

STAR SPANGLED MUSIC *Editions*

Adams and Liberty

Most popular song on “To Anacreon” melody before Key’s Banner

1798



Words by Thomas Paine
Music by John Stafford Smith



(C Major • High Voice)

Edited by Mark Clague and Andrew Kuster

STAR SPANGLED MUSIC
Foundation



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Adams and Liberty, 1798

Lyric by Thomas Paine (1773–1811); Music by John Stafford Smith (1750–1836)

Historical Note

Often referred to as America's first presidential campaign song, "Adams and Liberty" was rather inspired by the so-called "XYZ Affair" and the subsequent undeclared Quasi-War (1798–1800) between the U.S. and France. Attempting to remain neutral in the war between Britain and France, U.S. diplomatic relations with its former ally deteriorated after a U.S. trade deal with London and a refusal to pay off debts owed to the (former) French king. French privateers began seizing American ships. As a result, the U.S. Congress revitalized the Navy, passed the regressive Alien and Sedition Acts, and on July 7, 1798 rescinded its treaties with France. Only President John Adams's lonely and controversial refusal to declare war kept the nation from overt military action. The song thus serves as a Federalist Party anthem in support of a beleaguered leader.

Poet and editor Thomas Paine (1773–1811) was the son of lawyer and signer of the Declaration of Independence Robert Treat Paine. Commissioned by the Massachusetts Charitable Fire Society, he wrote nine verses to the tune of "The Anacreontic Song." The resulting 1798 publication of the soon popular song was the first U.S. imprint to offer musical notation of the melody that would become the national anthem. The melody and accompaniment here are already variants from the original. Most charming is a new active accompaniment that carries the music's momentum through a rather long text. The tune's English origins may represent another rhetorical layer for America's pro-British Federalist party, of which Francis Scott Key was a member.

Title and text seem to invoke the young nation's first patriotic anthem—John Dickinson's 1768 "Liberty Song"—by calling on the "Sons of Columbia" to recognize the peace and prosperity brought by the 1776 Revolution and with the chorus' vow that never again would they be slaves to another nation. Here, of course, Paine was not calling for freedom for the New World's African slaves, rather, that the white male elite of the nation would not be subjugated to colonial rule.

Verses that follow parallel contemporary events, to suggest that commerce should not be used as a means of war and that faction (partisanship) must not threaten the nation. Verse 4 makes rather clever use of two meanings of the word "Constitution," referring both to the nation's founding document ratified in 1789

as well as to the 1797 warship (later known as Old Ironsides). This verse also mentions France explicitly, criticizing the revolutionary republic "recumbent in blood," while refusing to barter American sovereignty, justice or fame for peace—likely a reference to the bribes requested of U.S. diplomats by "XYZ."

Verses 3, 5, 7, and 9 each make reference to the rule of American law, likely endorsing the President's Alien and Sedition Acts that restricted foreigners and limited speech critical of the government. America's "pride is her ADAMS—his laws are her choice" proclaims the lyric, calling for unity in the face of a greater threat to liberty. Armed resistance is called for only obliquely in this final stanza when "Leonidas' band" is mentioned, recalling the Spartan king's sacrifice in defending ancient Greece from Persian invasion.

Two confusions persist regarding the song. First, Paine changed his name to Robert Treat Paine, Jr. in 1801 for three reasons: to honor his deceased brother Robert, to honor his father, and to avoid confusion with the more famous Revolutionary War pamphleteer of *Common Sense* (1776) and the *Rights of Man* (1791). It is also not a campaign song. Elected in 1796, Adams was already serving as his nation's second President.

Performance Suggestions

Consider a selection of verses (1, 5, 6, 8, & 9 work well) and dividing them among men, women, solo, trio, and choral presentations. All (possibly including listeners) should sing the repetition of the chorus; soloists rest.

Sources

This edition based on the "Second Edition-Corrected" published by Linley & Moore (Boston), 1799 or 1800.

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Adams and Liberty

Words

Thomas Paine, A. M.
later named Robert Treat Paine, Jr.
(1773–1811)

Song in support of U.S. President John Adams.
1798

Music

Anacreon in Heaven
John Stafford Smith
Arr. Unknown

Allegretto

8 *[§]*

1. Ye _____ Sons of Co - lum - bia who _____ brave - ly have fought, for those
2. *In a clime, whose rich Vales feed the _____ marts of the world, Whose _____*
3. The _____ fame of our arms, _____ of our laws the mild sway, Had _____
4. *While _____ France her huge limbs _____ bathes re - cum - bent in blood, And so -*
5. Tis the fire of the flint, _____ each A - mer - i - can warms; Let _____

[§]

