortifications, Fort McHenry and Fort Carroll. The former is an inner fort, situated at the extremity of a point of land lying between the northwest and middle branches of the Patapsco River, and now known as Locust Point. The first settler upon the point was probably Charles Gorsuch, said to be a member of the Society of Friends, who on the 24th of February 1661, patented fifty acres of the tract, yielding and paying the rent of one pound sterling per annum in equal half-yearly installments at St. Mary's. Gorsuch subsequently abandoned it, and on the 2d of June, 1702, a patent was granted for the same land to James Carroll, who called it "Whetstone" and paid two shillings rent per annum. Whetstone Point or Neck was evidently considered a favorably location for a town, and by the Act of April 19, 1706, it was made a port of entry, but it does not appear that either traders or planters ever availed themselves of its commercial "facilities." In 1725 Carroll sold it to John Giles for five pounds sterling, and in 1727 the Principio Company¹ through John England purchased of Giles all the iron ore "opened and discovered or shut and not yet ~~discovers~~" for three hundred pounds sterling and twenty pounds current money of Maryland. It was for many years one of their principal sources of ore²

Upon the commencement of the Revolution the importance of Whetstone Point for the defense of the town was at once appreciated, and in 1775 ~~#####~~ ^{preparations} were made to fortify it. Warned by the recent approach of the British sloop-of war "Otter," in March, 1776, the inhabitants set to work with a will to complete the defenses of Baltimore, which had been ordered by the provincial convention. A water-battery of eighteen guns was planned at Whetstone Point by James Alcock, and begun under the superintendence of Messrs. Griest, Griffith and Loudenslager, and Capt. N. Smith was put in command. A large force of colored men were employed in providing timber, logs, etc., and in the erection of a boom between Whetstone Point and the Lazaretto, and a chain was also stretched, supported by twenty-one sunken schooners, across the neck of the

harbor. As the Revolution progressed these fortifications were still further strengthened, and an air-furnace was erected near the batteries, from which the Maryland Gazette of Sept. 9, 1777, declares, "red thunder-bolts of war will issue to meet our invading foes." Until 1793 the fortifications on Whetstone Point remained exclusively under the control of the State, but in consequence of the apprehensions entertained at that period of a conflict with Great Britain, it was deemed advisable to place the Point at the disposal of the Federal government, which was done in the following somewhat condescending resolution passed by the Legislature in 1793:

"Whereas, the United States may think it necessary to erect a fort, arsenal, or other military works or buildings on Whetsone Point for the public defense: therefore, Resolved That upon the application of the President of the United States to the Governor for permission to erect a fort, arsenal, or other military works on the said Point for the purpose aforesaid, the Governor shall and may grant the same, with the consent of the owner of the soil."

The Federal government did not take advantage of this permission, however, until 1798. In the summer of that year Maj. Tousard, an officer of rank and experience, was ordered to examine the existing works at Whetstone Point and report the additions he should deem indispensable to the protection of the city. Maj. Tousard was directed to submit his plans to the consideration of a committee of Baltimore citizens consisting of Messrs. Robert Gilmor, Jeremiah Yellott, George Sears, Mark Pringle, Robert Oliver, Archibald Campbell, William Patterson, Thomas Coale, and David Stewart, who were at that time engaged in superintending the construction of "ships of War" that were being built by the subscriptions of the citizens. In an address to the public on the subject under date of July 24, 1799, the committee say,-

"It was a duty foreign to our general purposes, and in every respect inconvenient, but it interested ALL, and we did not think ourselves at liberty to refuse. We were informed by the Secretary

of War that the finances of the United States did not admit of a larger appropriation than twenty thousand dollars towards the fortification to be erected in our city, and Maj. Tousard was enjoined to keep this circumstance in view in projecting the proposed new works. For the same sum also the land on which the works were to be erected was to be purchased, as well as all necessary materials. Maj. Tousard, after examining the old, and fully considering the position to be secured by the new works, delivered a decided opinion to your committee that it was impossible to erect adequate works of defense for the sum limited, nor would he risk his professional reputation by recommending such as on trial would deceive by proving insufficient. He, however, submitted the plan he deemed most proper to our consideration, with his estimate of the expense of executing, which exceeded the public appropriation \$10,963.44. Thus did your committee see the economy of the government at variance with the safety of the city. The latter was too serious and too important an object to be relinquished, and your committee, at every hazard, recommended that the fortifications should be erected on the most approved and effectual plan. In doing this they relied on the well-known liberality, patriotism, and zeal of their fellow-citizens to supply the deficiency. The Secretary of War has complied with their recommendation, and under the direction of your committee the proper quantity of land has been purchased, and considerable progress is made in the necessary works. Mr. Fonein, the present engineer and superintendent, in whose skill, industry and economy your committee have perfect confidence, has improved the plan of Maj. Tousard and devotes his whole time and attention to its completion. In the mean time the public funds are nearly

exhausted. But those works of defense, which all must admit to be proper even in the event of peace and indispensable in time of war, remain incomplete. Our lives, our families, our property are all exposed, for danger will exist while Europe is convulsed with wars, and as long as human nature remains imperfect. In this interesting situation you are called upon to supply the deficiency of public appropriations by voluntary contributions. Your committee, from the example of New York and other State governments, have formed an expectation that the subscriptions of the citizens will be reimbursed by the Legislature of Maryland. They pledge themselves to make the application in person if required, and in a measure of just and sound policy and deeply interesting to the State, they may reasonably promise themselves success. At the present moment, however, it is of primary importance to raise a supply by private subscription. To facilitate the business the city will be divided into districts, and two of the subscribers will call on the inhabitants of each district to receive their donations on or after the 25th instant."¹

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The fortifications thus constructed consisted of a star fort of brick-work, which was subsequently called Fort McHenry in honor of James McHenry, of Baltimore, who was first Secretary of War under Washington. During the war of 1812 the defenses of Fort McHenry were still further strengthened, and it was thus enabled to withstand successfully the memorable attack of Sept. 13, 1814. In 1872 a heavy water-battery was constructed and the fort was placed upon a thorough military footing. In spite of the proud associations connected with its heroic resistance in 1814, Fort McHenry can scarcely be considered at the present day as an adequate water defense, and it might with advantage be superseded by another fortification at a greater distance from the city.

- 1 The Principio Company was an association of British iron-masters, merchants and capitalists, established in the early part of 1700, and engaged in manufacturing pig and bar iron in the colonies of Maryland and Virginia.

- 2 After the Revolution, in 1781, the property of the company was confiscated, and we find among the returns of the Intendant of the Revenue the sale, on August 15th in that year, of seventy-five acres, and on September 25th of one hundred and twenty acres, on Whetstone Point belonging to the Principio Company.

- 1 Their hope of reimbursement by the Legislature, and we may also say by the general government, does not appear to have been realized.