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WITH
AMERICA

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IN TUNE WITH AMERICA

Our History
in Song

George R. Nethercutt, Jr.
With Tom M. McArthur

MB MARQUETTE
BOOKS SPOKANE, WA

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO
THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT
WOMEN IN MY LIFE

My wife, Mary Beth,
who has lived my dreams with love

My mother, Nancy S. Nethercutt,
who always believed in me

My daughter, Meredith,
who is heroic to me

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A WELCOME FROM THE AUTHORS



In Tune with America.

This is a history book. This is not a history book. Actually, it's a love story. May we explain?

Too often, books we describe as “history books” are uninviting — especially college textbooks. They look at history in such detail that readers are overwhelmed with seemingly irrelevant dates, obscure facts and ancient figures that most of us don't know or find hard to remember. Yet, the United States — the representative republic that is our homeland — is a rich mixture of outstanding and interesting people and leaders spanning over two centuries. Their collective contributions over generations — to a society that values freedom above all — are worthy of our attention as citizens.

Ours is a story of struggle, heartbreak, triumph and growth. It is a story all Americans should know and love because it is a story about us. And knowing our story makes us all better Americans and helps us more deeply love our country — better prepared to value all that America provides us, to defend it, preserve it and make sure our children, and their grandchildren, do, too.

Being “in tune with America” has an extra dimension in this book, not just knowing about our country, but more. It adds a twist to knowing our story — a musical twist. Since 1776, the year the United States declared independence from Great Britain, there have

been moments when patriotic Americans put their thoughts to rhyme and music, in song, to express what they felt, and sometimes saw, as witnesses to history. They describe — in music — their emotions: fear, sadness, joy and sometimes resolve, as history unfolds before their eyes. Through music they record their impressions of events, policies, injustices and victories. They were “in tune” with the significant and memorable events of their era.

When Richmond, the Confederate capital, fell to Union forces in April 1865, ending our nation’s bloodiest conflict — the Civil War — the man whose leadership had preserved the nation, President Abraham Lincoln, asked a military band to play a song. It was not a song of triumph over enemies, for Lincoln referred to the Confederates as “our friends across the river.” It was not a song of war or destruction. President Lincoln asked the band to play “Dixie,” the tune that stood for the secessionist South through four long and bloody years. It was now America’s song. And with that one musical gesture, President Lincoln tried to set the nation on a road to healing that, tragically, he would not live to see. This is but one dramatic example of how music has been intertwined with the fate of our nation — dating back even to the days before there was a United States, when we were merely colonies of the British Empire.

Songs are the poetry of American history. Knowing the stories of the music of an era helps us know the story of our country and the many eras through which it has emerged — that story is our national story. If you are a citizen, whether born or naturalized here, this is your story, too — and every American, regardless of ethnic background or heritage, should know it.

Written as a resource for Fellows of the George Nethercutt Foundation (www.nethercuttfoundation.org), this volume reflects a fundamental truth that our country — as President Lincoln put it

— is a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Knowing America’s story and understanding liberty’s history is important to our national citizenship — it gives us a solid basis upon which to judge current events, assess essential leadership qualities and possess a fundamental knowledge of American democracy as history unfolds before our eyes.

English attorney Frederick Weatherly (who wrote the lyrics for the classic “Danny Boy”) writes in 1926,

We may listen to the noblest sermons. We may study the deepest philosophy. We may be elevated by the loftiest speeches. We may read the brightest pages of history. And yet none appeal to us with quite the same appeal as song and story. Is it not perhaps that all the rest appeal to the intellect and need mental powers which only the few possess? But song and story appeal to the heart. From the heart they come and to the heart they go.

We live in a time when too many Americans have forgotten — or are not taught — how the United States came to exist, or the relevance and importance of America’s founding documents. The Constitution, Declaration of Independence, landmark laws and society-changing Supreme Court decisions seem somehow “irrelevant” to the busy lives we lead. But they make our country what it is — the greatest democracy in history. To be unfamiliar with America’s story is to diminish why and how the United States became free and makes us ignorant about those who fought to make it so.

