The Star-Spangled Banner

THE STORY OF ITS WRITING BY

FRANCIS SCOTT KEY

MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
201 WEST MONUMENT STREET
BALTIMORE 1, MARYLAND

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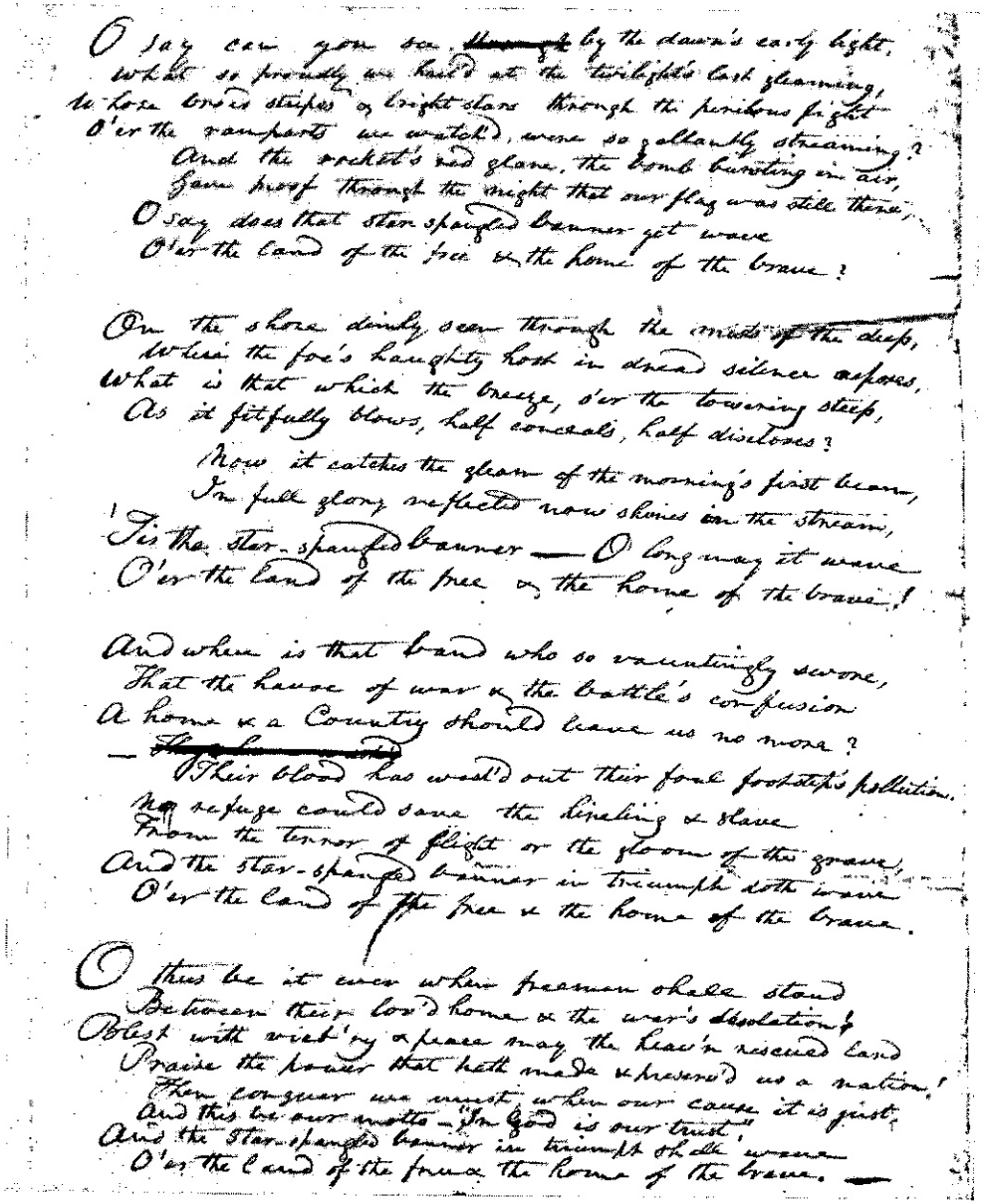

O say can you see, ~~through~~ by the dawn's early light,
what so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming,
whose broad stripes & bright stars through the perilous fight
O'er the ramparts we watch'd, were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket's red glare, the bomb bursting in air,
Gave proof 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 & 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 on the stream,
'Tis the Star-spangled Banner — O long may it wave
O'er the Land of the free & the Home of the Brave!

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore,
That the havoc of war & the battle's confusion
A home & a Country should leave us no more?
— ~~Their blood~~
Their blood has wash'd out their foul footstep's pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling & 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 & the Home of the Brave.

O thus be it ever when freemen shall stand
Between their loved home & the war's desolation!
Blest with victory & peace may the Heav'n rescued land
Praise the power that hath made & 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 & the Home of the Brave. —

Key's Original Draft of the National Anthem

The Star-Spangled Banner

THE STORY

OF ITS WRITING BY FRANCIS SCOTT KEY

AT BALTIMORE SEPTEMBER 13-14, 1814

BY

HAROLD R. AND BETA K. MANAKEE

BALTIMORE

THE MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1954

Edited by James W. Foster

PRINTED BY SCHNEIDEREITH & SONS

FOREWORD

AS THE NATIONAL ANTHEM of the United States "The Star-Spangled Banner" holds deep meaning for all Americans. It is a song of belief in our country, of love for our country and of pride in our country. The words of the song resound with concern for the safety and well-being of our nation. They sing of the courage of those who helped to make America free. Humbly they ask us to thank Almighty God for leading us to nationhood and beg for His guidance in the future. "The Star-Spangled Banner" is our patriotic hymn.

The Maryland Historical Society is privileged, therefore, to be the repository and owner of the original manuscript of our national anthem in the handwriting of Francis Scott Key.

The manuscript, which Key gave to his brother-in-law, Judge Joseph H. Nicholson, descended to the latter's granddaughter, Mrs. Edward Shippen of Baltimore. For many years it hung in her home at 209 West Monument Street, adjoining the present headquarters of the Society. In 1907 it became known that Mrs. Shippen would sell the manuscript if the new owner would keep it in Maryland.

Mr. Clayton C. Hall, attorney and historian, urged Mr. Henry Walters, leading art collector in Baltimore, to buy the manuscript. About the same time 12-year-old Mary Camilla McKim (now Mrs. Huntington Williams), hearing the matter discussed by her family, wrote Mr. Walters that as the poem had been "born in Baltimore, it ought to stay here." Soon it was announced that Mr. Walters had purchased the document for $2,500 and so it was retained in Baltimore.

