PROGRESS REPORT ON FORT FREDERICK, SP-1, MD.

BY

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Location: Fort Frederick is located about three and one-half miles south of the National Highway at Indian Springs, and about eighteen miles west of Hagerstown, Maryland.

History: An historical sketch of Fort Frederick was published some years ago by W. McCulloch Brown, consequently we need only sketch the story here.

After the disastrous defeat of General Edward Braddock on July 9, 1755, the situation on the Western Frontier, then exposed to attack from both the French and the Indians, became very alarming. In December the Governors of the Provinces of Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New York, and Maryland met to arrange plans for combatting the enemy. Shortly afterwards, in February, 1756, the Maryland Assembly convened to provide means for carrying out its part of the program. After much discussion in May, 1756, the Assembly passed an Act for the construction of a maximum of four blockhouses and one fort on the western frontier. At the same time provision was made for a garrison of two hundred men, officers included.

In pursuance of the above Act, Governor Horatio Sharpe purchased 150 acres of land on the north bank of the upper Potomac River and with the aid of 150 men began the construction of blockhouses and a strong fort for the protection of the frontier.

The fort, called Fort Frederick probably in honor of the sixth Lord Baltimore, was on an elevated plateau, a short distance from the Potomac River. Since engineers were not to be had and since all of the officers were ignorant of everything that related to fortifications or places of defense, most of the work of designing and constructing Fort Frederick fell to Governor Sharpe himself. Perhaps some little advice or criticism was obtained from George Washington because we know that while Sharpe was at Fort Frederick, Colonel Washington paid him a visit and brought the news that he was
building a strong fort at Winchester.

The Governor patterned his fort partly after neighboring frontier forts and partly after European models. The enceinte had the lines of the main stronghold of nearby Fort Cumberland, a fort several times visited by Governor Sharpe, notably in January, 1755. The stone walls of the main gate of Fort Frederick extend inward a considerable distance as though Sharpe contemplated erecting a sentinels' guard room and officers' guard room on the left and right sides respectively as at Fort Cumberland. The wooden gate at Fort Cumberland was mounted in the middle of the gateway and opened inward; there is evidence that the gate of Fort Frederick was similarly placed. At Fort Cumberland the magazine was located in the bastion just to the left of the gateway. At Fort Frederick the corresponding bastion is slightly oversized and six pound cannon balls were found therein, suggesting that this was the site of a magazine also. At Fort Frederick, just outside of the northwest bastion, the stone foundations of an old building were found on a site analogous to that of the hospital or Commissary's house at Fort Cumberland. On the other hand the pretentious size of Fort Frederick and its stone walls bring to mind the fortresses of the Old European Countries.

Fort Frederick was quadrangular in shape and had a bastion at each corner. The exterior lines were 120 yards in length. The stone walls were three feet thick for the curtains and four feet thick at the bottom and three feet thick at the top for the bastions. The bastion walls were further strengthened by earthen embankments and a six pounder was mounted in each bastion. For firing over the curtain walls the Governor could have had only a wooden platform or catwalk, as at Fort Ontario, because the curtain walls were not strong enough to support an earthen banquette. Moreover, unlike the bastion walls which were pointed with mortar only on the outside face, the curtain walls were pointed on both the outside and inside faces thereby showing that dirt was not banked up against them.

The barracks inside the fort were made for 200 men, but if occasion demanded it they could accommodate twice that number. The foundations were of stone. A recently discovered letter written by Captain Beall in 1756 suggests that the superstructure of these buildings was of hewn logs squared and that the chimneys were of brick, but of these details we cannot be absolutely sure.

The Maryland Assembly complained much about the size of Fort Frederick, which they said was so big that it could not be
...defended without a number of men larger than the province could support. They also objected to the cost, which had amounted to 2,000 pounds by August, 1756. Sharpe countered with the statement that Washington's fort at Winchester (Fort Loudon) would cost four times as much and would not be half as good. The burning of a number of stockade forts at the hands of the French and Indians would seem to be Governor Sharpe's justification for building his fort of more durable materials, as he said of "stone and earth". The total cost of the fort by December, 1757, was 6,000 pounds.

During the latter part of 1756 and the first months of 1757, 200 Maryland militiamen under Captain Eli Dagworthy garrisoned the fort. Dagworthy was sent to Fort Cumberland in April, 1757, and Captain Alexander Beall took command with 250 men.