So, this is an overview of the story of our national family, without hyphens or qualifiers, but illustrated and punctuated by musical selections. More than dates and facts, this book helps bring

to life through music the drama that enriches who we are — as a nation and as a people.

E Pluribus Unum — from many we are one. This is our motto and this is our story of freedom. We are simply Americans. Enjoy a noteworthy story about us and the freedoms we enjoy.

It is something to sing about!

GEORGE R. NETHERCUTT, JR.

TOM M. MCARTHUR

Spokane, Washington

CHAPTER 1

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

For Independence We All Now Agree



*You say you want a revolution
Well you know
We all want to change the world*

John Lennon
“Revolution”
The Beatles
1968

The Beatles record “Revolution” in July of 1968. It is a raucous song. The world, at the time, is filled with tension. In America, large groups of citizens demonstrate for civil rights and protest against a war in Vietnam; France is jarred by riots for regime change. In writing the song, John Lennon says he is “painting in sound a picture of revolution.”

Revolution. The word comes from Latin: *revolvo*, a turn around. When an engine turns around, it is measured in revolutions per minute (RPM). When a political system turns around, it is often measured in great loss of human lives and property. A revolution, in the political sense, is a fundamental change in power: One group takes power; one group loses.

Revolutions occur repeatedly throughout human history — they are usually radical and extreme. There is a wide variance in how they happen, how long they last and why they erupt. Regardless, revolutions bring change, whether in politics, cultural standards, economies or leadership. Throughout the past three centuries, we witnessed the French Revolution in 1789; the Russian Revolution in 1917; and the Chinese Revolutions in 1927 and 1949. The Castro Revolution in Cuba has lasted from 1959 to the present day. In modern times, revolutions occur in nations of Latin America, the Middle East and Africa. Looking back, there is usually some evidence of dissatisfaction, unrest or inequity from which full-scale revolutions develop.

The American Revolutionary War or the American War of Independence — from which the United States of America is born — occurs from 1775 to 1783. It is a revolt against British colonization and control of North America. And the struggle is illustrated in many songs, including J.W. Hewlings “American Hearts of Oak,” written in 1775.



*Come rouse up my lads, and join this great cause
 In defence of your liberty, your property, and laws!
 'Tis to honor we call you, stand up for your right,
 And ne'er let our foes say, we are put to the flight.
 For so just is our cause, and so valiant our men,
 We always are ready, steady boys, steady;
 We'll fight for our freedom again and again
 The Scotch politicians have laid a deep scheme,
 By invading America to bring Charlie in;*

*And if the Scotch mist's not remov'd from the throne,
The crown's not worth wearing, the kingdom's undone.*

J.W. Hewlings
"American Hearts of Oak"
1775

For our country, revolution officially starts the American story. The England of the mid-17th century is a nation of pomp and circumstance — a regal, monarchical and aristocratic society that is exceedingly formal and at times oppressively restrictive. Its colonies have global reach. Americans today have such an abundance of freedom that we find it hard to fathom having been controlled by a government a continent far away. It is not hard to understand that the Founders of the United States of America widely envisioned a new existence, one living beyond the unnatural state of English domination.

Yet the genesis for America's love of freedom and independence and the seeds of revolution are first the establishment of Jamestown Settlement in Virginia in 1607, and then the migration in 1620 of a small group of religious separatists from England on a ship christened *The Mayflower*. These Pilgrims are seeking religious freedom and independence from Great Britain and the Anglican Church to which unchallenged allegiance is owed. They decide to pull up stakes and leave the only country they know for an arduous trip across the Atlantic Ocean to an uncertain destiny. Determination marks their launch to the New World. With 102 passengers and crew on board, *The Mayflower's* departure from Southampton, England, on September 16, 1620, is both sorrowful and sobering. Ocean travel for sixty-six days proves harrowing. Upon arrival at what is now Cape Cod, Massachusetts, forty-one of

the ship's passengers sign the Mayflower Compact, a document that serves as the first majoritarian model for self-government, a social contract by which the Plymouth settlers agree to be bound in the governing of their affairs. It is a significant step toward independence.