Upon Mr. Walters' death in 1931 the art collection passed by will into possession of the City of Baltimore, but the manuscript remained among the personal assets. When the latter

were sold at auction in 1934 the trustees of the Walters Art Gallery, desiring to retain the manuscript in Maryland, bought it for the sum of $26,400. In 1953 they agreed to its purchase at the same figure by the Maryland Historical Society. Funds for its acquisition and for installation of a marble niche to exhibit it were provided by May McShane Jenkins (Mrs. Thomas C. Jenkins) as a memorial to her husband's mother, Catherine Key Jenkins, cousin of Francis Scott Key.

The Society and the public at large owe a great debt to the enlightened civic interest and generosity of Mrs. Jenkins, who previously had given ten portraits of the Key family to the Society together with a fund to defray the cost of installing them.

The following pages briefly describe the events which led to the writing of the National Anthem in 1814, a time when Americans looked upon the British as enemies. Subsequent developments have brought mutual understanding and friendship to the two great English-speaking countries. At the end of World War II the ranking British naval officer in Baltimore stated that "Fort McHenry no longer symbolizes the maritime differences between two cousin nations, but the close liaison between the United States Navy and the British Royal Navy." The friendship between the two nations is an outstanding contribution to the Free World.

George L. Radcliffe, *President,*
MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Baltimore, Maryland
September 14, 1954

The Star-Spangled Banner

THE STORY OF ITS WRITING

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Background to a Battle

The War of 1812 found the United States unprepared to fight. As a result of a long conflict with France, Great Britain had built a powerful army and navy, while in the 30-odd years of its existence the American nation had striven for economy and peace.

To increase its sea power as rapidly as possible the United States commissioned merchant vessels to arm and strike at British shipping. The government encouraged this practice by permitting the owners and crews to profit by the sale of captured prizes. Many American seaports sent out privateers, as such vessels were called, and more of them sailed from Baltimore than from any other port. One hundred twenty-six of these "emergency warships"—many of them of the famous Baltimore clipper type—hoisted sail in the Patapsco River, skimmed down the Chesapeake Bay and ran the British blockade to reach the Atlantic Ocean. By sinking or capturing 556 enemy vessels during the course of the conflict Baltimore's daring and skillful seamen caused more damage to British commerce than those of any other port. The names of such privateers as the *Rossie,* the *Highflyer,* the *Comet* and the *Chasseur* became household words.

Privateering was entirely legal—Britain had followed the practice in previous wars—but now the shoe was on the other foot, and it pinched. Angered by the continued losses of their

vessels, the British declared that privateering was piracy and called Baltimore "a nest of pirates." London newspapers demanded that the city be punished.

In April, 1813, a small fleet of British warships under Admiral George Cockburn sailed into the Chesapeake Bay. Alarmed by the threat of attack, Baltimoreans called upon the government in Washington for assistance. They called in vain. Most of the American army was fighting the British on the Canadian border several hundred miles away, and most American warships were held in ports blockaded by the superior enemy fleet. The city faced the reality that, if the enemy attacked, her people would have to fight their own battle.

The authorities appointed a Committee of Vigilance and Safety to direct the defense of the city and raised over $500,000 to meet the cost. Some militia troops were called out, others were alerted, and nearby communities in Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia were asked to stand ready to send reinforcements. The Committee collected stores of arms, ammunition and food.

Meeting little resistance, the British roamed the Chesapeake Bay and lower Potomac River for over a year. They captured or sank American vessels, raided lonely farms and temporarily occupied several islands, including Tangier, St. George's and Kent. Occasionally they set fire to towns or villages near the shore, a fate suffered by Frenchtown, Georgetown and Havre de Grace. Twice they sailed to the mouth of the Patapsco as if ready to advance upon Baltimore, but each time they turned away to continue their raids along the bay. This "cat-and-mouse game" kept the city in a state of alarm. At any minute day or night the call to arms might sound.

In August, 1814, after receiving large reinforcements of ships and men, the British struck. They landed a raiding force of 4500 men near Benedict, a village on the Patuxent River, and marched toward Washington, about 40 miles away. On August 24th the Americans tried to stop the invaders near the town of Bladensburg.

But the indifference and delay of government officials combined with the inexperience of the American troops hindered effective resistance. Consisting largely of untrained militia, the defenders were commanded by officers many of whom had little experience. No defensive works had been built. Some soldiers even received ammunition that did not fit their muskets. To make matters worse, the vague plans were carried out badly. Before the battle high-ranking army officers and government officials dashed about the field giving and changing orders without advising each other. Officers placed their men in positions not easily defended. Confusion reigned.

For about an hour, however, the militia made a creditable stand, especially in view of the fact that the British were using rockets, a type of weapon new to the Americans. Finally confusion turned to panic, and the Americans fled. The veteran British troops marched into Washington where they remained for 24 hours and burned the Capitol, the President's house, the Treasury, the War Office and other public buildings. Then they began the return to their ships in the Patuxent River.

On their march the invaders passed through the peaceful little town of Upper Marlboro, where a misunderstanding arose between some British stragglers and Dr. William Beanes, a local physician. Enemy soldiers seized him and carried him back to their fleet, and the British force then sailed down the Patuxent and out into the Chesapeake Bay.

The Battle Looms

A few hours after the British had captured Washington, Baltimore heard the alarming news. The capital was only 40 miles away. Baltimore would surely be next to feel the weight of Britain's power.

Baltimoreans began to prepare for trouble. Many sent their

wives and children out of town. As commander-in-chief the Committee of Vigilance and Safety named Major General Samuel Smith, a successful merchant and United States Senator who, as a young officer, had fought against the British in the Revolutionary War more than 30 years before. Now 62 years of age, General Smith toiled day and night, planning and strengthening Baltimore's defenses. He asked for volunteer troops from miles around. He laid in additional arms and supplies. Coolheaded, seasoned in war and confident of his countrymen's courage, he planned to throw back the enemy wherever he struck. For three weeks General Smith lived with but one thought in mind—to build strong defenses for the city both on land and at the water's edge.

Expecting that the enemy would land troops several miles down the Patapsco River and then march up to attack Baltimore, General Smith built strong earthworks east of the city on a long rise of land known as Hampstead Hill, now partly in Patterson Park. Hundreds of Baltimoreans worked feverishly digging trenches and gun pits. Merchants, bankers and shipowners swung picks and shovels alongside lawyers and schoolmasters. Shoulder to shoulder with them toiled shopkeepers, carpenters and brickmakers. For days many Baltimoreans had lame backs and blistered hands, but everybody knew that aches and pains were marks of patriotic service. All were doing their share to protect their city. The defenses on Hampstead Hill were Baltimore's chief shield against land attack.

