

**"The Star-Spangled Banner"**

In September 1814, British troops invaded Washington, DC and set on fire the Capitol, the president's mansion, the Treasury, and other government buildings. During the British withdrawal from Washington, Dr. William Beanes, an elderly physician, was taken prisoner. Dr. Beanes was a personal friend of Francis Scott Key, a Maryland attorney.

Key (1779-1843) was commissioned to help secure the release of his friend from the British navy. Key and John S. Skinner, a government official who was in charge of prisoner exchanges, sailed to the British fleet under a flag of truce to make their request. On September 7, 1814, their request was granted, but as it happened, the British were preparing to attack Baltimore and would not release the American visitors. Key and Skinner sailed with the British fleet and watched helplessly as the British first invaded near Baltimore, then bombarded Fort McHenry during the night of September 13-14. Through the smoke and haze, they could dimly see a huge American flag flying over the fort's ramparts. At the end of the bombardment, as dawn arrived, they peered anxiously to see which flag flew over Fort McHenry, and to their relief, the Stars and Stripes were still there! While awaiting their release, Key began making notes for poem. On the evening of September 16, Key composed the poem in a Baltimore hotel, re-creating.

The events the next day, the poem was printed on a handbill in Baltimore and titled "Defense of Fort McHenry." A month later, the poem had been retitled "The Star-Spangled Banner" and set to the tune "To Anacreon in Heaven," which was well-known to Key (and which, according to historians, he may have had in mind while writing the poem). On October 19, 1814, the song was performed at the Baltimore Theatre.

For many years, it was one of many popular patriotic songs, and viewed with "Hail Columbia" and "America" as national songs. It gained in favor among federal troops during the Civil War and became even more popular in the following decades. In 1895, army regulations required the playing of "The Star-Spangled Banner" while the flag was lowered; in 1904, the Secretary of the Navy ordered that he played at morning and evening colors. Although the song always had his critics (some thought that the tune was too difficult to sing, or that the lyrics were too obscure, with that it was too militaristic) Congress adopted the Star-Spangled Banner as a national anthem 1931.

**"The Star-Spangled Banner"**

by Francis Scott Key

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 our 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:  
'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!