The Compact does two things: It affirms the settlers' colonization of this new land and establishes a form of self-governance to which they pledge their allegiance. The Compact is undertaken "for the Glory of God and advancement of the Christian Faith." Its co-equal purpose is the advancement of the "Honour of our King and Country." Its importance is not so much that the settlers represent England, but that they are establishing, in writing, the principles of self-governance and the foundation for the constitutional democracy that will last for centuries.

Between the early 1600s and the mid-1700s, colonization of the new land continues. A look back lets us now see the commitment to independence. Thirteen original colonies are established, principally on the northeastern and southeastern coasts. They are Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia, New York, North Carolina and Rhode Island. By 1775, the original group of several hundred settlers has grown to almost 2.4 million. Each of the colonies is connected by the common thread of commitment to independence, individual freedom and adventure. Facing disease, hardships posed by long distance from England, the challenges of natural resource use, relationships with Native Americans and the novelty of self-governance, the settlers personify extraordinary self-reliance and bravery and a seriousness of purpose in the name of liberty. By now, a generation of independent spirit has been established.

Colonial conditions and attitudes have also changed dramatically. Anger at Britain's growing repression in the colonies reaches a boiling point. Taxes levied from Mother England are deemed excessive. British control of colonial settlements is so strict and dogmatic in recent years that the colonists yearn even more for independence. The colonists have elected a Continental Congress — representatives who convene as a legislative group to make decisions for all thirteen colonies.

So, in 1776, the foundation has been laid and the stage is set for a revolution. The colonial leaders who step forward to found this new country believe in the new concept of government — freedom and self-government — that they have practiced since the Mayflower Compact was signed. They recognize the importance of individual rights to the success of any central state. They embrace the concept of representative government — electing public leaders to represent their interests.

They also have a model for a new government — it is fashioned after the *Magna Carta* (Latin for “Great Charter”), widely viewed as one of the most important documents in the history of democracy. It is a foundational document for the colonists — it leads them to the U.S. Constitution and a “people-based” government.¹

With this background, the American Revolution is under way. Its lofty purposes are self-government and liberty, with a clear dedication to the individual. Philosopher John Locke writes that “the state is a vehicle for protecting the natural rights of man, and if it cannot, the people have every right to rise up and rebel.” Self-governance concepts are understood by the colonists in the 1770s as fundamental, self-evident truths, worthy of protection, and worthy of revolt.

The right of rebellion accepted by the colonists of the late 18th century leads them to action against King George III. That action is war.



*Hark, hark, the sound of war is heard,
And we must all attend;
Take up our arms and go with speed
Our country to defend.*

Benjamin Dearborn
"War Song"
1776

Many of the songs of the American Revolution are calls to arms, encouraging actions to stem a tide or fight a battle. Dr. Jonathan Mitchell Sewall of New Hampshire is a colonial Loyalist (even those loyal to the King want independence) who writes a song called "On Independence" in 1776. Despite the heritage of the Loyalists, the song reflects their deep devotion to their common cause and their unwavering conviction that the independence of their fledgling colonies justifies rebellion.



*Come all you brave soldiers, both valiant and free,
It's for Independence we all now agree;
Let us gird on our swords, and prepare to defend,
Our liberty, property, ourselves and our friends.*

*In a cause that's so righteous, come let us agree,
and from hostile invaders set America free,
the cause is so glorious we need not to fear,
but from merciless tyrants we'll set ourselves clear.*

*Heaven's blessing attending us, no tyrant shall say
That Americans e'er to such monsters gave way,
But fighting we'll die in America's cause,
Before we'll submit to tyrannical laws.*

Dr. Jonathan Mitchell Sewall
"On Independence"
1776

The lyrics of Dr. Sewall's song reflect the priorities of the colonists on the eve of the American Revolution and the intangibles by which they are driven. The word "Heaven" is mentioned six times in Sewall's song; the words "independence," "liberty" and "free" are mentioned seven times. These words are the hallmarks of America's beginning and will sustain the new nation through future challenges.