Against attack from the water, General Smith depended on the small, star-shaped fort standing at the end of Whetstone Point and guarding the narrow entrance to the harbor. With brick and earthen walls 16 feet high and 35 feet thick, Fort McHenry had been begun during the Revolutionary War and completed some years later. Now the works were in poor repair, and the guns were out of date. General Smith hastened to strengthen the fort. From *L'Eole,* a damaged and abandoned

French frigate in the harbor, he purchased twelve 42-pounders and had them mounted in the gun pits. He laid in great stores of ammunition. In outlying positions he had supporting batteries of small cannon erected. He increased the number of troops under Major George Armistead, the fort's commander, to 1,000 cannoneers and infantrymen.

As General Smith studied his maps, he realized that the British might try to by-pass Fort McHenry and storm it from the rear. To block such a move he set up two batteries on the Ferry Branch of the river, about a mile west of the fort. Though each battery had only a few cannon behind hastily thrown up banks of earth, they were given the imposing names of Fort Covington and Fort Babcock.

At the Lazaretto, a quarantine station across the harbor from Fort McHenry, General Smith had another battery placed, and here he based a small fleet of gunboats. Finally, to prevent enemy vessels from slipping into Baltimore's inner harbor the commander-in-chief ordered old hulks loaded with earth and stone sunk in the ship channels. From shore to shore farther up the Ferry Branch, the defenders stretched a great iron chain floated on wooden blocks.

When General Smith and his staff realized that a new flag was needed at Fort McHenry, a committee of three officers—General John Stricker, Commodore Joshua Barney and Lieutenant Colonel William McDonald—was appointed to obtain one. They ordered the banner from the widow Mary Pickersgill, a flagmaker who lived in a little house on Pratt Street. The ensign was to be of unusually large size—30 feet high with a fly of 42 feet. It would have 15 stars and 15 stripes—eight red and seven white—representing the 15 states then in the Union. The width of each stripe and of each star from point to point would be two feet. Was this great banner intended to be a gesture of defiance or a display of confidence?

History tells us only that, assisted by her 14-year-old

daughter, Caroline, and by her mother, Rebecca Young, Mary Pickersgill was soon busy cutting out the stars, the huge blue field and the long, wide stripes. Four hundred yards of bunting —hours and days of steady and tedious work—went into the banner. When, at last, the flagmakers were ready to sew together the large pieces of bunting, no room in their tiny home was big enough. Mrs. Pickersgill asked permission from the owner of nearby Claggett's brewery to lay out the cloth in its large malt room, and there they kept on with their work until they finished.

Soon the flag floated proudly over the garrison at Fort McHenry.

An Errand of Mercy

On September 4, 1814, in the midst of Baltimore's girding for battle, a fine-looking man rode into the city from the southwest. Thirty-five years old and slender, he was of medium height and wiry. He had blue eyes and wavy brown hair. His name was Francis Scott Key, and he had come from his home in Georgetown near Washington, where he practiced law.

Though Key had taken part in the Battle of Bladensburg, he was not coming to Baltimore to fight. Instead he was on an errand of mercy. A neighbor of Dr. William Beanes had begged the young lawyer to plead with the British for the release of the elderly physician. As a close friend of Dr. Beanes, Key was distressed at his arrest and promptly agreed to press for his release.

Before leaving Washington Key obtained official appointment for his task from President Madison. Then he mounted his horse and rode to Baltimore to join John S. Skinner, United States agent for exchanging prisoners of war with the British, who would take him to the British fleet.

On September 5th Key and Skinner left Baltimore in a small sailing vessel flying a white flag to show that it was on a peaceful mission. Two days later, near the mouth of the Potomac

River, they sighted the British fleet and signaled for permission to board the flagship, the *Tonnant*.

Admiral Alexander Cochrane received the two Americans courteously. When Key asked for the release of Dr. Beanes, however, the British commander and his advisers, Admiral George Cockburn and General Robert Ross, firmly refused. The charge against the doctor was serious, Cockburn declared. When British troops first had entered Upper Marlboro, they had not made a prisoner of Dr. Beanes on the condition that he would remain a noncombatant. The physician had agreed. Yet, when the British were passing through Upper Marlboro on their return to their ships, the doctor had caused the arrest of three disorderly British stragglers. This seemed to be evidence that Dr. Beanes had broken his word. He would be taken to Canada for punishment.

When his turn came to reply Key needed all the skill that had made him a successful lawyer. Dr. Beanes, he argued, was a peace-loving gentleman who knew nothing of the rules of war. In ordering the arrest of the British stragglers, he had not intended to break his promise to remain neutral. To him the soldiers seemed to be ruffians who had trespassed on his property and demanded something to drink. Key also described the attentive care given to the enemy sick and wounded and produced letters from some of them—letters addressed to friends in the fleet. These would prove, he said, the kind treatment given by Americans to those of the British left behind.

Gradually Key won over the British. They agreed to free Dr. Beanes. However, since they were planning to attack Baltimore in a few days, they could not release anyone at this time, not even Key and Skinner. The risk of their carrying useful information to the defending forces would be too great. They would be treated well and released immediately after the battle.

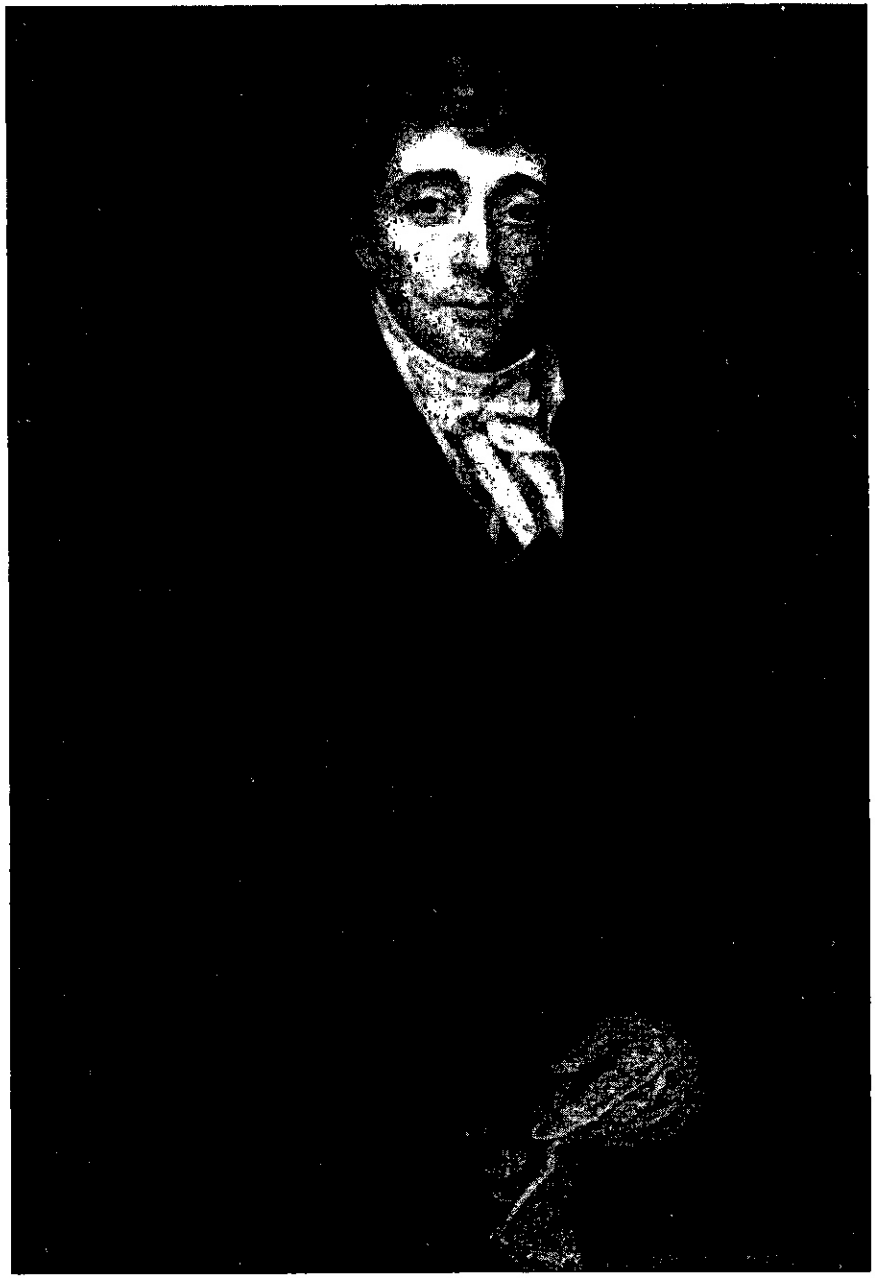
As the British fleet stood up the Chesapeake, Key's thoughts must have turned to his family. Before leaving Georgetown he

