

“*...In Triumph Shall Wave...*”

FRANCIS SCOTT KEY



FORT McHENRY

NATIONAL MONUMENT
and HISTORIC SHRINE

The Birthplace of the "Star-Spangled Banner"

MARYLAND



FORT McHENRY

National Monument and Historic Shrine

The successful defense of Fort McHenry against a heavy British naval bombardment in September 1814, during the War of 1812, and the writing by Francis Scott Key of "The Star-Spangled Banner" in a burst of enthusiasm and inspiration induced by the successful defense which he watched from a distance, are the principal historical events commemorated in the preservation and maintenance of Fort McHenry for the benefit and inspiration of the people.

All the deeply stirred emotions evoked in Americans by sight of the "Stars and Stripes" have special meaning when the Nation's flag is seen floating in the breeze over Fort McHenry. It was here that a glimpse of a similar flag in the early days of the struggling Republic brought forth the commonly accepted classic expression of American patriotism and love of country. Because they so truly reflect the feelings and sentiments of the American people, the words struck off in the inspiration of a moment are now sung and played throughout this land of liberty as a grateful people's national anthem.

Early History

The first fortifications at the site of Fort McHenry were built early in the American Revolution. In 1775, when the Provincial Convention of Maryland ordered the construction of fortifications for the defense of Baltimore harbor, the point of land commanding the entrance to the harbor was selected as the most strategic location for the fort. Early in 1776 an 18-gun battery was installed here, and defense preparations were completed. The defenses were named Fort Whetstone.

In the 1790's, when hostilities with European countries appeared likely, Congress authorized a program of fortifications for the defense of the coast. In 1794, Fort Whetstone was offered by the City of Baltimore to the Federal Government for use in the new program. The citizens of Baltimore urged the construction of a more adequate fort, and the Federal Government gave \$20,000 toward its erection. As this amount proved to be insufficient, the people of Baltimore raised

the rest of the funds necessary to complete the present star fort. Designed by Maj. J. J. Ulrich Rivardi, a prominent engineer, it was named Fort McHenry in honor of James McHenry, of Maryland, a native of Ireland, Secretary to General Washington during the Revolution and Secretary of War from 1796 to 1800. The construction of the fort as originally planned was completed in 1805.

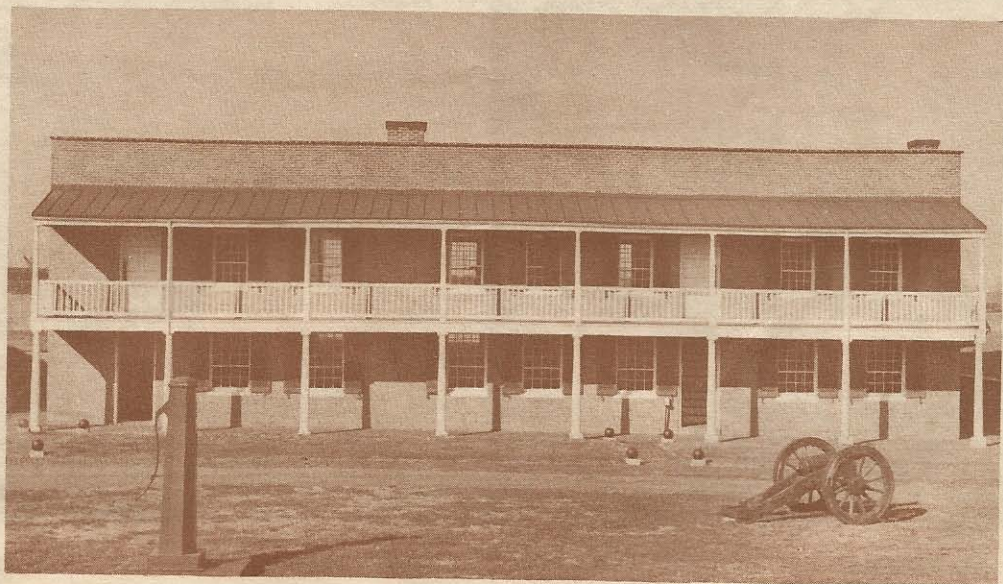
The War of 1812

At the time of the declaration of war against England in 1812, Baltimore had become one of the leading seaports in the United States, as well as an important naval center. Many of the vessels of the American Navy had been built there, including the famous frigate *Constellation*. Early in the war, Congress authorized privateering, and the use of Baltimore as a base for many privateers increased the city's military and naval importance. In order to forestall these operations, the British blockaded the Chesapeake and, in April 1813, sent a fleet up the Patapsco River. The militia was ordered out, and the people of Baltimore hastily strengthened the fortifications around the city. Seeing these evidences of preparedness, the British did not risk an attack.