In 1774, Thomas Jefferson, a thirty-one-year-old political philosopher and Virginia state legislator, writes his first published work, "A Summary View of the Rights of British America." It is a lengthy counter to the Coercive Acts² passed by the British Parliament that year. Jefferson asserts that the British have no authority to govern the American colonists. To the contrary, the colonists have the natural right to govern themselves. Jefferson's paper articulates a theoretical framework for the concepts behind the American Revolution. It is this framework that defines Jefferson as a thoughtful architect of American independence, well equipped

to help draft the Declaration of Independence two years later in 1776.

In addition to the enumeration of specific complaints against King George III, the Declaration of Independence passed by the Continental Congress carries the frightening assurance that the signers pledge “our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor” to the great cause they are bound to undertake.

For the American colonies to wage war against the British Empire in 1776 is analogous to a high school team lining up against the pros. But the American colonists have leadership and resolve — two essential ingredients for victory. A bloody and tragic seven-year war is waged in all thirteen colonies. Thousands are killed; thousands more are wounded. Dramatic battles won and lost produce American leaders and heroes who earn the privilege of serving in war and in the peace they ultimately achieve.

America and England sign the Treaty of Paris in 1783, ending British rule in all thirteen colonies. What comes of seven years of fighting is a new nation that adopts a constitutional democracy and establishes a legal system that protects individual rights, guarantees due process of law, affirms states’ rights, and ensures the construction of a governmental system that will serve the people’s needs and desires. But the democracy earned by war and separation develops slowly. The Continental Congress commences work on a governing document, beginning in May 1787. Colonial independence evolves into national unity — delicately.

After five months of Congressional debate, the Constitution is adopted by Congress on September 17, 1787. Thirteen years after the Continental Congress adopts the Declaration of Independence and two years after adopting the Constitution at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the new government under the Constitution begins operations on March 4, 1789. All thirteen states ratify the

Constitution by May 29, 1790. The Constitution balances the equities of individual rights with national order, and balances the rights of states with the necessity of having a unified central government. It has sectional balance that acknowledges the economic and social realities of the South as different from the values of the northern colonies. Generations later those Southern traditions will be balanced with the social and economic values of the nation as a whole.

The year 1789 also marks the year that “Hail, Columbia” becomes the nation’s new unofficial anthem. It is composed and adopted for the inauguration of George Washington, the nation’s first president and the most famous soldier of the Revolutionary War. Written by violinist and musician Philip Phile, it is titled “The President’s March.” The song’s lyrics are written by Joseph Hopkinson nine years later.³

The song, “Hail, Columbia” celebrates America, reveres its new president and exalts patriotism and freedom. The chorus strikes a consistent message after the opening stanza:



*Hail Columbia, happy land!
Hail, ye heroes, heav'n-born band
Who fought and bled in freedom's cause,
Who fought and bled in freedom's cause,
And when the storm of war was gone
Enjoy'd the peace their valor won.
Let independence be our boast, ever mindful what it cost;
Ever grateful for the prize, let its altar reach the skies.*

CHORUS

*Firm, united let us be,
Rally round our liberty,
As a band of brothers joined,
Peace and safety we shall find.*

Philip Phile, lyrics by Joseph Hopkinson — 1798

“Hail, Columbia”

1789

This song, now the U.S. Vice President’s official song, remains the unofficial national anthem until 1931, when the “Star Spangled Banner” officially replaces it. Both anthems have common themes. They extol the virtue of America, record the real-time feelings of nationalism at a significant point in history and are timeless as Americans salute the achievements and virtues of freedom and liberty.