had sent his wife and children to Frederick County, Maryland, far inland, to await his return from this mission. Polly, his wife; Frank, John and Edward, his three sons; and Elizabeth, Maria and Anna, his three daughters, were now safe at the peaceful farm in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. He knew that countryside well, for there on a large farm called "Terra Rubra" he had been born on August 1, 1779. There he had spent his childhood years, and his mother had given him his early education. There his father had taught him to ride and to hunt as well as to understand something about running a farm. His mother was deeply religious, musical and poetic, while his father was a veteran of the Revolutionary War, a successful farmer and a respected judge.

As a lad of ten his parents had sent him to grammar school at the new St. John's College in Annapolis. Seven years later he had graduated from the college. Then, under the guidance of his uncle, Philip Barton Key, a successful lawyer and member of Congress, he had read for the bar. In 1800 he had returned to Frederick County to practice law, leaving at Annapolis a beautiful young lady named Mary Tayloe Lloyd whom he deeply desired to make his wife. Two years later they had married. They had made their home in Frederick County until 1805, when Key's uncle had retired and turned over his Georgetown law practice to his nephew.

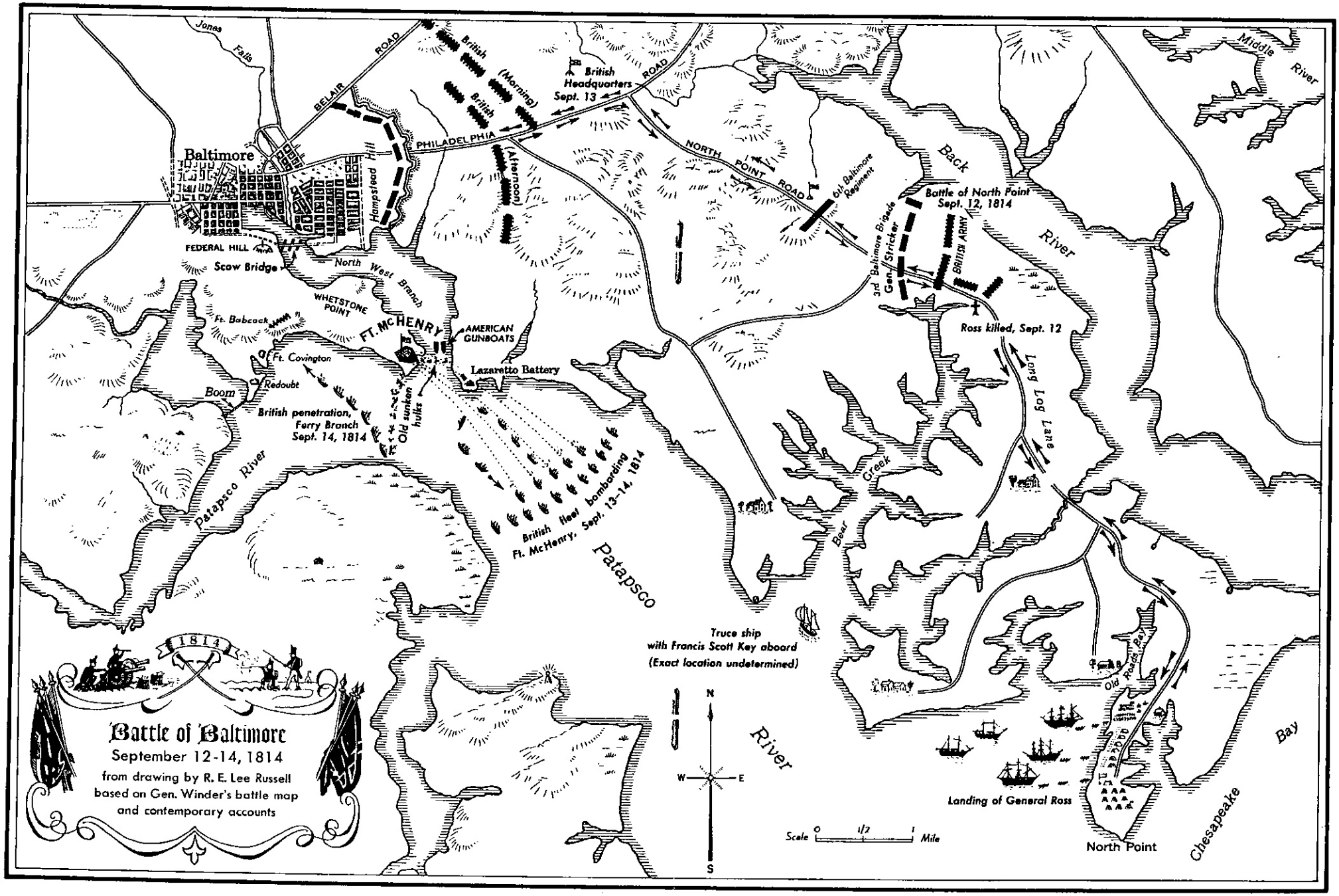
Key's life in Georgetown had been happy. He and his wife were popular—to their many friends they were "Frank" and "Polly." They tried to be good parents, carefully bringing up their children, and Key was becoming better known as a lawyer. In his occasional free time he enjoyed writing articles and verses. Especially he liked to write poetry.