On September 11, 1814, the British fleet, this time of more than 50 sail, again appeared in the Patapsco. The British had just succeeded in capturing Washington and burning the Federal buildings there, and an attack against Baltimore was now planned. About 5,000 troops, many of them Wellington's "Invincibles," seasoned veterans of European conflicts, were landed near North Point, 10 miles east of the city. After the battle of North Point, which followed this landing, the British troops advanced against stubborn resistance to within a few miles of Baltimore where they awaited the result of the bombardment of Fort McHenry. British warships, including 5 bomb vessels, continued up the Patapsco to within two or two and a half miles of Fort McHenry.

At the fort, a garrison of 1,000 men, under the command of Maj. George W. Armistead, awaited the attack of the fleet. On the morning of September 13, 16 vessels of the enemy fleet moved up the Patapsco in an attempt to push their way past the fort. During the fierce bombardment, more than 1,800 bombs were hurled at the fort from the British ships, some of them weighing 220 pounds, and innumerable round shot and rockets were fired by the attacking British squadron.

The critical point of the struggle came at



Old Barracks building, now used as a museum

about one o'clock on the following morning when a British force of approximately 1,200 men, carrying scaling ladders, tried to land in the rear of the fort. This movement was discovered, however, and the converging cross-fire from the fort and shore batteries farther up the river forced them to abandon the attempt. The bombardment of Fort McHenry lasted continuously for 25 hours, but the damage was not severe. Of the defenders only four were killed and twenty-four wounded.

"The Star-Spangled Banner"

It was during the bombardment of Fort McHenry that Francis Scott Key was inspired to write "The Star-Spangled Banner." With John S. Skinner, the Government agent handling the exchange of prisoners, he had left Baltimore some days before on a ship carrying a flag of truce to intercede for the release of a friend, Dr. William Beanes, who had been seized by the British at Upper Marlboro, Md. Key was detained by the British on board a small American vessel anchored behind the enemy fleet during the attack. From this point he watched throughout the night the spectacle of the British fleet throwing a continuous stream of shot, bombs, and rockets at Fort McHenry. As dawn broke, he saw the American flag still flying and knew that the attack had failed. There are several different versions as to when Key wrote the verses of "The Star-Spangled Banner." The generally accepted version is that given by Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, brother-in-law of Key. According to Taney, Key wrote the poem on an envelope while on his way from the British fleet to the shore. Apparently the rough outline of the poem had come to his mind during the bombardment. The poem was struck off in handbill form in the printing office of Capt. Benjamin Edes, of Baltimore, a day or two after Key came ashore, and it was published September 20 in the *Baltimore Patriot*. Set to music to the tune of "To Anacreon in Heaven," the verses were soon being sung in taverns and theaters throughout the land as an expression of American patriotism.

