

0. ATTACK ON FT. McHENRY - Story Preface

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On the 13th of September, 1814, ships of the Royal Navy began their bombardment of Ft. McHenry at Baltimore Harbor (near Washington D.C.). The events took place during the War of 1812 (sometimes called the "Second War of American Independence"). This painting—by LTJG (Lieutenant Junior Grade) James W. Murray, USN (U.S. Navy)—depicts the artist's impression of the night-time scene which inspired Francis Scott Key to write "The Star Spangled Banner." Image online via [Naval History & Heritage Command](#) (NHHHC image NH86765). Click on the image for a better view.

The attack on [Baltimore](#) and Fort McHenry began on September 13th. Aboard the British ship, [Key watched the battle](#).

The British were using a new type of military [bombshell](#) that exploded into deadly fragments. [Traveling](#) 2½ miles, those "rockets" produced red streaks in the night sky.

[Ft. McHenry](#) held on through most of the night. Key could see its fifteen-star flag as the rockets lit up the sky. [It](#) was a huge flag, measuring thirty by forty-two feet. Major Armistead had ordered it that way so the "British would have not trouble seeing it from a distance."

Key could see it from a distance, too.

The continued shelling, between both sides, gave Francis Scott Key hope. He figured as long as the battle continued, Ft. McHenry was resisting and Baltimore could be saved. For twenty-five hours the British bombarded the fort.

But then, sometime during the night, the shelling stopped. All was quiet.

Had McHenry fallen? Did the British break through to Baltimore?

Key did not know. He could not see anything. And ... he was worried.

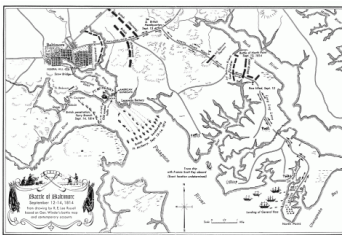
See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ATTACK-ON-FT.-McHENRY-Star-Spangled-Banner>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

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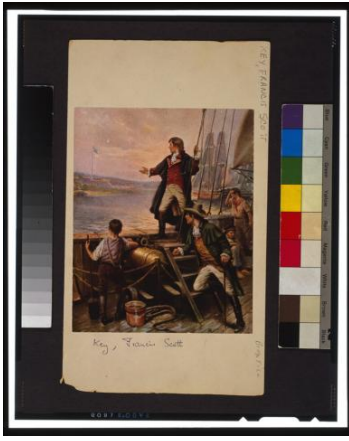
Media Stream



Battle of Baltimore - Map Locator

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Park Service.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Battle-of-Baltimore-Map-Locator>



Francis Scott Key - Watches the Battle for Baltimore

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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War of 1812 - Bombshell from Attack on Ft. McHenry

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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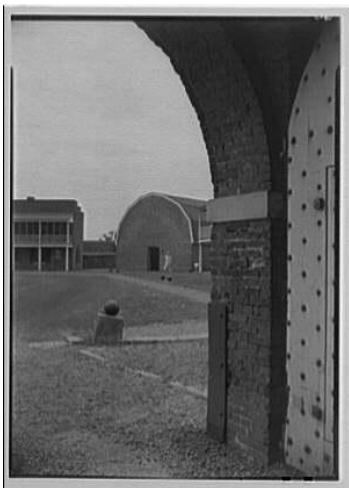
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/War-of-1812-Bombshell-from-Attack-on-Ft.-McHenry>



Rocket-like Bombshells

Image online, courtesy the National Park Service.

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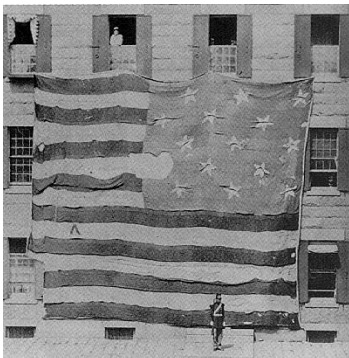


View of Ft. McHenry

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress.

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American Flag at Ft. McHenry

Image online, courtesy Wikipedia Commons.

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ATTACK ON FT. McHENRY

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