Now, aboard the British warship, he must have wondered if he would enjoy that peaceful life again. How long would it be before he could see his family? What would happen to rela-

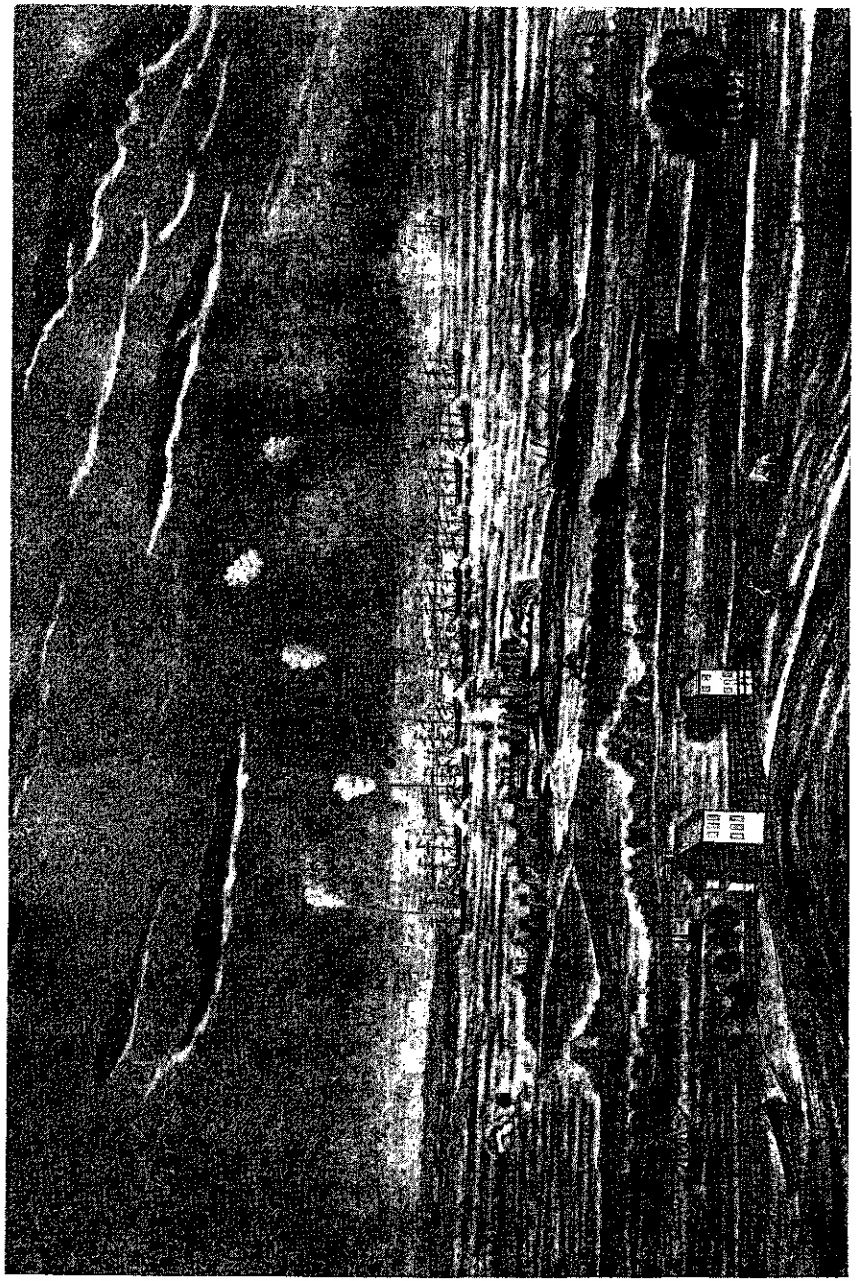


Courtesy of a descendant of Key

Francis Scott Key
Aged 39 years



Adapted from map prepared by the National Park Service



From a print by J. Bower. Maryland Historical Society

Bombardment of Fort McHenry

tives and friends in Baltimore when the attack came? What would happen to him?

He could not know. He was held aboard an enemy vessel going into battle against his countrymen. Danger would surround him on every side.

Citizen-Soldiers Throw Back Regulars

On Sunday, September 11, 1814, the British fleet of over 50 ships entered the Patapsco. Watchers along the shore notified General Smith in Baltimore that the enemy's fleet was moving toward the city.

Promptly the commander-in-chief ordered the alarm given. From a small cannon standing in front of the court house the pre-arranged signal of three rounds boomed out. Scarcely had the last report echoed over the city than Baltimore's volunteer soldiers were on the move. Those who were at home said goodbye to families and friends, seized their muskets and hurried to their battle stations. Those who were in church hastily left as the ministers abruptly ended the services. Snatching their guns, which they had stacked at the church doors, the men rushed off to join their comrades. Though hundreds of volunteer soldiers from nearby places already were in the city, messengers galloped away to summon reinforcements. Headed by General John Stricker, a strong scouting force of 3000 men pushed out from Hampstead Hill to check the invaders if they put troops ashore.

Late in the evening of September 11th the British ships were anchored off the western shore of North Point, about 12 miles from Baltimore. At early dawn Monday, September 12th, about 6000 British soldiers began landing. Commanded by General Ross, they were crack troops flushed with recent victory over one of the armies of the great Napoleon. With small advance parties of scouts moving ahead, the column cautiously marched up Long Log Lane without meeting an American

soldier until late morning. The general ordered a halt for a delayed breakfast.

After a leisurely meal, Ross and his soldiers resumed their march. Suddenly scattered shots rang out ahead. Advance parties of the opposing forces had met. The firing increased steadily.

The British commander spurred his white horse and rode toward the gunfire. He had scarcely reached the spot when he was struck by sharpshooter fire. Tradition says that two young Baltimoreans, Daniel Wells and Henry McComas, fired the fatal shots. Ross swayed forward in his saddle, was caught by one of his officers and lowered to the ground. In a few minutes he died. Ironically enough, he had been the first of the British officers to agree to the release of Dr. Beanes.

A short distance farther up Long Log Lane, General Stricker was waiting to test the enemy's strength. He had formed his troops into a battle line which stretched almost entirely across the narrowest part of North Point, and early in the afternoon the main body of the British attacked. After an hour and a half of stubborn fighting Stricker realized that the enemy soldiers were too strong and experienced for his untrained volunteers. He ordered his men to fall back and form a new battle line a half mile away. Here the American force again offered battle, but the invaders did not attack. After waiting an hour Stricker ordered a withdrawal to Hampstead Hill. However, these citizen-soldiers had reason to be encouraged by the North Point engagement, the first phase of the Battle of Baltimore. Against a more powerful enemy they had fought courageously, they had slowed the British advance, and their retirement was orderly.