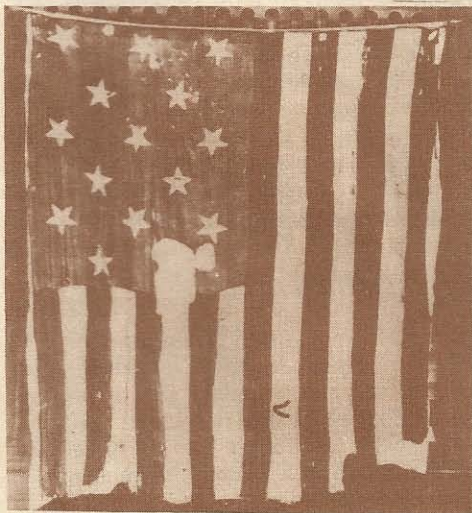
Fort McHenry, 1815-1918

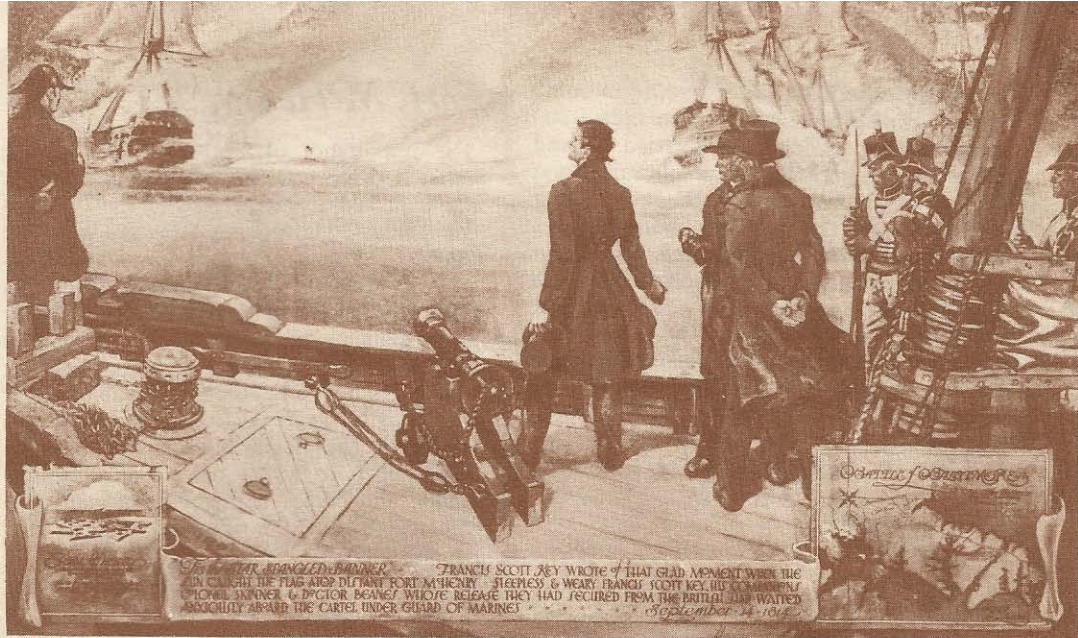
The importance of Fort McHenry in the national defense decreased as time went by, but it played a part in each of the Nation's emergencies. During the Mexican War, the Maryland Volunteer Artillery was mobilized at Fort McHenry and embarked from this point for the war. In 1861, Francis Key Howard, a grandson of the author of our National Anthem, was imprisoned at the fort, ironically enough, as a Southern sympathizer. The Maryland National Guard was inducted into service at the beginning of the Spanish-American War by the officers of Fort McHenry, and before that, the Baltimore regiments were trained in rifle practice at the fort. At the close of World War I the entire reservation was for a time turned into a convalescent hospital, and many barracks were erected for the treatment of wounded and disabled veterans.

Fort McHenry, Today

The old fort, with its five bastions forming a five-pointed star, has been restored approximately to its original appearance. This fine example of late eighteenth century military

This flag, known as "The Star-Spangled Banner," was flown over Fort McHenry during the bombardment in September 1814. Note the 15 stars and 15 stripes. This flag is now in the U. S. National Museum in Washington, D. C. (Courtesy U. S. National Museum.)





"'Tis the Star-Spangled Banner," original painting by George Gray, now in museum at Fort McHenry

architecture is entered through an arched sally port, flanked on both sides by dungeons. Within the fort are located the officers' and enlisted men's barracks. Across the parade, opposite the sally port, is the powder magazine with masonry walls and roof 13 feet thick. From the ramparts by the flagstaff one can look down upon the Patapsco River, where in 1814 the British fleet attempted to force its way past the fort.

The old buildings house museums devoted principally to the fort's early history. Outstanding exhibits are those pertaining to "The Star-Spangled Banner" and to military arms. Among the contributions made to the Fort McHenry Museum are the E. Berkley Bowie collection of firearms, presented in 1935 by the Maryland Society of 1812, and the painting, "'Tis the Star-Spangled Banner," presented in 1939 after a successful campaign for its purchase by public-spirited Baltimore citizens.

The Monument

Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine includes the five-pointed brick star fort and a surrounding area 47 acres in extent. First established in 1925 as a national park, an act of Congress in 1939 redesignated the area as a national monument and historic shrine.

How to Reach the Fort

Fort McHenry, situated in Baltimore, about 3 miles from the heart of the city, is readily accessible, East Fort Avenue leading directly to it.

