

F 189  
.B1 L3  
Copy 1

2105

12

# ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

LAYING OF THE CORNER STONE

OF THE

# CITY HALL,

IN THE

*H*  
CITY OF BALTIMORE,

ON

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 18<sup>TH</sup>, 1867.

BY

*✓*  
JOHN H. B. LATROBE, ESQ.

---

COX'S MONUMENTAL PRINTING OFFICE,

*Gay and Lombard Streets.*

*Ev*



ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

LAYING OF THE CORNER STONE

OF THE

CITY HALL,

IN THE

*Y*  
CITY OF BALTIMORE,

ON

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 18<sup>TH</sup>, 1867,

BY

JOHN H. B. LATROBE, ESQ.

---

*Baltimore*  
COX'S MONUMENTAL PRINTING OFFICE,

*P12*  
Gay and Lombard Streets.

*1867.*



# ADDRESS.

---

MY FELLOW-CITIZENS :

I have accepted the invitation to deliver this Address with more than usual pleasure. I scarcely regret that a busy period of professional life has been broken in upon by its preparation.

For years the municipality of Baltimore has been housed in a way unbecoming the character of our people. The back parlor of an old-fashioned private residence has accommodated the Mayor, while the front parlor has been the Secretary's office, as well as the ante-room for the crowds having business with the Chief Magistrate of the city. The Register and the Comptroller have divided between them similar parlors in an adjacent building. The Appeal Tax Court has been packed away in a room some twelve feet by fifteen. The Police Commissioners were to be found in the back building of a house a century old, and left unfinished. The lower apartments of another building, eked out by shabby sheds, held the

Collector and his clerks. The Water Department had still more limited accommodations. The City Commissioner was stowed away in a third story, and the Park Commission was indebted to the Mayor's hospitality for a place in which to meet.

As for the Legislative Department, the First Branch held its sessions in what was formerly the very modest picture gallery of Peale's Museum, and the Second Branch succeeded a collection of stuffed animals in an adjacent room. Neither apartment was capable of being adapted to the uses to which it was put.

So long as there was no hope of change, a decent pride kept us silent in regard to what was, in truth, humiliating; but now that a day of better things is dawning, we may, without hesitation, allude to the past, and congratulate ourselves that in the building whose corner-stone we are about to lay, the municipal authorities will have escaped from such quarters as we have described.

Why we have remained so long without a reputable City Hall it is hard to say. If it has been from motives of economy, the economy has been an unwise one. In the life of an individual struggling to make his way in the world, it is doubtless proper to ask, prior to each expenditure, "Can I do without it?" and so, the dinner may be deprived of its dessert, and

the old garment be made to last through another season. But when the question concerns a city, and not a citizen, the application of the rule of private life may be inconsistent with the pride, patriotism, and interest of the community. Neither the monument to Washington nor the Battle Monument were necessities. Had neither been erected, we would still "have lived upon the fat and drunk the sweet wine upon the lees;" and yet, which of us would exchange for any other our epithet of "the Monumental City;" or who, after the war of 1812, did not hear with pride the toast that described us as "a people who gave graves to their foes and monuments to their defenders."

For years we lived without our Parks, and yet who would now restore them to their former owners, abandoning the shades of the one, or giving up the right to enjoy, as his own, the matchless view from the high ground of the other?

If our monuments redound to our patriotism, if our railroads demonstrate our enterprise, if our Parks illustrate our appreciation of the beautiful in Nature, our public buildings should not disgrace us by their inconvenience, their insignificance, and their insufficiency.

On an occasion like this, some reference to the early history of Baltimore naturally suggests itself as an appropriate topic, if only to perpetuate tradition

in regard to old memories that are rapidly vanishing away.

The first land taken up in our vicinity was Whetstone Point, on the south side of the basin. This was in 1662, when Charles the Second was King of England, Cecilius Calvert, Lord Baltimore, was Lord Proprietary of Maryland, and Philip Calvert was Governor of the Province. A piece of "glade land," so called by the old annalist, through which flowed Harford Run, was taken up in 1663; the neck of land between the middle and north branches of the Patapsco was next patented, and the year after a Mr. Thomas Cole took up four hundred and fifty acres, through which ran and debouched Jones' Falls, a name given to the stream by one David Jones, who was the first person to build a house on its banks, after purchasing the tract patented to Cole. Jones' house was on the north side of the Falls, near the head of tide, where what was then called "the Great Eastern road" crossed the stream by a ford, and passed northeastwardly in the direction of French street, towards the Susquehanna.