Disconcerted by the loss of their commander and by the strength of the American resistance, the British camped for the night on the battlefield. Next morning, Tuesday, September 13th, they took up their dogged march. They had little confidence in Colonel Arthur Brook, their new commander. Progress

was slow; often they had to stop and remove trees felled across the road by Stricker's men. The weather was hot and sticky.

When the troops reached the Philadelphia Road, they turned west and pushed toward Baltimore, soon coming within sight of the positions on Hampstead Hill. Then they stopped to reconnoiter.

Impressed with the strength of the American fortifications, the British estimated that about 20,000 men were manning the works. Actually there were only about 10,000. Showing over the earthen banks of gun pits were the black mouths of more than a hundred cannon. To advance against so strong a position would mean heavy losses.

But Colonel Brook was not one to give up easily. After careful study of the American lines, he tried to draw the defenders from their fortified positions by maneuvering his men as if to launch an attack. General Smith checkmated every move.

Meanwhile Brook asked Admiral Cochrane to move his bomb and mortar vessels into position to shell the fortifications on Hampstead Hill. The admiral could not—he would have had to move so close to Fort McHenry that its guns might blast his vessels out of the water. Colonel Brook made camp. About midnight the skies opened and rain poured. To lighten their packs the invaders had left their tents aboard ship. They were drenched.

Unwilling to risk a frontal attack, early on the morning of Wednesday, September 14th, Brook began a retreat along the Philadelphia Road, down Long Log Lane to North Point where he re-embarked his men on the transports. General Smith had successfully defended Baltimore against attack by land.

A Song Born in Battle

While the British were advancing, fighting and retreating on land, their warships were seeing even more action. After putting ashore Ross and his troops on Monday, September 12th,

Cochrane kept his transport vessels at anchor off North Point and detached some of his largest ships to protect them. Then he sent 16 bombardment vessels up the Patapsco, slowly and cautiously sounding for the channel. His part in the joint land and sea attack on Baltimore was to bombard Fort McHenry into surrender and penetrate the inner harbor.

By daybreak on Tuesday, September 13th, the enemy vessels were anchored in two great semicircles about three miles off Fort McHenry. Key, Skinner and Beanes were transferred to their sailboat and stationed outside the zone of danger but under a guard of British marines. Then the fleet opened a heavy fire and bombs, mortar shells and rockets began to fall upon the fort over which General Smith's great new battle flag was flying.

Major Armistead, commander of the fort, ordered his cannoneers to reply. Immediately they discovered that the American guns were not powerful enough to reach the British ships. Armistead told the gunners to point their cannon higher so that the shells might carry farther. Still the shots fell short. In desperation the commander ordered his men to use larger charges of powder. Armistead knew that he was running a risk, for too much powder might burst the gun barrels and kill or injure his own artillerymen. Nevertheless, he gave the command and the guns roared. The barrels were unharmed, but the force of the extra charges threw three cannon off their carriages. The cannoneers soon replaced them, but realized that continuous firing would only be waste, for none of their shots had reached the British ships. Except for a round now and then to keep the enemy at a distance, the Americans stopped firing.

The defenders in the fort protected themselves from the heavy firing as best they could. One British shell squarely struck an American cannon and badly damaged it. Six men were wounded and two killed. Another bomb fell on the roof of the powder magazine, but failed to explode.

Day changed to night and night to day as the bombardment continued. Twenty-five hours passed with only a few short periods of silence. In Baltimore, two or three miles away, the shock of the gunfire shook buildings to their foundations. From upper windows and from housetops many people anxiously watched and listened to the firing. The brilliant flashes in the sky and the unending explosions told them that a terrifying battle was at their doors. In everybody's mind the question was —could Armistead and his men hold out?

During the bombardment two exceptional events occurred. Once Fort McHenry's guns remained silent for so long that the British thought the defenders might be ready to surrender. Cochrane ordered several of his ships closer, but as soon as they came within range a blaze of gunfire leapt from the fort, and hurriedly the admiral ordered his vessels to drop back.

Again, about midnight September 13th to 14th—after the rain began to pour—1200 soldiers attempted to land behind Fort McHenry and attack it from the rear. Almost noiselessly the enemy barges moved through the darkness. One by one they slipped through the blockade of sunken hulks. When they estimated that they were well past Fort McHenry, they turned toward the shore. Unknowingly, they were putting in toward Fort Babcock, one of the batteries built to protect Fort McHenry against a flank attack. Sailing Master John A. Webster, commander of the battery, heard faint splashing sounds out on the water and glimpsed dim lights. Against the darkness he saw black shapes. Immediately Webster opened fire with Fort Babcock's six guns. Quickly the cannon at Fort Covington, Fort McHenry and the Lazaretto joined in. Several of the small American gunboats raced up to strike the British from the rear. Again the enemy fleet unloosed its big guns. The sound of the gunfire grew to a great, unending roar, and for more than an hour the battle was sharp and vicious. American shot and shell sank one of the barges and damaged others. Finally the barges gave up the attack and scurried back to the safety of their fleet.

Meanwhile, from the deck of their little boat, Key and his friends witnessed the battle. He heard the gunfire of the North Point engagement on Monday, September 12th, and with his telescope excitedly tried to follow the British as they marched toward Baltimore. Then darkness fell, and no sound of battle came from Hampstead Hill.

Dawn broke to cannon fire. All day the three Americans watched the British pour shot and shell on Fort McHenry. Once a shell tore one of the stars from the great battle flag. But "at the twilight's last gleaming" General Smith's banner—"that star-spangled banner"—still floated proudly "o'er the ramparts." Thereafter, only when "the rocket's red glare, the bomb bursting in air," split the gloom could Key see the flag still flying.

Carried away by the grandeur of the scene, by the spirited resistance of his countrymen, by his own agonizing uncertainty, Key was thinking in poetic phrases. He began jotting down his thoughts.

Then, for fear of hitting their own men trying to land behind the fort, the British held their fire. Key was torn with anxiety. Had the defenders surrendered? The fierce cannonade as the landing party was discovered answered his question. The gunfire was music to his ears. Americans still manned the fort.

Quiet followed the prolonged outburst as the British barges retreated. Nervously Key paced the deck, leaned on the rail. Almost wild with apprehension, he peered vainly through the night. Was the flag still there?

At last the sky lightened. "On the shore dimly seen" was a flag. American or British? Lifelessly it clung to the pole, its color and design concealed. The morning gleamed brighter, the wind freshened. Fitfully the banner stirred, fell limp. Then the breeze caught it. Key and his friends saw the ensign's "full glory" stream out. It was the American flag!