The liberty and freedom of the day are reflected in the Constitution, which sets out procedures for governing the nation — and the people. The new nation needs structure and certainty, but less than the British model. Too little government can frustrate national cohesion. The Constitution does something else. It outlines the rights and obligations of Americans, and the American government, one to the other — rights that protect the individual through the Bill of Rights, and the nation. It will be the national constitution with the longest history of any in the world.

It divides the national government into three co-equal branches — the Legislative, Executive and Judicial Branches. By design, the Legislative Branch is the largest elected branch: It has sixty-four members (now 435) in the U.S. House of Representatives, and twenty-six Senators (now 100), two Senators per state,

regardless of a state's population. The Judicial Branch consists of the U.S. District (Federal) Courts, U.S. Circuit Courts of Appeal and the U.S. Supreme Court. There are now nine Justices of the U.S. Supreme Court, but there were only five in 1789, six in 1802, eight in 1837, ten in 1861, back to six in 1866, eight in 1869 and nine from 1871 to the present. The Executive Branch of the federal government consists of one U.S. President, and a Cabinet Secretary for each federal Cabinet agency.

The Supreme Court is the smallest branch of the government, but arguably the most important. With lifetime appointments, its purpose and role is defined by Article 78 of the Federalist Papers, written by Alexander Hamilton.⁴ It is not until the decision of *Marbury v. Madison*, establishing in 1801 the Court's right of judicial review, that the Court gains a foothold in American government.

The Founders learn that independence is a complicated, evolutionary process, one filled with self-interest and national interest, selfishness and self-consciousness, and with narrowness and simultaneous magnanimity. America is not easily described, even from its beginnings. But the nation is resilient; it survives intact with the solid principles of its founding, and the revolution, in place and understood.

Through generations of immigrants, with varied backgrounds and history, through world wars and minor conflicts, the United States withstands any major overhaul that threatens its existence. Its principles, institutions, system of justice and politics are designed to withstand the passage of time. Its consistency exists because American leaders build on a set of accepted ideals through successive generations. The principles of democracy in the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution are timeless principles that assure all Americans of life, liberty and

the pursuit of happiness. Read them again and again — they affirm our basic freedoms, even though those freedoms evolve over time to adjust to modern circumstances. (See Appendices B & C)

We have many tangible reminders of the intangible principle of freedom. The greatest of these is, perhaps, the Statue of Liberty — a gift from the people of France to the United States in 1886 to represent the friendship established between the two countries during the American Revolution. “Liberty enlightening the world,” the statue’s official title, captures Libertas, ancient Rome’s goddess of freedom from slavery, oppression, and tyranny. Her raised right foot is on the move. This symbol of Liberty and Freedom is not standing still or at attention. She is moving forward, as Lady Liberty’s left foot tramples broken shackles at her feet, in symbolism of the United States’ wish to be free from oppression and tyranny. The seven spikes on the crown epitomize the Seven Seas and seven continents. Her torch signifies enlightenment. The tablet in her hand represents knowledge and shows the date of the United States Declaration of Independence, in Roman numerals, July IV, MDCCLXXVI (July 4, 1776).

Smaller reminders of freedom may be found on bumper stickers many people have on their cars today: “freedom isn’t free,” “land of the free because of the brave,” and “these colors do not run.” They are crafted as slogans based on an American record of sacrifice and commitment, by men and women who loved the United States, from the founding revolution to today.

The American Revolution ends with a freedom-loving population in a new land, a charter governing the relationships of the nation and its citizens and a dream that democracy and representative government will endure — that the independence and liberties fought for will be sustainable.

It is an American dream.

