

## My country, 'tis of thee

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Samuel Francis Smith, 1808-1895, American. Editor of the Baptist Missionary Magazine. Pastor of a Baptist church at Waterville, ME, then Newton, MA. Professor of modern languages. Editorial secretary of the American Baptist Missionary Union. He wrote about a hundred hymns.



Written at Smith's first year of study at Andover Theological Seminary, 1831. Lowell Mason had received quite a few German chorale books brought by a friend from Germany. Mason could not read German and brought the books to Smith, requesting translations that he could use in his music collections. Smith was attracted to a German patriotic text, "Gott segne Sachsenland" (God bless Saxony), which we have at #716. Says Smith: "I instantly felt the impulse to write a patriotic hymn of my own, adapted to the tune. Picking up a scrap of paper which lay near me, I wrote at once, probably within half an hour, the hymn 'America' as it is now known."

Original third verse had strong views concerning the treatment of the American colonies by England. It has been omitted from all printings since the original.

No more shall tyrants here with haughty steps appear, and soldier bands;  
No more shall tyrants tread above the patriot dead –  
No more our blood be shed by alien hands.

## AMERICA

"Perhaps the most famous tune in the world."

Played as "God save the King (or Queen)" for more than 200 years throughout the British Empire and Commonwealth, has been used by Continental composers including Beethoven, Weber, Brahms, and Debussy; became a national song in the U.S. and Germany and other countries, and has been the model for national anthems throughout the world, including Haydn's AUSTRIA.

Composer is unknown.

Meter imitated in tunes like MOSCOW and OLIVET.

1 My coun - try, 'tis of thee, sweet land of  
 2 My na - tive coun - try, thee, land of the  
 3 Let mu - sic swell the breeze, and ring from  
 4 Our fa - thers' God, to thee, au - thor of

lib - er - ty, of thee I sing; land where my  
 no - ble free, thy name I love; I love thy  
 all the trees sweet free - dom's song; let mor - tal  
 lib - er - ty, to thee we sing; long may our

fa - thers died, land of the pil - grim's pride,  
 rocks and rills, thy woods and tem - pled hills;  
 tongues a - wake, let all that breathe par - take,  
 land be bright with free - dom's ho - ly light;

from ev - ery moun - tain - side let freed - om ring.  
 my heart with rap - ture thrills like that a - bove.  
 let rocks their si - lence break, the sound pro - long.  
 pro - tect us by thy might, great God, our King.

Words: Samuel Francis Smith (1808-1895) Music: *America*, from *Thesaurus Musicus*, 1745

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Katherine Lee Bates, 1859-1929. b. Massachusetts. Educated Wellesley College and Oxford. Daughter of Rev. William Bates, pastor of Falmouth Congregational Church. She taught high school for a year, then five years at Dana Hall, a prep school for Wellesley. In 1886 she began teaching at Wellesley, eventually becoming head of the college's English department. Author or editor of about two dozen works. Her poetry was published in 1911 under the title *America the Beautiful* (New York). Honorary doctorates from Oberlin, Middlebury, and Wellesley.

Written in 1893 (probably July 22<sup>nd</sup>) after a summer session at Colorado College, where she had been lecturing. On the way to Colorado she stopped at the Columbian World Exposition in Chicago, where the "white city" exhibition inspired the "alabaster cities."

End of session: a trip to Pike's Peak. "It was then and there, looking out over the sea-like expanse of fertile country spreading away so far under those ample skies, that the opening line of the hymn floated into my mind."

Published in *The Congregationalist* July 4, 1895.  
It has seen numerous revisions, three by Bates herself.



## MATERNA

Samuel Augustus Ward, 1848-1903, Newark NJ. Studied with Jan Psychowski in NYC. In 1878 began a retail music store in Newark, and in 1889 founded the Orpheus Club of Newark, when he directed until 1900. (It's still going... a TTBB choir that just allowed women, who can sing 1<sup>st</sup> Tenor.) Succeeded Henry Cutler as organist at Grace Episcopal Church, where a brass plaque was given to his memory by the Schoolmen's Club and the public school children of Newark in 1934.

Tune written for hymn "O mother dear, Jerusalem."

Store employees said Ward wrote the tune on his cuff while crossing New York Harbor, then sang it with 200 men and boys at Grace Episcopal.

Ward's son-in-law said it was written in memory of his oldest daughter Clara, who died in 1885.

1912: permission granted by Ward's widow to pair this tune with the Bates text. Very popular during World War I.



1 O beau - ti - ful for spa - ci - ous skies, for am - ber waves of grain,  
 2 O beau - ti - ful for he - roes proved in lib - er - at - ing strife,  
 3 O beau - ti - ful for pa - triot dream that sees be - yond the years

for pur - ple moun - tain ma - jes - ties a - bove the fruit - ed plain!  
 who more than self their coun - try loved, and mer - cy more than life!  
 thine al - a - bas - ter ci - ties gleam, un - dimmed by hu - man tears!

