



Songs Of America's Soul



Songs Of America's Soul

Celebrate 218 years of independence this Fourth of July with the strains of these popular patriotic pieces:

The Star Spangled Banner

The words to our national anthem (*O say, can you see, by the dawn's early light/ what so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming?...*) were written in 1814 by Francis Scott Key, a Washington, D.C., lawyer and poet. Key was on a mission to release a civilian friend captured by the British during the War of 1812, when his flag-of-truce ship was detained by the British in Baltimore Harbor. From the deck, he witnessed the bombardment of nearby Fort McHenry, which began early Sept. 14, 1814, lasted all day and through the night. Despite the relentless attack, the U.S. flag continued to fly over the fort, and key was moved to acknowledge the triumph in a four-verse poem: "Defense of fort M'Henry."

It was first printed on handbills and posted around Baltimore a few days after the battle. Two months later, it was published as "The Star-Spangled Banner." In 1931 Congress adopted it as our national anthem.

Today the U.S. flag flies continuously over Key's grave in Frederick, Md. The original Fort McHenry flag that served as his inspiration hangs in the National Museum of American History in Washington D.C.

Yankee Doodle

No one knows the origin of this piece, popular in the United States since the 1700s: *Yankee Doodle came to town/Riding on a pony/Stuck a feather in his cap/And called it macaroni.*

Macaroni was the term for young men in London who dressed and behaved extravagantly. Thus, the author of the ditty (who obviously scorned colonials for their unsuccessful attempts at sophistication) meant the words to paint an unflattering portrait of colonial Americans. Initially, British soldiers sang the piece to poke fun at the American troops. But the Americans liked the song and adopted it for their own, singing it in camp whistling the tune in battle.

In the early 1900s, composer George M. Cohan, a leading figure in American theater, capitalized on its cocky spirit in his own patriotic anthem, "I'm A Yankee

Doodle Dandy". I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy/W Yankee Doodle, do or die/A real-life nephew of my Uncle Sam/Born on the Fourth of July...

America The Beautiful

This popular piece (*O beautiful for spacious skies/For amber waves of grain/For purple mountains majesty/Above the fruited plain...*) was written by Katherine Lee Bates, a professor of English at Wellesley College. During the summer of 1893, Bates climbed the 14,100 foot summit of Pikes Peak, where she "...gazed in wordless rapture over the far expanse of mountain ranges and seallike sweep of plain. Thus, the opening lines of "America the Beautiful" sprang into being," wrote the author in her memoirs.

The poem was published in *The Congregationalist* on July 4, 1895, where it attracted immediate attention. More than one hundred composers wanted to set the piece to music, but Bates chose "Materna," a hymn written by Samuel Augustus Ward in 1882.

America

The words to this short, sweet song (*My country 'tis of thee/sweet land of liberty/of thee I sing...*) were written in 1831 by Samuel Francis Smith for a church school in Boston. It was first sung at the school's Fourth of July celebration that year. Ironically, the tune is the same as the British national anthem: "God Save The Queen."

God Bless America

Irving Berlin wrote this piece (*God Bless America/land that I love/stand beside her and guide her/through the night with the light from above...*) in 1918. But remained unknown for twenty years, until 1938, when singer Kate Smith asked Berlin for a patriotic song that she could sing on the radio in observance of Armistice Day. The song became one of the most popular songs of the year, and Berlin donated all his royalties to the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America.

The Stars and Stripes Forever

Across the country on the fourth of July, many fireworks celebrations are enhanced by the bouncing, booming march, "The Stars and Stripes Forever," written by John Philip Sousa. Sousa was famous as a

prolific composer of marches.

Born in Washington D.C., in 1854, Sousa's parents couldn't afford to send him to Europe to study music. He later said "I Feel I am better off as it is, for I may therefore consider myself a truly American composer."

The Spirit of America

Having Fun With Fire Works

This summer, more than 13,000 people will be treated for fireworks-related injuries. roughly a third will be caused by government-banned explosives, says the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Although the best safety precaution is to avoid use of fire-works altogether, the CPSC suggests that when fireworks are used they be lighted only in a clear area with a bucket of water kept nearby for emergencies.

Facts About Fire-works-Related Injuries



A Consumer Product Safety Commission study in 1992 found that

*Sixty-one percent of injuries involved small firecrackers and explosives that are legal in certain states.

*Twenty-four percent were associated with explosives that are illegal for the consumer market; an additional 11 percent involved either homemade or public display devices.

*Rockets accounted for 12 percent of injuries; small firecrackers, 11 percent; sparklers, 10 percent; ground spinners, 9 percent.

* Children under 15 accounted for about 41 percent of the injuries.

* Thirty-five percent of accidents were to hands and fingers; 18 percent to eyes; and 17 percent to the head area.

