Once ashore, Key rented a room at the Indian Queen Inn on High Street. There he made a fair copy of the lines he had written, complete with the phrases "rockets' red glare" and "bombs bursting in air." He composed them to the remembered strains of a popular British drinking song (Key's four verses aligned with the melody of "To Anacreon in Heaven"). He showed his work to a friend, a well-connected Maryland jurist, and within a day a typeset version of the song came off the press at the Baltimore American, which had yet to resume regular publication after the siege. Key had left the piece untitled, but the small handbill—6 1/2 inches high, 5 1/2 wide—bore the title his friend the judge had added. A few days later the Baltimore Patriot published the poem, "Defense of Fort McHenry." Though the editors noted that the song was "destined long to outlast the occasion," no author was credited.

The land assault on Baltimore had also ended. After receiving word from the harbor that the Royal Navy could not help them, Cockburn had held a long counsel of war to consider the entrenched Americans on Hampstead Hill. At midnight he decided to rejoin the fleet at North Point. In the rain and predawn darkness on September 14 the British army retreated.

 Text from: Hugh Howard, "Big Night in Baltimore," Military History, March 2012, 28–34.

Francis Scott Key[2]

Key's Youth and Marriage

The father of our national anthem was born in 1779 in Frederick (now Carroll) County, Maryland at the family property called Terra Rubra. He loved and wrote poetry as a child and by adulthood had learned the style of oratory practiced by the ancient masters of Greek and Roman history.

His was a Christian who made it his practice to read his Bible first thing each morning and before retiring at night. His thinking and his lifestyle exhibited his complete trust in divine guidance. No matter the circumstance he believed all things occurred by divine will.

In his letters to friends and family members this instruction is found among them, "Read your Bibles every morning and evening, never neglect private prayers both morning and evening, and throughout the day strive to think of God often, and breathe a sincere supplication to him for all things."

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[2] The excerpts in this section are paraphrased or copied from: Marc Leepson, *What So Proudly We Hailed: Francis Scott Key, A Life* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), passim. See link to this title at amazon.com: https://www.amazon.com/Proudly-Hailed-Francis-PROUDLY-Hardcover/dp/B00QOJ4IFY/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1510458125&sr=1-2&keywords=what+so+proudly+we+hailed+francis+scott+key%2C+a+life

Key's mother was a strong Christian woman and she instilled into the Key's only son the principles of biblical guidance. At age 10, Key's parents sent him to Annapolis enrolling him in St. John's College. His curriculum included studies in Latin, Greek, grammar, mathematics, the sciences, and Bible.

At age 14, Francis, who was called Frank," entered St. John's College graduating in 1796 at age 17. By 1800, Frank was admitted to the Maryland legal fraternity. During this time Frank became close friends with another barrister, Roger Brooke Taney (pronounced "TAW-nee"), who later married Key's sister Anne. Frank won the hand of Mary Tayloe Lloyd, who was called Polly. They were married in January 1802. Frank and Polly moved to Georgetown near Washington in 1806.

Key and Polly taught their children at home, but Frank had a deep interest in educating children of poor families. He developed an interest in an educational system developed in England by Joseph Lancaster. Lancaster's system was so successful he expanded it into a detailed schooling plan that became known as the Lancaster System. By 1810, Britain had ninety-five Lancaster schools with some thirty thousand students.

At that time, Key joined with other philanthropists of Georgetown to introduce the Lancaster System. They opened the Lancaster Society of Georgetown in June 1811. The mission statement for the school was summarized by Key who wrote that the school was "a plain, practical, useful, and Christian system of education, offered to all our citizens to all classes of society, equally beneficial to the wealthy, and accessible to the most indigent."