The Fort, although its strength may very well have discouraged attack, played very little part in the French and Indian War. Until Fort Duquesne was captured by General Forbes in November, 1758, the Maryland frontier continued to be in danger and during this time Fort Frederick served as a base for military supplies and as a place of refuge for frontier families. Several parleys with the Cherokee Indians were also held at Fort Frederick, notably in April, 1757. Early in the Spring of 1756, a fierce encounter took place on Lost River in Hardy County, West Virginia, near Fort Riddle, between a French Captain and Fifty Indians on the one side and a party of Virginians on the other. The French Captain was killed. On his person was found a commission and instructions to attack Fort Frederick. Although the capture of Fort Duquesne in November, 1758, somewhat relieved the frontier situation the garrison remained at Fort Frederick until the close of the French and Indian War in 1763.

During the Revolution, prisoners of war were quartered at Fort Frederick. The barracks were at this time reconditioned and we may surmise that the dirt embankments in the bastions and the firing platform along the curtain walls were torn down to keep the prisoners from escaping. In 1780 there were 1100 prisoners at the Fort.

The fort seems to have played little or no part in the War of 1812, but during the Civil War Fort Frederick again became a frontier fort and a part of the First Maryland Regiment under General John R. Kenly was garrisoned therein. At this time a hole was knocked in the south curtain wall and a cannon mounted so as to command the approach from that quarter. On December 25, 1861, there was a skirmish at or near Fort Frederick, but no really determined effort to take the fort was ever made.

After passing into private hands in the post-war period,
Fort Frederick was again acquired by the State of Maryland and restoration was commenced by the CCC late in 1934.

Restoration of Fort Frederick: When the writer was appointed assistant Regional Historian in June 1935, the archeological work at the Fort had been completed, and reconstruction of the fort walls had proceeded so far that we were committed to a program of restoration. In the succeeding months the entire stone facing of the old fort was restored with the exception of the top of the fort wall which was left slightly ragged since we did not know the exact height of the walls and since we did not wish to entirely destroy the appearance of age. Additional archeological trenches were opened at strategic places but only one new foundation came to light. This was a building just outside the northwest bastion. Comparison with the plan of Fort Cumberland suggests that this stone foundation may have been the cellar of either the Commissary's house or the fort hospital. The foundations of this building and the foundations of the officer's quarters and barracks inside the fort have all been raised to the ground level and capped to protect them from frost action. The visitor to Fort Frederick today can see the stone facing of the fort, very much as it looked in Governor Sharpe's time, and it is also possible to examine each foundation and reconstruct in one's imagination the buildings that must have been inside the fort.

Since the archeological work had been performed without keeping a record of where artifacts were found, the writer devised maps with grid lines and a system of site survey cards and specimen data cards. These have been filled out by the same personnel that excavated the artifacts. In consequence we have remedied to a large extent the error that had been committed before we took charge of the historical work in the old Third Region.

Much time and research was spent in trying to find a plan of Fort Frederick. Maryland sources at Baltimore and Annapolis were searched in vain as were the files of the Library of Congress, and the indices of the records in Michigan, California, Virginia, France, England, and Canada. Letters were written to the University of Michigan and to the Canadian Archives at Ontario. Professor Stanley Pargellis of Yale searched the library at Yale and Harvard and had other researches made by his friends at the Huntington Library in California - still the plan of Fort Frederick has not been found.

Under these circumstances restoration of structures other than the fort walls has necessarily proceeded slowly. The fort well has been restored and emergency approval has just been granted by the Maryland Park Authority and Inspector Woodward to rebuild the earthen gun mount in the northwest bastion and to reconstruct a section of the wooden catwalk or firing platform along the west
curtain wall. These restoration features are based on the known engineering facts about the fort walls, on the archeological plan of the fort, on examples of other mid-eighteenth Century forts at Fort Ontario, Fort Ticonderoga, etc., and upon such Eighteenth Century manuals on fortification as L. LeBlond, *Elements de fortification contenant La Construction raisonnée de tous Les ouvrages de la fortification*, Paris, 1764, and John Muller, *A Treatise containing the Practical Part of Fortification* for use of the Royal Academy of Artillery at Woolwick, London, 1755.

The only other restoration work contemplated at this time is the wooden gate of the fort. It is felt that by limiting restoration work to one bastion and one section of the catwalk and to the fort wall and fort gate enough will have been restored to enable the visitor to visualize the fort in action and yet enough will be left unrestored to permit the full use of the imagination and recreate a sense of the past.

For museum and educational displays the writer prefers exhibits in the administration building to signs or trailside museum structures which would seem out of place in an Eighteenth Century Fort. The museum program now contemplated includes photostats of plans of contemporary forts such as Fort Ticonderoga, Fort Cumberland, etc., and a map showing the other forts in the frontier chain, pictures of Colonial and Revolutionary soldiers in uniform, and explanatory material to go with Fort Frederick's rich store of artifacts.

