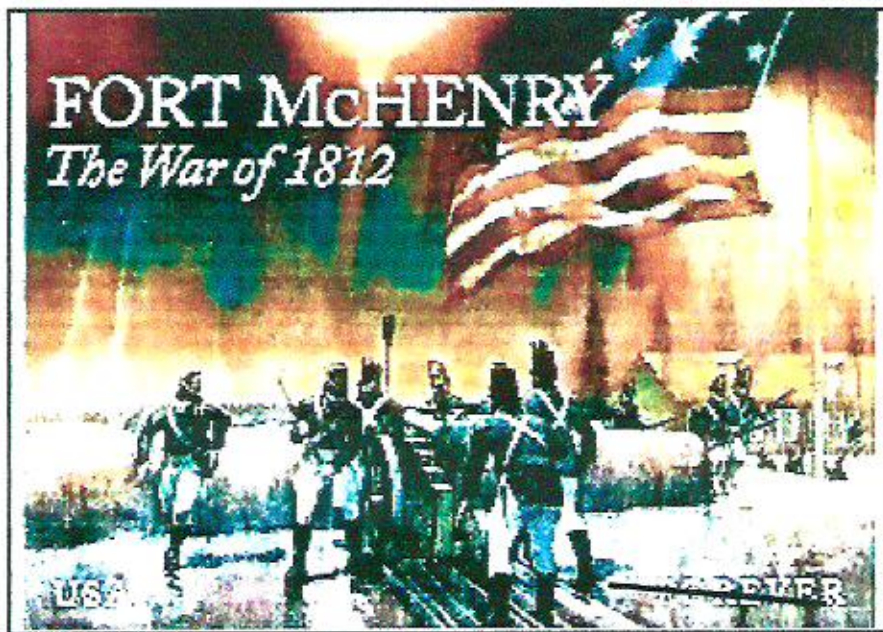


For those that are looking through the newsletters on line or receive your newsletter through email, here is some information and a facsimile of the stamp on this quarter's newsletter



THE WAR OF 1812

FORT McHENRY



In the summer of 1814, Britain launched an offensive "into the very heart of America," as one British officer put it. Burning the White House and other public buildings in the nation's capital in August, the British then sailed up the Chesapeake Bay to attack Baltimore, Maryland.



THE WAR OF 1812: FORT McHENRY

BALTIMORE WAS THE THIRD LARGEST CITY in the country and an important commercial hub. It boasted an energetic militia of some 10,000 citizens who had recently constructed an extensive system of earthworks in preparation for a British assault by land. The city was also protected by Fort McHenry, a star-shaped fortification built in the 1790s at the narrow entrance to Baltimore's harbor.

After the British Army met stiff resistance on land, Vice Admiral Alexander Cochrane of the Royal Navy attempted to attack the city by getting past the defenses of Fort McHenry, which was manned by 1,000 troops under the command of Major George Armistead.

For some 25 hours beginning on the morning of September 13, Cochrane's squadron fired more than 1,500 rounds of shells and rockets at the fort, while his ships remained safely out of range of the fort's guns.

Maryland native Francis Scott Key, a 35-year-old lawyer, witnessed this massive display of firepower from the deck of an American flag-of-truce vessel. He had just completed negotiations with the British for the release of an American prisoner confined aboard a ship in the British fleet.

On the morning of September 14, Key realized that the bombardment had been a failure when he saw the British squadron withdrawing downriver. The garrison flag was run up over the fort at 9:00 a.m., confirming the post was still in American hands.

Key was so moved that he wrote "The Defence of Fort McHenry" to the tune of an old English song, and it quickly gained wider recognition under the title "The Star-Spangled Banner."



George Armistead served as the commander of Fort McHenry during the British assault on Baltimore in the War of 1812.