Here They Come Again

The War of 1812 began on June 18, 1812 and concluded on December 24, 1814. Here is a synopsis of it harbingers:

> **British–U.S. conflict arising chiefly out of U.S. grievances over oppressive maritime practices during the Napoleonic Wars. The long struggle between Great Britain and France, fought intermittently between 1793 and 1815, led both belligerents to infringe on the rights and impair the interests of neutrals. Britain … insisted that neutral vessels first call at British ports and pay duties. In addition, U.S. sensibilities were offended by the British practice of stopping U.S. ships on the high seas and impressing seamen alleged to be deserters from the Royal Navy. The new nation reacted with the Embargo Act (1807) and the Non-intercourse Act (1809). A third measure (1810) removed trade against whichever belligerent should fail to revoke its blockade. This Great Britain failed to do in time to prevent a declaration of war signed by President James Madison on June 18, 1812.**

International tension was increased by U.S. resentment of British actions along the Canadian frontier. British authorities were supplying arms and encouragement to the Shawnee leader, Tecumseh, in an effort to check the advance of white settlers into Indian country. After a Shawnee attack led to the pitched Battle of Tippecanoe (November 7, 1811), Westerners raised the cry that the British must be expelled from Canada to ensure frontier security.[3]

Sometimes known as the Second American Revolution, the conflict with England entered a second phase on July 12, 1812, when American forces under General William Hull invaded Upper Canada. On July 17, British forces, with the help of Native American fighters, overran Fort Mackinac \'ma-ka-naw\ on an island off the coast of Norther Michigan. This was the first battle of the conflict and it was fought on American soil.

On August 5, at the Battle of Brownstone south of Detroit, the famed Shawnee Indian chief Tecumseh routed an American force. Ten days later came the Fort Dearborn Massacre, after which American troops abandoned the fort on the Chicago River in the Illinois Territory and a band of Potawatomi Indians burned the fort to the ground. The next day, August 16, 1812, Hull surrendered Detroit without a fight, and the British took control of the entire territory of Michigan. Less than two months later, on October 13, came another stunning defeat when American forces under General Winfield Scott surrendered to the British following a humiliating defeat at the Battle of Queenston Heights in Ontario along the Niagara frontier.

These engagements did not bode well for American success in this second round with the Brits. The war dragged on through the spring and summer of 1813. In a May 14 letter to his close friend, John Randolph of Roanoke, he wrote, “We have been in a state of alarm here for the last three or four days, having reason to believe the British were coming up our river. He further commented that he did not see anything that promised better times.

Key and Randolph maintained an ongoing friendship throughout their lives. This partnership was aided by subscription to the laws of divine establishment:

[3] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia*, 15th ed. (2010), 4:400.

> **Edmund Burke and John Randolph were not the men to deny that laws of nature exist—laws, that is, derived from the spiritual character of man and demonstrated in the pages of history. Liberty was no absolute and abstract "Right of Man"; but it was a privilege conferred upon men who obeyed the intent of God by placing a check upon will and appetite. No "right" however natural it may seem, can exist unqualified in society. A man may have a right to self-defense; therefore, he may have a right to a sword; but if he is mad or wicked, and intends to do his neighbors harm, every dictate of prudence will tell us to disarm him. Rights have no being independent of circumstances and expediency.**[4]

Key often brought divine viewpoint into his writings and this one gives credence to the country's military exploits in the north:

> **All the vicissitudes of human affairs … are ordered and controlled by the Almighty Governor of the world."**

As Randolph and other had predicted, the American attempt to invade Canada proved disastrous. American forces suffered two big setbacks in late October and early November 1813 that ended all thought of taking Montreal.

In the Battle of Chateauguay River, American General Wade Hampton's three thousand troops could not overcome a much smaller British force. At the November 11, 1813, Battle of Crysler's Farm, along the north bank of the St. Lawrence River in Ontario, the Americans once again lost to a smaller number of British troops, this time aided by Canadians and their Mohawk allies.

Frank Key was not unhappy by that turn of events. "The people of Montreal will enjoy their firesides for this, and I trust, for many a winter," he wrote to John Randolph early in December. "This I suppose is treason, but, as your Patrick Henry said, 'If this be treason, I glory in the name of traitor.' I have never thought of those poor creatures without being reconciled to any disgrace or defeat of our arms!"