Improvement made slow progress in those days; and it was not until 1711 that any one was found adventurous enough to build a mill. This was done by Mr. Jonathan Hanson, at the corner of Holliday and Bath streets. We see the spot from where we stand. In 1723, however, there were people enough



collected to organize a town government, and the spot selected for the site was Moale's Point, including the level lands around Ferry Bar, in the southwestern section of the present city. This property belonged to Mr. John Moale, "a merchant from Devonshire," and a member of the Colonial Legislature. With very different ideas, apparently, of the value of ground rents, from those now entertained, Mr. Moale used his influence to defeat the bill that had been introduced to incorporate the town on his land; and the most profitable employment, perhaps, that his successors have been able since then to find for the property has been to use the clay for bricks to build houses and create ground rents in other places.

Moale's Point being out of the question, attention was directed to the north branch of the river, and in 1729 an act was passed by the Legislature "for erecting a town on the north side of the Patapsco, in Baltimore county, and for laying out into lots sixty acres of land in and about the place where one John Flemming now lives." Flemming was a tenant of Mr. Charles Carroll, an agent of the Proprietary, and resided in a house on the north side of Uhler's alley, near the corner of Charles street, according to our present nomenclature.

The first Commissioners of Baltimore town were seven in number, who held their offices for life, with power to fill their own vacancies. They might either

purchase or condemn the "sixty acres," which they were to divide into lots, giving to the owner of the land, Mr. Carroll, the first choice of a single lot. No one was authorized to take more than one lot during the first four months, and none but inhabitants of the county during the first six months; after which the property was thrown open to purchasers generally. All purchasers, however, were obliged to erect a house, covering not less than 400 square feet, in eighteen months, to procure a title. The survey was made on the 12th January, 1730, with the assistance of one Philip Jones, and began at the northwest corner of Pratt and Light streets, then ran along Uhler's alley towards "a great gulley" at Sharp street, then up Sharp street and across Baltimore street to McClellan's alley, which it pursued to the precipice which overhung the Falls at the corner of Saratoga and Saint Paul streets, thence southwardly and eastwardly to the low grounds west of Gay street, including the Fish street meeting-house, then along these low grounds southwardly to the river, and then following the meanderings of the river, along Water street, to the beginning. This description is not in the technical language of the survey, but is adapted to the present landmarks, and is accurate enough for our purpose.

Time does not suffice to follow Baltimore in its growth from year to year, or to describe how, as one

enlarges the garments of a child in his advance to manhood, addition after addition was made to the city. At first, it had but two streets—Baltimore, then called Long street, and Charles street, then called Forrest street—and nine one-perch “lanes.” The names of three of these have been preserved, in Lovely, St. Paul’s, and German, though the last two have been raised to the dignity of streets. The others appear at present in Lexington, South, Second, Light, Hanover, and North streets. As late as 1750, the town was surrounded by a board fence. In this there were two openings for carriages, one at the west end of Baltimore street and the other at the north end of Gay street. There was also a small opening for foot passengers on the hill near abouts where Saint Paul’s Church now stands. The fence was intended as a protection against a sudden surprise from Indian marauders, and was kept up for some three years by general subscription. A hard winter proved, however, too much for this very original fortification. It was pilfered for fire wood, and Lloyd Buchanan, Esquire, is recorded as having been employed to prosecute the thieves. The town Commissioners were then found to have no authority in the premises; and when this got to be understood, the town fence soon disappeared in smoke.

About this time, the bricks used in Baltimore were imported from England, and the Mount Clare man-

sion, the stately edifice still remaining to the southwest of the railroad station of the same name, was built with them, a fact worthy of mention, inasmuch as the fields on which the old house looks down, and which still belong to the descendants of the first owner, have since furnished the bricks of which a large part of our city has been built, of a quality unrivalled either in England or America.

In selecting the sites for cities, their founders generally have had regard to their economical extension. Penn selected the flat between the Delaware and Schuylkill. New Amsterdam, now New York, was planted on a comparatively level surface. Washington chose a vast plain as the site of the Capital of the Union. St. Louis had a plateau of the Mississippi on which to expand, and an almost boundless prairie of unbroken ground afforded space for the indefinite extension of Chicago. But it was far different with Baltimore. After Moale's Point was *tabooed*, nothing was left for those determined to have a town in the neighborhood but the marshes and sand hills around the homestead of John Flemming; and could I now present a model of the surface of the original "sixty acres," it would do more justice to those who made our city what it is, than can be done by mere verbal description of the topography of the year 1729. Still, let me attempt something in this direction.

