

president included his secretary, Tobias Lear, in this deceptive plan: "I wish to have it accomplished under pretext that may deceive both them and the Public," he wrote to Lear, referring to the slaves. When Ona Judge (also known as Oney Judge), a mulatto slave girl who was Martha Washington's personal attendant, learned that she was to be bequeathed to Mrs. Washington's granddaughter, Eliza Custis, she escaped into the night as the Washingtons dined. The president expended considerable resources in an unsuccessful effort to recover her, even sanctioning an advertisement in a local paper noting that Judge had "absconded from the household of the President of the United States." In 2003 the National Park Service began planning an exhibit to show the complex irony of life in the President's House during George Washington's tenure there. A line of small footprints, embedded in the exhibit plaza, moves in a northerly direction through the outline of the house, a powerful symbol of a slave fleeing to freedom.

Declaration House, now reconstructed, is one block west, at Market and 7th Streets. In a rented room on its second floor, Thomas Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence in the early summer of 1776. This document would soon be celebrated throughout the states with fireworks, cannonades, church bells, and parades. Though many Americans are taught that the Declaration was signed on the fourth of July, the Continental Congress merely agreed on its final language on that day in 1776. Jefferson's notes explain that, after much deliberation on July 2-4, agreement was reached "in the evening of the last closed. the declaration was reported by the comm[itt]ee, agreed to by the house, and signed by every member present except Mr. Dickinson." Historians believe that it was likely approved late in the morning of July 4—signed only by John Hancock, president of the Continental Congress—and that fifty representatives of the thirteen states signed it at the official signing ceremony on August 2, 1776 (the six others signed in the months following). Celebrations erupted as the messengers galloped into cities and towns shouting the news. John Adams presciently predicted the legacy of the Declaration in a July 3 letter to Abigail that referred to the work of the Congress on July 2: "I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated, by succeeding Generations, as the great anniversary Festival. It ought to be commemorated . . . solemnized with Pomp and Parade with shews, Games, Sports, Guns,

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now known as Patterson Park (some of the 1812 cannon in the park are authentic). "White and black are all at work together. You'll see a master and his slave digging side by side. There is no distinction whatsoever," noted a young woman. Troop barracks and gun platforms were hastily erected; trenches were dug and earthworks built. The gun battery and observatory on Baltimore's Federal Hill went on high alert. Baltimore banks lent \$663,000 to the effort, while individuals did what they could: 3,000 bricks from one and two bundles of lint from another, while a third contributed five barrels of whiskey. Baltimore in short order boasted a land-and-water defensive arc extending from Bel Air Road to the north-east across Hampstead Hill to the harbor—dozens of guns and more than 15,000 defenders. A chain of observation posts along the shore, with horse relays every ten miles, provided intelligence on the movements of the British fleet.

The British commander, Maj. Gen. Robert Ross, landed at North Point before dawn on September 12, planning to attack Baltimore the next day. Ross had nearly 5,000 men, consisting of marines, sailors, and a battalion of "disciplined Negroes," all carrying eighty rounds of ammunition. The blacks were likely escaped slaves known as "Colonial Marines," who were promised land and freedom in Nova Scotia by the British in exchange for their service. The heat rose as the men moved inland. A confident Ross laughed as his sailors vainly chased pigs and chickens, and proclaimed to a farmer who fed breakfast to him and his officers that he would "sup in Baltimore tonight—or in hell." His prophecy proved correct when a sharpshooter blew him from his horse. There is little consensus on the color of the general's horse (white or black) or who felled him—Henry McComas and Daniel Wells, young apprentices in the business of making saddles, being two likely possibilities. Both men, part of an advance skirmish line, died that day. Ross's corpse was sent to Nova Scotia in a hogshead of rum; his arrival in hell is as yet unconfirmed. The British forces, after warily eyeing the American defenses on Hampstead Hill for a night, withdrew, with the two forces so close to one another that one American, Lieut. Jacob Crumbaker, recalled that he "could hear the hogsqueal as [the British] killed them in their camp."

On Sunday, September 11, Baltimoreans anxiously awaited the arrival of British ships seen the day before sailing north up the Chesapeake Bay