

ADDRESS, MARYLAND SOCIETY OF NEW YORK

NEW YORK CITY

March 29, 1963

Mrs. Tawes and I are most grateful to Marylanders now living in New York for inviting us here to celebrate this 329th anniversary of the Maryland Society of New York.

When I contemplate the history of our great State, I am impressed by two things. One is the habit that Maryland has had of meeting the emergencies of the whole American nation. The other is the ease with which our own Maryland people forget the great services they have rendered, once the emergency is past. I should like this evening to discuss these characteristics of Maryland.

Let us consider some of the contributions that Maryland has made to our nation. The American National Anthem, the beloved and triumphant name of the American flag—the Star-Spangled Banner—and the United States capital are all possessions which our country has received from Maryland. Flag, song and capital—yes. Truly a wonderful list.

The naming of our flag and the creation of our national song came out of what is perhaps the greatest emergency our nation has ever faced. Let us consider the situation as it was in September, 1814. The British had taken Washington. Our President and all our important federal officials had fled into hiding. Our capitol building was in ashes. The shops and homes of our capital city had been looted. Our armed forces had been scattered. Only thirty years had passed since the United States became a nation, and it looked as if the end were at hand. The British themselves believed that it was. In their view, only one more thing needed to be done. Capture Baltimore, and it would all be over. So they moved their invading forces toward our Maryland port city. A vast force the British had, too. Fifty ships of the line from the undefeated British navy, vessels carrying the heaviest armament available in the world at that time. As for land action, there were the troops who had just defeated Napoleon—the Duke of Wellington's Invincibles, as they were called, and Lord Nelson's marines. To meet these, in Baltimore, there was virtually no force except Maryland militia, commanded by militia officers. The world knows the result. There was a battle, and when it was over the enemy sailed away. The United States, with the mighty Star-Spangled Banner flying over Fort McHenry was saved. And in Baltimore, a new song was being sung.