Stand with me, in imagination, at the corner of

Calvert and Water streets, not long before the war of the Revolution. The Basin, as we now call it, is rippling at our feet, and across it rises Federal Hill, rugged and precipitous, as it has remained—all clay and sand, and colored with streaks of brown and red and yellow in fantastic mixture. At its base, a scant footway leads to Locust Point. To the left, the river seems shut in by ground on which the Lazaretto stands, the sharp turn southward around Fort McHenry being hidden in the distance. To the right, the water's edge is flat and marshy. A somewhat sluggish rivulet *debouches* near what is now the head of Light street wharf, and further southward, at the foot of a sand bank seamed with ravines, there is a spot of verdure, where the spring lately converged under ground to the basin gushes forth, and sparkles as it threads its way through the low ground to the Patapsco. Houses are scattered sparsely here and there, and boats are moving to and fro upon the water. Along the shore are ranges of tobacco hogsheads, and on the roads leading to the landing other hogsheads are in motion, like garden rollers, with a pin in the centre of each end, to which rude shafts are attached, for the horses that have dragged them in this manner for many a weary mile. The scene, on the whole, is not unpleasing; but it owes its interest to its business life rather than to its landscape beauties.

Turning from this, let us ascend Calvert street, still unpaved and far steeper than at present—the Baltimore street crossing being on a level with the platform of the present portico of Barnum's Hotel. There are many still living who remember the dilapidated frame buildings at the northwest corner of Baltimore and Calvert streets, whose underpinning, when the street was graded, made them look not unlike a gang of ragged cripples mounted upon stilts. Leaving them behind, we find ourselves in front of the Court House, occupying the site of the Battle Monument, and overlooking a steep sandy precipice, at the foot of which flows Jones' Falls. The house now standing at the northeast corner of Lexington and Calvert streets is about in its bed. When the street was graded in 1784, it became necessary to underpin the Court House, and Mr. Leonard Harbaugh acquired much renown by forming an archway underneath, through whose sides stairways led to the rooms above. When Mr. Harbaugh's work was done, the edifice was probably not unlike a Captain Bobadil, or a modern "rough," standing astride the street, with a hat, too small, set jauntily on his head, and represented by a little belfry, in which was the bell that rang the people into the courts of justice. Under the Harbaugh archway was the whipping post, on whose platform were the stocks, and on an upper platform was the pillory. The last use made of this mediæval con-

trivance was in 1808. Able and learned men were those who sat on the bench of this Court House of the olden time; men who owed their elevation to their knowledge of the law, and who gave dignity to the seats they occupied. Among them none was greater than Samuel Chase, who had signed the Declaration of Independence, and was elevated afterwards to the Supreme Court of the United States. He was one of the last who preserved the costume of the Revolutionary day; and, dressed in small clothes, with his scarlet cloak and three-cornered chapeau, was the type of a period then rapidly fading away, and now vanished forever. Whether we have gained anything by the change, not in costume but in legal lore, judicial integrity, or public morals, is a question which need not now be discussed.

Looking northward from the Court House, the Meadow lies before us, a pleasant, smooth, green flat, around which Jones' Falls, issuing from the rocky-mouthed ravine now spanned by the Eager street bridge, and hugging the steep hillsides to the west, winds its way, receiving in its course the City Spring bubbling from a high sand bank. The depth of the subsequent filling at this point is shown by the depth of the sunken area around the spring at the present time. Some idea of the great change that has been wrought in this part of the city may be inferred from the fact that a bay schooner was once built and

launched hard by the spring. From the foot of the Court-House hill the Falls take a northeasterly course, passing by the "town powder-house," along the present Fish street, towards the site of Gay street bridge, and thence turning southerly flows through marshes along Harrison street and Marsh Market space to the Patapsco. At this time there was no bridge at Gay street; but a ferry, or a ford, according to the stage of the water, served the wants of the "Great Eastern road," and connected Baltimore town with Old Town. The latter was then a separate municipality, afterwards united to Baltimore, but whose "boys" retain, it is believed, to this day their ancient cognomen. It was not until 1789 that the Meadow was thrown upon the west side of the Falls by Mr. Engelhard Yeiser and others, who cut a straight channel from Eager street to Gay street bridge.

