

THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER

RADIO STATION WFBR, AND NATION-WIDE HOOK-UP,

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Baltimore

At dawn, this morning, in this critical period of America's existence, there was re-enacted at Fort McHenry, here in Baltimore, a scene to thrill the heart and imagination of every American.

There, at the same location where the sight of the Star Spangled Banner had inspired Francis Scott Key to write the immortal words of our National Anthem, Miss Lucy Monroe broadcast them to the Nation, while a Color Guard and band of the Maryland State Guard recalled the military atmosphere of that embattled dawn of September 14, 1814.

Then, as today, our Nation was in peril. Enemy troops, attacking by land, had been repulsed by Maryland's defenders and the foe's Commanding General killed. The next day the attack was resumed, this time by water, and all day long the hostile fleet had thrown a shower of rockets and bombs upon the Fort's defenses. When darkness came, the assault was renewed, and the fleet continued to fire throughout the night. During the 25-hour bombardment it is estimated there were fired nearly 2,000 bombs, 400 of which landed within the limits of Fort McHenry.

An unwilling spectator to this bombardment throughout the night was Francis Scott Key. A visitor to the invading fleet's Commanding Officer, trying to secure the release of his friend, Dr. William Beanes, he had kept aboard the flagship for fear he would reveal information to his compatriots on shore.

All night long he paced the deck in anxiety. At the burst of dawn, Key saw that the "Flag was still there" and in his heart flamed the emotion that translated to paper, gave to the world the immortal words of the Star Spangled Banner.

A poet once said: "Give me the making of the songs of a nation, and I care not who makes its laws."

Yet, with a free and Democratic Nation, it actually is the same thing. For both the songs and the laws of a free people are the creation of the people. They exist as National institutions only by the approval of the people. A group of patriots wrote the Constitution, but it only became our basic law when the people approved. Key wrote the Star Spangled Banner, but it was the people's acceptance that made this song our National Anthem.

It is fitting then on this Star Spangled Banner Day—that we take cognizance of -- that we give sober thought to -- what the American heart and mind meant to say by the adoption of this anthem.