CHAPTER 2

A NATION DEVELOPS

Sweet Freedom's Song



*“Oh say, does that Star Spangled Banner yet wave,
O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave?”*

Francis Scott Key
“The Star Spangled Banner”
1814

While each of the sovereign states struggles with what it is to be in the 1800s, the United States struggles with its own identity crisis. Starting in 1803, as the United States under President Thomas Jefferson makes the Louisiana Purchase and doubles the size of the country, the President ignites a national curiosity to explore what lies to the west. A few weeks after the purchase, Jefferson asks Congress for an appropriation of \$2,500 for an expedition to find a Northwest Passage to the Pacific Ocean. He selects his good friend, Captain Meriwether Lewis, a hunter and outdoorsman originally from Virginia and Georgia, to lead it, and writes him:

The object of your mission is to explore the Missouri River and such principal stream of it as by its course and communication with the waters of the Pacific Ocean whether the Columbia,

Oregon, Colorado or any other river may offer the most direct and practicable water communication across this continent for the purposes of commerce.

Lewis asks William Clark, a seasoned soldier originally from Virginia and Kentucky, and later, a Missouri territorial governor, to share the leadership of the journey with him. The “Corps of Discovery,” as it comes to be called, includes forty-two people — including Clark’s slave, York, and a Shoshone Indian woman, Sacajawea. The expedition sets out from Camp Dubois (Hartford, Illinois, today) on May 14, 1804. On December 3, 1805, Clark writes “Ocian [sic] in view! O! The Joy!”

While the Lewis and Clark expedition tells Jefferson that a Northwest Passage across the United States does not exist, it presents him with 140 maps of North America and describes 100 species of animals and nearly 200 plants previously unknown to science. The new knowledge about the Northwest’s geography, natural resources and native inhabitants sparks American interest in the West and strengthens the nation’s claim to the area.

The Revolutionary War does not put aside conflict between the United States and Great Britain. In fact, it simmers for thirty years, during which time the United States makes no real investment in its armed forces. Notwithstanding this, the Congress of the United States of America approves a Declaration of War against Great Britain on June 18, 1812, officially beginning the War of 1812 — the first war of our new nation. The United States has 6,000 men in uniform and sixteen Navy vessels at the time. Great Britain has a quarter-million men in uniform and 600 Navy vessels.

The cause of the war stems from British interference on the high seas with American vessels seeking to pass through international waters to pursue global trade opportunities. It is the

second time the United States engages the British militarily since the American Revolution in 1776. England and France are in a continuous state of European war since 1793. Britain wants to stop the expansion efforts of Napoleon I and that conflict threatens to draw in other nations, including the United States, that want to stay neutral.

Starting in 1807, America faces the British action of impressment, which is the seizing of American vessels and seamen on the open seas for service in the British Navy. Looking for British deserters who sail under the American flag, the British create a crisis in 1813 by firing on an American ship, the *Chesapeake*, a few miles off the American coast, demanding to search her for British subjects. The *Chesapeake* refuses to be boarded, and the British vessel, the *Leopard*, fires on her, killing American sailors. President James Madison orders the British out of American waters, and the British apologize for the attack. But the British continue seizing American ships, as Britain's ongoing war with France intensifies. British harassment of American ships at sea and France's aggression in its war with Britain are eventually too much for American leaders. Trade relations are suffering, and Americans are blaming the British.

Continually taunting the United States, the British begin a naval blockade of the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays and later, on August 24, 1814, invade Washington, D.C., with 3,500 British troops. They storm and set fire to the Capitol, the Navy Yard and the White House, destroying each as they sweep through America's capital city.

This act of aggression by the British, attacking and destroying the institutions of government of the new United States, is not only offensive to the American system, but also frightening to its citizens. It is a time of fearful uncertainty. What will happen next?

Will the American nation have a short life, only to be terminated by the empire from which it broke free late in the last century? James Madison succeeds Thomas Jefferson as President in 1809, but Jefferson has left his mark of statesmanship on the nation.

As a Founding Father and principal author of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson is the country's third president, succeeding John Adams. He serves as Secretary of State for President George Washington and Vice President to President John Adams and is experienced as a Virginia legislator, Governor, and Minister to France. He is a learned man and an intellectual, well-read and prominent among the leaders of his day. His presidency is a success: The Louisiana Purchase is transacted with France in 1803 for \$15 million and the Lewis and Clark expedition, commissioned by Jefferson, continues from 1804-1806.

