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The War of 1812, which secured the economic freedom of The United States from British domination, grew out of the welter of the Napoleonic wars. All of Europe was aflame for about twenty years and the United States-then the infant nation of the world-wanted to be neutral, but British Orders in Council and French Imperial Decrees attempted to drive our commerce from the ocean. In 1810 however, Napoleon revoked his Imperial Decrees while Great Britain continued to seize American property and impress our seamen into her naval service. Sailors' Rights became the dominant cry and after many futile efforts to maintain the dignity of the American Flag, Congress, June 18th, 1812, declared war against Great Britain. The United States had not recovered from the wastage of its own revolution and was not prepared for war. The National Treasury was almost exhausted and, depending upon the state militias to protect their own districts, Congress provided a small national army and called for privateers to supplement the small U.S. Navy.

Despite the fact that Baltimore had built about one third of the ships that were in the navy and that one fifth of the officers and one eighth of the men in the navy were Marylanders, Baltimore responded nobly and sent out more privately armed ships than any other city. Because of these activities Great Britain promptly blockaded the Chesapeake and from their headquarters on Tangier Island they ravaged the bay shores. But the conflict was to be on land as well as on the sea, and on July 12th 1812 began an invasion of Canada. This campaign was so unsuccessful that on August 15th he ordered Fort Dearborn-now Chicago-to be abandoned and on August 16th he was forced to surrender the American army at Detroit with all of his stores. On October 13th, General Van Rensselaer was compelled to surrender another army with which he was attempting a similar invasion and the effects were disheartening.

Meanwhile the British were working further up the Chesapeake and in April 1813 their fleet of 15 warships came in into the e

evident intention to attack Baltimore. But the people of Baltimore had not been waiting idly for the expected attack. Knowing that they could not expect much help from the Federal government, the local militia had been called out and \$500000 had been subscribed to fortify the exposed sections of the town and to increase the armament at Fort McHenry which they had previously built and offered to the government for national defense. When Admiral Warren learned of the fortifications around Baltimore, he withdrew his fleet and sent it up the bay to attack Havre de Grace, Georgetown, Frenchtown and other places on the shore. In August the British again came into the Patapsco but the citizen soldiers of Baltimore had continued their training and increased the strength of their entrenchments and when the enemy observed the promptness with which the defenses were manned Admiral Warren again withdrew without giving battle.

Later in the year a flotilla of gunboats was built and manned by Baltimore seamen and in the spring of 1814, it was placed under the command of Commodore Joshua Barney, a Baltimorean and sent down the Chesapeake to divert the enemy. But in the summer, the British heavily reinforced their fleet and sent over an army composed largely of Nelson's marines and Wellington's Invincibles. Early in August the British drove Barney up the Patuxent and followed him so closely that he was compelled to burn his gunboats to save them from being captured. The enemy then landed and followed Barney to Bladensburg where they defeated a hastily gathered American army and captured the City of Washington. The Federal Government, having abandoned the National Capital without making an effort to recapture it, The British then returned to their ships with the avowed intention of capturing Baltimore and making it their winter quarters.

Sunday morning, September 11th 1814, was hot and humid in Baltimore. A storm was brewing and the churches were full of people who had were

soliciting divine protection against the enemy. Suddenly the cannon at the Court House Square boomed forth its alarm. It was the signal agreed upon. The enemy fleet of over 50 sail was sighted, making for the mouth of the Patapsco. Congregations were dismissed, with a hasty prayer for deliverance and men ran to their homes to get their equipment and report to their regiments. For over a year our citizen soldiers had been in training and each man knew his station, and more recently companies of militia from the surrounding country had been coming in. That afternoon The Baltimore Brigade, composed of The Fifth, Sixth, Twenty Seventh, Thirty Ninth and the Fifty First Regiments with 120 volunteer cavalrymen and 75 artillerymen, under General Stricker, marched out the Philadelphia Road on its way to North Point. The troops assigned to Fort McHenry and to Reger's Bastion on Hampstead Hill took their stations and the long line of breastworks bristled with cannon and bayonets.

That evening the British fleet anchored in Old Roads Bay, back of North Point and by daybreak, September 12th, their troops had been landed for the advance on Baltimore. Francis Scott Key, who had gone to the fleet to intercede for his friend Dr. ^{imprisoned} Beanes was sent back to the little sleep upon which he had left Baltimore, while the bombing vessels and lighter draft frigates moved up the river to attack Fort McHenry, the Lazaretto and other forts on the channel. The British planned to make a joint movement by land and water against the city, but the Baltimore Brigade had taken its position at the narrowest ^{place} palce on the North Point neck and advance parties had been sent forward to observe the enemy's movements. Early in the afternoon Major Richard K. Heath, Fifth Md. Regiment, contacted the head column of the enemy on the North Point Road and in the skirmish the British General-Sir Robert Ross- was killed. Realizing that he was opposed to the main body of the British, Major Heath fell back to the battle line of the Baltimore Brigade. Here the Baltimore Brigade

Here the Baltimore Brigade, composed entirely of volunteers, held the veteran British army at bay until after four O'Clock in the afternoon, when Stricker thought it prudent to retire on his reserves.

At daybreak, September 13th, the British fleet began to bombard Fort McHenry and Stricker fell back on the left of Hampstead Hill for the general defense of the city, while the British army advanced to within a mile of the entrenchments. All that day the fleet bombarded Fort McHenry and the Lazaretto, without silencing a single battery; and late that afternoon General Winder withdrew a brigade from the Ferry Bar section and moved in with Stricker to the right of the British line. The enemy, observing this movement which apparently had not weakened the forces on Roger's Bastion, began to wonder, and that night Admiral Cockburn, who commanded the division of British Marines in the land attack, went out to confer with the flag ship to confer with Admiral Cochrane, the Commander in Chief. When he explained that he could not make a direct attack on Hampstead Hill without inviting a flank attack from the troops that were massed on his right, the council decided to attempt a surprise attack on Fort McHenry from the rear. About 1200 marines with scaling ladders were then embarked in long boats and barges, and shortly after midnight they skirted the Anne Arundel shore with muffled oars and entered the main branch of the river. But a company from the 82nd Regiment that was doing picket duty on what is now Wagner's Point, heard the creaking of the oars and ~~lighten---lighting-a-fire~~ setting fire to a nearby hayrick, they revealed the enemy's movement. The tables were turned and

Although within a half mile of their objective, the British themselves were surprised and the guns from Fort Covington, the Six Gun Battery and fort McHenry belched forth a rain of iron hail. The firing was terrific and heavy fast, and Francis Scott Key, hearing the great noise that came from behind Fort McHenry, feared that Baltimore Had fallen. But the

dawn's early light revealed the flag still flying over Fort McHenry and in reaction to his pent-up feelings, Francis Scott Key wrote what is now our National Anthem-The Star Spangled Banner

The Battle of Baltimore -as it was called in those days - was over-and-by-7-o'clock-in-the-morning-of-September-14th. Before daybreak on September 14th, the British Army had retired to go back to its transports and by 7 o'clock in the morning the ir ships had stopped firing and slipping their cables, they fell back to Old Roads Bay and prepared to depart. Francis Scott Key, Colonel Skinner and Dr. Beanes were dismissed, as had been promised and Key returned to Baltimore where his ode was put to music and has now become our National Anthem

