## A RELIEVED POET



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Ft. McHenry, guarding Baltimore Harbor, was an Army fort during the War of 1812. The U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH) tells us more about this photo: "An aerial view of Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine. This image shows the fort more in its Civil War era appearance. It was here, in September 1814, that the sight of the historic U.S. Army post's garrison flag, still waving defiantly despite twenty-five hours of intense bombardment, inspired Francis Scott Key to write *The Star Spangled Banner*, the song that later became our national anthem." CMH photo, online via CMH's official website.

<u>Francis Scott Key</u>, the lawyer, was also an amateur poet. He was so overwhelmed by what he had seen during the battle, and so relieved by what he observed at first light, that he wrote down some words on the back of a letter he had in his pocket.

The next day, on September 16, when he and the other two men were allowed ashore, Key took a room at the Fountain Inn. There he revised the words he had <u>drafted</u> while aboard ship.

He showed the poem to his brother-in-law who gave it to the *Baltimore Patriot*. The *Patriot* published the poem on September 20, 1814. It was soon <u>published</u> in other newspapers in other states.

The following month, an actor sang those now-famous words using the tune of a popular drinking song called <u>To Anacreon in Heaven</u>. The song (named in honor of a poet, <u>Anacreon</u>, who wrote of love and wine and lived in Greece between 563-478 B.C.) was <u>sung</u> in London during meetings of a "gentlemen's society."

Ever since Key's poem was <u>set to music</u> - performed here as it would have been <u>heard in the 19th century</u> - the song was called *The Star-Spangled Banner*. The first verse became America's *de facto* national anthem.

It became the official anthem when Congress passed a law to that effect in 1931.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/A-RELIEVED-POET-Star-Spangled-Banner

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/A-RELIEVED-POET-Star-Spangled-Banner

## Media Stream



Francis Scott Key

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Capitol Historical Society.

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