Francis Key's Patriotism

Key's piety and patriotism were on display on February 22, 1814, when he gave what one newspaper called "an elegant and very interesting discourse" at the Washington Society of Alexandria's annual birthday tribute to George Washington. He spoke at the Old Presbyterian Meeting House in Old Town Alexandria, Virginia. The 34-year-old lawyer, sounding at times like a patriotic fundamentalist preacher, offered flowery words of exaltation for George Washington, then went on to offer his prescription for the future of the American society.

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[4] Russell Kirk, *John Randolph of Roanoke: A Study in American Politics*, 4th ed. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1997), 44.

Calling Washington "your hero, your patriot, the deliverer and the Father of his country," Key marveled that at the "mere utterance" of Washington's name, it is "as if a magic spell had been pronounced," and the "tide of transport rushes from every heart and throbs through every vein of all who hear it."

Key's main theme was the prescience of Washington's famed Farewell Address of 1796. Key hammered away primarily on his interpretation of Washington's belief in the importance of religion and morality and how both should be ingrained into the American brand of democratic government. "In all our national deliverances we see [Washington] ascribing all the glory to their true and Almighty Cause and calling upon his countrymen to acknowledge and praise the power that defended them."

Key said that piety and patriotism held special importance during the current "dark and evil times" that he characterized as the "gloom of present distress, [and] the still more awful anticipation of approaching calamity."

Preservation of Our State Papers

British Major General Robert Ross marched his troops into the undefended and virtually uninhabited nation's capital. That day and night and into the next day the British burned as many federal buildings as they could, including the Capitol, the President's House, the small national library, and the State, War, and Treasury Department buildings.

In the days before the British attack, Secretary of State James Monroe wrote a note directing his staff to safeguard the nation's most important papers. That task fell to Stephen Pleasanton, a State Department clerk. Pleasanton and several fellow clerks dutifully gathered up international treaties, the papers of George Washington, and other documents, and stowed them inside jerry-rigged carrying cases. That took several days.

Then, on August 24, with British entering the city, Pleasanton thought to add the original Declaration of Independence and the Constitution to the lot. He and his fellow clerks loaded those national treasures onto carts with the other documents and took them into Virginia for safe-keeping. The precious cargo wound up safely stored in a house in Loudoun County.

It is believed they were hidden in the basement of Rokeby House outside Leesburg, Virginia, some thirty miles northwest of Washington, DC. That privately owned home, which was built around 1765, today includes a shrine in the basement honoring the spot where the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and other documents were safely stored.

Conflagration

The incineration of the Capitol and White House is described by British Captain Harry Smith, General Ross's junior adjutant, in his biography: "I would never forget the destructive majesty of the flames as the torches were applied to the beds, curtains, etc."[5]

The flames of the burning President's house and the other federal buildings flew so high in the sky that they could be seen in Baltimore, some thirty-five miles to the north.

The conflagration ended only when a huge thunderstorm with gale-force winds blew in. It was "a regular hurricane," Smith remembered. "It did not last more than twenty minutes, but it was accompanied by a deluge of rain and such a gale that it blew down all our piles of arms and blew the drums out of camp. I never witnessed such a scene as I saw for a few minutes. We learnt that even in the river, sheltered by the woods, several of our ships at anchor had been cast on their beam ends."

The British—who never intended to occupy Washington—left town and marched back to Benedict, Maryland. They had been in the city for twenty-six hours. General Robert Ross and Admiral George Cochrane decided their next move would be to destroy the city of Baltimore.

Key's Historic Assignment

On August 27, before all British troops had made their way aboard ships at Benedict bound for Baltimore, a group of them broke off from the main force and raided several farms in Maryland, including one owned by Dr. William Beanes, who had served as a surgeon in the American Revolution. Beanes organized a group of local men to go after the renegade British troops. The makeshift posse captured several soldiers and threw them in local jail.

