

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

"Defenders' Day Celebration"

Carroll County Times article for 13 August 1995

By Jay A. Graybeal

September 12th will mark the 181st anniversary of the Battle of North Point, an American victory which was a prelude to the bombardment of Ft. McHenry. The latter attack inspired Francis Scott Key, born in the part of Frederick County that would later become Carroll County, to write the "Star Spangled Banner."

A number of local residents participated in the defense of Baltimore and these men were often known as "Old Defenders" later in life. Among them was Jacob Reese (1797-1872), who served as a musician in Capt. William Blizzard's Company, 15th Regiment of Maryland Militia. When Jacob Reese died in 1872, his obituary in the Westminster Democratic Advocate newspaper noted, "Mr. Reese was one of the Defenders of Baltimore, during the attack of the British upon that city, in 1814, and although only about sixteen years of age, he bore his share in that conflict."

A brief mention of Jacob Reese's service record can be found in *The British Invasion of Maryland, 1812-1815* written by William M. Marine and edited by former New Windsor resident Louis Henry Dielman. In his forward to a 1965 reprint of the 1913 original edition, Francis F. Beirne wrote of Mr. Dielman.

"Contributing to the importance of the history was the collaboration of Louis Henry Dielman, for many years executive secretary and librarian of the Peabody Institute. Mr. Dielman edited the manuscript and added an appendix containing the names of nearly 12,000 soldiers and sailors, natives or citizens of Maryland who served in the war, and the names of their units."

Information about the service of nearly 3,000 Frederick County veterans can be found in *Frederick County Militia in the War of 1812* by Sallie A. Mallick and F. Edward Wright. The authors have examined surviving muster and pay rolls and searched for corresponding bounty land and pension applications. These latter documents yielded a wealth of information about the veteran's military service, subsequent activities and family history. This book also contains an overview of the Frederick County militia during the war and useful appendices of information from the Adjutant General Papers, Commission Books and from the Muster Rolls of active units.

In observance of Defenders' Day, a Maryland state holiday, the Defender's Day Foundation, Inc., sponsors an annual event entitled "MARCH BACK IN TIME" at Ft. Howard Park in Baltimore County. This year's observance will be held on Saturday September 9 (rain date September 10th) from 10:00 a. m. to 6:00 p. m. A brochure for the event includes an overview of the Battle of North Point:

On that day, September 12, 1814, 4,000 British troops flushed with their success at burning Washington three weeks earlier, landed in the area of what is now Fort Howard. After a preliminary skirmish during which the British commander, General Ross, was killed, 3000 American militia under the command of Brigadier General Stricker engaged the main British force. Unlike the rout at Washington, the American militia held its ground, successfully delaying the British advance long enough to allow the reinforcement of the defensive fortifications around Baltimore. At the end of the day, Stricker's forces pulled back to join the 10,000 troops already assembled at Hampstead Hill (in what is now Patterson Park), leaving the British forces encamped on Bread and Cheese Creek.

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The next day, as the British army resumed its march on Baltimore, part of the British fleet sailed up the Patapsco River towards the town, planning a secondary attack by sea. On the morning of September 13, the British Navy began bombarding Fort McHenry. Despite heavy shelling that continued into the following morning, the fort did not fall and the British ships withdrew in defeat. Early on the morning of September 14th, slowed by the fighting at North Point, and demoralized by the loss of their commander and the Navy's failure to reduce Fort McHenry, the British army, which had advanced to within sight of Baltimore, decided to retreat without engaging the Americans further.

The Battle of North Point was a turning point of the War of 1812, and was a major influence on the negotiations for the peace treaty signed three months later.

The Defenders' Day Celebration features a number of living history offerings including War of 1812 military camp life, early nineteenth century trades people (blacksmiths, pewtersmiths, quilters, spinners and weavers, woodworkers, housewrights and sawyers, basketmakers, steel engravers and brickmakers). Visitors can learn about early nineteenth century customs and practices, games and toys, cooking, clothing, medical and medicinal arts, arts and entertainments, music, dance, storytelling, magic, and see an authentic "medicine show". The Battle of North Point will be reenacted at 11:30 a. m. and again at 4:00 p. m. Visitors will also be able to see first person interpretations of Mr. and Mrs. Francis Scott Key, General John Stricker, Rev. Joshua Thomas, Dolly Madison and others. There will also be special historical exhibits about the War of 1812 era presented by several Maryland museums. For more information about this event, you may call (410) 637-7493.

Photo Caption: Jacob Reese (1797-1872) of Westminster served as a musician during the defence of Baltimore during the War of 1812. Known as "Old Defenders," these veterans are honored each year on Defenders' Day, September 12th. For nearly a decade the Defender's Day Foundation sponsors a reenactment and living history celebration at Fort Howard Park in Baltimore County. Historical Society of Carroll County Collection, Gift of Paul Reese, 1941.