Service to the Public

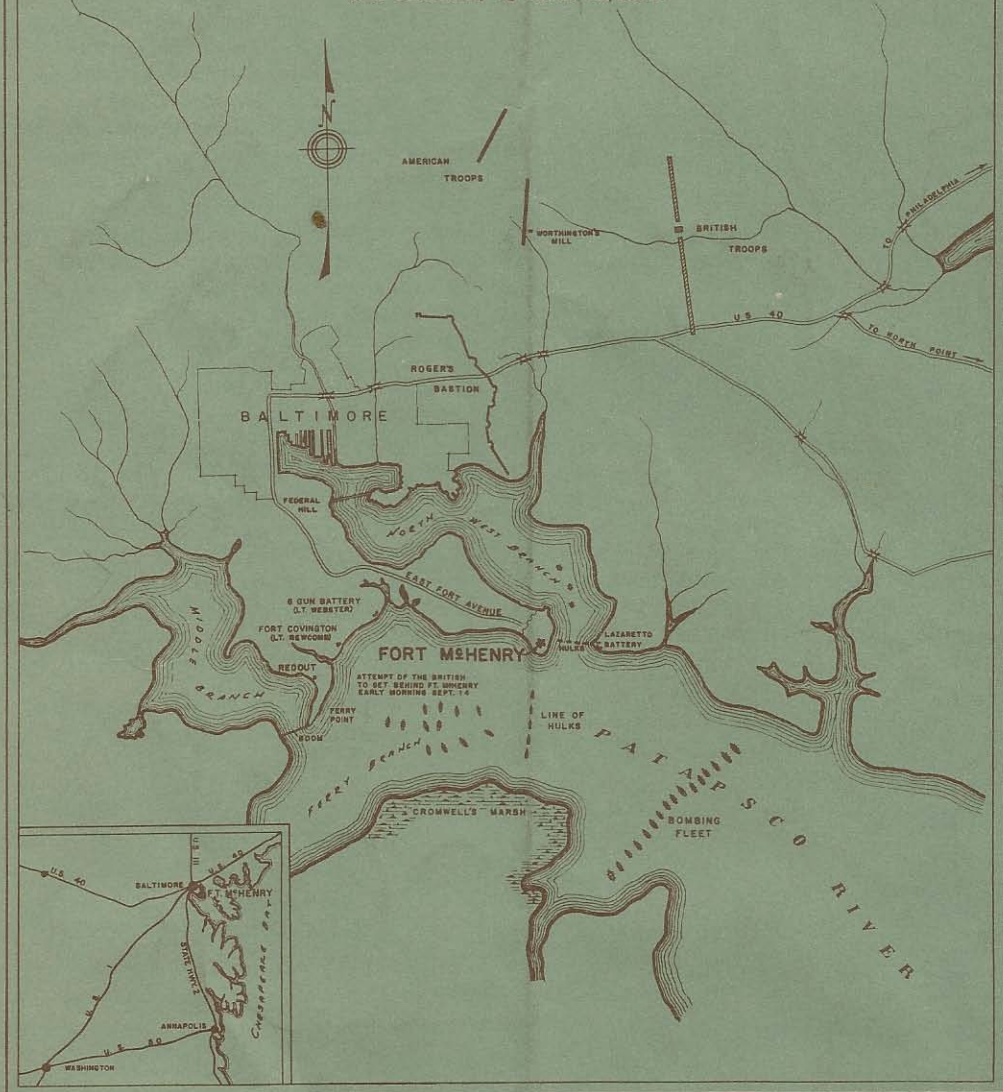
Fort McHenry is open to the public daily throughout the year, including Sunday, from 7:30 a. m. to 5:30 p. m. The museum buildings, however, open at 9 a. m., and close at 5 p. m. An admission fee of 10 cents is charged visitors more than 16 years of age, with the exception of members of school groups, who are admitted free up to 18 years of age. Organizations or groups will be given special service if arrangements are made in advance with the custodian.

Administration

Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine is administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. Communications should be addressed to the Custodian, Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine, Baltimore, Md.

BOMBARDMENT OF FORT M^CHENRY

SEPTEMBER 13 AND 14, 1814.



A 16-page illustrated booklet dealing with Fort M'Henry and its significance in American history may be obtained from the custodian or from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., at 10 cents a copy.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, *Harold L. Ickes, Secretary*

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, *Newton B. Drury, Director*