One of the British troops escaped and the next night he returned with company and took Beanes and two other Americans—Dr. William Hill and Philip Weems—prisoner. The British rousted the three men from their beds at midnight and forced them to ride on old wobbly horses thirty-five miles to Benedict.

Prisoner releases and exchanges were common practice during the War of 1812. At Benedict, the British released Hill and Weems, but not the sixty-five-year old Beanes. He was put aboard the *Tonnant*, Vice Admiral Cochrane's flagship, as the British sailed toward Baltimore. The British wanted Beanes punished.

Friends of the Beanes family, including Richard West—Frank Key's brother-in-law—tried to intervene with Ross and Cockrane to no avail.

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[5] Harry Smith, *The Autobiography of Lieutenant-General Harry Smith* (London: J. Murray, 1903), 200.

West took it upon himself to ride to Georgetown to ask Key for help believing the lawyer's tact and persuasive manners in getting the doctor released. Key agreed to take the assignment.

On September 1, Key secured permission to go on the Beanes mission from President Monroe and from General John Mason, the commissioner general of prisons relating to military prisoners. Mason, son of founding father, George Mason, spelled out in a letter what he wanted Key to do. He addressed it to Key and John Stuart Skinner, who was appointed by the State Department to deal with prisoner exchanges.

Mason also contacted the senior British prisoner, Colonel William Thornton, telling the officer he could arrange to have letters from his fellow British prisoners delivered to Ross and Cochrane. Thornton eagerly accepted and many letters were written which Key collected before he left.

Freeing Dr. Beanes

Specific details of what took place on the *Tonnant* were not recorded by Key himself. What is considered the best account of the release of Dr. Beanes and the words of Key's lyric are best left to the writings of Key's brother-in-law, Roger B. Taney written in 1856.

Key never personally spoke about his poem and is recorded a referring to it only briefly. The drama began on September 4 when he and John Skinner boarded an American cartel[6] ship sailing under a safe-conduct flag, most likely the *President*, under the command of John Ferguson. They left Baltimore harbor in search of the British fleet.

In the early afternoon of September 7, they found the *Tonnant* at the mouth of the Potomac River. General Robert Ross and Admiral George Cockburn welcomed the Americans aboard. Roger Taney provides the details of what followed.

The four men met in the early afternoon. Naturally, it was Admiral Cockburn who spoke despairingly of Dr. Beanes and seemingly opposed to his release. The doctor was below decks where he had been treated harshly. He had on the same clothes from the time he was captured on August 28, eleven days previous.

Taney reported Key's disfavor with Dr. Beanes captors, "Never was a man more disappointed in his expectations than I have been as to the character of the British officers. With some exception they were illiberal, ignorant, and vulgar, and seem filled with a spirit of malignity against every thing American."

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[6] "cartél. A written agreement between opposing nations" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 2d ed.), s.v. "cartel."

Key and Skinner reported to the British that Dr. Beanes was a civilian noncombatant who never should have been taken prisoner. They then handed the letters from the British prisoners over to them.

Taney said the content of those letters "all spoke of the humanity and kindness with which the British prisoners had fallen into our hands." These letters from the British prisoners seemed to sway Ross. In the official dispatch to General Mason, Ross said that the "friendly treatment" given to "the wounded officers and men of the British army" enabled him "to meet your wishes regarding" Dr. Beanes.

The British had one big condition, however. Key, Skinner, and Beanes could not return to Washington until after the attack on Baltimore.

Skinner reported that one British officer explained, "After discussing so freely as we have done in your presence our purposes and plans, you could hardly expect us to let you go on shore now in advance of us. You will have to remain with us until all is over, when I promise you there shall be no further delay."

The Battle of Ft. McHenry

Before dawn on Tuesday, September 13, 1814, the attack flotilla set up in two rows about two miles below Fort McHenry. The bomb ships, each featuring two formidable ten-and thirteen-inch mortar guns that had a range of over two miles, although not with great accuracy, weighed anchor in the first row in a semicircle, just out of range of the fort's guns.