The Louisiana Purchase is likely the most significant historical event of the early 1800s. It doubles the land mass of the United States, with thirteen separate states carved from this massive area — states that expand the country from east to west, opening a new area of exploration, lifestyle and open spaces. Jefferson's actions imbue the United States with an undeniable national identity and enable it to withstand British threats to American sovereignty.

The War of 1812 is an expansive one, involving Canada on the north and threats of conflict that stretch along the entire eastern seaboard of the United States. After the British sack the capital in 1814, forcing President Madison to flee the White House to safety on the eve of the assault, the attention of the nation turns to the prominent port of entry and trade headquarters — Baltimore, Maryland — America's next important battlefield. The mighty British Navy amasses ships outside the harbor, readying for an attack. It dwarfs the American Navy, and its manpower vastly outnumbers American fighting men. The British blockade of U.S.

ports along the Atlantic seaboard is complete. The blockade has a severe economic impact on American commerce, and as Americans weary of the war, James Madison becomes increasingly unpopular.

Fort McHenry guards the Port of Baltimore, one of the Atlantic harbors vital to U.S. commerce and trade. Shaped like a five-pointed star and named after James McHenry, President George Washington's Secretary of War, the port is an attractive target for the British. Defeating the Americans here would open a wound that could cripple American resistance to British control over the region.

The date is September 3, 1814. A thirty-five-year-old Maryland attorney, Francis Scott Key, and Col. John Stuart Skinner board the HMS *Minden* flying a flag of truce. Key is an amateur poet educated at St. John's College at Annapolis. Skinner, a twenty-five-year-old lawyer, is a prisoner-of-war exchange officer commissioned by President Madison to negotiate the release of American prisoners. They carefully sail out beyond Baltimore Harbor to meet with British officers to negotiate the release of a popular Maryland physician, Dr. William Beanes, who was captured by the British and held hostage. The two climb aboard the British flagship and negotiate with British officers for Beanes' release. The British agree to release all three Americans, first on a British ship, then on their own vessel, but forbid the trio from returning to Baltimore, convinced the Americans now know British strength and plans for attack.

In the early morning of September 13, 1814, the British attack on Baltimore Harbor begins. British Navy vessels launch cannon fire at Fort McHenry for twenty-five straight hours at a range of two miles. The American defenders fire back. Both sides have inaccurate weapons, so few casualties occur. Francis Scott Key is offshore, with Skinner and Beanes, witnessing the battle. All through the day of September 13 and into the night, the three helplessly watch the

fighting from a distance, not knowing who is winning. But as the smoke of battle clears on the early morning of September 14, they look toward Fort McHenry and see the American flag flying, with fifteen stars and fifteen stripes, all red, white and blue, symbolizing the American resolve to prevail in battle.⁵ They know the fight has ended. The British are not able to take Fort McHenry. The Americans successfully defend Baltimore Harbor! As Skinner, Beanes and Key exult and make their way back to Baltimore, Key scrawls this poem on the back of a letter in his pocket, which later is set to music:



*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.
 Oh 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 on the stream:
 'Tis the star-spangled banner! Oh 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 victory 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!*

Francis Scott Key

"The Star Spangled Banner"/The Defence of Fort McHenry

1814

Key shows the poem to Skinner and decides to publish his work six days later in *The Baltimore Patriot* with the title "The Defence of Fort McHenry." The words are adapted to the rhyming style of an English drinking song titled "To Anacreon in Heaven." The song becomes so popular that it is recognized by the U.S. Navy in 1889 as a proper song to accompany the raising of the American Flag. In 1916, the song's prominence grows as President Woodrow Wilson orders it played at numerous military and official occasions. One-hundred-seventeen years will pass before that song, renamed

“The Star Spangled Banner,” becomes, by law, America’s National Anthem. President Herbert Hoover signs that law on March 31, 1931. Now sung before all major government convocations, sporting events and countless other public assemblies, the song is a noteworthy part of the American story, composed by an eyewitness to history and revered by generations who pay tribute to all that the American flag symbolizes and the words that affirm our love for the United States, the “land of the free and the home of the brave.”