Above the Meadow, to the north, Colonel Howard's mansion of Belvidere was built in 1783, directly opposite to the Court House, in the line of Calvert street. The Colonel was one of those men, in this world, who could look justice fearlessly in the face, and his dwelling was no inappropriate vis-a-vis to the halls of Themis. He was one of those, too, whose example, at Estaw and Cowpens, was not lost upon the brave men who fell at North Point, and whose monument the Colonel lived to see rise in sight of his parlor



windows, block by block, until the admirable sculpture that crowns it was lifted up to hold forever its marble wreath above this record of the honored dead.

To the northwest of the Court House we see the town jail, and beyond that—the jail intercepting the view—is Saint Paul's Church, a sort of hint, this interception, that the way from this world to a better may, for evil-doers, be "a hard road to travel."

The Saint Paul's we speak of was not the building afterwards destroyed by fire, but a barn-like edifice, on the edge of a sand hill, with the graves of departed congregations clustered around, their coffins at times being exposed by the violence of northeast storms. Close to Saint Paul's was a bell-tower, standing apart like a sentinel on duty—a sentinel of the shabbiest shape and uniform, and now long since relieved.

The curious may readily trace the topography here described by the steep streets of the present city, and if they have accompanied us in our imaginary walk, can now look with us from the Court-House hill eastward to the forest-covered heights of the Maryland Hospital, and southeastward over the marshes of Market space, across part of Old Town, and beyond "Mr. Fell's store and the houses around it," on Fell's Point, to the Patapsco proper, and thence along the river until its waters mingle with those of the distant bay, whose blue line against the sky forms the horizon in that direction:

In a rare old volume, compiled with unexampled diligence by Thomas W. Griffith, Esquire, and to which I am indebted for many of my facts, will be found a singularly detailed account of the growth of Baltimore up to 1820. The names of the merchants who came here, the dates of their arrival, their business, its influence upon the town, hints sometimes of their families—all this is recorded; and it is interesting to observe how many nationalities were represented in our early history. As was natural enough, we had Englishmen, Scotchmen, and Irishmen, for Great Britain was the mother country. But France contributed largely; so largely, indeed, as to appropriate a part of the town—the district on Charles street, north of Pratt, long known as Frenchtown. Germany was largely represented, and Holland contributed numbers of her careful, accurate, and intelligent merchants to swell the tide of prosperity. In later days, New England found out what was good, and brought its thrift into our midst. But in the early days it was upon the Maryland stock of cavalier antecedents, with grafts from beyond the seas, that our well-doing and increase hung.

We are a mixed race, we Baltimoreans of to-day; and if, as some pretend, it is with men as it is with animals, and crossing produces improvement, the beauty of our women, which has become proverbial, is accounted for, as well as the enterprise which has

ever been our distinguishing characteristic.

Nature favored Baltimore from the beginning. The location of the town, indeed, was sterile, but the country round about was fertile. A water carriage unrivalled elsewhere brought the products of the rich lands bordering the Chesapeake to Baltimore as their appropriate depot. The streams emptying into the Patapsco, and the Patapsco itself, came rushing to the tide and furnished mill sites for every species of manufacture. The hills to the west and southwest were filled with iron ore, and the ancient ore banks and the ruins of old furnaces show how well they were worked long years ago. Pig iron was sent to England to be refined in immense quantities. Copper existed in the hills to the north and west, and chrome lay in rich nests in the intervening vallies. Tobacco and wheat were the great staples of the State, and Baltimore soon became their place of export. No wonder, then, that the city attracted the nationalities referred to.

But there was yet another reason. Beyond the mountains lay the Mississippi and its tributaries, and to the navigable waters of these Baltimore was nearer, geographically, by many miles, than any other city north of her on the Atlantic seaboard. At first, by the pack horse, then by common roads, then by turn-pikes, she had availed herself of this advantage. But when the canals of New York and Pennsylvania,

by cheapening transportation, more than equalized the distance practically, another stride forward became necessary in order to hold the trade of the west; and here Baltimore again illustrated her spirit of enterprise by being the first to adopt, for general purposes, that system of railroads which ultimately restored to her the advantages of her geographical position. Her first great road to the west was the pioneer of all others in the land. The "Great Eastern road" of 1729 came down a gully in Sharp street, found McClellan's alley wide enough for its accommodation, crossed the Falls at a ford near Fish street, and wound its devious way through the forests that separated Baltimore from Joppa, then the seat of justice of the country between the Patapsco and the Susquehanna. Now there radiate from the city railroads in all directions, and the system of which they form a part refers for its origin, as regards all America, to the 28th day of February, 1827, when the State of Maryland, with no other guide than its turnpike charters, created the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company to do that with a capital of three millions which it has cost more than thirty millions to accomplish.