13

rights which un - stain'd from your Sires had De - scend - ed, may you long taste the
shores are un - shak - en by Eu - rope's com - mo - tion, The _____ Tri - dent of
just - ly en - no - bled our na - tion in sto - ry, Till the dark clouds of
- ci - e - ty's base threats with wide dis - so - lu - tion; May _____ Peace, like the
Rome's haugh - ty vic - tors, be - ware of col - li - sion! Let them bring all the

Adams and Liberty

18

bless - ings your — Val - or has bought, and your sons reap the soil, which your
Com - merce should ne - ver be hurl'd, To in - cense the le - gi - ti - mate
Fac - tion ob - scur'd our young day, And en - vel - op'd the sun of A -
Dove, — who re - turn'd from the flood, Find an Ark of a - bode in our
vas - sals of — Eu - rope in arms, We're a World by our - selves, and dis -

23

fa - thers de - fend - ed, Mid the reign of mild peace may your na - tion in -
powers of the o - cean. But should Pi - rates in - vade, Though in thun - der ar -
mer - i - can glo - ry. But let Trai - tors be told, Who their Coun - try have
mild Con - sti - tu - tion. But though Peace is our aim, Yet the boon we dis -
dain a di - vi - sion! While, with pa - tri - ot pride, To our Laws we're al -

2nd time
Chorus.

28

-crease, with the glo - ry of Rome and the wis - dom of Greece, And ne'er may the
- ray'd, Let your can - non de - clare the free char - ter of Trade. For ne'er shall the
sold, And — bar - ter'd their God, for his im - age in gold, That ne'er will the
- claim, If — bought by our Sov' - reign - ty, Jus - tice, and Fame. For ne'er shall the
- lied, No — foe can sub - due us, no fac - tion di - vide. For ne'er shall the

34

sons of Co - lum-bia be slaves, While the earth bears_ a_ plant, or the sea rolls its waves.
sons of Co - lum-bia be slaves, While the earth bears_ a_ plant, or the sea rolls its waves.
sons of Co - lum-bia be slaves, While the earth bears_ a_ plant, or the sea rolls its waves.
sons of Co - lum-bia be slaves, While the earth bears_ a_ plant, or the sea rolls its waves.
sons of Co - lum-bia be slaves, While the earth bears_ a_ plant, or the sea rolls its waves.

[D.S.]

Adams and Liberty

[§]

6. Our _____ mount-ains are crown'd _____ with im - pe - ri - al Oak, Whose _____
 7. Let our Pa - triots de - stroy _____ An - arch's pes - ti - lent worm, Lest our _____
 8. Should the Tem - pest of War _____ o - ver - shad - ow our land, Its _____
 9. Let _____ Fame to the world _____ sound A - mer - i - ca's voice; No In -

[§]

49

roots, like our Lib - er - ties, ag - es have nour - ish'd, But _____ long ere our _____
 Lib - er - ty's growth should be check'd by cor - ro - sion; Then let clouds thick - en _____
 bolts could ne'er rend Free - dom's tem - ple a - sun - der; For, un - mov'd, as its _____
 -trigue can her sons from their Gov - ern - ment sev - er; Her _____ Pride is her _____

54

na - tion sub - mits to the yoke, Not a tree shall be left on the _____
 round us, we _____ heed not the storm; Our _____ realm fears no shock, but the _____
 por - tal, would _____ Wash - ing - ton stand, And re - pulse, with his breast the as - _____
 Ad - ams, his _____ Laws are her Choice, And shall flour - ish, till Lib - er - ty _____

59

field where it flour-ish'd, Should in - va - sion im - pend, Eve - ry grove would de -
earth's own ex - plo - sion, Foes as - sail us in vain, Though their Fleets bridge the
-saults of the Thun - der! His sword, from the sleep Of its scab - bard, would
slum - bers for - ev - er! Then un - ite, heart and hand, Like Le - on - i - des'

2nd time
Chorus.

64

-scent From the hill - tops they shad - ed, our shores to de - fend. For ne'er shall the
main, For our al - tars and laws with our lives we'll main - tain! And ne'er shall the
leap, And con - duct, with its point, eve - ry flash to the deep. For ne'er shall the
band, And swear to the God of the o - cean and land, That ne'er shall the

70

sons of Co - lum - bia be slaves, While the earth bears a plant, or the sea rolls its waves.
sons of Co - lum - bia be slaves, While the earth bears a plant, or the sea rolls its waves.
sons of Co - lum - bia be slaves, While the earth bears a plant, or the sea rolls its waves.
sons of Co - lum - bia be slaves, While the earth bears a plant, or the sea rolls its waves.

[D.S. al Fine]