The War of 1812 is fought over a period of three years with battles along coastal states from Canada to Louisiana. As the British grow weary of their twenty-two-year war with France, they also lose decisive battles with the United States. The War of 1812 ends in 1814 with the signing of the Treaty of Ghent peace agreement between the United States and Britain. But the important message of the war is that the United States is a country capable of fighting to defend its interests. Even though the Treaty of Ghent is signed on December 24, 1814, news of the peace accord doesn’t reach the United States for two months. Oblivious to these developments, the British amass army and navy forces for travel to New Orleans for a last-ditch military assault on the American port there, still hoping to defeat the United States.

President James Madison orders Army Major General Andrew Jackson to defend the city of New Orleans against the massive British forces assembling there. His foe is led by Sir Edward Parkenham, an English aristocrat and war hero renowned for his defeat of Napoleon’s forces at Leipzig, Germany. Jackson is a rough-hewn fighter from Tennessee. The British have 8,000 troops; the Americans, 5,000. It is now January 1815. An epic battle stage is set. Parkenham’s soldiers are highly trained and battle-tested; Jackson’s men are mostly militiamen from Kentucky and Tennessee.

Parkenham launches his attack on January 8. Jackson's forces fight fiercely and kill or wound 2,000 British troops in the first twenty-five minutes. Jackson is fearless and aggressive. Parkenham quits the attack and withdraws, never to resume the fighting. Ten days later, the British forces withdraw. The Battle of New Orleans is the greatest battle of the war, delivering a resounding victory to the United States. With this battle, the fighting is truly over, and the Americans are victorious. The signed Treaty of Ghent reaches the United States by February 11, 1815, and, days later, is ratified by the U.S. Senate.

Over a century later, high school principal and history teacher Jimmy Driftwood writes a song about the Battle of New Orleans to help his students learn about this pivotal event in American history. The song "Battle of New Orleans" is set to a popular fiddle tune of the day ("The 8th of January") and earns Driftwood a Grammy Award for Song of the Year in 1959; it earns Johnny Horton a Grammy Award for Best Country and Western Performance for his recording of it.



FIRST AND LAST VERSES

*Well, in eighteen and fourteen we took a little trip
along with Colonel Jackson down the mighty Mississip.*

*We took a little bacon and we took a little beans,
And we caught the bloody British near the town of New Orleans.*

*We fired our guns and the British kept a'comin.
There wasn't nigh as many as there was a while ago.*

*We fired once more and they began to runnin'
down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico.*

*Well, they ran through the briars
and they ran through the brambles
And they ran through the bushes where a rabbit couldn't go.
They ran so fast the hounds couldn't catch 'em
down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico.*

*We fired our guns and the British kept a'comin.
But there wasn't nigh as many as there was a while ago.
We fired once more and they began to runnin'
down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico.*

Lyrics by James Morris (Jimmy Driftwood)
"Battle of New Orleans"
1958

This pivotal victory exalts President Madison and launches the political career of Andrew Jackson, who is elected President in 1828. It also reinforces the indisputable stamina and commitment of the American nation. At a time when the nation is frightened for its existence and survival, Jackson's victory at the Battle of New Orleans restores a sense of equality among nations. The United States' defenses are strong, and the nation is unafraid of foreign threats; it can defend itself against the strongest of world powers.

Turning inward is now the nation's focus as America looks westward for expansion. But the expansion doesn't occur without the establishment by the United States of standards for her dealings in foreign/international affairs.

James Monroe is the 5th President of the United States, serving from 1817-1825. A Virginian, he serves the United States with distinction, first as a major in the Army, a Minister to Great Britain and France, Virginia's U.S. Senator, twice Governor of Virginia,