A - mer - i - ca! A - mer - i - ca! God shed his grace on thee,  
 A - mer - i - ca! A - mer - i - ca! God mend thine ev - ery flaw,  
 A - mer - i - ca! A - mer - i - ca! God shed his grace on thee,

and crown thy good with bro - ther - hood from sea to shin - ing sea.  
 con - firm thy soul in self - con - trol, thy lib - er - ty in law.  
 and crown thy good with bro - ther - hood from sea to shin - ing sea.

Words: Katherine Lee Bates (1859-1929), alt. Music: *Materna*, Samuel Augustus Ward (1848-1903)

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Francis Scott Key, 1779-1843, American. Lawyer and district attorney, patriot and statesman, churchman and writer of verse. Served as District Attorney for the District of Columbia. In 1835 President Andrew Jackson sent Key to settle a land dispute with the Creek Indians in Alabama. Active in the Episcopal Church, serving as a vestryman and lay reader at St. John's Church and Christ Church, both in Georgetown, DC. One of the founders of the Protestant Episcopal Seminary in Virginia and one of the organizers of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society. He was a poet who wrote a considerable number of works, most of which was religious.



August 1814. British made a sortie from their fleet in Chesapeake Bay into Washington, D.C., where they set fire to the Capitol, the White House, and other public buildings. As they left they arrested a Dr. Beanes of Upper Marlborough, Maryland. Key, because of his political influence, was persuaded by friends to negotiate Beanes' release. Release was agreed to, but the party was detained lest they give warning of the proposed attack on Baltimore. The fleet sailed to Baltimore and smaller bombers and rocket ships went up the mouth of the Patapsco River for an attack on Fort McHenry. The Americans were returned to their sloop under guard. During September 13 the British lobbed 1800 bombs into and around the fort. When the firing ceased about 1am on the 14<sup>th</sup>, tension on the sloop was high because they had no way to know whether the fort had fallen. When they saw through the mist and drizzle of the morning that the flag was still flying, they relaxed. The British did not want a serious engagement, because their orders were to attack New Orleans and not the eastern seaboard. When they saw how well Baltimore was defended the reembarked their troops during the night. Key began sketching this text on the back of a letter. The sloop returned to Baltimore that evening, and Key wrote a clean copy in his hotel. This is probably the manuscript that's in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore. Next morning Key was persuaded to go to the offices of the Baltimore *American*, where the poem was set up in handbill form. It spread quickly.

Key's words were seen and the best embodiment of the American ideals of patriotism that had been produced in song form. It had become the popular usage national anthem long before it was declared so by an Act of Congress on March 31, 1931.

## NATIONAL ANTHEM

There is quite a bit of controversy surrounding the origin of this tune, and much research leads to the possibility that it was composed by John Stafford Smith (English, 1750-1836) between 1775 and 1777, set with the text "To Anacreon in Heaven." Smith was a composer, organist, and early musicologist who was one of the earliest collectors of the manuscripts of Johann Sebastian Bach. He was a member of the Anacreontic Society, a gentlemen's club of amateur musicians.



Key knew this tune and had examples of other poems he set to this tune. It is very likely that he was thinking of this tune as he wrote the words.

Tune is known both as NATIONAL ANTHEM and STAR SPANGLED BANNER. Must be cautious, because NATIONAL ANTHEM is also the tune name for "God save our gracious queen." That tune is known as AMERICA in the United States. Go figure.

1 O say can you see, by the dawn's ear - ly light,  
 2 O thus be it ev - er, when free - men shall stand

what so proud - ly we hailed at the twi - light's last gleam - ing,  
 be - tween their loved homes and the war's des - o - la - tion!

whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the per - il - ous fight,  
 Blest with vic - tory and peace, may the heaven-re-scued land

o'er the ram - parts we watched, were so gal - lant - ly stream - ing?  
 praise the Power that hath made and pre - served us a na - tion!

And the rock - ets' red glare, the bombs burst - ing in air,  
 Then— con - quer we must, when our cause it is just,

gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.  
 and this be our mot - to, "In God is our trust."

O— say does that star-span-gled ban - ner yet wave  
 And the star-span-gled ban - ner in tri - umph shall wave

o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?  
 o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

Words: Francis Scott Key (1779-1843) Music: *National Anthem*, source unknown, ca. 18th cent.

*All three hymns and tunes are in the public domain.*

*Thank you for joining us for Song Lovers Online #9. We pray you're well and we look forward to the time when we can assemble and sing these songs as a community. Peace.*

Research from Glover, Raymond F.: *The Hymnal 1982 Companion*, New York, The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1990; Westermeyer, Paul: *Hymnal Companion to Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, Minneapolis, Augsburg Fortress, 2010; and Young, Carlton R.: *Companion to the United Methodist Hymnal*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1993.  
 Also many interesting web sites.