

# Fort McHenry

National Monument  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

*The*  
**ANACREONTIC SONG**  
*as Sung at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand*  
*the Words by*  
*RALPH TOMLINSON Esq. late President of that SOCIETY.*  
*London Printed by Longman & Broderip N.º 25 Cheapside (Price 6s)*



To ANACREON in Heav'n, where he sat in full Glee, A few Sons of Harmony

The words of Ralph Tomlinson's "To Anacreon in Heaven" are unknown to most Americans, except for musicologists who study late 18th century European lyrics. The tune however, is universally known to all as "The Star-Spangled Banner."

## The Society

The Anacreontic Society was a popular gentlemen's club in London, named in honor of Anacreon, a lyric poet of Greece. The society's patron saint was Anacreon, the "convivial bard of Greece." The society's membership, one observer noted, was dedicated to "wit, harmony, and the god of wine." The lyrics were written by Mr. Tomlinson, who had been president of the society.

## The Tune

There does not seem to be a single composer of this tune, rather it was a collective effort by the members of the Anacreontic Society. The new society song, "To Anacreon in Heaven" required a new tune and thus all got together and worked on this project. John Stafford Smith (1750-1836) a court musician and member of the society was probably the guiding force behind this endeavor and most likely is the person responsible for the tune as we know it today. Incidentally, he is also the composer of the British national anthem ("God Save the Queen"), the tune known to us in the United States as "My Country 'Tis of Thee".

As early as 1798 the tune appeared in American papers under various lyrics, among these was Robert Treat Paine's (1731-1814) popular "Adams and Liberty," perhaps the most prominent American song prior to "The Star-Spangled Banner."

## Key and the Tune

As early as 1806 Francis Scott Key adapted the tune to an earlier poem he wrote entitled "When the Warrior Returns" in honor of an American naval victory over the Barbary pirates. Hence, there is no doubt that Key was well acquainted with the tune, when in September 1814 he saw the flag over Fort McHenry "by the dawn's early light." Soon after the battle, the poem and tune were published, a reminder of the American victory.

## "The Star-Spangled Banner"

Francis Scott Key, a young poet-lawyer, witnessed the bombardment of Fort McHenry while under British guard on an American truce ship in the Patapsco River. Seeing his country's flag still flying over the Fort the next morning, he was moved to pen these immortal lines:

*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, now conceals, now 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 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 homes and the war's desolation!  
Blest with victory and peace, may the heaven-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!*