Appendix

1. Copy of the justification for the restoration of the northwest bastion and catwalk.
2. Copy of letter by Professor Stanley Pargellis of Yale, Visiting Professor of History at Harvard University.
3. Plans of the restored northwest bastion and catwalk.
4. Typical site survey cards and specimen data cards.
5. Grid map (archeological) of the fort.
6. Grid map (archeological) of the park.
7. Pictures of Fort Frederick before and after restoration work, December, 1934 - October, 1936.
8. Archeological plan of the Fort, 1934.

Respectfully submitted,

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Assistant Historian
RESTORATION OF THE NORTHWEST BASTION AND SECTION OF THE CATWALK (BANQUETTE)

JUSTIFICATION.

At present, visitors to Fort Frederick cannot understand how anyone ever managed to fire at an enemy from Fort Frederick's high walls. It is desired to remedy this condition by restoring the earthen gun mount in the northwest bastion and the wooden firing platform along the west curtain wall. Governor Sharpe at the time of the building of Fort Frederick stated that he was going to mount a six-pounder in each bastion and that the fort was being built of stone and earth. In restoring the northwest bastion, we merely intend to put back the earth that was there originally. The sixteen foot width of the gun mount is outlined on the archaeological plan of the fort made by Washington Reed (See northeast and southwest bastions). Contemporary manuals on fortification show that this sixteen foot dirt platform should come within four feet six inches of the top of the stone parapet. This would give us an en barbette gun mount in the northwest bastion, which is what Sharpe must have had since one six pounder had to service all angles of the bastion in question. The barbette would be approached by two ramps, the width of which should be ten feet in each case. Subtracting ten feet from the sixteen feet mentioned above and shown on the archaeological plan of the fort, we get six feet for the width of the wooden firing platform that ran along the curtain walls. This platform ran partly into the bastion as is evidenced by the joist holes in the walls of the southeast bastion. These same holes, and others along the east curtain wall show that the floor joists of the wooden firing platform were at least six by six inches in size. The notching of the timbers and the supports are details taken from John Muller's A Treatis Containing the Practical Part of Fortification For Use of the Royal Academy of Artillery At Woolwich, London, 1755.

Precedent for the wooden firing platform, or catwalk, is found at Fort Ontario. As to the wisdom of undertaking more reconstruction work we can cite the opinion of Dr. Stanley Pargellis of Yale University, the highest authority in this country on the campaigns and fortifications of the French and Indian War, who expressly stated to us in a letter dated July 20, 1936, that we ought to rebuild the officers' quarters, and that he would like to see us fill up a bastion or two, mount a cannon, put up a catwalk, and rebuild the wall. This is the sort of thing being done by the Canadian Historical Sites and Monuments Board. It would reconstruct just enough of the fort to make it intelligible to visitors, yet leave plenty of scope for the imagination and recreate a sense of the past.

NOTE: Emergency approval for this work given by the Maryland Park Authority, by Inspector Woodward, and by C. W. Porter, Assistant Historian.
Dear Dr. Porter:

I have put off answering your letter of June 29 until I saw what there was at Harvard that might of use to you. Nothing, I fear. My lead here came to no useful end.

I am sorry I haven't a copy of my letter of June 8. There was little in it that you had not already surmised. 1) One-story wooden barracks and officers' quarters, of timbers, probably adzed. I suggested that you see what working tools were provided; if you can get such a list of tools, you could hazard a notion as to the construction. 2) The question of a magazine in one of the bastions, and for that I should like to know what your masons say about the bricks required for fireplaces and perhaps paving. 3) The question of a platform along the curtains, for rifle fire. I should certainly think there was such a runway, probably with embrasures in the stone through which to fire. If you reproduce those, you know doubtless the sort of thing; angular, funnel-shaped openings, so arranged that every point in the approach can be covered from at least two embrasures. A Set of Plans and Forts in America, reduced from actual surveys (1763) may give you a notion about runways.

It is an interesting point you raise about the amount of reconstruction. Pell's work at Toconderoga leaves me with the feeling that too much has been done, even though it has been splendidly done. I should think you ought build the officers' quarters, and turn them into a museum, in which you would collect all the original data and mementoes that you can find. Maryland people, once interested, would be willing to contribute. I am surprised that an acquaintance of mine in New Hampshire, letting it be known that he is turning his barn into a museum of Americana, is continually receiving most interesting gifts from neighbors and strangers alike. You cannot reproduce the fort exactly as it was, and I wouldn't try. Fill up a bastion or two, mount a cannon, put up perhaps a catwalk, rebuild perhaps the well, and whoever is interested can get the rest of it in your museum. This is the sort of thing which is being done by the Canadian Historical Sites and Monuments Board. Personally I like it. Too much reconstruction destroys rather than recreates a sense of the past.

Is there anything for you in that bibliography of Maryland history in the March issue of the Maryland Historical Magazine?

Yours sincerely,

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