While this great work was struggling against obstacles of all sorts, absolutely forcing its way to the west by dint of an almost exhausting spirit of perseverance, driven by the hostile legislation of adjacent

States to adopt routes at one time looked upon as impracticable, while the other roads to the north, east, and south from the city were being completed, Baltimore made no advance in any of those respects which stamp the rank of cities as the die stamps the value of the coin. The old octagonal watch-boxes of the last century still sheltered the antiquated gentlemen who fancied they were protecting the city when they warned thieves of their approach by crying the hours during the watches of the night. The jail erected at the beginning of the century had become an overcrowded den. The "b'hoys" still "ran with the machine," and the volunteer fire department, with all its courage, devotion, and energy, still had its rows, fought its battles in the streets, and injured its own reputation while it interrupted the peace of the city. With streams of water all around, of sufficient élévation within reasonable distances to supply the city by natural flow, we were still indebted to the pumps of a private corporation to fill costly reservoirs, which a single great conflagration might exhaust.

We still relied, for all purposes of police, upon the tolling of bells or the speed of messengers on foot, to give notice of a fire, or to inform the authorities of a riot requiring force for its suppression. While New York, with nothing but a wilderness of rock and marsh to work upon, was rapidly making it "blossom

like a rose" in a vast pleasure ground, in which architecture illustrated its faculty to adorn, we were satisfied with scraps of woods, here and there in the vicinity, for shade, and dusty turnpikes for exercise and recreation, although around the city were tracts of virgin forest, with hill and dale and running brooks, that seemed to have been preserved by some special Providence for glorious Parks. Truly might it have been said that our railroads had exhausted our energies and left us satisfied with mediocrity, or even less, in all besides. But it was not so. The French have a saying, "*On recule pour mieux sauter,*" one steps backwards that he may spring further forwards, which describes, in some sort, the condition of our city at this time. The pause in general improvements that followed the completion of the railroads was the step backwards, for a city that stands still, in this regard, retrogrades, in fact, by comparison; the spring forward was due to a chief magistrate of Baltimore, the present Governor of the State, who demolished the old watch-boxes, who made steam and a paid fire department take the place of the old volunteer force, who removed the del-den upon the Falls and gave us an imposing structure adequate to the wants of the community, who discarded the ancient pump-houses and reservoirs and brought the water, by its natural flow, into the city, who gave us the telegraph for all purposes of police,

who made the street railways—in other places selfish monopolies—contribute to the public treasury, and who, lastly, but not least, devoted the revenue so secured to the purchase and adornment of public Parks, whose peculiar beauties are unequalled, and which are not only the pride of Baltimore, but the admiration of all strangers, from all lands, who visit them.

Nor in the enumeration of what has been done under the auspices of one of our chief magistrates, must we forget what has been accomplished in the same direction under the auspices of the present incumbent. The lake which bears his name, and now rapidly approaching completion, will make the city independent alike of the drowths which curtail the supply of water and the freshets which deteriorate it. Unique in its character and beautiful in its surroundings, it is being constructed to last for ages. And, still further to supply Baltimore with water as amply almost as was ancient Rome supplied, the wise forecast of the same administration has secured a river for the city's uses, when need shall be, in the purchase of the Gunpowder ; and again, last, but not least, the building whose corner-stone we this day consign to its place in the foundation, will relieve us from the humiliation of having the authorities of a city competent to the works we have described, occupy offices in all respects inferior to those of a

private corporation of the commonest pretensions. The municipality of Baltimore should be lodged as reputably, at least, as a bank or an insurance office; and the City Hall should not be inferior, as it so long has been, to the most modest of the railroad stations in our midst.

This sketch of the past and present of our city has necessarily been rapid and imperfect. In 1820 the Annals of Baltimore already filled a volume, and what, since then, has not been accomplished? Our pride in the emporium of Maryland will not be lessened by the edifice now to be erected. A desideratum will have been supplied when its spacious halls and commodious apartments shall be occupied for the purposes of the City Government, and second to none in extent of accommodation and architectural taste, it will place Baltimore among the foremost of cities renowned not only for commercial thrift, but for the refinement which should always be the accompaniment of freedom, and whose noblest illustrations have always been in their works of art.









LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 368 525 1