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At the gravesite of Francis ("Frank") Scott Key and his wife—located at Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Frederick, Maryland—an American flag flies day and night. It is America's way of honoring the man who wrote the country's national anthem. A note about Mary Tayloe ("Polly") Lloyd Key. [Polly Lloyd's Maryland-based family](#) owned hundreds of slaves. [Frederick Douglass](#), who became a leading American abolitionist, was born on the Lloyd plantation (known as Wye Plantation) where he lived for the first two years of his life. (See Marc Leepson's *What So Proudly We Hailed: Francis Scott Key, A Life*, at [page 15](#).)

Francis Scott Key—who was known to friends and family as "Frank Key"—lived until 1843, when he died of pleurisy. Today, the American flag flies at his grave—and at [Ft. McHenry](#)—both day *and* night.

Three years before he died, Key penned a few more copies of his famous poem. The Library of Congress has one of those [originals](#). Note the difference in his original version:

*...bright stars and broad stripes
through the clouds of the fight...*

and the version of today:

*...whose broad stripes and bright stars
through the perilous fight...*

Maybe the change was made because today's version is easier to sing. Or maybe both are versions which Key himself wrote.

And what of the flag which inspired Francis Scott Key? It is [old and tattered](#) but still survives:

- It is in the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C.
- The huge flag, whose stars measure two feet from point to point, is still a sight to see.
- Because of its age and condition, it recently underwent extensive [restoration](#).

[Francis Scott Key](#) isn't remembered for what he contributed to the practice of law. And ... a cousin who was named after him ([Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald](#)) became *much* more famous for literary works (such as *The Great Gatsby*). Instead, Key is remembered for so poignantly honoring the flag which survived the British bombshells.

He is honored today for his contribution to the language of freedom and patriotism.

NOTE:

The Smithsonian has a terrific web site about the [Ft. McHenry flag](#). We encourage you to check it out. A story at the Department of Education web site provides [more interesting details](#) about Francis Scott Key and Dr. Beanes.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-FLAG-AND-THE-MAN-Star-Spangled-Banner>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-FLAG-AND-THE-MAN-Star-Spangled-Banner>

Media Stream



Francis Scott Key - Portrait

Image online, courtesy the National Park Service.

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