At sunrise, around six thirty, the Royal Marine artillerymen aboard the *Volcano* began the Battle of Baltimore by firing a two-hundred pound-plus mortar, and explosive shell known as a carcass, packed with a lethal mixture of incendiary materials. Cochrane then ordered all the ships to open fire.

The relentless British bombardment—each of the five bomb ships alone could fire as many as fifty gigantic mortars an hour—lasted throughout that entire day and into the night.

All told, the British war ships fired at least 1,500 mortars, cannonballs, and rockets in twenty-five hours. When the British ships moved in closer, the guns at Fort McHenry and its nearby batteries opened fire and scored several hits. The British ships retreated out of range of the fort's cannon. But they kept up the bombing, raining a nearly constant stream of shells onto the fort.

The British scored at least one direct hit on one of Fort McHenry's guns, destroying a twenty-four pound cannon and killing or maiming its crew. Miraculously, though, only four Americans at Fort McHenry died and just twenty-four were wounded during the British onslaught.

Added to the mayhem, a torrential rainstorm punctuated with loud bursts of thunder drenched the city and harbor. The British attack continued until Cochrane called a halt in the early morning hours of September 14. When the guns were quiet, the British war fleet turned away from the city and sailed back down the Patapsco, into Chesapeake Bay, and out to sea.

Baltimore was saved. Even more importantly, the American victory in the Battle of Baltimore signaled a turning point in the War of 1812. The British slunk off in defeat, seeming to lose heart for the fight.

One last big conflict remained—the January 8, 1815, Battle of New Orleans, in which Major General Andrew Jackson of Tennessee led the Americans to a smashing victory and became the number one American military hero of the War of 1812.

Francis Scott Key's Paean of Praise

Francis Scott Key had a ringside seat during the entire Battle of Baltimore on the *President*, which sat an anchor behind the British fleet. Key, Skinner, and Beanes saw a large American flag flying over Fort McHenry before the British bomb ships let loose at 6:30 a.m. on September 13. All that day Key paced the deck as the rockets and bombs burst in the air. Peering through the darkness as day turned to night—at the twilight's last gleaming." As he would later put it—Key could still make out the Stars and Stripes.

When the British guns tapered off and then went silent around three a.m., the men did not know whether that meant an American victory or defeat. Even as the horizon lightened at around five a.m. Key, Skinner, and Beanes could not tell if Baltimore had survived. Rain clouds obscured the sunrise just before six and a mist hung over the water. Peering through their spyglass, the tree men still could not clearly make out the fort or the British ships in what Key would immortalize as "the dawn's early light."

Key, Skinner, and Beanes waited in painful suspense, watching with intense anxiety for the return of day, and looking every few minutes at their watches to see how long they must wait for it.

Just after six a.m., as Key peered into the cloud-obscured dawn light through his glass, he could make out a flag limply hanging. It was impossible to tell if it was the Stars and Stripes or the Union Jack. Then a slight breeze stirred and Francis Scott Key saw that the American flag was still there. He knew that his countrymen had prevailed against overwhelming odds.

In Key's a letter to John Randolph of Roanoke in an October 5, 1814, letter, Admiral Cochran had told him, "the town must be burned, and I was sure that if taken it would have been given up to plunder. It was filled with women and children."

Key felt the "warmest gratitude" for the "most merciful deliverance" when the British attack failed. He expressed these high feelings just after dawn on September 14 as his gaze moved from the American flag at Fort McHenry to the British bomb ships and frigates sailing away. He began to compose a poem on the back of a letter he had in his pocket. The words came tumbling out in the fervor of the moment.

Key worked on the four verses of the poem while sailing back to shore and then wrote out a finished copy the next day at a hotel in Baltimore. The following day, September 16, 1814, according to Taney, Frank Key presented the verses to his brother-in-law, Judge Joseph Nicholson, the husband of Polly's sister Rebecca.

It is not know who exactly took those verses to Benjamin Edes's print shop but he distributed the verses bearing the title "Defence of Fort M'Henry" on handbills and broadsheets and distributed them throughout the city, including the troops at Fort McHenry. The text of the song appeared in the daily afternoon newspaper, the *Baltimore Patriot and Evening Advertiser*, on September 20.