Relief swelled to exultation. Within an hour or two Key and his party saw the nearby ships preparing to withdraw down

the Patapsco. The marine guards returned to their ship. The Battle of Baltimore had ended in victory for the Americans, and stirring verses had been born in the mind of Francis Scott Key.

As the flag-of-truce boat sailed into Baltimore harbor, Key began to fit together the ideas and phrases that had come to him. Gradually he formed lines into stanzas. As soon as he reached the quiet of a hotel room, he wrote out the first fair copy of his verses. With a fresh sheet of paper before him, he penned his poem just as he had lived it—just as if he were still watching the bombardment. Without giving his poem a title, he wrote:

O say can you see by the dawn's early light . . .

Key's first stanza is a question. Proudly he had hailed the flag the evening before, briefly he had glimpsed it in the night, but with the coming of daylight would the banner yet wave?

On the shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep . . .

In his second stanza the poet describes the coming of dawn and the tantalizing playfulness of the morning breeze before it unfolds the nation's flag. Long may it wave!

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore . . .

Key's third stanza overflows with joy of victory. The boastful invaders, who had sworn to take American homes and country, are either dead or fleeing. But the star-spangled banner still waves in triumph.

O thus be it ever that freemen shall stand . . .

Here the patriot asks his countrymen always to guard their homeland. Praise the heavenly power that has made and saved the nation, he urges, and take for a motto, "In God is our trust." Then always the flag will wave over a free nation.

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Early the next morning the poet showed his verses to Judge Joseph Hopper Nicholson, his brother-in-law. Having served

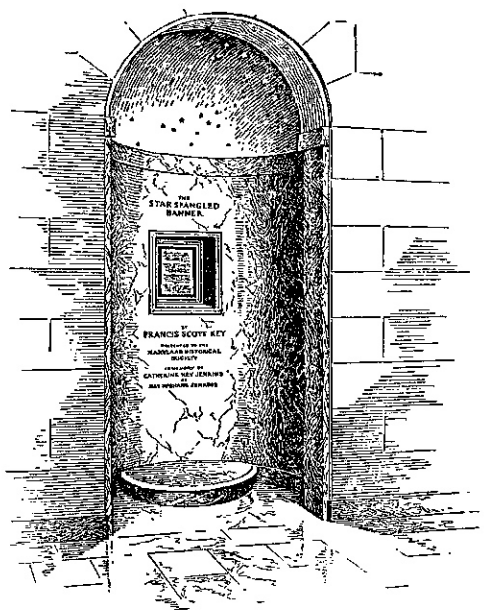
as an artillery officer at Fort McHenry during the Battle of Baltimore, Nicholson was quick to recognize the stirring spirit of the verses. A patriotic poem with fine literary qualities, he thought, would give a finishing touch to the victory celebration. He rushed the manuscript to the printing office of the Baltimore *American* and had the verses printed in handbill form.

Under the title of "The Defence of Fort McHenry," Key's poem soon passed from hand to hand through the city. Almost at once someone—Nicholson, it is believed—discovered that the verses could be sung to the tune of an old favorite song, "Anacreon in Heaven." Soon groups of soldiers, professional actors and people in their homes and on the streets were singing the new song. Within a few weeks, under the title of "The Star-Spangled Banner," Carr's Music Store in Baltimore printed both the words and the tune in sheet music form. The song became even more popular than the poem.

For many years "The Star-Spangled Banner" was known best in the armed forces of the United States. Then, in 1904, the Secretary of the Navy ordered its music to be played throughout the navy at morning and evening colors. Twelve years later President Woodrow Wilson, by executive order, made the song the national anthem for the armed forces.

For over a century the American people looked upon "The Star-Spangled Banner" as their national anthem. Under the leadership of Congressman J. Charles Linthicum of Maryland and Mrs. Reuben Ross Holloway of Baltimore, many patriotic citizens pressed for its official adoption and in 1931 Congress passed a bill to that effect. On March 3rd of that year President Herbert Hoover signed the act. At last the beloved song became the National Anthem of the United States.

Today, believing in the destiny of their country and trusting in God, Americans sing their patriotic hymn with pride and confidence. May we always sing it so!



Here the manuscript of The Star-Spangled Banner was installed on September 14, 1954, the 140th anniversary of its writing.

The marble-lined niche was designed by Messrs. John H. Scarff, F.A.I.A., and Lucius R. White, Jr., F.A.I.A., in consultation with Mr. Laurence Hall Fowler, F.A.I.A. The ceiling, representing the heavens to the northwest towards dawn of September 14, 1814, while Key watched the bombardment of Fort McHenry, was decorated by Mr. R. McGill Mackall from information furnished by Mr. Paul C. Watson, curator of astronomy, Maryland Academy of Sciences.

The manuscript is hermetically sealed in a glass container filled with helium gas to prevent deterioration. For the gift of specially treated glass the Society is indebted to Dr. Roy W. Wampler of the Libbey-Owens-Ford Company through the good offices of Dr. John D. Strong, professor of physical meteorology and astrophysics, The Johns Hopkins University. Particular thanks are due Dr. Strong for devising the sealing arrangement and personally sealing the manuscript in its enclosure. Dr. Richard T. Cox, professor of physics and dean of arts and sciences, The Johns Hopkins University, also gave invaluable counsel.

The yellow filter, required to prevent damage to the manuscript from ultra-violet rays, was the gift of Eastman Kodak Company.

To the trustees and officers of the Walters Art Gallery for cordial and generous cooperation warm appreciation is hereby tendered.

The niche was built by Thomas Hicks & Sons, Inc. The marble is reddish Fleuri from Tennessee. The Society gratefully acknowledges assistance unstintingly given by all those mentioned and many others, especially Messrs. Robert Garrett, president, Philip B. Perlman, vice president, Edward S. King, director, John C. Kirby, assistant director, and Miss Dorothy Miner, keeper of manuscripts, all of the Walters Art Gallery; Dr. J. Hall Pleasants, Dr. John C. French, Messrs. William B. Marye, Richard H. Randall, G. Ross Veazey, H. Vernon Eney, John E. Motz, John A. Pentz, Harold I. Lessem, and Wilbur H. Hunter, and representatives of the National Archives, the National Bureau of Standards, the Corning Glass Works and the Joseph Katz Company.

For Further Reading:

THE WAR OF 1812, by *Francis F. Beirne.* New York: Dutton, 1949. 410 pp.

FRANCIS SCOTT KEY: LIFE AND TIMES, by *Edward S. Delaplaine.* New York: Biography Press, 1937. 506 pages.

THE BRITISH INVASION OF MARYLAND, by *William M. Marine.* Baltimore: Society of War of 1812, 1913. 519 pages.

