



AmericasFoundationMT
Presents

Francis Scott Key's



"Star-Spangled Banner"
(1812)

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Introduction

On June 18, 1812, the United States formally declared war with Great Britain. This would be the first time that the U.S. declared war on any other nation. The U.S. declared war for several reasons, for instance, Great Britain restricting the United States' trade agreements with France. The U.S. considered such restrictions as a violation of American rights and wanted to uphold its national honor in what would become the Second War of Independence. There were many battles fought on land and at sea (even though the American forces were outnumbered on both fronts) throughout the course of the war. One of which was the Battle of Fort McHenry. The night of September 13-14 became a historical night when British ships started bombarding Fort McHenry in Baltimore. The British ships were out of range of the U.S. cannons which never fired a single shot. All of the lights in Baltimore were extinguished that night, and the only light that was given off was from the shells exploding over the fort. During the attack a young American lawyer named Francis Scott Key (who was there to arrange a prisoner release) was put under guard on his own boat, where he could see the tattered flag (illuminated by the explosions) was still flying over the fort. This sight inspired him to write a poem that he titled "The Defence of Fort McHenry." The poem was later set to a popular British song called "The Anacreontic Song" (which was already popular in the U.S.) and was renamed "The Star-Spangled Banner". On March 3, 1931, President Herbert Hoover signed a congressional resolution that made "The Star-Spangled Banner" the national anthem of the United States of America. "The Star-Spangled Banner" was originally written with four stanzas, but a fifth stanza was added during the Civil War which is as true today as it was when it was written. If not for the War of 1812 "The Star-Spangled Banner" may never have been written.

"The Star-Spangled Banner"

O say can you see by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that your flag was still there;
O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave,
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

On the shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected now shines in the stream:

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'Tis the star-spangled banner, O! long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion,
A home and a country, should leave us no more?
Their blood has washed out their foul footsteps' pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave:
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave,
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

O thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand
Between their loved home and the war's desolation.
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the Heav'n rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation!
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto: "In God is our trust."
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

When our land is illumined with liberty's smile,
If a foe from within strikes a blow at her glory,
Down, down with the traitor that tries to defile
The flag of the stars, and the page of her story!
By the millions unchained,
Who their birthright have gained
We will keep her bright blazon forever unstained;
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave,
While the land of the free is the home of the brave.