The newspaper included a short introduction, most likely written by Judge Nicholson. It read, "The following beautiful and animating effusion, which is destined long to outlast the occasion, and outlive the impulse which produced it, has already been extensively circulated. In our first renewal of publication we rejoice in an opportunity to enliven the sketch of an exploit so illustrious, with stains which so fitly celebrate it."

The broadsheet and the newspaper went on to describe the circumstances under which the song came to be. Key was not named but described only as a "gentleman" who "had left Baltimore, in a flag of truce" to secure the release of Dr. Beanes, and had watched the bombshells, and "at the early dawn his eye was again greeted by the proudly waving flag of his country."

The song became known as "The Star-Spangled Banner" (from a line in the first stanza) after Carr's Music Store of Baltimore published it for the first time in sheet music form in November.

In a report about a December 12 testimonial dinner in Washington during which those in attendance sang the song, the *National Intelligencer* identified its author as "a gentleman (F.S. Key) of this District whom circumstances had thrown on board the British fleet during its tremendous attack on Fort McHenry." By 1816 word had spread throughout the young nation that Francis Scott Key of Georgetown wrote the stirring, patriotic air, "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Here are the first and fourth verses of the song with commentary. I'll make a few comments and then, following our closing prayer, we will stand and sing these two stanzas of our national anthem:

The Star-Spangled Banner

Oh, say, can you see, by the dawn's early light, (The men get their first glimpse of the flag)
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming? (It was flying the night before at dusk)
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight, (It endured throughout the night)
O'er the ramparts we watch'd, were so gallantly streaming? (They observed it illuminated by ordinance)
And the rocket's red glare, the bomb bursting in air, (The explosions that caused visibility)
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there. (It continued to fly until the assault stopped)
O, say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave (The question on their minds until dawn)
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave? (The question was answered in the affirmative)

Oh, thus be it ever when freemen shall stand
Between their lov'd home and the war's desolation; (A prayer for divine protection as a client nation)
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the heav'n rescued land
Praise the Pow'r that hath made and preserv'd us a nation! (Gratitude to the Father for victory)
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just; (Principle of Freedom through military victory)
And this be our motto: "In God is our trust!" (Client nations must have a pivot that trusts in the Lord)
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave (Pivot power maintains freedom in the nation)
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave. (The environment of a client nation sustains freedom)

Father, we are in Your debt that we have enjoyed more personal freedoms in this country that any other nations in world history. We know that You defend that nation whose God is the Lord. Abraham defeated the Allied Mesopotamian Army in a night assault near Damascus. You enabled Joshua and his army to take down Jericho. David defeated his son, Absalom's coup d'état at Ephraim Forest. Throughout the Tanakh you insured Israelite victories over their enemies.

Your promises have instilled courage into the souls of warriors as you did for Joshua to whom you commanded, "Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

If freedom is to be maintained, it is necessary for good to triumph over evil. This is why nations who serve the Lord are provided divine guidance and military power to overcome strategies from the Dark Side. Because evil adversaries always challenge freedom, then we are not surprised that today some have formed a fifth column without our borders. Confuse their plans, expose their strategies, and defeat their intentions. We salute today those who have defeated enemies from abroad. May the power of your Word emerge in the souls of believers so as to restrain current attacks from within.

We are dependent upon all believers to learn Your Word so they may apply Your Word. If so, under the principle that Jesus Christ controls history, You may deliver us from the current discontent and restore our land so our Founders' desire to "secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity" will be maintained.

By Your grace, may the service, effort, sacrifice, and, for far too many who have given their last full measure in our nation's wars, not be found wanting or done in vain.

"And the Star-Spangled Banner in triumph shall wave / O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave."

We lift our prayer of gratitude in the name of Jesus Christ Who is *'Yahweh Sebaoth*, the Lord of the Armies. Amen.