POEMS OF THE LATE FRANCIS S. KEY, ESQ. . . . WITH AN INTRODUCTORY LETTER BY CHIEF JUSTICE TANEY. New York: Carter, 1857. 203 pages.

THE PERILOUS FIGHT, by *Neil H. Swanson.* New York: Farrar and Rinehart, [1945]. 555 pages.

FORT MCHENRY NATIONAL MONUMENT AND HISTORIC SHRINE. National Park Service. (Historical Handbook No. 5), by *Harold I. Lessem and George C. Mackenzie.* Washington: Government Printing Office, 1950. 38 pages.

SPANGLED BANNER: THE STORY OF FRANCIS SCOTT KEY, by *Victor Weybright.* New York: Farrar, 1935. 307 pages.

FRANCIS SCOTT KEY AND THE NATIONAL ANTHEM . . . by *Edward S. Delaplaine.* Washington: Wilson Epes Press, 1947. 14 pages.

POINTS OF INTEREST

CONNECTED WITH THE WRITING OF

The Star-Spangled Banner

FORT MCHENRY, foot of Fort Avenue, Baltimore. Route indicated by markers throughout city. Barracks and other buildings with period furnishings, relics of bombardment and Bowie arms collection. Administered by National Park Service. Open 9-5 E.S.T. daily. Admission 25 cents.

STAR-SPANGLED BANNER FLAG HOUSE, 844 E. Pratt St., Baltimore. Restored home of Mary Pickersgill where the flag was made. Open daily 10-5. Closed Sunday. Admission free.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 201 W. Monument St., Baltimore, two blocks west of the Washington Monument. Home of the original manuscript of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

PATTERSON PARK, 2300 block E. Baltimore St. and Patterson Park Ave., one block south of Pulaski Highway (U.S. Route 40). Here earthworks and gun emplacements erected in 1814 may still be seen.

NORTH POINT (site of Fort Howard Veterans' Hospital). State routes 151 and 20. Here the British troops landed. Near the intersection of Pulaski Highway and North Point Road a reservation and markers indicate the site of the Battle of North Point.

BATTLE MONUMENT, Calvert and Fayette Sts., Baltimore. Erected 1815 in memory of those who fell in the Battle of Baltimore.

SITE OF HOUSE IN WHICH KEY DIED, now occupied by Mt. Vernon Place Methodist Church. E. Mt. Vernon Place at Charles St., Baltimore. Near the Washington Monument.

MONUMENT TO FRANCIS SCOTT KEY, Eutaw Place and Lanvale St., Baltimore.

U. S. NATIONAL MUSEUM, Washington, D. C. Here the faded and repaired banner that flew at Ft. McHenry in 1814 may be seen.

MOUNT OLIVET CEMETERY, Frederick, Md. U.S. Route 240. Grave of Francis Scott Key and monument to his memory.

Courtesy of the United States National Museum

Original Flag that Flew over Fort McHenry

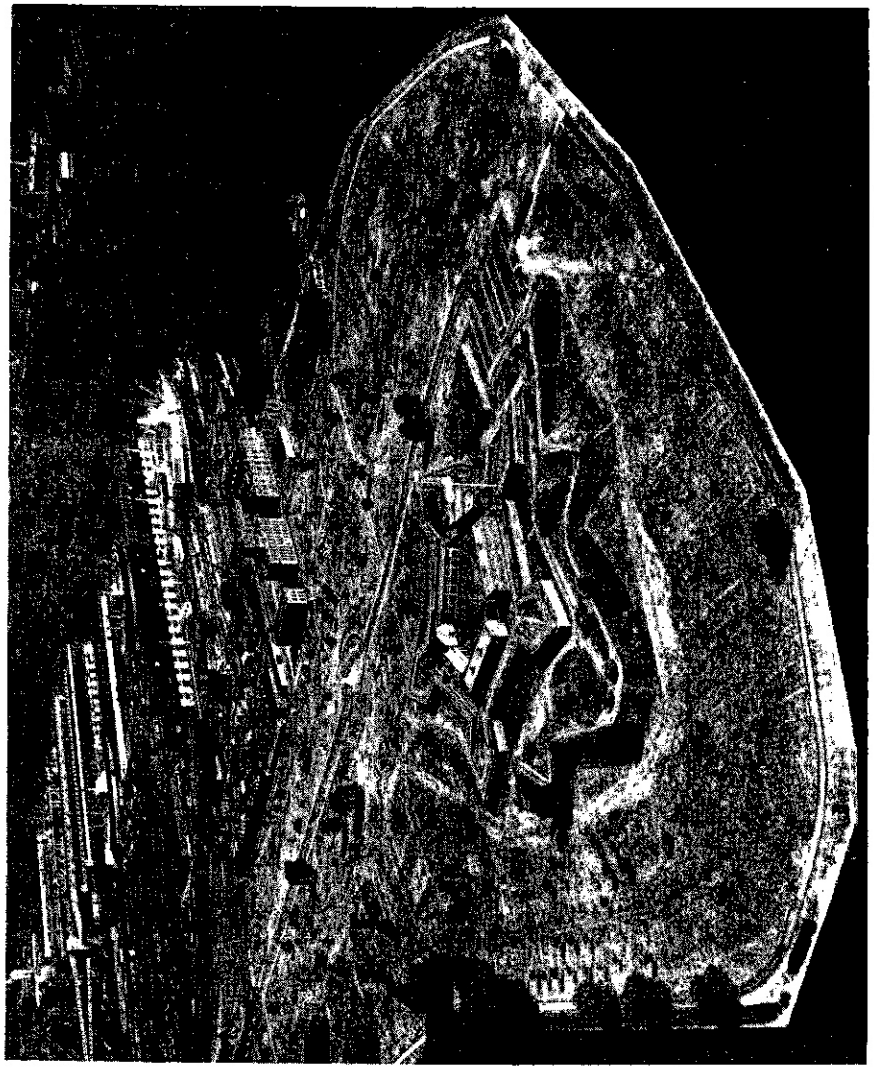


Photo by U. S. Air Force, courtesy National Park Service

Fort McHenry Today

The Maryland Historical Society was founded in 1844 to further an understanding of our American heritage with particular attention to the colony and State of Maryland. Sustained by a membership of more than 3,000, it is devoted to the collection of library and museum materials and to the furthering of knowledge in its field through publications, lectures, library service and exhibitions in its gallery and various period rooms. The Society is open to the public daily except Sunday from 9 to 5, Saturday 9 to 4. Summer hours, daily 9 to 4, Saturday 9 to 1. Admission free.

Copies of this pamphlet are available at 50 cents each. By mail 62 cents.

A reproduction of The Star-Spangled Banner manuscript in a handsome folder is priced at $1.00. By mail $1.10, Maryland tax included.